

First man finishes women's program

By JOHN HEALY
Of the Emerald

"It's so hard to crack the male barrier. Most privileges are still left up to males and the power is still in male hands. Until that changes, I don't know. It's going to be a hard, long climb," says Merle Johnson.

Johnson, the first male to receive a Women's Studies certificate at the University, is an ardent supporter of feminism and what he terms a "feminist perspective." His opinions echo many of the thoughts of feminist leader Gloria Steinem, yet Johnson lends a unique light to the issue of women's rights.

He speaks from a female perspective yet his roots — biological and sociological — are definitely male. He has seen society from two totally different positions and can identify with both. But in the last two years he has gradually shifted to a belief that looking at society from a feminist perspective is the only viable means of moving women toward equality.

A book recommended to him by his roommate — Germaine Greer's "The Female Eunuch" — was Johnson's initial encounter

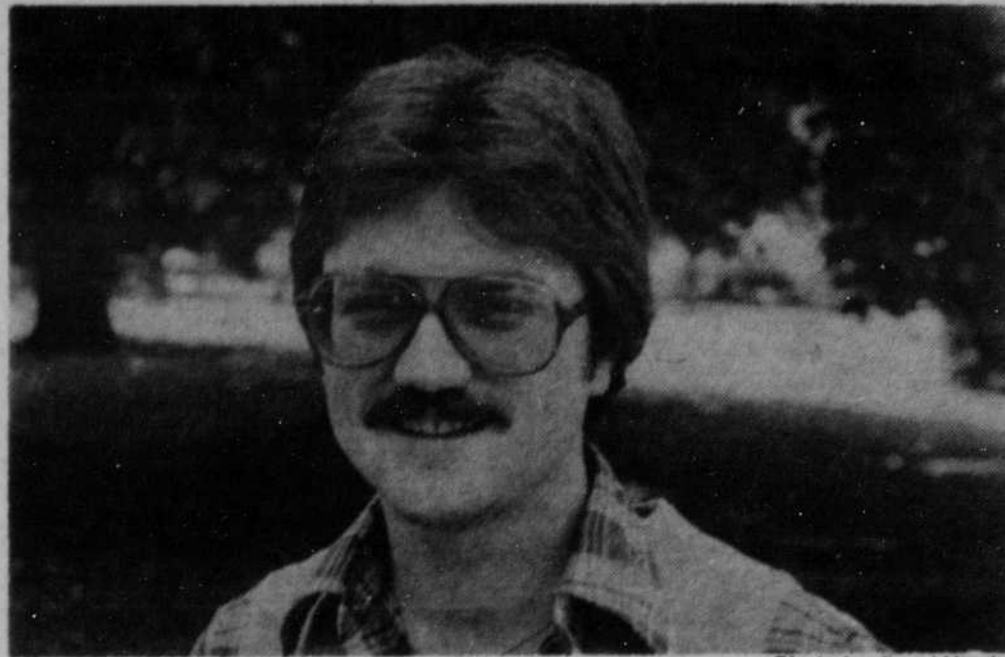


Photo by Jimmi Harris

Merle Johnson, the first male to finish the Women's Studies program, believes that a move toward equality for women means looking at society from a feminist point of view.

with feminism. Disturbed by what he had read yet interested in learning more, he took the introductory Women's Studies class, while continuing working on his bachelor's degree in psychology.

"Before that I had no idea why women were oppressed. It's kind of like a consciousness-raising thing, and you start picking things out. For instance, you find out that the majority of

women work in service jobs. You start looking around in the world and you see that this is the way it is. Women are on the bottom part of the totem pole," explains Johnson. "There's blatant sexism, like 'Charlie's Angels,' but you can also pick it out in movies like 'An Unmarried Woman,' who goes from man to man."

Johnson has received a "lot of support" in his women's

studies classes from women, but has been generally regarded by fellow males as a "curiosity." "Males have generally been curious and then that's about it. They wonder why I'm taking it, but (for) the most part it's (been) a neutral reaction."

Excitement and support have been the two most common female reactions, he says. "A lot of them are really excited about it. I get a lot of support in the women's studies classes. There are a few women who believe they should be separate from men and have no contact with them. There's very few of those. One class I had some problems with that, but we worked that out. But that's part of a growth process too."

He has been able to make the transition to feminism with much less difficulty than a great majority of the men he has encountered in women's studies classes, he says. "I was a facilitator (student teacher) for a Women's Studies 101 class. I had an all men's group and... they didn't want to get into talking about medical problems like cancer. You have to check

your body for lumps just like women do and they didn't want to get into that."

Johnson believes that men must begin to look at society from a feminist perspective if they are interested in getting in touch with their "real selves."

Johnson looks forward to applying the knowledge he has gained through women's studies to the rest of society. "Now, what I hope to be able to do is apply it to the outside world. I think that's really going to be hard because society is set up not to take into account a feminist perspective because most things are from a male viewpoint. It's going to be really hard to challenge the male system."

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Art unfolds with solstice

By STEVE MYERS
Of the Emerald

Students walking on the lawn west of Emerald Hall and south of the Science Library today might be shocked by the presence of a large cocoon-shaped object but they needn't worry; it's only an art student working on her fantasy.

Karen Herbst, a senior, will be presenting a sculpture-performance titled "Flight Fantasy: Prelude, A Time Chrysalis." A chrysalis is anything still in the process of development and Herbst plans to work on the sculpture throughout the day in celebration of the summer solstice, the longest day of the year.

The cocoon-like chrysalis will also function as a giant sundial and every hour, from dawn until

dusk, the tip of the shadow will be marked with a piece of Herbst's sculpture. The art pieces relate to a general theme of time, growth and flight. She says each hour of the day will also have a different title, like "Time Flies."

"The chrysalis will go through a metamorphosis throughout the day," Herbst explains. "In the afternoon, it will be nothing like it was in the morning. Visually there will be major changes."

Her sundial creation will be made of papier-mache and she promises there will be a few surprises for those who attend the celebration. Herbst won't say what she has in mind for the chrysalis, but indicates that it has to do with "growing an idea on flight."

She says she got the idea for

the celebration while driving through the Nevada desert, on the way to Oregon from her home state of Oklahoma. She also says, as the title indicates, this is only a prelude to more works of art along the theme of time, flight and growth.

The only problem she foresees is a possible lack of sunshine, which would hinder the sundial effect of the performance. But Herbst says a lack of sunshine won't stop the metamorphosis of the chrysalis.

"It has been cloudy for the last three summer solstices," she laughs. "Hopefully, luck will be on our side this year and it will be sunny."

Herbst invites anyone interested to come and watch her chrysalis go through its metamorphosis and help with the summer solstice celebration.

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