

# John Coleman: The Working Man's Poet

photo by Audrey Acosta

by Bill Warner  
Collegian Staff Writer

John Coleman is reading minds again. As the semester gets under way and Coleman begins again to practice his craft, his students begin to see why he is so popular, and so successful.

"I think that's what makes him so key as a teacher. That he knows what the student is thinking while he is teaching," said former Coleman student Steve McGarvey.

His ability to see through the eyes of his students, as well as those of the average man, is a quality that has earned Coleman respect on campus and enabled him to write poetry that conveys a sense of "being there."

Coleman, a former Behrend student himself, has been teaching several writing courses here since 1985. He is a published poet as well as a founding member of the Round Table Society and heads the Behrend Learning Assistance Center. Firmly rooted in the Behrend community, Coleman's past has afforded him many insights when advising his students.

He was raised on the east-side of Erie and came from a blue-collar background, with both of his parents working at local

shops. Following along that path, he worked part-time as a stockboy/cashier at Gary's Variety in Wesleyville. Both of his older sisters attended Behrend before him, but that didn't provide him with much direction.

"I really didn't know what the hell I was doing," he recalls of his freshman year. At first a Business Management major, he spent the year watching dollar movies at Eastway Theater and getting C's in his course work.

During his third term (Behrend was on a trimester schedule then), he took a Persuasive Writing course which inspired him to change to an English major and ultimately changed his life. There were only five or six students taking the English major at the time, and Coleman found himself becoming more involved in campus activities.

As the group came to know one another they began to meet informally to read poetry and share insights. Thus began the Round Table Society. Though he greatly admires and respects the students he has dealt with since then, Coleman has strong feelings about those founding members of the Round Table. "That crowd of people are among the best group of students I've ever been around."

Coleman's own students feel

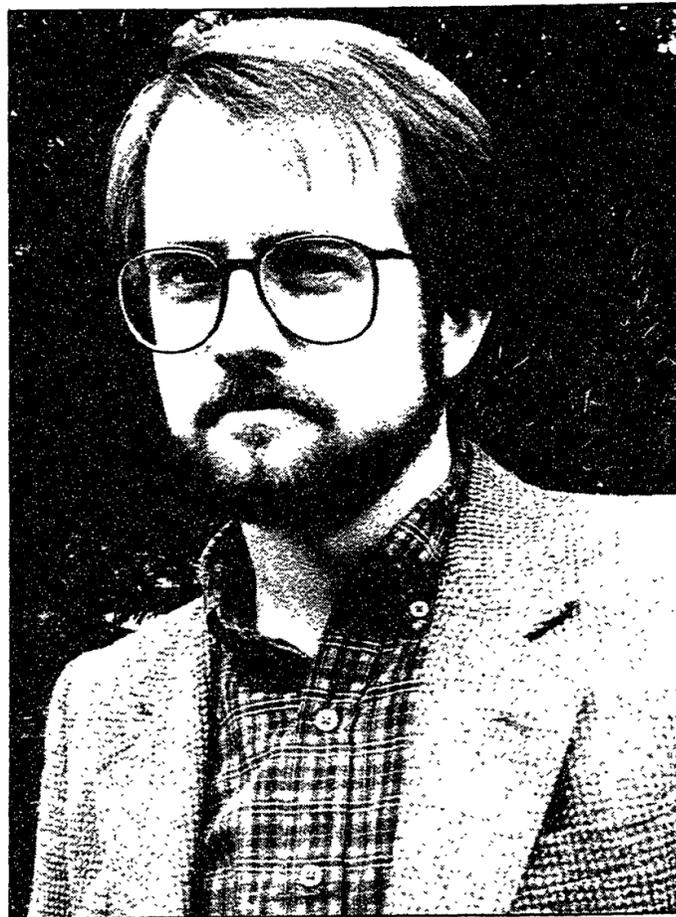
strongly about him too. "It was the epitome of the college course," recalled Darrell Freund, of his poetry writing course. Coleman's policy of open forum during his poetry class left a permanent impression on Freund, who is the editor of Behrend's literary magazine "Tempus." "That was what I was looking for in a college course."

Steve McGarvey, president of the Student Government Association, spoke of Coleman's Business Writing course. "He always stressed the need to say things the best way they can possibly be said. He loves what he does, you can tell that right away. He's really energetic."

Coleman's energy and his love for his work seem to make his advice important to students.

"I see this mistaken notion around that you can do anything you want," Coleman says of students deciding on a major. He feels that while anyone can learn about a subject or trade, students often ignore possibilities that should be explored. "If you find something you like or you're good at, don't hesitate because it may not be lucrative. Find out what you're strong in and do it."

John Coleman has obviously found what he is strong in and his students are glad he is doing it.



John Coleman

**ACROSS**

- 1 Irritates
- 6 Small bottle
- 11 European
- 12 Second of two
- 14 Above
- 15 Supplications
- 17 Proceed
- 18 Lamprey
- 20 Fear
- 21 Weaken
- 22 Projecting tooth
- 24 Finish
- 25 Diminutive suffix
- 26 Run aground
- 28 Diatribe
- 30 Weapon
- 31 Garden tool
- 32 Attempts to

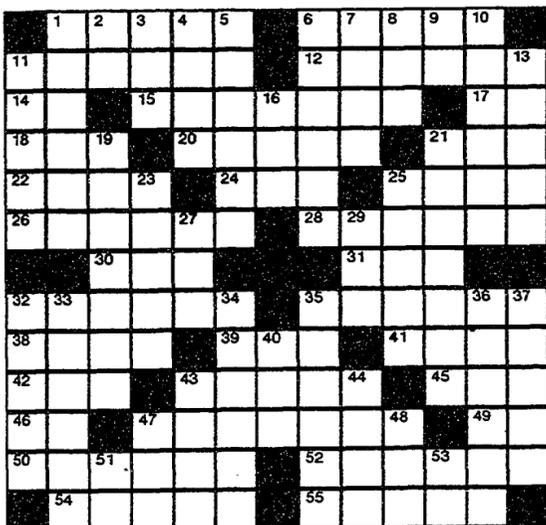
**DOWN**

- 35 Spoke with speech
- 38 Gaelic
- 39 Edible seed
- 41 Otherwise
- 42 Damp
- 43 Poets
- 45 Sched. abbr.
- 46 Half an em
- 47 More pitiful
- 49 Article
- 50 Small wave
- 52 Builds
- 54 Frocks
- 55 Mediterranean vessel

## The Weekly Crossword Puzzle

- 3 Demon
- 4 Fat of swine
- 5 Trapped
- 6 Bogs
- 7 Difficult

- 8 Possessive pronoun
- 9 Near
- 10 Ambassador
- 11 Estimate
- 13 Lassoed
- 16 Deep yearning
- 19 Biggest
- 21 Spire
- 23 Standard measure
- 25 Worn away
- 27 Compass point
- 29 Greek letter
- 32 Drain
- 33 Peaceful
- 34 Extras
- 35 Females
- 36 Landed property
- 37 College officials
- 40 Transgress
- 43 Nut's companion
- 44 Withered
- 47 Health resort
- 48 Soak, as flax
- 51 River in Italy
- 53 Symbol for cerium



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