

arts & entertainment

Goal of religious system is the path to a wareness

By Peg Sheldrick

"Everybody's so much in a hurry to be the ultimate person they want to be, and they run over themselves," Keith Larsen said.

"Taking small steps in the right direction will get you there eventually."

That's the attitude behind ECKANKAR, a system of religious and philosophical teachings that has as its goal total awareness and transcendence of the physical body. It's "a point of view on life," according to Janis Morariu, area representative for ECKANKAR.

"It's an individual path to awareness," she said.

Keith Larsen, Mahdis for Nebraska, compares it to philosophy, religion, psychology and other methods used by individuals to cope with the world.

"It's all of those things," he said.

Gathering together

"(Through ECKANKAR) you can separate yourself from your physical body and take a whole different look at what's going on in your life. The contemplative aspect lets the world spin. . . (while) you decide what you really want. It's not escaping—it's more gathering yourself together," he said.

ECKANKAR teaches that an individual should try to be attuned with the ECK, the "creative life force."

Since it's nature is individual study, there are no churches. The ECKist tries to work through states of physical, emotional, causal and mental consciousness to a level of consciousness "beyond energy, space, time and matter," according to Larsen.

'Soul travel'

He said the ECKANKAR experience can allow the individual to transcend the physical body and experience "soul travel," moving into a world of large consciousness.

People are taught to relax and let go of problems "so that each individual can learn to be in the present moment," Larsen said.

There is no strong authority figure in ECKANKAR because that would diminish individual responsibility. The Living ECK Master, Sri Darwin Gross, is a spiritual guide rather than an authority.

"It's up to the individual," Morariu said.

Can't be converted

"The organization is not a social movement," Larsen said. "The individuals within it are involved in movements. . . The purpose of ECKANKAR is to present the ideas of ECKANKAR to people who are looking for them. There's no way you can convert somebody to ECKANKAR—they have to be ready for it."

The teachings of the worldwide organization are said to be older than recorded history. They were brought to

modern attention in 1965 by Paul Twitchell. On a national basis members pay about \$40 a year and receive mailings each month. Funds are used to publish literature on the teachings. The staff in Menlo Park, Calif., mails materials all over the country to ECK Centers such as the one here in Lincoln at 2639 Randolph.

Storefront rented

The ECK Center is open during evenings and is used for discussions and lectures and for making ECKANKAR literature available. Local ECKists have pooled their money to rent the storefront.

The student branch of the organization meets on campus and has existed for about a year and a half.

Members range from college age to 50, and some come from Omaha to take part in discussions. Local operations are funded through donations, but ECKists don't make a point of soliciting funds. Since it is considered a religious education foundation, ECKANKAR is tax exempt.

No People's Temple influence

Asked if she thought recent events with the People's Temple would discourage people from joining groups like ECKANKAR, Morariu said, "I figure anyone who is really interested in ECKANKAR, it wouldn't stop them."

"In ECKANKAR, if Sri Darwin Gross told an ECKist to kill someone or commit suicide, it would be their responsibility to tell him to go jump in the lake," Larsen said.

Worldly search for delectable eats leads gourmet home

By Ben T. Shomshor

Over the years I have come to the conclusion that there are only two good reasons to travel. The first is to see someone whom you would otherwise be unable to see (an acceptable reason). The other is to eat something which you would otherwise be unable to eat (the right reason).

I knew one chap who hunted throughout all of France in search of the ultimate *croissant*. Another trekked the length of Scotland and the width of Ireland questing, not for the Holy Grail, but for a merely tolerable way to prepare oatmeal. I stalked the elusive *Sachertorte* in the konditorei of Central Europe.

black-eyed peas and cornbread. The restaurant is very small, friendly and inexpensive.

Chopsticks

Since the lamented closing of the Hong Kong Pizza King and the loss of the world of renowned Chinese pizza, the closest Chinese restaurant to campus has been the *Ming Palace* at 1309 N St.

The *Ming Palace* does a justifiably good business, serving the only Mandarin menu in Lincoln. I have never been anything but pleased with the food and service. The house and chef's specials are good, but after you try them once or twice they begin to seem monotonous. That is the the right time to start ordering the other items on the

menu. If you enjoy spicy food, order one of the Szechuan dishes offered.

The wine list is distinguished primarily by its low prices, so don't hesitate to order a full bottle with your meal.

The only real competition to the *Ming Palace* is the *House of the Dragon* 6811 O St. While the atmosphere is open and comfortable, and the waiters exhibit a professionally unhurried attentiveness to the diners, there seems to be a disquieting lack of "vigor" and precision to the food. They also have at least two pairs of warped chopsticks which they show no qualms about offering to the customers.

notes from table 8

The hazards of such journeys are sung in the underground Odysseys throughout our land. Legends abound of intrepid gastronomes diverted from their single-minded purpose by willowy, blonde Swedes, or waylaid between sun and sea by passionate Greeks and Latins.

Eat at home

The safer (and cheaper) way to enjoy such adventures is by eating at ethnic restaurants at home. In New York City, the explosion in the numbers of ethnic restaurants has been so phenomenal that, as one writer noted, where it was once considered a sign of worldliness to know the difference between veal marsala and veal piccata, you now need a Master's Degree in Altaic Studies or a working knowledge of the Honan dialect of China just to order lunch.

The situation in Lincoln has not yet reached this state. The few ethnic restaurants we have are used to catering to the midwestern, fattened-on-steak-and-potatoes, crowd. Still, they are well worth trying.

The *Soul Food Cafe* (2049 'O' St.) is one of my favorites. Though I admit a certain bias, having been weaned to collard greens and red beans and rice at an early age, many of my Yankee guests have also been favorably impressed. Of special note are their breakfasts (the largest and most reasonably priced this side of the Mason-Dixon line) and the supplementary dishes such as the greens,



Ambitious plans drift like crumbs on cosmic muffin

Enough of this pedestrian nonsense, what I *really* meant to say was after nine semesters of swearing not to do what I had already done, I capitulate. If the gods had meant me to finish my classes with a measure of grace, they would have made me a Basket Ed. major.

Having just returned from an extended vacation in the Bruhahas, and not without a measure of fatalistic clarity, I am quite willing to admit that the energy I had set aside for the end of the semester has set me aside.

There is no order in the universe. If there were, the thrill of another semester's worth of higher education would propel me into unparalleled brilliance in the final

hours. As it is (and it is), I am sleeping through the death rattle of yet another season's worth of aspirations, and am quite resolved to waking up with a bone in my throat and a daisy in my hand.

michael zangari

Where does lost energy go?
Does it drift off to some distant plain and collect like dust on the cosmic muffin? Does it come back with

interest when you finally cash in your chips at the end of the game? Can you get more with Bingo bucks? I'm enough of a mystic, and silly enough to believe that no energy is ever lost. Misplaced, obviously—lost never.

Hours of meditation in front of an empty sheet of paper and acres of term paper notes have left me with an inner peacefulness and an intense desire to go out and get out of my head.

My consciousness is beyond—hovering lightly over books and obligations, relevance and politics. I can't see my notes, next semester or even this one. All is quiet. In other words, damned again.