

Distinguished historian to retire at end of semester

by John Hill
Evergreen Staff

Washington State University's Centennial Historian George A. Frykman said the esprit de corps among the faculty and administration here at the "People's University" has been a key influence in his 37-year tenure.

Frykman has announced his retirement from the WSU history department at the end of this semester, after approximately 74 semesters of teaching in the Palouse.

Before the university's centennial celebration on March 28, 1990, the Pacific Northwest historian will be working to finish what he calls "WSU Centennial History."

"The presidency of Wilson Compton, from 1945 to 1951, lists as the most significant era in the school's history," Frykman said. "During Compton's term, the faculty had its greatest influence."

"He (Compton) used the talent on campus to change the school from a small college to a modern university," Frykman said. "Compton started what was termed 'The Committee of 40,' bringing in new faculty who were creative and ambitious."

Faculty were given security in tenure and retirement plans, plus the freedom to express their needs and ideas toward improvement of WSU, he said.

Thus, according to Frykman, improvements were made and "gains were solidified" under Compton along with the Board of Regents' "rubber stamp."

"We can't leave them (the

Regents) out of the picture," he said.

Frykman said WSU's third president, E.A. Bryan, also stands out as one of the most influential in the school's history.

"He was the most articulate and really set the tone for WSU as a land-grant college," he said.

Frykman disputed the notion that WSU is simply an agricultural college, or "Moo U."

"Ever since Bryan's term this university has been a full liberal arts college, and one of the few land-grant colleges to develop a liberal arts program," he said.

Bryan began his tenure in 1893, and when he left in 1915, his insistence in WSU's existence as a "people's university" never died, he said. "It still is a 'people's university.'"

"Each administration has had its fine points, though," he said, "and my associations with other historians, our ability to stimulate new and creative ideas, and the strong friendship with such a cooperative department have been key reasons for my staying here."

After nearly four decades here, Frykman said the era from 1968 to 1973 stands out as the most significant in terms of change that he has seen at WSU.

There were protests from minority and white students on and off-campus for civil rights and withdrawal from Vietnam. He pointed out that the "violence in the South (United States)" took a few years before it had any impact at WSU.

Frykman said two protesting groups made 11 "non-negotiable demands" to President Glenn Terrell. "Some of the demands

were neutralized, some were granted, and others were impossible for anyone to grant.

"The protests had a constructive side," he said. "Some of them were legitimate demands, and started some long-overdue programs like Black Studies, Women's Studies, Chicano Studies, Native-American Studies and Japanese-American Studies."

He indicated that students were disgruntled by the lack of minority communities.

However, he asked, "Who's fault is that? They had to come here and create their own community. The Pacific Northwest had very few blacks at the time — they only comprised one percent of Seattle's population."

Frykman is a native Californian who received his bachelor's degree from San Jose State, and his master's and doctorate degrees from Stanford University. When asked if Stanford was as prestigious an institution as it is today, he replied, "It has gained popularity...and has more money."

He smiled and jested, "After I left, stock went up."

At Stanford, he taught one year of Western Civilization and then left for WSU. He began in 1951 as an assistant librarian in the social sciences.

In 1960, he was appointed assistant to the dean of the graduate school for four years. After working with the graduate students, he taught history courses such as U.S. History and Pacific Northwest History — his favorite because it "tends to be close to home, and the students like that."

YWCA brings new programs to WSU

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The Young Women's Christian Association has initiated several programs and committees this semester to bring awareness of important social issues on campus, said the new director.

Sue Douglas, appointed last October, indicated a need for more student involvement in the YWCA to launch such new programs as the Homophobia Awareness Committee, the Racial Justice Committee, and the Women's Network Group.

Douglas said members of the Homophobia Awareness Committee (homophobia is a fear or dislike of gay men and lesbians) are trained to provide workshops and answer questions students may have about homosexuality.

Although the Gay People's Alliance is currently inoperative, she said the YWCA does not wish to replace the GPA. "The YWCA wants only to help raise awareness about the issues surrounding homophobia," she said.

The Racial Justice Committee was formed to "combat racism" at WSU, Douglas said.

"In 1970, the YWCA began a nationwide program for the elimination of racism wherever it exists, and by any means," Douglas said.

Douglas spoke of workshops available for instructors and living groups interested in discussing the issues of racism

and homophobia.

She said the YWCA recently started a Women's Network Group to provide a means for representatives from Palouse women's organizations and other interested individuals to share information.

"We are particularly interested in getting some of the business and professional women from the community to attend the meetings," Douglas said.

The first meeting for the group is set for February, Douglas said, and will cover the Leandro Gonzalez case, the Washington Rape Shield Law, and some protective legislation in Idaho.

The YWCA will also be addressing various international social and political issues, Douglas said. The organization is looking for a student "Global Chair" to act as a liaison with other YWCA's and groups.

"The new Global Chair would act as a communication link with other organizations such as the International Women's Network, or the Coalition for Central America," she said.

Some other programs at the YWCA include planning activities at the Pullman Senior Center, where student volunteers may visit with senior citizens there, or at their home, Douglas said.

The director said a tutoring program for schools and Pullman nursery schools is another YWCA program.

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