

College instructor packs his books — and memories

By Del Hood
of *The Daily Californian*

CHARLES FRANK VITTOR has packed 65 boxes of books and shipped them off to his new home on Dauphin island in Alabama.

He isn't finished. Some of his office bookshelves at Grossmont College still are crowded with volumes. He will pack those, too, or put them on a table outside his office for his students to claim for their own libraries.

Along with the books, Vittor, 63, will be packing away some memories of a 16-year career as an English instructor and 37 years as a resident of this area. Nine heart attacks since 1970—the last one a triple bypass—have forced him to give up teaching.

Had it not been for a slow year in the avocado orchards, Vittor might have never gotten to the classroom. He dropped out of Penn State in 1938 to help his ailing father, Frank Vittor, a noted sculptor who had studied with Rodin and who produced sculpted portraits of five presidents, author-humorist Mark Twain and other famous personages.

The Depression had not ended when Vittor left the sculpting trade and took a job on the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1945, after enduring a winter in which 112 inches of snow fell in 12 weeks, Vittor brought his wife and four children (they now have 10) to the El Cajon area where he was employed for nearly two decades

as an orchard contractor.

Grossmont College had just opened on the Monte Vista High School campus when avocado production began to wane. Vittor had often thought about returning to college, and this seemed like the right time. He enrolled at the college, took a full load and graduated with the first class of 18.

The bug had bitten. Vittor, who started reading by his mother's side on trolley rides when he was 5, finished his bachelor's degree at San Diego State College, earned a master's degree and taught there for two years before signing on with Grossmont College in 1966.

Vittor started his teaching career only a few years before the wave of unrest began to sweep college campuses.

"There was a time in the 1970s when every day was potentially explosive," Vittor said. He remembers one day when two young men brought their dogs and permitted them to disrupt the class with a dogfight."

"That day I not only had two dogs thrown out but also two students."

Another young man threatened to take over Vittor's class and "reconstitute" it according to the ideological pattern of that time. Vittor held his ground—and won the respect of students who awarded him a Golden Griffin for his work on their behalf.

□ Teacher 5A



Charles Vittor is leaving for an island in Alabama after 16 years as an English instructor at Grossmont College and 37 years as a resident in East County. Health problems make continued service as a teacher impossible.

science fiction. One of the magazine he read while riding the trolley with his mother was "Amazing Stories." So when he had a chance, he started a science fiction-fantasy class at Grossmont College that became one of the most popular of the literature courses.

But Vittor eventually turned that course over to another instructor and concentrated on teaching basic reading and writing skills to students who had enrolled but were incapable of doing the assigned work without some help.

Over the years, Vittor has been witness to the deterioration of collegiality between faculty, administration and trustees. He doesn't like what has happened and thinks collective bargaining is the culprit.

"I think a line was drawn," he said. "I don't know whether they can ever get back to the situation we had at the beginning." Vittor approves of the reinstatement of department chairpersons and some of the other administrative changes that will take effect Aug. 1

Despite his misgivings about what collective bargaining has done to community colleges, Vittor remains a devout champion of the two-year institution.

"I have tremendous admiration for the community college system because it leaves practically no one with any excuse not to get some education," Vittor said. "The opportunity is here."

Where he is going will be a remarkable contrast to the place Vittor and his family have been for nearly four decades. Dauphin Island sometimes is raked by hurricanes. It is inhabited by probably no more than 500 persons.

But the air is clean and the fishing is good, and three of the 10 children will be close by. A son has his own environmental research company there and has offered Vittor a part-time job.

"I haven't been fishing for a long time," said Vittor, his face brightening at the prospect of loafing for a change. "The water is clean enough that oysters can be eaten all year round."

And when the fish aren't biting, he may even find time to read a few books.