

Master Fencing Instructor Leads College Swordsmen

by DAVE KNAUSS

"Once more — *en garde!*" cracked the Hungarian-born fencing master. His students, clad in the appropriate white knickers and jackets for this ancient sport, leapt and thrust in attentive obedience.

For the last several months, novice but serious College swordsmen have been learning the art of fencing from War College historian Laszlo M. Alföldi two nights a week through the newly-founded College Fencing Company.

"Same motion — step forward, launch, extend!" repeated Alföldi, employed as instructor for the club which president Mark Holbrow organized after three semesters of earnest but unsuitable self-training in fencing.

"Tony [King] and I had some colleges before we came here as juniors," stated Holbrow. King has been Holbrow's roommate for two years, working out with him and aiding him in the establishment of the company.

After Christmas, Holbrow wanted to start some kind of group fencing activity but saw "no point in starting a club unless we had somebody qualified who could teach." But then he became informed of Mr. Alföldi and his extensive fencing background, contacted him at the War College, and staged an exhibition in the Union side-room, where 72 signatures of interested people were collected.

A naturalized American citizen, Mr. Alföldi was brought up in a fencing atmosphere by his Hungarian father. He became champion several times at Austria's University of Innsbruck, where he instructed the sport and received a Ph.D. in military history.

Alföldi participated in international competition but took no championships. "To make it into international competition is an achievement in itself," informed the swordsman who competed in Europe, fencing center of the world.

This past year Alföldi taught fencing to the children of War College students and expects to teach a new group in September, while continuing to instruct at Dickinson.

"I was very happy to come here. I wish next year we could start a very good course here and maintain that course," said Alföldi, "Mark [Holbrow] and his friend [Tony King] are just great. They have the potential to go to the Olympics. It would be the greatest joy for me in my fencing career if some of my students would be internationally known."

Stating that fencing is "mentally and physically an excellent sport" that unfortunately is still unknown in the U.S., Alföldi lamented about American instruction. "I'm sorry to see people learning bad habits because it's so difficult to get rid of those habits."

Several of the students expressed their steadfast approval of fencing. "We all like it," exclaimed two female fencers. One of them added, "It's a lot more mental than you think."

"This is really a phenomenal sport," stated Dave Bassert. "I'm just sorry I'm a senior."

President Holbrow revealed that the club, which received only limited funds from the Student Senate but obtained funds elsewhere, attracts about 25 people from each class.

"I think we have about thirty people who are enthusiastic, . . . and eight or ten who are fanatical," added Bassert.

About their quadrilingual instructor Holbrow said, "I think (See FENCING, page 15)

Fencing Company Conducts Classes

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he's very, very good, and the students are very happy with him, in spite of all his demand and discipline."

"Las [Alfoldi] said that Americans tend to get a weapon in their hands and begin hacking away at each other, whereas in Hungary the students don't get a weapon in their hands until six months into lessons," said Holbrow. "They concentrate on things like footwork, which is half of it."

After the group lesson on the evening of April 30, Alfoldi showed his ace student, Holbrow, some advanced footwork,

and in one instant received a well-placed blow. "A perfect cut. You see, in the name of the Three Musketeers I would be a dead teacher," he quipped.

The Fencing Company is being considered for acceptance into the physical education program next fall.

"I think there's enough enthusiasm to keep the Company moving next year to include even more students," said Holbrow.

Treasurer King explained that instruction must be maintained at the College to develop good swordsmen. "Some people go to fencing, pick up a sword, and expect to do an Errol Flynn scene, but fencing is not quickly learned. It takes a long time."

But Holbrow and Company have established a solid foundation for the future of fencing at the College. They not only have a first-rate instructor, but also a unique charter. Explained Holbrow, "We are the only College organization whose constitution provides trial by combat in the case of an impeached officer."