

Dr. Ruth Frary leaves UCSC, but not for long

By JAMIE MARKS

Institutions never die; they just move on.

Dr. Ruth Frary, the "dean" of student well being at UC-Santa Cruz, was an institution in her 15 years as director of health services and chief campus physician. Now she's a student there.

Since her retirement June 30, Dr. Frary has thrown her considerable energy into the Asian art of tai chi (the discipline of self-defense and exercise), calligraphy and Chinese brush painting.

"I've been interested in Oriental art a long time," she said recently while sitting in her study lined with Asian art pieces. "A great many physicians turn to art to express their creative side. It's for keen observers with good eye-to-hand coordination."

Dr. Frary grew out of the feminist movement of the '30s. "I kept my maiden name because I thought one Dr. Ludden was enough in the family," she says (her husband is physician Jerome Ludden). "When we first started private practice in Watsonville, many of our patients didn't know we were married."

The Luddens tied the knot on their graduation day from Tufts University medical school in Boston 43 years ago. They moved to San Francisco to do their internship, then decided to live in a small town within 100 miles of the city. They discovered Watsonville, where Dr. Frary worked for 28 years before joining up with the new-born Santa Cruz campus.

"The campus was an exciting place to be," she says with a sparkle in her eyes. "I had always wanted to specialize in adolescent health care. And here was a group of bright, young, talented young people who made me re-live some of my own adolescence."

"I had a distinct sense of *deja vu* this week as I drove past the Santa Cruz Post Office," she continued. "There were young men and women outside protesting the draft. It triggered memories of my first years at UCSC, when the draft, anti-Vietnam and free speech movements, and use of drugs were all new phenomena."

Dr. Frary maintains the image of Santa Cruz as a haven for hippies and dope addicts is overblown. "Oh, sure, we knew of marijuana, LSD and coke usage, but the health service was the last place to find out about it. There weren't any heroin addicts — they don't remain students for long. Basically, the problems we had were minor compared to the drugs and political rumblings at other campuses, like Stanford, Berkeley and others."

There were a few community relations problems, though. "I think the downtown people thought a campus would give them more business. What they didn't realize was that students wouldn't be getting haircuts, patronizing beauty salons and buying new clothing," she says. "I think Goodwill did better business than downtown."

Dr. Frary saw some of her more progressive ideas come to pass in the 15 years she spent as UCSC health administrator — a strong psychiatric counseling program, and, perhaps her biggest triumph, a birth control service established in 1973.

"It took me about five years to fight for that clinic," she said. "The chancellor was opposed to the idea, but it became evident that we needed one. We couldn't keep sending our female patients down the hill for every problem."

She also "wrote the program" for the design of the Cowell student health center. Earth tones, nothing surgical green or hospital white, open space — those were requirements Dr. Frary had in mind.

"I've always liked the feeling of the building — that it was accessible to everyone and an inviting place to visit," she says. It's one of the few buildings designed for wheelchair use on campus, she noted, with walkways that extend to the street.

Fewer than 1,000 students were on campus when the building was first planned, but another 27,000 were expected to fill out the enrollment. "We designed the lobby and conference room for the extra students, which, thank God, we never got," she says.

Except for major medical emergencies, which are handled at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz, the Cowell health center treats everything the students come down with. Illnesses usually flare up, Dr. Frary says, in the beginning of the quarter, at mid-terms and when final papers are due. "The viral diseases are stress-related, and intestinal upsets, headaches, stiff necks and back aches are common. Most of them are caused by lower resistance, which is induced by stress," she says.

Dr. Frary had the final say on who would work on the staff. She especially looked for physicians who were willing to "make education an integral part of every clinic visit," a job description she still adheres to, and hopes her as-yet unnamed replacement will emphasize.

The fact that there is no replacement for her has caused Dr. Frary the most consternation in her 15 years on campus. "For the past year it's as if the staff had no direction. I think the administration is looking for someone with student health experience, but I hope they take their chances on a creative person," she says. "I'd be disappointed if it (Cowell) stayed the same."

It would be hard to find a successor, though. Dr. Frary left a distinguished record of community service behind her. For a while she taught at Cabrillo College as a family and marriage counselor; she was acting vice chancellor at UCSC for the '74-'75 academic year; the president

of the Santa Cruz County medical society in 1942; a past member of the American Medical Association and California Medical Association, both of which she dropped out of because she doesn't believe in their philosophy of medical care; the first woman physician AMA liaison to the National Education Association Committee, a position she held from 1962-65; and founded the first mental health services in the county (she was also a founding member of the Northern California Mental Health Society).

Dr. Frary's work experience emphasizes her philosophy of medicine, which is that a sound mind can conquer many of the modern day ills, like stress-related sickness and depression. She proudly points up that UCSC has the greatest number of staff psychologists per student than any other university in the UC system.

"Our general medical staff is tuned into the psychological state of students' illnesses," she says, noting that she still refers to the campus as "ours' and 'we.'" "It'll take a long time for me to adjust, just like it did when I first got out of private practice."

So, what will she do come fall?

"We're taking a trip to Tahiti," she says with a note of nostalgia in her voice. "I wouldn't feel comfortable not being on campus, planning the new school year, giving talks to the freshmen, priming the residence advisers."

The vacation will include a watercolor class, one of many Dr. Frary hopes to take in the coming years. Her goal now is to practice this new avocation — painting — as much as possible.

Dr. Frary officially retires on August 1. She's already been honored at an informal party given by campus colleagues, and has signed up for more UC extension art classes. While she's no longer an active entity in Cowell health center, her presence will be felt for many years to come.

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