

Cults on campus

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The second time he was getting his son out of the Moonies.

John Lyons was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1927.

He was raised "in the bosom of the Congregational Church and the Bible was always read at breakfast." Now, when he teaches his classes on Milton, there is usually a student who will come forward to tell him, "You're a terrible atheist" and then ask, "Are you a Catholic?"

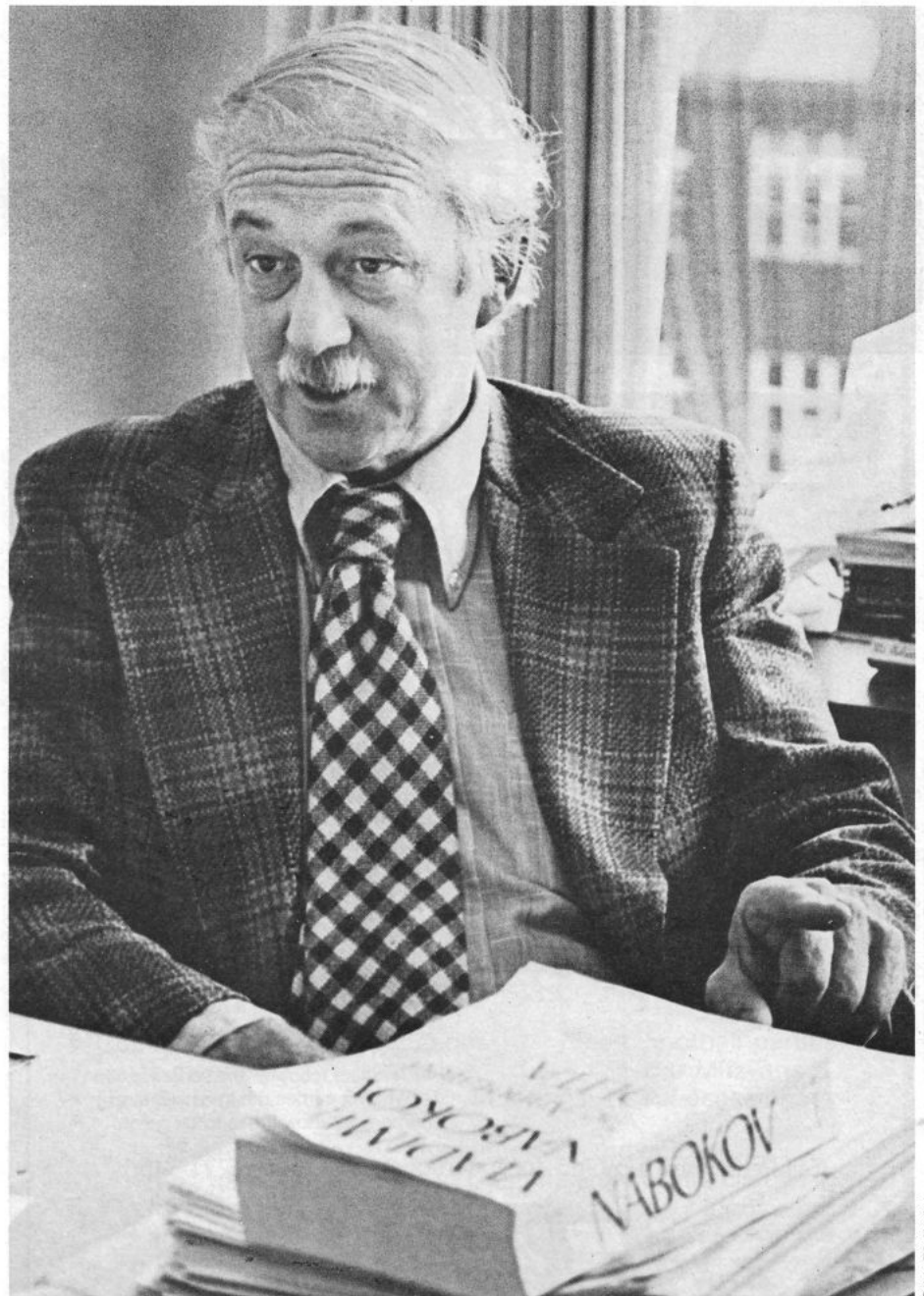
He holds a B.A. from Kenyon College where he came under the influence of poets John Crowe Ransom and Robert Hillyer; an M.S. from Columbia University; an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Florida. He has been a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1960. He and his wife, Mimi — who is manager of the University Club — are the parents of Emma, Maggie, Gus and Beau.

The first time John Lyons visited San Francisco, he was alone, a purser in the Merchant Marine. The second time, he was married to Mimi and they were getting Beau out of the Moonies.

"Up until the time our son, Beau, joined the Moonies in 1978," John Lyons says, "all I knew about cults was from the magazines I read in dentists' offices."

John and Mimi Lyons not only got their son out of the Moonies — in the two short years since then, the Lyons

George Vukelich is a regular contributor to Madison magazine.



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BILL FRITSCH

Cults

have become very involved in getting other people's sons and daughters out of cults. Particularly John.

"We went 'blind' to get Beau," John recalls. "He had only been in the Moonies for a couple of weeks at their Camp K which is north of Oakland, California. We flew out and friends told us about Annette Fuller.

Annette's son has been a Moonie for almost two years, recruited on a

camping trip while he was still a high school student. She has been able to extract him through a conservatorship. A social worker by profession, she spent countless hours advising the distressed parents of cultists.

Annette arranged for two young women, themselves former Moonies, to work with the Lyons and the young women "deprogrammed" Beau.

The California "network" impressed

the Lyons. After returning to Madison, the Lyons decided to attend a meeting in Chicago of a support group called the Midwest Friends for Individual Freedom, a regional division of the National Friends for Individual Freedom (NFIF).

"We wanted to get more information about cults," John says, "and we also wanted to assist other people with cult problems because we knew how much help the California "network" had been to us."

The Lyons joined the Wisconsin Affiliate of NFIF whose president is Carolyn Smith of Milwaukee and are now plugged into a larger "network" that stretches from coast-to-coast.

The "network" has three main objectives:

- **Education** — this is directed to the public-at-large about the dangers of cults.

- **Legislation** — encouraging legislators to enact laws that will protect communities against the misrepresentations of cults.

- **Counseling** — advising and helping those people who are distressed to find relatives involved with cults.

John Lyons insists that the observation that *one person's cult is another person's religion* is not only simplistic, it is dead wrong.

"The historical purpose of religion" he points out, "has been to ritualize relationships, the births, the marriages, the funerals, the celebrations — and to integrate those relationships into the rest of society. What the cults propose is a counter-belief in which their followers see the rest of society as demonic, evil."

Cults separate children from parents, from sisters, from brothers, from relatives, from family.

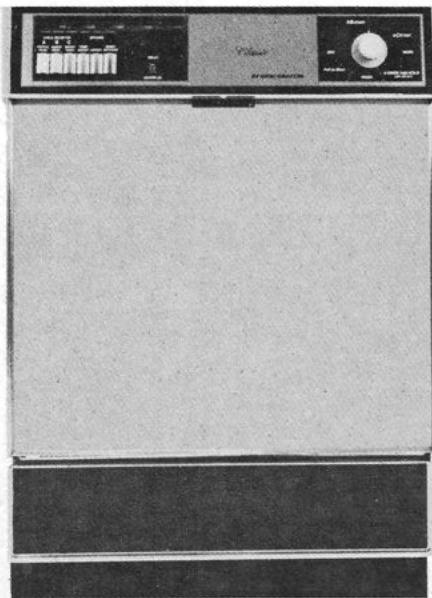
"Religions are a moral force," John Lyons insists, "a cult is not a moral force. It encourages a frenzy that is largely irrational. A frenzy against reality."

No one has fully explained the psychological mechanism of the change that takes place in the making of a cultist, but the methods by which the changes are accomplished are universally known and all cults are essentially the same methods. This process produces a change in personality that John Lyons says is

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"very real."

Gary Scharff, a Princeton graduate who spent four years in the Moonies as a lecturer and is now part of the California "network," describes that process: "You keep a person from his home and friends, isolate him from his own mind by a structured program of no free time that goes from 7 a.m. until the following 1 a.m., that allows no activity to be conducted alone — including washing, exercising, and eating — and add to these factors, a deluge of religious concepts that leaves the participant so confused and fatigued that he can't figure out what's being said — except that if he doubts any of it or fails absolutely to follow the teaching, he is bad. Lack of sleep and low-protein food reinforce the process by reducing the physical person to low ebb.

"The newcomer to the cult learns in a series of carefully managed revelations that there is a new messiah who understands God's will and that the greatest thing he personally can do is follow and obey, just as those more spiritually aware around him are doing. He's told that if he has any doubts, that's to be expected because he can't understand a revolutionary new awareness all at once; he should expect conflict within himself or herself, but the more he serves and obeys, the more God will clarify all and the better he will feel.

"The entering person, in St. Paul's phase, is 'subjugated in hope,' or strangled in his own idealism."

Out of an awareness that nothing is free, Gary Scharff concludes, the skeptic won't even come to a "free" dinner.

John Lyons is particularly concerned about the vulnerability of young people on campus to the recruiting activities of cults.

"Since the death of the concept of in

loci parentis," he explains, "the University has been placed in the legal position where it must allow a greater latitude of freedom than is probably wholesome."

On reflection, he added, "You can strike out the probably."

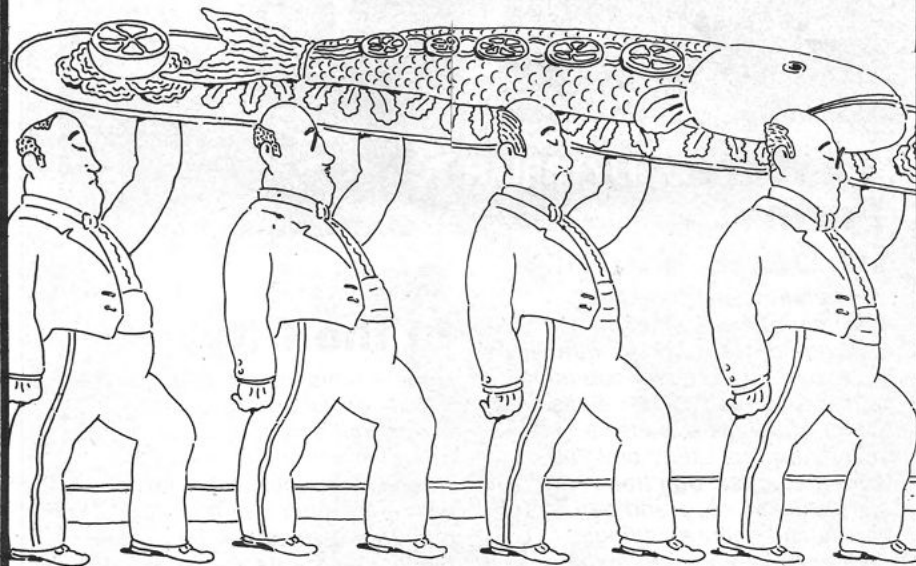
To be recognized as "Student Organizations" on the UW-Madison campus, groups must register with the Dean of Students Office and sign a

statement which defines a student organization as "any formalized group which is composed mainly of students and whose purpose(s) is related to student life on campus. The membership policy of each organization must be non-discriminatory and each member should have the right to complete intellectual freedom, the right to his or her opinions and the right to be heard . . ."

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Cults

John Lyons contends that at least two groups recognized as "Student Organizations" are, indeed, cults and do not meet the criteria cited for student organizations by the Dean of Students Office.

"The most active cults here on campus — that I know of — are The Way International and C.A.R.P."

The Way International, Lyons says, is a fundamentalist, spiritualist cult which employs mind control and insists upon a discipline from its members which is characteristic of cults.

C.A.R.P., Collegiate Association for the Research of Principle, is one of many front organizations for the Unification Church, the Moonies.

It's not inconceivable, John Lyons suggests, that in the future some parent whose child has joined a cult may very well sue the University for permitting that cult to be on campus.

"I know," he says, "that at Berkeley, the dean's office circulates a printed warning to students that cults will be approaching them and that they should be wary. And at Harvard, the Moonies are not permitted to solicit on campus because of their history of mendacity." Archie Epps, Dean of Students at Harvard College confirmed this in no uncertain terms.

"We don't permit the Moonies at Harvard," he said, "for two reasons: One, they used deception in obtaining an appointment in this office — the Dean of Students Office — in the Spring Academic Term, 1978-79.

"Two, they continued to attempt to recruit students at Harvard after being warned not to recruit here. At the moment, they are the only cult barred from Harvard because they are the only cult that has attempted to recruit here. Harvard is a private university. Private means private. We — this office — decided to bar the Moonies. I think it takes applying a little common sense to the problem."

Unlike Harvard, and like the University of Wisconsin, the University of California at Berkeley is not a private school, and its approach — while "applying common sense" — has been less spectacular.

Jim Lemmon, Chief Administrator in the Student Information Center, formerly the Dean of Students Office, also confirmed Lyons.

"We include in our Student Orientation Packet," Lemmon said, "a printed sheet titled: LEARN TO BE A QUESTIONER which is produced by the University Religious Council. The Council is composed of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish groups on campus. No single cult is named, the piece simply warns students that "... when you're alone, feeling lonely ... you're VULNERABLE!"

"The piece also points out the two basic principles of mind control (brainwashing) '... One: If you get a person to behave the way you want, you can get that person to believe what you want. Two: Sudden drastic changes in environment lead to heightened suggestibility and to drastic changes in the ability to believe.

The cult experience, John Lyons observes, seems to return the victim to an earlier stage of development in which there is a great dependence on a paternal-like authority and an abundance of physical energy. It is a stage of naive idealism, and so it is also one in which the alien adult world is suspect because of its moral temporizing.

In these troubled times, there is a growing suspicion in many quarters that nothing can be done about things, that the problems confronting society are simply insoluble and that any rational social action is doomed to failure and ineffectiveness.

"This tends to throw people into spiritual solutions," Lyons says, "and the cults trade on this."

"I hate to give advice to young people" he apologizes, "that suggests they be cynical. I urge them to be cautious. Mind control does exist and to learn that on your own is a very costly and painful experience."

His advice to the parents of young people is starkly: Don't think it can't happen to you because it can.

"If you're a parent," he says, "you should educate yourself about cults and you should discuss them with your children."

He also urges children and parents to keep in mind the words of a young Madison woman who like his son, Beau, was rescued from a Moonie camp in northern California:

"My family and friends gave me unconditional love. The Moonies only preached it." ■