

Faculty couples



Stanley and Thelma Greenfield

What was once considered nepotism is now commonplace in University departments

The Greenfields
The Greenfields are both full professors in the English department. They came to the University with their two children in 1959. Stanley started as an assistant professor. Thelma taught extension courses.

In 1962 Thelma became a full-time member of the English department. According to the recollection of the provost and the Greenfields, they were probably the first married faculty couple within a University department — certainly the English department.

"There were laws against it — hiring a couple full time — the nepotism rules were still on the books," Thelma remembers. However, Kester Svendsen, department head at the time, overlooked the rules. According to the Greenfields, he was bent on "solidifying" the department.

Stanley Greenfield remembers Pres. Arthur Fleming as the administrator who "abrogated" the nepotism rule. He said, "I'll give you tenure, despite the fact" that you are married, Stanley recalls.

"I just sort of took what came," Thelma says about her appointment. "I wasn't going to uproot my husband."

He probably would have gone elsewhere if his wife had not been able to work here, Stanley says. In fact, he was offered a higher paying position at UCLA, but declined because of his wife's position.

"We can think of cases where it — the hiring of a couple — hasn't been good," the Greenfields say. How-

ever, they think it is usually to the benefit of the University to hire a couple, as long as both members are qualified. As an example they point to Pres. Paul Olum and his wife Vivian, a psychology professor.

Nevertheless, the Greenfields realize the problems that can arise when two members of the same family are employed in the same department.

"You wouldn't recommend your own wife's salary," or be on a personnel committee discussing her, Stanley says. When she came up for tenure he left the meeting.

Stanley explains with pride that in spite of "something of a history of anti-feminism" in the English department, Thelma was its first woman associate professor and full professor.

The Greenfields find working in the same discipline a great contribution to their marriage. "The other person wouldn't have understood," the hours and pressures quite in the same way, Thelma says. She can hear other wives asking, "You've been on that book for five years, why don't you give it up?"

They have never collaborated on a work or class. Even when they teach the same course with the same text, they do it differently, each "secretly thinking" their own method is right, Thelma says.

They occasionally vote on opposite sides at department meetings, but this doesn't upset them, they say. What does upset Thelma is when her work on a committee is evaluated in terms of her husband's work.

"People assume that I am taking

directions from you," Thelma says to Stanley.

He laughs at this, "She has the level committee head."

This spring both published books. "Edit is too strong a word. We advise," Thelma says of the input they give each other on their work.

"We've done a hell of a lot," Stanley concludes, smiling at his wife. "It's just possible we wouldn't have gotten so far" if they had been in different disciplines, Stanley says.

The McFees

The McFees came to the University in 1965 because of the leniency of the nepotism rules. June is head of the art education department. Malcolm retired this spring as an associate professor in anthropology.

"Nepotism was a problem. We were glad to come to a place where both jobs were secured," June says. Then Pres. Arthur Fleming's encouragement of women applicants attracted them here.

Previously, the McFees taught at the University of Arizona in Tucson. June's position there was never formalized because Arizona strictly enforced its nepotism rules.

"We even joked about getting a divorce (in Mexico)" to stay in Tucson, they say.

Both Malcolm and June began their teaching careers late in life.

In 1954, after 13 years of marriage and one son, they returned to college — to Stanford.

"We sold out everything and went back to school. Our friends and

Continued on Page 3

A University proposal will define nepotism

Being related to someone at the University won't get you or deny you a job at the University if a proposed rule goes into effect. The "Family Relationships and Employment Rule" would prohibit "nepotism" — favoritism based on family relationships. If all goes smoothly, it will be on the books Oct. 1, according to Muriel Jackson, assistant for administration in Pres. Paul Olum's office.

In addition, the rule would restrict relatives from making administrative decisions on each other.

"No members of the faculty or administration shall participate in making recommendations or decisions involving the employment supervision, salary, promotion, leave of absence, grievance adjustment or termination of members of their family," reads Draft II of the proposed rule.

The rule defines nepotism as, "the exercise of preferential selection practices based upon family relationships rather than upon merit. There are exceptions for special cases of employment without a job search and tandem (team) projects."

Classified personnel director Jack Steward estimates that about 25 classified positions are filled with either married couples or relatives.

According to a match of names with addresses and/or phone numbers in the 1981-82 Student Directory, there are more than 40 professorial couples and more than 30 faculty-staff couples. Matching by surnames doesn't take into account marriage in which the wife has retained her maiden name or family members who don't live at the same address.

The current version of the anti-nepotism regulation is the result of three years of study by the University's Committee of Equal Employment Opportunity. The committee began working on the rule in 1980 on the request of then-Provost Paul Olum.

Prof. Edna Wooten-Kolan, who chaired the EEO committee at the time the rule was first being considered, says the committee spent most of that year working on the rule.

At that time, there was a "sense" that people were "almost threatening" not to accept employment unless their spouses also were hired, Wooten-Kolan says. The administration felt a need for a policy in writing — something which said, "You don't negotiate two contracts at once," she says.

"In the past we were able to attract one spouse by arranging the employment of the other," Steward says. He denies, however, that the University ever created a position for a spouse.

Wooten-Kolan's committee is not sure there ever was job creation at the University, but in financially good times, such as the 1960s, the temptation "was great" to make room for a spouse.

Traditionally, one member of a family had to leave the University or other state institutions upon marriage; only one family member could be hired.

"Almost inevitably the women," were let go, says Barbara Edwards, the 1981 head of the EEO committee.

To date, the University has relied on a State System of Higher Education rule dealing with familial employment and on Oregon law dealing with marital status.

In the 1950s the University allowed two members of a household to be employed, but one member, usually the wife, had to be only part-time.

By the mid-1960s, the University changed its practice to allow both partners in a marriage to be employed full time and was one of the first in the state system to do this, Richard says.

"It wasn't thought of as proper," he adds.

"U of O has been more progressive," Steward says. "We hire on the basis of qualifications and we don't care about anything else."