

## **Frank Bryan**

### **University of Vermont John G. McCullough Professor of Political Science**

For more than 30 years, you have astounded University of Vermont students with your unique brand of forthright, small-is-beautiful politics. But your impact is much broader, on the collective consciousness of democratic societies around the world.

You grew up in the tiny Vermont community of Newbury, where you lived and worked alongside hard-working people who lived off the land and knew their minds. Your neighbors had an admirable sense of civic duty born from their isolation, and you have kept these people and their small-town values firmly in your mind as you enlightened the world on democratic ideals.

Your first interest was in writing, but after earning a bachelor's degree from St. Michael's College and a master's from UVM, you discovered your gift for teaching at a high school in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. After a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut, you began inciting the imagination of political science students at St. Michaels, Montana State University, and in 1976 UVM, where you were named the John G. McCullough Professor of Political Science in 2005.

You call your own politics "communitarian," a philosophical position that lies somewhere between liberal and conservative. But unlike most in the middle of the political spectrum, you have never failed to surprise. You have been both a Golden Gloves boxer and rodeo rider. You balance a busy teaching schedule with working your 78-acre farm and dropping, cutting and splitting eight cords of wood each year. Your commentaries on Vermont Public Radio and appearances on television, from Fox's *The O'Reilly Factor* to Bill Moyers' *The Public Mind*, always enlighten and amuse. Your sense of humor permeates all you do, but is highlighted in books such as *Real Vermonters Don't Milk Goats* and *The Vermont Owner's Manual*. You are an outspoken advocate for Vermont's secession from the union, an intellectual exercise drawing attention to how far the U.S. has strayed from the democratic vision of its Founders.

Perhaps your most lasting contribution is communicating the essence of Vermont town meetings, which you have referred to as both the paragon of democracy and "a long day sitting on a hard chair listening to people argue." Your latest book, *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works*, the culmination of three decades of rigorous research by you and your students, should be required reading for all citizens of a democracy who care about the future of their society.

This idealistic community of Marlboro College is particularly grateful for your good citizenship and scholarship regarding democracy, and concurs with your estimation that, "Town meeting is like going to church. You're not sure it did any good, but you feel better."

Frank Bryan, it is our pleasure to confer upon you the degree:

Doctor of Humane Letters

*Marlboro College commencement, May 18, 2008*