

It's not 'retirement'

Bingham finally gets time to write

By Joan Nyland
Of the Emerald

Bing Bingham dashes off to lunch from his office in PLC. He doesn't walk slower with his new artificial hip and knee, but he does favor the left leg. Usually dressed in slacks, plaid cotton shirt and a tie that doesn't quite match, Bingham wears a smile for students — his lunch partners.

"Prof. Bing (pause) Bingham," his explanation of how to introduce him, retires this term from his 33-year post in the history department.

But retire is the wrong word.

"I got my notice of being granted emeritus," says

the 62-year-old professor, but "I won't leave, and I don't think anyone would try to make me. But if they did I would refuse. I'd pull age," he jokes.

Bingham will remain in his office between piles of books, dissertations, old tests, sports equipment and immerse himself in the biography of turn-of-the-century Portlander Charles Erskine Scott Wood.

That is, he will concentrate on the biography he started 25 years ago while he teaches Pacific Northwest History and American Biography each fall and advises graduate students.

The tall, blond-haired professor walks briskly into his U.S. History 201 class only to be stopped every few seconds with questions from students and an "Is that OK?" from others.

Though continuing teaching is important to Bingham, he admits he's tired of the "Big Class." He now sighs when he talks of teaching.

"He devotes a tremendous amount of time to his students, and that takes a whole lot of emotional energy," says Richard Brown, head of the history department.

During the last two years Bingham has had two major surgeries, and he has continued to teach throughout the period despite "real agony," Brown says.

Bingham has potential for human understanding that makes him extremely liked and remembered, according to both Brown and Glen Love, English professor and a 17-year colleague of Bingham's.

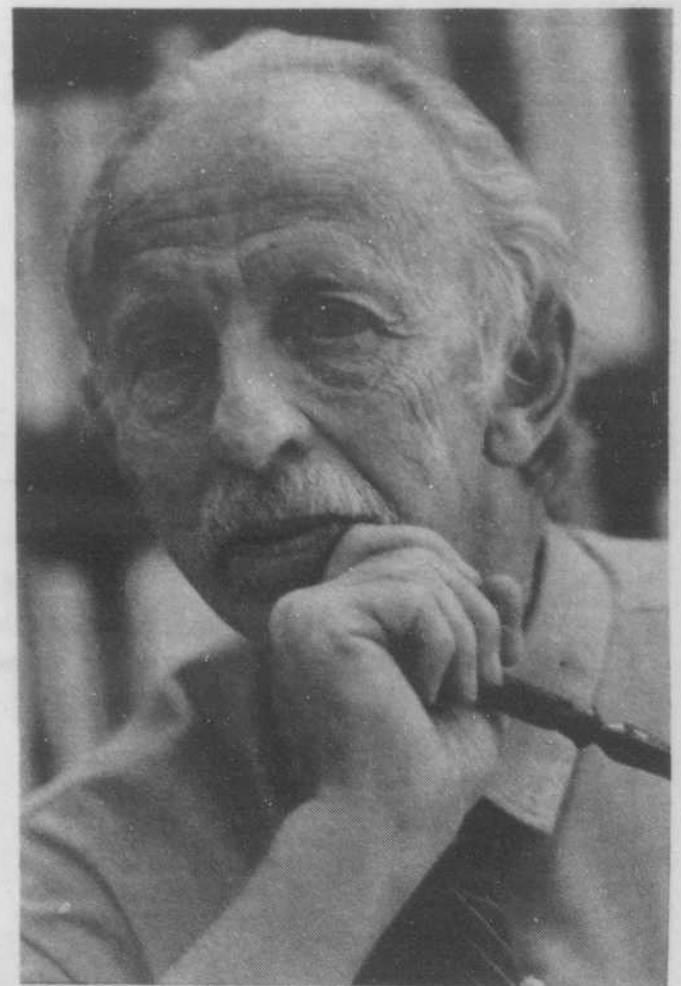
He says "yes" to committees, regional historians and students seeking help, which, says Love, "is not the way to get to Harvard."

Despite retirement, Bingham will keep his positions on the Oregon Geographic Names Board and the editorial board of Pacific Northwest Quarterly, and he will continue to narrate historical presentations such as the one-woman play "Northwest Woman" he co-wrote and toured with last year.

He has just agreed to narrate an historical spoof on the Oregon Democratic machine for the 1983 Legislature.

The community and University involvement takes away from scholarly pursuits. One reason Bingham wants to retire is to rid himself of what he calls the "nonsense" of academia — the committees and reports.

"To me he is one of the key figures in Pacific Northwest regionalism, and I think he generally is



"Bing" Bingham

Photo by Bob Baker

Retirees feted

More than 20 faculty and staff members were honored at a retirement reception in Gerlinger Alumni Lounge last week.

Catherine Lauris, editor of University publications, began her professional relationship with the University in 1940. Prior to that, she was a student here.

The longest tenure among teaching faculty whose service to the University ends this calendar year belongs to Lloyd Sorensen, history, who began in September, 1947.

Other retiring faculty and staff and the year they began work here are Roland Ball, English, 1952; Phyllis Bennett, University Foundation, 1967; Edwin Bingham, history, 1949; Leo Brassieur, physical plant, 1967; Jake Dragt, physical plant, 1975; Ed Hedden, athletics, 1969; and Jon Kahananui, physical plant, 1971.

Others are Richard Long, library, 1966; Joyce Lang, education, 1971; John McManus, music, 1967; Robert Morris, biology, 1955; Nina Peterson, education, 1970; Daisy Rooks, housing, 1969; Virgil Ross, physical plant, 1960; and Walter Parsons, printing, 1964.

Also retiring are Lois Schreiner, library, 1970; Phyllis Schrader, registrar, 1965; Robert Schwarz, education, 1971; Ray Wolfe, chemistry, 1956; Rena Whittington, counseling center, 1960; and Melba Rothschild, library, 1976.

regarded as such," Brown says.

Bingham, who likes to think of himself as a would-be writer, says he is "coming around full-cycle" with his retirement career as a biographer.

"I can scarcely wait until I can turn full-time to this project," says Bingham. "Biography is as close to literature as I've been able to get."

A few years ago, before she died, Wood's widow released 80,000 pages of manuscripts — many of them love letters. Bingham and his wife Ginny had visited her and knew nothing of the papers.

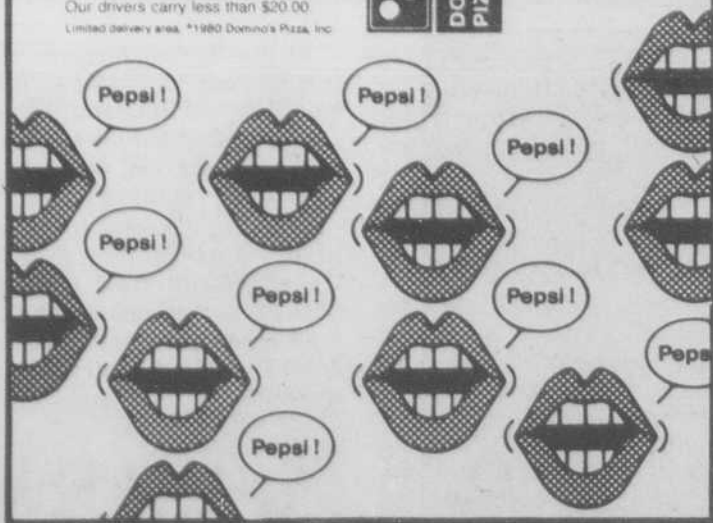
"I had to start again. I still haven't assimilated them," says Bingham.

If all goes well with the book, he and Ginny, his wife of 30 years, intend to return in a year from January to India, where they spent the 1978-79 academic year on a Fulbright in Mysore, India.

Meanwhile, Bingham is going to hang a "do not disturb" sign outside his office... and write.

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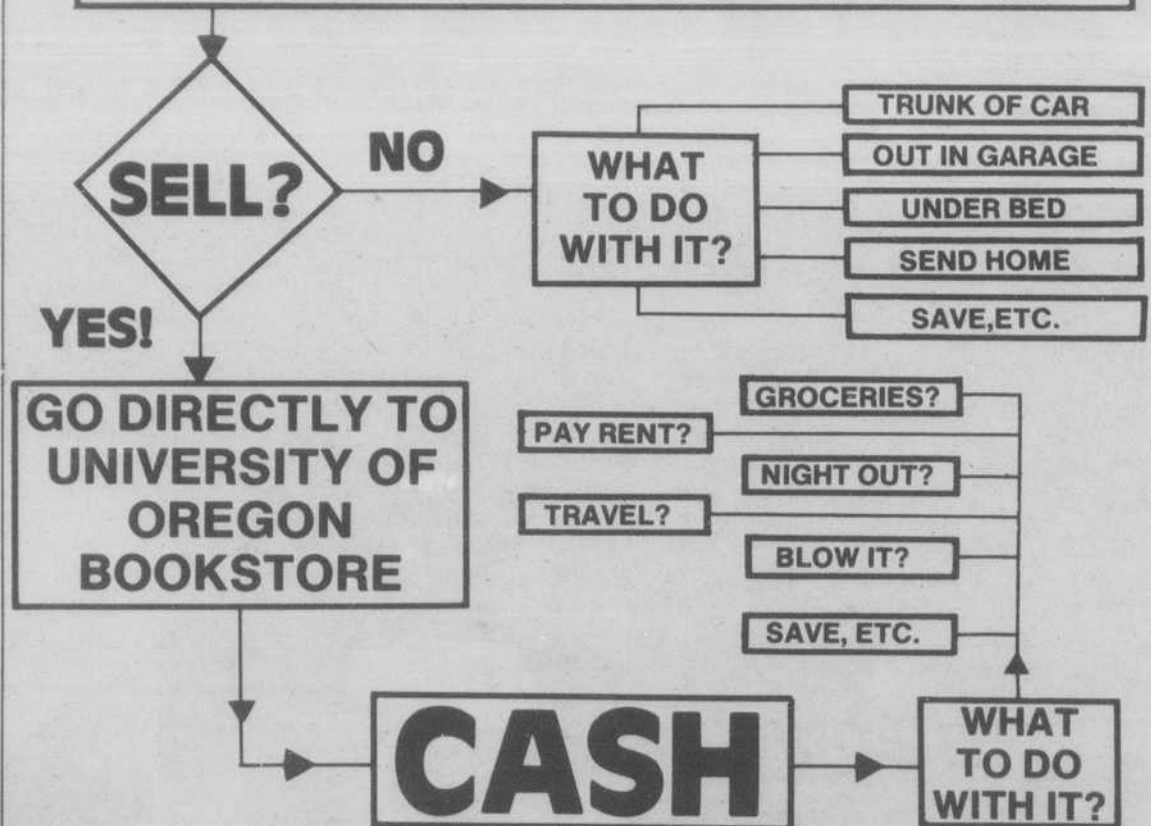
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