

# PSH NEWS

## Professor Frank Ferguson: A man for all cities

*Robin Price  
Capital Times Staff*

Some people move mountains. Dr. Francis Ferguson moves towns.

Ferguson, professor of humanities and architecture, produced an award winning design for the relocation of the northern Pennsylvania town of Nelson when, in 1978 the Army Corps of Engineers built Cownesque Lake on the site of the existing town (to control flooding of the Susquehanna River).

The project required moving some existing historic structures such as the cemetery and post office, and completely rebuilding others.

Ferguson said the population of the town, which has a history dating back to the pre-revolutionary war era, experienced an improved standard of living after the relocation.

The Army Corps of Engineers deals with projects from a cost-benefit perspective, Ferguson said. For the Nelson project, Ferguson dealt with real people and the problems of relocating an entire town.

The grey-haired, bespectacled Ferguson, a licensed architect in New York and Pennsylvania, said the project fascinated him and taught him a lot.

Ferguson, who holds degrees from Notre Dame, Harvard and Columbia Universities in both architecture and

urban planning, said he went into academics because of his interest in research--primarily in the formation of cities.

Ferguson was an associate professor of urban planning at Columbia University until 1971, when he joined the faculty at Penn State Harrisburg as professor of urban design in the graduate program in urban and regional planning, and chaired the program for three years before returning to teaching and researching design theory.

Ferguson, who joined the humanities

division in 1987, teaches courses on the built environment and the future.

"The advantage of the humanities is that it's principle driving forces are cultural and economic, as opposed to simply technical," Ferguson explained.

He said it's natural for an architect to be interested in the design of a city.

"The form of cities is changing due to the changing nature of communication," Ferguson said. And cities are decreasing in population density partly because more and more workers are "telecommuting," through

use of home offices and computers.

According to much of the population is moving out of cities to suburbia and "exurbia"--the far reaches of suburbia, to places like Tyson's Corner, Va. Areas Ferguson calls new "urban enclaves." Ferguson said these areas are competing with big cities for business. Ferguson said Tyson's Corner is the 12th largest business district in the country.

Ferguson's own tiny office shows an architect's ability to utilize space

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separate questions about their physical attributes:

--How would you describe your over all level of physical attractiveness in your fantasy?

--How would you describe the size of your penis in your sexual fantasy as compared to real life? How would you describe the size of your breasts and buttocks in your fantasy as opposed to real life?

Although Becker's research is ongoing, he said he has so far found little difference in the ways men and women fantasize about sex. Females

more than men tend to imagine they were more attractive in their fantasies than they are in real life, Becker said.

Becker's interest in the details of fantasy life corresponds to a general carefulness about details.

In Becker's office editions of the journals American Psychologist and Journal of Personality and Psychology along with folders of research material are stacked impeccably along one wall.

Clemmie E. Gilpin, assistant professor of Afro-American studies and community systems, has worked on a number of department committees with Becker. He said Becker "pays meticulous attention to detail."

For some, the concern with detail sometimes goes a little too far.

"He is meticulous about everything and it always has to be done his way," said Kathy Ritter, a behavioral science secretary who has worked with Becker since he came to campus four years ago.

Ritter said Becker made her retype a manuscript several times because he was not pleased with the way her computer justified.

"We had numerous battles over commas, spaces and periods," she said.

Becker spent two years at the State University of New York--College at Plattsburgh and one year at Scripps College in Claremont, Calif. as an assistant professor of psychology.

Recently, separated, Becker lives in Harrisburg where he plays "Mr. Mom" to daughters Emily, 6, and Jenna, 4.

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