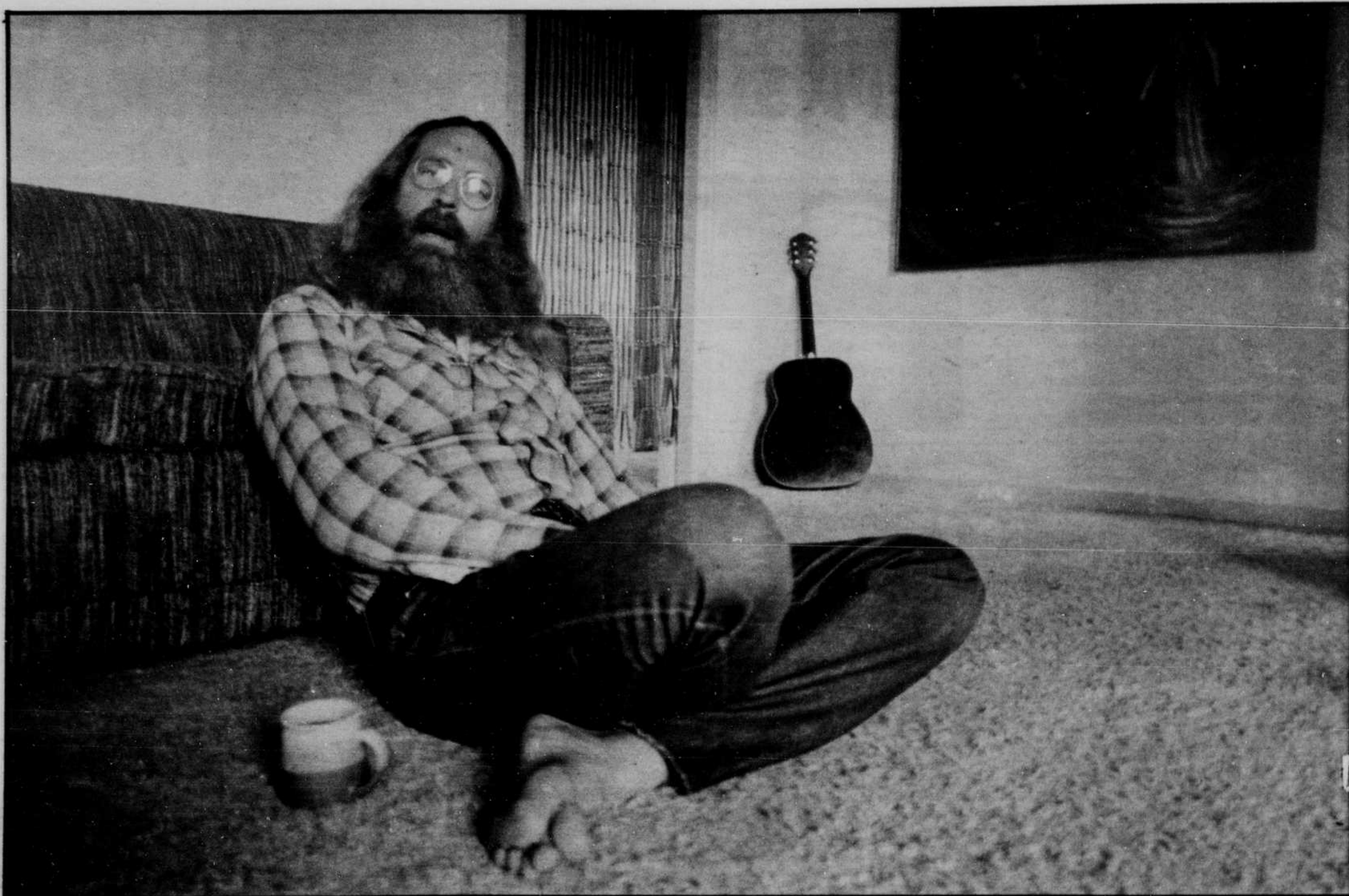




Brotherhood Continued from Page 11

people without the orthodoxy."

Although group members call themselves Christian, their beliefs differ from traditional Christianity. To brotherhood members, Christ is "absolutely not" the only way to God, Bob says.

To the group, Christ was sent as an example, not as an atonement for sin. Sin — or "missing the mark" — is created by "the system," not inherent in man, Bob says. The group also says the world will end in nuclear war within a decade.

To solve mankind's problems, people should practice "simple friendship, peace and goodwill and live in harmony with yourself, nature and others," Brown says. "Love and peace are the armour I wear."

David Espinoza, a former

member of the brotherhood who flew to Eugene from New York this week to help officials investigate the group, says the group's harmony, love and peace is carefully regulated and controlled by Brown.

"Without his leadership and role, the group loses its meaning," Espinoza says, adding that Brown "manifests and maintains the type of authority (over the group) that one would imagine God to have."

Brotherhood members say they live by the four New Testament gospels and several gnostic writings including the Gospel of Phillip, the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Truth. "The truth is written in the gospels," Brown says.

Although many people consider the two sets of gospels to be radically different, the gnostic writings are valid "because of the power and authority of the words themselves," Bob says. "It strikes one as being truth in one's heart. It confirmed my own experience."

These "metagospels" — as

the brotherhood calls them — are books generally associated with the gnostic movement of the second and third centuries, says religious studies Prof. Stephen Reynolds.

"Most people would regard them as being very different from the New Testament," he says.

Reynolds says that Bible scholars generally agree that the gnostic gospels contain little historical or independent value in themselves, and their authors relied on fabricated stories and parts of the New Testament gospels for the writings.

The four gospels in the Bible "emphasize the reality of the incarnation of Jesus" while the gnostic gospels are usually secondary collections of sayings attributed to Jesus, he adds.

Cults such as Christ Brotherhood often pick and choose beliefs from the Bible, other religious books and Eastern and Western thought to develop a set of beliefs that it likes, says Dick Beswick, a member of



Toys are scattered throughout the Christ Brotherhood houses, but the group's children were taken into custody by state authorities because of allegations of sexual abuse.

Campus Interfaith Ministry who teaches a class on cults.

"When you deviate from the basic position that the Bible in its entirety is inspired by God, it's fairly easy to come up with almost anything," he says, ad-

ding that he has seen deliberate mistranslations of the Bible in some of the brotherhood's material.

"They (Christ Brotherhood) edit out what they don't like, essentially," Groothius says. But the group prefers to be evaluated "on the basis of our fruit," not on "crazy accusations" and doctrines, says Bob. "We don't really go by any dogma. What we live is a return to the garden. That, in fact, was what Christ was living."

But Groothius, Beswick and Espinoza say they are evaluating the group on its "fruits" — that's why they don't hesitate to call it a cult.

The group leads a calculated — not innocent — religious life that includes welfare fraud, sexual freedom and hate for parents, Espinoza says.

"What's sinister is that they lie about what they're doing."

Story by Sally Hodgkinson
Photos by Bob Baker

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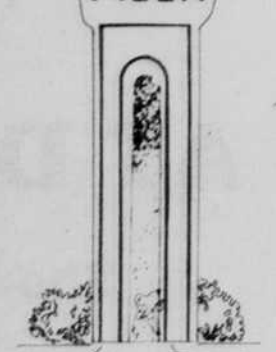
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