

Box instructs a student in the proper techniques of giving artificial respiration. As the student breathes into the mouth of the dummy, a meter registers the strength of the short, intense puffs of air.

THE REAL DR. COLIN BOX

PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR

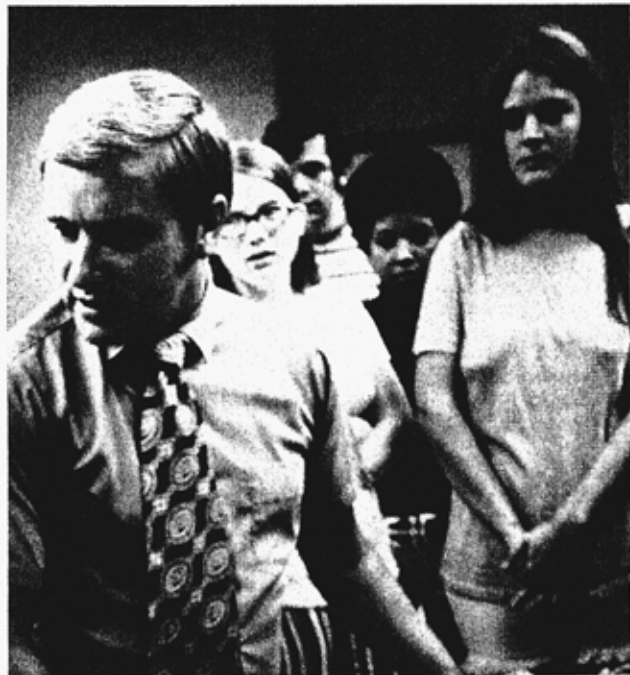
Dr. Colin Box flunked third grade and high school counselors told him to forget about college.

This spring, he was chosen Professor of the Year during Mizzou Daze. The assistant professor of health education was selected by a committee of 10 students from a list of nominees submitted by Campus fraternities and sororities.

Three years ago students had been trying to get Elements of Health Education dropped as a requirement for a degree in the School of Education. But since Box began teaching here two years ago many students say, "It's the best course I've ever had." This fall, five sections will be taught and there will still be a waiting list.

Perhaps one of the reasons he is so popular with his students is that he doesn't fit the stereotype of the pipe-smoking absent-minded academician.

Intent on a student's question, Box displays the interest and real concern that made him the Greek's choice for Professor of the Year.





The gory wounds are plastic. The blood is colored water. But these students take them seriously as they cope with a realistic crisis provided as an exercise by Dr. Box in Elements of Health Education.

Turned down for admissions at several colleges in his native Canada, he packed two suitcases and bought a bus ticket to the United States. He arrived one Sunday night on the campus of Indiana University with \$53 in his pocket and spent the night stretched out on a stone bench near the administration building. Monday morning he knocked on the door, and Indiana let him in. "I'm extremely grateful to Indiana," he says.

But his first semester, Box made five hours of F in Zoology. "I'd never seen a multiple choice test," he explains. There were other things to adjust to in the States. One of his professors told him years later that she couldn't understand what Box was doing in her class. Every time she called on him, he stood beside his desk. She thought he was going to walk out of the class, but, finally, she realized that standing to recite was the custom in Canadian schools.

He received his BS, returned to Canada and entered the Royal Canadian Air Force as a career flying officer. "I was a hot shot pilot with a silk scarf and a million dollar aircraft and it didn't mean anything," he recalls. "My boyhood dream had been to be an officer. Some aspects of the life were tremendous, but over all I found I wasn't growing adequately as an individual in that role. Quite reluctantly and with mixed emotions, I left the Air Force."

As a collateral duty he had done counseling about drugs and alcohol. As he read, he became more and more interested in health education.

He returned to Indiana and received his MS and HSD (doctorate in Health and Safety Education) degrees. He was an instructor at Indiana for a year where he received the Lieber Memorial Distinguished Teaching Award.

His course, Elements of Health Education, deals with drug and alcohol abuse, emergency procedures, human sexuality, and consumer quackery—interesting subjects. And Box adds his "dynamic, energetic, provocative, real" personality, group discussions, ex-drug users and alcoholics as speakers, films, and role playing. He has abandoned his schoolboy formality, and students respond to his "Hellzapoppin'" approach. Not only do they enjoy class, but they make notes on his unusual teaching techniques so that they can use them when they get into the classroom.

"When we're doing mouth to mouth resuscitation," Box says, "I always get my wife to come into the class and sit in the back. I ask for a volunteer to demonstrate the technique on. The students are a little embarrassed.

Then my wife raises her hand slowly and I ask her to come up to the front. The students don't know she's my wife and they watch very, very closely," he laughs.

The most intense class discussions concern abortion, VD and the legalization of marijuana, Box says. Students not only get the available facts from a wide variety of sources, they confront their own value systems, and learn to read and think critically.

"He has me thinking," one student says. He asks questions like "How high do you want society?" He's hard on pat answers and hypocrisy. He makes you examine your inconsistencies."

"I aim not for a single point of view, but for students to think through a consistent philosophy, one they can live with," Box says.

"Teaching is a hell of a high for me," Box says, talking fast, punching the words out. "I love students. I'm optimistic about them. I like sharing experiences. I learn as much as they do. I think it is important to try to be real. Teaching offers a great opportunity to realize your potential. And, quite honestly, it's also ego satisfying to me."

Older students are as full of praise as the undergraduates. Box taught a two-week summer institute in July for teachers and school personnel on drug abuse. (A new Missouri law requires schools to offer a continuing program in drug education from kindergarten through high school.) One nun wrote in her evaluation of the course, "Sometimes, I rebelled a little within myself, because you really made us face issues, but most of all you made us face ourselves." Another teacher wrote, "I felt many times confused. I wondered if I had lost my own set of values. I was always exhausted when I got home from class. It was trauma, but it was productive trauma."

Thirty-year-old Box is not exhausted after a class. He still takes the steps up to his second-floor office in Rothwell Gymnasium two at a time, his voice roaring a hello to students and colleagues. He doesn't have time to waste. He is consultant for the St. Louis School District on drug education, is on the chancellor's committee on drug abuse, is working with the Columbia Drug Abuse Council and a local group on alcoholism, and is in demand as a guest lecturer. He gave about 70 talks to school districts, juvenile courts and clubs last year.

And last year Box went back to his old high school in Canada where he'd been told he wasn't college material to set up their drug education program. □