

Former UNLV student hits dream as author

by Bonar Tucker

"Catch this guy right out of the gate; he's an author you'll be racing to read for years to come," said the *Christian Science Monitor* about William Nixon, former UNLV football player and former editor of *The Yellin' Rebel*.

The prediction, made last summer when Nixon's first novel, *Strategic Compromise* hit the stores, has held truth. Not only did this suspense thriller receive great reviews by *The New York Times*, but it was also named by *USA Today* as one of the four best books to take to the beach. It has since been released in paperback editions, has been a best seller in a number of major cities and has been translated to Japanese. The book is active in the option area with Hollywood which means the movie industry pays to hold the rights to produce the book as a movie.

Still, in spite of his new-found fame, Nixon remains as open and friendly as a country neighbor, speaking highly of the education he received at UNLV.

"Some of the best lessons I ever learned were from John Irsfeld," he said.

Nixon had worked with Irsfeld, who is now deputy to President Robert Maxson, both as a student and with *The Las Vegas City Magazine* in late 1981.

"I had the drive and energy,

and I brought with me the intellect and desire, but Irsfeld and Dr. Barbara Cloud (associate professor of journalism) groomed me," he said.

Nixon is quick to point to others who inspired him at UNLV.

"UNLV has professors who will stand up with the best of them," he said. "Dr. Hart Wegner taught me to love film. Dr. Moehring and Dr. Mattson give me a solid background in history."

Nixon names some to whom

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he is grateful in the back of his book. Irsfeld is mentioned as his mentor and friend and his parents are named as being lifelong supporters of his dream to write.

He tells of his parental support in an amusing anecdote about his father. William Nixon apparently felt it would be good for his son to go to law school.

Nixon said, "When I was young, I knew that first you had to go to medical school to become a doctor. So I asked my father 'What do you have to do to write a book?'"

"He answered me by saying 'You have to go to law school.'"

However, even without his son attending law school, after the book was near completion, it was the

senior Nixon who approached one of the biggest publishers for its printing.

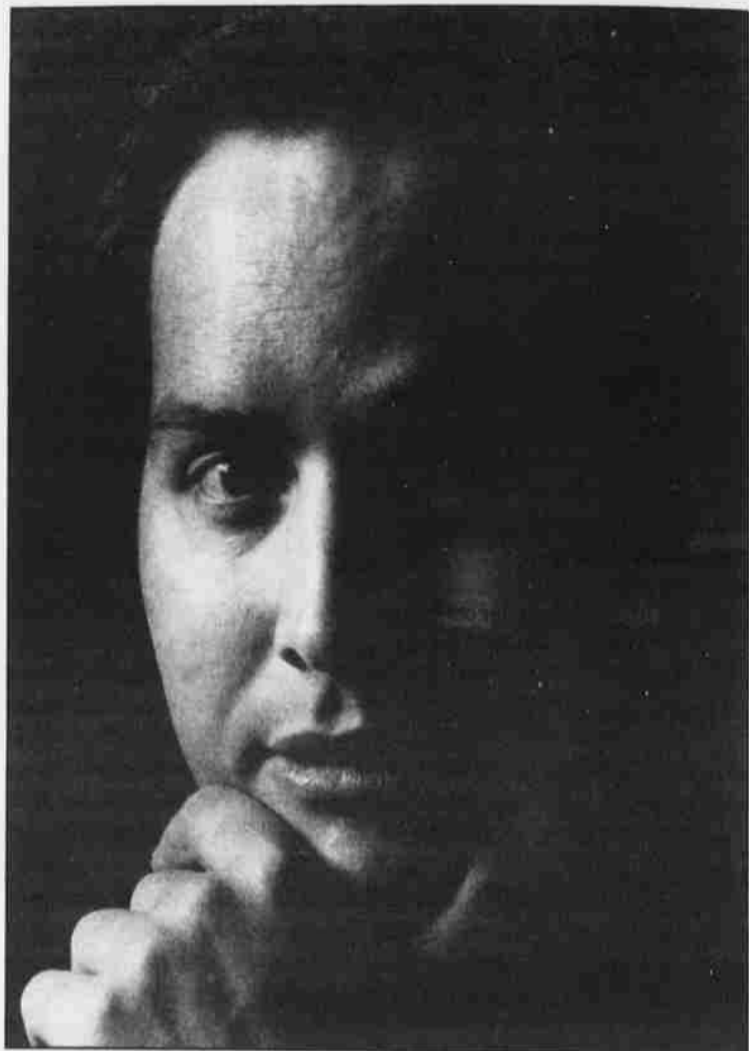
"My dad believes you start at the top," Nixon said. "If you've got a product that's good and you're proud of it, he believes that, rather than working up from the bottom to try and market it, start at the top."

His father's confidence paid off. Nixon said the publishing company printed more than 20,000 copies of *Strategic Compromise* which is considered an unusually large first run for a new novelist.

Nixon, who now works in Washington, D.C. as executive assistant to Sen. Bill Roth Jr., R-Del., writes from 4-8 a.m. six mornings a week. He has finished a second novel due out later this fall and he says he'll keep on writing. He lives with his wife and two children and has travelled extensively in the Far East and Western Europe. Nixon said he is used to being busy.

"Some of the days at UNLV got me ready for this," he said.

As a center on UNLV's football team, he played on the field with later greats like Jim McMahon and Randall Cunningham. He worked at the same time as editor of *The Yellin' Rebel*. By his senior year, he was



William Nixon, author and former UNLV football player and former editor for *The Yellin' Rebel*.

publishing *American Times* fondly. *Magazine*.

"Those were the days," he said. "Running from one project to the next, dog-tired most of the time, and enjoying all of it."

How Time Flies

In one second 8 million blood cells die in a healthy human adult; the primary shock waves from an earthquake travel five miles; a cheetah can sprint 34 yards; 1.5 million cubic feet of water tumble over Khone Falls in Laos; a teacher will wait for an answer to a question before calling on another student.

In one minute one ton of water is discharged from a fire hose; the brain of a newborn baby grows 1-2 milligrams; an elevator can whisk you to the 86th floor of the Empire State Building; a human swallows once.

In one hour the Federal Reserve can sort 60,000 checks; an adult male sheds 600,000 particles of skin; an active woodchuck breathes 2,100 times and a hibernating woodchuck breathes 10 times; a human sperm will reach an egg.

In one day a baby blue whale gains 200 pounds; a mother whale produces 200 quarts of milk; a supernova releases as much energy as the sun does in a billion years; an adult human will produce 1-3 pints of perspiration.

In one week newborn babies will soil 70-90 diapers; a day passes on Pluto.

In one month beavers' teeth grow one inch (they are gnawed down at almost the same rate); human hair grows one half inch; head lice live their entire lives.

In one year 16 million thunderstorms occur on Earth; a dripping faucet wastes 900 gallons of water; the Atlantic Ocean widens two inches between South America and Africa; one Steinway piano is built.

From *Durations: The Encyclopedia of How Long Things Take* (as printed in March 1991 issue of *Self* magazine).

High School or college— Teaching is still teaching

by Gary Puckett

For the last few years, many students in the college of education at UNLV have been treated to classes taught by Dr. William Pankratius. His knowledge of secondary education is considerable, as is his experience, which includes more than 10 years teaching high school science.

"If there was any prerequisite for people who want to go into teaching it would be, 'Do you have the commitment?'" Pankratius said.

He emphasizes commitment in his education classes, especially 301. Although teaching in public schools requires commitment and occasional sacrifice, Pankratius would be the first to point out that there are benefits as well.

Teaching high school kids is "the most exciting thing I've ever done in my life," he said.

By comparison, teaching college may not be as exciting but it is far from boring. Each type of teaching, as well as geographical location, has its own rewards and peculiarities. Teaching at UNLV

is no exception.

"What is fascinating about UNLV is that our average class age is a lot older; what we call non-traditional students," Pankratius said. "The traditional student goes straight through college."

"I think our average age is close to 30 years old. These are people who come to teaching after other job careers."

Some of the other careers do

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not necessarily pay.

"The group that fascinates me are mothers who have raised their children and who have learned how to teach from the negative (teaching) experiences with their children," he said.

"The one thing that we're finding out is that they turn out to

be dedicated, committed and more student-centered. They turn out to be more process-oriented than fact-oriented and that makes for an exciting classroom; one in which the student is the focus of the attention," Pankratius said. "It's up to the teacher to use some motivational techniques and to make the topic exciting and interesting."

Many students at UNLV will readily agree with this assessment. If some students on campus believe some of their teachers are less than "exciting and interesting," they wouldn't get much argument from Pankratius as to whether the fault lies with the teacher or the student.

"One of the reasons we are able to get away with teacher-centered and fact-oriented teaching in college is that we have highly motivated students," he said. "But I think we have a right to hold teachers up to a high standard, one which requires that they do have an interest in the subject they are teaching. And one in which they make an effort to make that subject meaningful and exciting to their students."

Education in this country has been under fire for some time with the realization that the United States has lost the edge in learning. Students from other countries have been scoring higher compared to U.S. students. In reaction to this discrepancy in learning, an intense amount of pressure has been brought to people in education. This pressure may bring remedies but it may also cause problems.

"There is overwhelming pressure on people," Pankratius said. "I think we're not at the point yet, but we're very close to the point of asking the school system to do too much. I think we as a society, ... a family and ... a culture, have to start rethinking what we're asking our schools to do."

The problems are complex. Answers can only come from those who choose teaching as their profession. The responsibility of those who teach is truly awesome but it pales when compared to the responsibility of those who teach the teachers, people like Dr. Pankratius.

And the winner is...

By Rick Nielsen

Though enthusiasm and participation were not overwhelming, *The Yellin' Rebel* Battery Drive Slogan Contest was a success in the sense that it produced an excellent slogan and a winner.

The slogan for this year's battery drive was selected based on originality and correlation to the event. The slogan that will be on the button is: "Recycle to Keep the Power Alive"

The lucky winner of the \$25

cash prize is native Las Vegas and UNLV student Richard Bickerton. Bickerton is a graduate of Chapparral High School and is in his second semester at UNLV. Bickerton, who is now undeclared in his major, also designed and did the art work for the button, which was not required or part of the contest. The buttons, which will be given to the donors of the dead batteries, will be in five colors.

The prize will be awarded on Earth Day, which is Sunday, April 21, by an unannounced dignitary.

