

Million-dollar friendship

'Adopted Cougar' thinks WSU is worth big donation

By Mike Stewart
of the Tribune

PULLMAN — What business does an alumnus of the University of Southern California have donating more than \$1 million to Washington State University to help build a new alumni center?

There are several reasons, according to Olympia businessman Jack Lewis, who with his wife, Ann Lewis, has pledged more than \$1 million toward the planned \$3.5 million renovation of the 50-year-old Animal Science Barn on the WSU campus.

The gift is the largest single donation in the school's nearly 100-year history, according to WSU Foundation Director Connie Kravas.

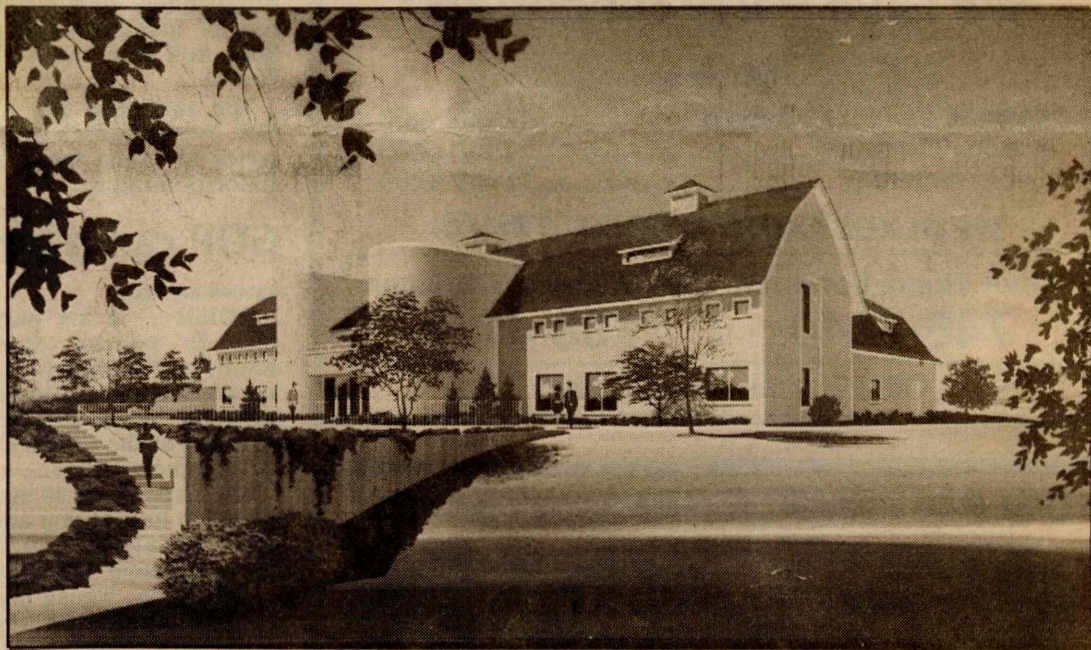
Lewis said one reason behind his gift is related to the success he has had operating his own business. Another is the fact that several of his children have been or will be students at the Pullman school.

Yet another is what he sees as a strong need for a first-rate center to serve visitors and alumni and that would be the envy of every other college in the Pac-10 Conference.

Perhaps the major reason behind the gift, however, is that the Lewises consider themselves "adopted Cougars."

"You work for financial independence, and then once you have that, you look around and see what you can do with it. And, you have to do that to be a whole person," Jack Lewis said recently.

Lewis says WSU is no different from other universities he has visited as far as facilities



This artist's conception shows how the alumni center will look when it is completed.

for alumni.

"I've been to a lot of schools and have never seen (an alumni center) I thought was adequate," he said. He's visited members of the Pac-10, including Stanford, UCLA and his alma mater, USC, and others, such as Ohio State University. The absence of a good

alumni center "is one of the things that made me want to be involved in that project," Lewis said.

The Lewises own Panorama City retire-

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ment village at Lacey, Wash. It was there that they came to know WSU President Glenn Terrell.

Several hundred retired WSU staffers and faculty members live at the village, Lewis said. When Terrell arrived several years ago to visit and find out "who was taking such good care of the Cougars over here," Lewis said he was greatly impressed and deeply touched.

"The reason I am a friend of the school lies squarely with the personal effort of Dr. Glenn Terrell," he said.

Although Lewis said the idea of converting the cattle barn into an alumni center initially seemed silly to him, the more he thought about it, the more appropriate it seemed. WSU is, after all, a land grant school with agricultural education among its primary missions, he said.

Lewis said a realization that public schools need private financial help in these times of tighter budgets also influenced his decision to help with the center. He said he figures the center will pay dividends by serving as an incentive for future donations of all types to the school.

So far, about \$1.5 million has been pledged to the project, Kravas said.

Although neither of the Le-

wises are WSU alumnis, one of their six children — a daughter — is, and another daughter soon will be, he said. A son will enroll this fall, he said. A third daughter is vacillating between WSU and USC.

"I may have three each at USC and WSU," Lewis said.

He said having allegiances to two Pac-10 rivals presents a dilemma at times, but he manages to cheer for both schools.

"I've always been to the football games USC plays in the Northwest. But, I've always cheered heartily for WSU — in both basketball and football," he said.

Lewis' pledge of \$1 million-plus included only one condition.

"I gave with a contingency that this facility would be a first-class place, so that anyone would feel good about coming into it," he said.

Although he said he would have preferred to have announced the gift a bit later in the fund-raising effort, Terrell's retirement left him no choice but to make the announcement when he did — at a recognition dinner in Terrell's honor.

"He's quite a man, and I wanted him to have the pleasure of receiving the gift for the university," Lewis said.