

# Blindness not a hindrance

## His unusual name a problem for GTF

By Melissa Martin  
Of the Emerald

Eugene Organ, appropriately enough, teaches geography at the University.

When he applied for graduate school, department officials were on the verge of throwing the application away because they thought it was a joke. But somebody verified his name in the phone book.

"People tell me this is an appropriate place to live," says Organ, who teaches 150 University students in an urban environment class.

But he's not the stereotypical teacher of geography, which he defines as the study of places and spatial relationships on the earth. He's legally blind.

"I'm forced into a position where I can't rely on my vision alone," Organ says. "I'm forced to rely on other stimuli like sound. I was able to capitalize on that."

With a magnifying glass, he "laboriously" grades papers and reads maps that his wife, Lucinda, draws for him. He also depends on readers, provided by the Commission for the Blind, to help him with his own studies.

"My only handicap is my immobility," he says.

His blindness is a result of gradual vision deterioration.

"It's been pretty stable lately," he says. And doctors tell Organ his vision will remain the way it is for awhile.

Depending on people may be frustrating at times, but Organ says it creates friendships for him.

And at the same time, his blindness gives his students a nonvisual picture of landscapes and geography.

"I've made people more aware of using sense rather than their vision for studying a place," he says. "Geography is a perspective in looking at the world, or in my case, listening to the world."

For example, Organ studied sounds in urban landscapes for his master's dissertation.

"I spent a year listening on the street corners," he says.

In the project, Organ sectioned off Eugene, listened to sounds and identified them as coming from environmental, mechanical or human sources.

Organ says he wasn't surprised to find more human sounds near campus than in any other

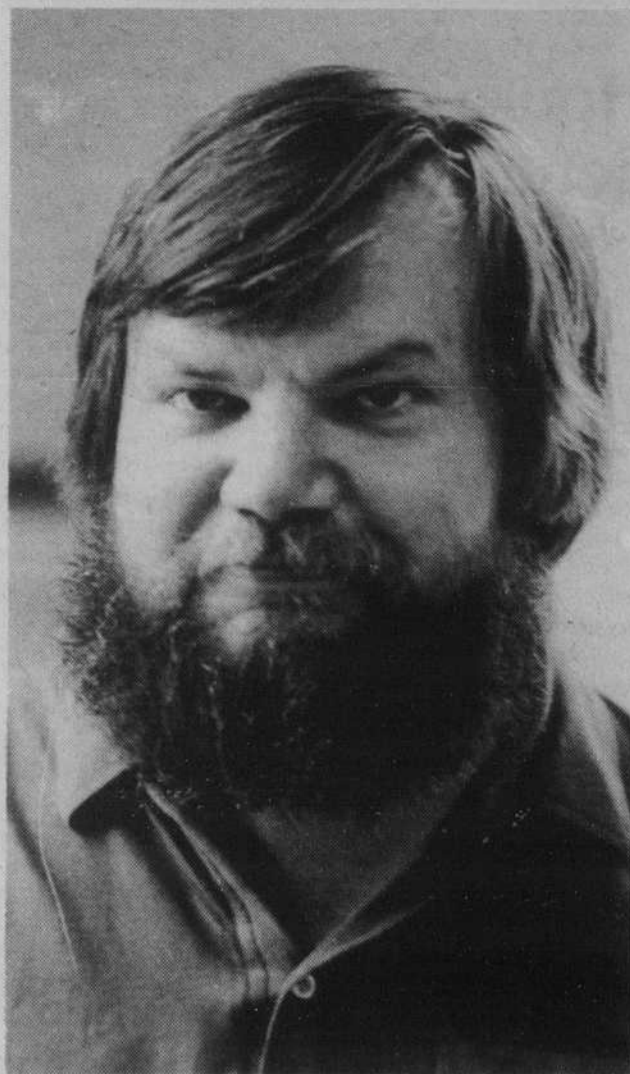


Photo by Melissa Martin

Eugene Organ has overcome his sight problems to become a geography GTF.

place in the city. And the mechanical noises he did identify came from roller skates and bicycles — not cars.

The University GTF will spend the summer traveling around Western Oregon to study unincorporated towns and hamlets, which he defines as any place with five buildings, five functions (this could include a family) and an identity.

His field work will include counting buildings, determining the function of the 60 unincorporated towns in Lane County and interviewing local people.

"You'd be surprised how many candy bars I have to buy in a little grocery store to talk to the people," he says.

When he graduates with his doctorate degree next year, Organ wants to continue doing what he enjoys most — teaching at the college level.

# Bundy honored as top senior

By Lois Yoshishige  
Of the Emerald

For University student John Bundy, recognition as one of the top three blind college seniors in the United States is not a personal achievement but an encouraging example for other physically limited people.

Bundy was presented with a certificate of recognition and a \$1,000 award at a reception in New York City two weeks ago.

His award — the Scholastic Achievement Award given by the Recording for the Blind — shows that "blind people can succeed in something they start, such as going to the University and doing fairly well," Bundy says.

"Doing fairly well" for Bundy means a nearly straight "A" average in clinical psychology, which places him in the top 2 percent in his class. Bundy will graduate this month and plans to begin a doctoral degree program in clinical psychology in the fall.

As far as the \$1,000 award, Bundy says the money will pay for the 12 to 15 readers who help him study every week.

The trip to New York put Bundy one week behind in his studies. "I have to catch up on lectures, my reading, and I have a paper due — just like everyone else."

To catch up, Bundy says he is increasing his study time from eight hours a day to about 11 hours and finding a few more readers to help him collect research material. This task gets more difficult toward the end of the term, he says.

"They get busy to where they can't help me. Even an hour or two a week helps."

Like his recent award, Bundy's blindness came unexpectedly.

When he was 9 years old, a can of Drano exploded in his face and blinded him in one eye. He gradually lost sight in the other eye despite a series of cataract surgeries five years ago.

But Bundy didn't consider it a tragedy.

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