

Professor knows A&M history

By Staci Finch

Often, professors come and go as rapidly as do their students. When applying for new jobs, many professors have a mile-long list of positions they've held at other universities. But not always. Some professors find a school and stay with it throughout their career. Such is the case with Dr. Joseph Milton Nance.

Nance came to the Texas A&M Department of History in 1941, after completing his undergraduate, master's and doctorate degrees at the University of Texas in Austin. Nance taught history at A&M for 38 years, until his retirement in 1979.

"I went to the University of Texas because it was close to where I lived," he says. "I used to drive back and forth from Kyle, Texas in a Model A Ford with my brother and sister, and later a few people who would carpool with me to share gas expenses — which was 15 cents a gallon at the time.

"After I finished my studies, I came to A&M because it was the first place to offer me a job," Nance says. "But I stayed because I liked it here and I liked the people I had to deal with."

The only time Nance left A&M during his teaching career was during World War II.

"One summer I didn't have any classes to teach, so I got a job in the engineering department, helping to train Navy soldiers in radio repair, Morse code, etc.," he says. "I did that for a while, then I went into the Navy. They needed people with my background, and so I taught at a base in San Diego.

"Finally, the Draft Board wouldn't grant the Navy's appeal for my deferment any more, so I was transferred out to Pearl Harbor and served under Admiral Nimitz."

After the war, Nance returned to A&M. He says a lot has changed since that time.

"When I came here all you had to do to park your car was register it for 50 cents and you could park anywhere," he says. "It certainly isn't that way now.

"There wasn't the problem with the sports either," he says. "We had good coaches and a good football team that won the national championship, and there wasn't all this high powered pressure there is now. Once I did get asked to give extra credit to an athlete,



Photo by Fred Joe

Dr. Joseph Nance works on the latest of his books about Texas history.

but I never did. That is not a practice I believe in."

Nance has his own solution to sports pressure.

"I think we should just knock out all the high-powered college athletics and let the alumni associations hire their own professional teams," he says.

Nance says the students have changed a lot since he began

teaching.

"Students often expect you to hand everything to them," he says. "Some of my students couldn't believe I didn't keep a quiz file or put my lectures in the library.

"Also, since they don't get essay tests anymore, students don't learn to write very well, which is a shame," he says.

But Nance says it's not only the students who have changed.

"Now a lot of professors don't even teach their own classes, they have their graduate students do it," he says. "I don't really believe in that. Kids' parents send them to college to get an education, and they don't always get it from only being taught by graduate students.

"Also, teachers spend more time applying for research grants than they do teaching," he says. "And it seems to me that a lot of them only want the grant to supplement their income, and not to do research."

Nance believes research should be done in addition to a full course load of teaching, because finding the time then means you really want to do the research.

"I had a friend tell me that all professors who get grants make no contribution to new knowledge," he says. "The people who have a full teaching load, and also do research, do it because they want to learn.

"When I was head of the history department I had a teacher approach me about a grant," Nance says. "I told him when he came in with some work done on it to prove to me he really wanted to do the research, I would approve the application. He never came back."

However, Nance says he has enjoyed some of the changes that have come to A&M.

"I was talking to Earl Rudder not long after the war, and he was concerned about the drop in enrollment," Nance says. "He asked me what I thought could be done to improve it. I said there were two things to do. One was to push for co-education of the school, and the other was to make enrollment in the Corps of Cadets voluntary.

"He didn't agree with me at first," Nance says. "but once he got more involved with the school, he saw what I had said was true. And look where we are now."

Now that Nance has retired, he has more time to work on his books. He has published several which deal with the pre-Civil War period when Texas was a republic.

"I really enjoy research and writing," he says. "Two of my books are in the works to be printed, and there are a lot more I want to work on. Hopefully, I will be able to get around to all of them."

Attending A&M becomes family tradition

By Staci Finch

The idea of legacy has always been an important part of enrollment at Texas A&M. Many students attend school at A&M because their parents or other relatives did. There is even a section on the student application for listing relatives who attended A&M.

Of course, not all students who come here attend because of relatives or friends. Many learn about the school through high school guidance counselors or by reading articles in magazines and newspapers. Still, family plays a major role in the decision of some students to attend

A&M.

Travis Reynolds, a junior range science major, has had two uncles and two cousins, as well as himself, attend A&M, and growing up in Aggie surroundings had a lot to do with him coming here.

"I was raised as an Aggie, with Aggie booties right on up, and in that way coming here was a natural thing to do," he says.

Doug Arnold, a sophomore agricultural systems major, agrees.

"My dad, some cousins and other relatives have come here, and I've always wanted to be in the Corps of

Cadets," he says. "Dad was really glad I came here, and I hope my kids come here, too."

Sandy Hastings, a senior journalism major, says her family involvement with the school contributed a lot to her decision to attend A&M.

"My Dad was Class of '50, my brother was Class of '80, my sister was Class of '83 and my uncle was Class of '46," she says. "I also had several cousins come here.

"But they didn't push me to come here," Hastings says. "They didn't

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