Energetic Professor Heads E.E. Department

by Dave Kamons

He ran with the bulls in Pamplona where he was born. He was only six when the Civil War rented the Basque Hills he grew up in. Married one month, he emigrated in the mid 50's to the United States to teach electrical engineering at Carnegie Tech. Now the walls of the E.E. Department head’s office display reproductions of Picasso and Dali in the place of venerable portraits of Machinry Hall.

Dr. Angel (pronounced ahn-chehl) Jordan succeeded Dr. E. M. Williams as head of the Department of Electrical Engineering last February at Dr. Williams’ retirement. The energetic, young (38) professor brings with him boundless enthusiasm, drive, and innovation.

Dr. Jordan’s appointment augurs well for his students. He is, foremost, a teacher. He believes strongly in student involvement. He has great aspirations for the job.

“The department is very, very good. Dr. Williams has built a very strong foundation. It has the potential to be great in a few years.”

Dr. Jordan billed his ideas as “just a few additions and injections” into the current scheme. Involvement is his philosophy. Faculty will be involved more in policy making. Students will be involved in matters of curriculum and teaching evaluation on a much larger scale than under the former regime. Most important, the two groups are to be involved with each other on an informal, personal level as well as on the academic plane.

“The Student Conference Committee will be doing the teaching evaluation themselves. Students will present the formal evaluations. We expect them to be frank, but tactful. After all, the students are the customers; we’ll listen.”

Dr. Jordan plans to enrich the faculty by recruiting talent from other institutions. He points out that Carnegie people will neither be systematically excluded from the faculty, nor eased out of current positions.

“arre there too many Carnegie people on the faculty. We must avoid inbreeding. New faculty from other universities will refresh and stimulate the department.”

Dr. Jordan promises to be a cool hand at the helm. He holds no fear of student activists.

“Everything that’s happening on campus is not new to me. I’ve seen it all before—twice. Before the Civil War it was the Leftists; after, it was the Rightists.”

In the midst of the teacher-researcher controversy, Angel Jordan stamps well with both facets. He is a very active research engineer (solid state devices) with over 40 papers to his credit. Yet it was teaching that brough him to C-MU.

“One of the reasons I came to America to teach. In Spain it is a very difficult and long process to become a university teacher.

“When I started teaching I had no Ph.D. (Although he had completed all the requirements except a thesis of a Ph.D. in physics) I wanted to teach engineering on a university level. To do this I had to have a Ph.D. So I got a Ph.D.”

Dr. Jordan’s innovations comprise curriculum expansion, increased evaluation, and faculty expansion.

“We are going to have three options, computer, applied physical electronics, and systems. In addition, there will be a system of cross optional electives, for those people who don’t want any of the three, or want all of them.

Dr. Feucht has done a fine job developing the revised curriculum.

“The changing curriculum at the freshman and sophomore level (because of the new college) gives students time to shop around. This, of course, is for all of CIT, not just E.E.”

Much of the student influence will come from the Student Advisory Committee, set up under the auspices of the Faculty Senate. It consists of eight members, two elected from each of the four classes.

“We plan on using the SAC as a Conference Committee to consult on policy decisions. It will also be in close contact with myself and Dr. Feucht, the associate department head.”

There will be an extensive evaluation of teaching methods, both the general philosophy of instruction and particular teachers.

“The essence of the Carnegie Plan will be maintained. There will be more balance in curriculum decision. There will be much more weight given to student contributions in shaping courses, more feedback and student help in implementing ideas.”

Both Angel and wife received Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering from Carnegie Tech in 1959. His scholarly activities are a matter of outstanding record.

We asked why Mrs. Jordan went into such a technical field. “She is more an artist than a scientist. She is a dancer at heart. She wanted to do semi-conductor (transistor to the layman) work, so she took the degree.”

This is Dr. Angel Jordan, an exciting blend of old world and new, teacher and researcher, healthily, respectfully of tradition and enthusiastic innovator.

Dr. Jordan poses with his wife and sons at his Squirrel Hill home. Photo by FKS