

Lise Giraud

# Franklin fired for politics

In 1972, the University fired a tenured professor for his political beliefs and his opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Bruce Franklin was an associate professor of English. Even the Advisory Board that supported his dismissal called "his competence as a scholar and teacher exceptional."

But he was also a Marxist-Maoist-Leninist, of which he reminded people often, and on the central committee of a revolutionary organization called Venceremos, composed of University and community people. He had a political analysis of the war — and Stanford's role in it — that was considerably to the left of most.

He was, in addition, charismatic and had a following. While perhaps he might have been forgiven for any one of those things, the combination did not go down well, and he became a painful thorn in the side of the trustees, the administration and the Stanford establishment.

In February 1971, right after the invasion of Laos, with feelings against the odious war running high, it came to light that two men from the Stanford Research Institute were running a project on the Stanford computer that was directly applicable to amphibious assault landings in Vietnam.

## Outcry

An impassioned community meeting attended by about 800 followed the disclosure, as did a noon rally on White Plaza the following day, right after which several hundred people went to the Computer Center, and a few into the building — without, however, doing any damage to the computer. An evening rally in the Old Union Courtyard followed the police dispersal of that demonstration.

Franklin spoke at all those rallies and was at the Computer Center, though not in the building. President Richard Lyman, claiming that Franklin's role had been one of incitement, took steps to have him fired.

Franklin appealed his dismissal to the Advisory Board, annually elected by the faculty and in this case, at least, probably representative of

many of them, if a letter addressed to the Board by 24 eminent earth scientists is any indication.

## 'Actions unimportant'

"There is little point," it said, "in quibbling over precisely what he did or did not do on a specific occasion. . . . We hope that the Advisory Board will look beyond the details of specific actions."

After six weeks of hearings, 111 witnesses and 4200 pages of testimony, the Advisory Board apparently did just that and, in a 5-2 decision, recommended to Lyman that Franklin indeed be fired.

The grounds for their decision were worthy of the advice they had received from the vigilantes of the Geology Department.

## 'Rehabilitation' unlikely

"The perception of reality which Professor Franklin and his followers profess to share differs drastically from the consensus in the University. . . . We are highly dubious whether *rehabilitation* (italics theirs) is a useful concept in this case. (His) announced conviction about the guilt of the University appears deeply held, and his opposition to the institution in its present form seems implacable. . . . Thus, 'rehabilitation' is likely to fail."

No one even claimed that Franklin had done anything illegal, for which certainly he could, and surely would, have been taken to court. However, no sanctions were ever proffered against the researchers who had used the Stanford computer for their war game, in clear violation of University rules against secret research.

Franklin took his case before the American Civil Liberties Union, whose directors were unanimous in the view that the speeches Franklin had been fired for were "plainly protected by the First Amendment." The ACLU took Stanford University to court. There the case has been desultorily dragging on for seven years, costing the University a bundle.

(Lise Giraud is a librarian at Green Library. This is the first of two parts; the second will appear tomorrow.)

Gay Furlong

## Typing error

A Daily typographical error in my piece on Bruce Franklin (May 23) said the American Civil Liberties Union had always "liked" cases like his. The text should have read: "The ACLU has no intention of dropping (the Franklin case). Historically, they say, they have always won cases like this."

It is not as a hobby, but in confidence of eventual victory, that they are pursuing it.