

Environmental director helps clear the air

by William Holt

If you have questions about what's in the air you breathe, the staff at the Environmental Research Center may be able to help.

It is a service that investigates human exposure to pollutants and is affiliated with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Edwin Furtaw, an environmental engineer, recently lectured at an international symposium on the measurement of toxic air pollutants.

Furtaw said his job is to "determine how people can reduce their exposure to pollutants in a modern society." His offices are located in the LaPlaza office complex on Maryland Parkway across from the university.

He and his staff, including UNLV students Shawn Tilbert and Derrick Price, collect information about people's daily activities by using public surveys and electronic sensors to transfer these records into computer simulation programs.

These computer models help the research center to "identify and understand human exposure to pollution in order to reduce health risks," Furtaw said.

When pollution first became a concern, the EPA set up monitoring stations throughout the nation to

detect the chemical concentration in the "ambient" (meaning the surrounding air in any one area) air in order to protect human health.

However, in 1980, when the EPA began testing pollution by having individual people carry around monitors during their daily activities, the testing of ambient air proved to be a bad indicator.

Instead of being measured by ambient air, pollution is now being measured by the activity of people that causes other people to be exposed, Furtaw said.

The main active pollutant outdoors is ozone, which is the sunlight in interaction with chemicals. However, Furtaw has found that pollution is generally in higher concentration indoors than outdoors.

While the level of ozone does decrease after entering a building, most ambient air pollutants will not change.

"There is a vast amount of chemicals released by activities indoors," Furtaw said.

Examples are gas stoves, cigarette smoke and attached garages containing parked automobiles.

A person using a gas stove will receive the highest concentration of the plume of chemicals released by the outlet, Furtaw said.

Any type of combustion process will emit chemicals.

The exhaust of a parked car in a garage will find its way into the home and be trapped, he added.

Cigarette smoke is a major indoor pollutant, especially since the average person spends 90 percent of his day indoors, Furtaw said. There are some 2,000 chemical compounds in cigarette smoke alone, and the chemical compound benzene that it releases has been determined to cause leukemia.

Cigarette smoke and the exhaust from fossil fuels are the two leading causes of exposure to benzene.

Congress has recently passed an amendment to the Clean Air Act so that the EPA administration has the power to require governments to reduce the amount of pollution coming from each automobile.

"The exhaust from automobiles is our biggest problem," said Furtaw.

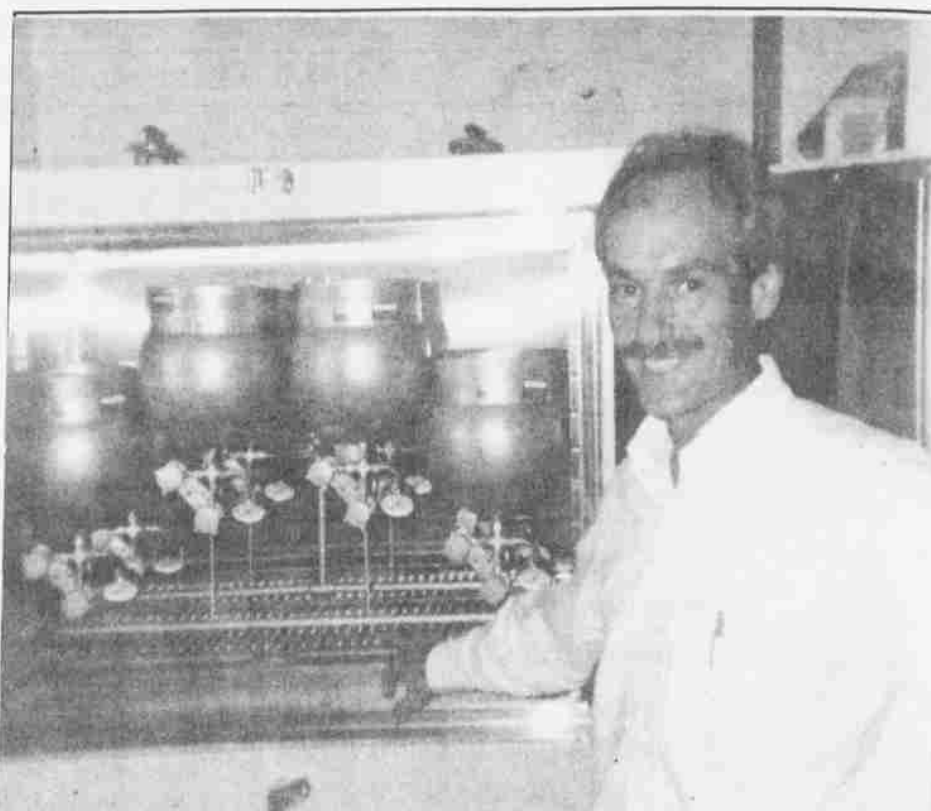
Furtaw said that he is not against modernization. He does expect that we will run out of petroleum in roughly 50 years at its current rate of use.

"The most obvious answer to reusable, non-polluting energy is solar energy," he said. "We have the technology to build an electric solar plant. It would be 20 percent more expensive than the current use of natural gas."

If there would be any difference in the performance of electricity produced by a solar plant used in a city like Las Vegas, he said very few people could notice a difference.

Air pollution is being controlled now, but Furtaw said,

"It is not acceptable." Las Vegas in 1989 was tied as the fifth worst city for violating the carbon monoxide frequency standard, he said. One reason is Las Vegas is located in a valley. Furtaw added that he didn't see things getting drastically worse.



Ed Furtaw shows us his toys

photo by William Holt

Colebrook undecided about health center fee

by Karen Splawn

Student Government President Roderick Colebrook recently said he is "not sure" whether a proposed \$25 Student Health Services fee is a good idea.

At a Student Senate meeting last May, Health Center Director Lori Winchell told senators the center was underfunded and a fee charged to all undergraduate students during registration might be the answer.

"Ninety percent of the 95 universities we surveyed had a student health fee separate from and in addition to (other fees)," Winchell said at that meeting.

Colebrook recently said it would be unfair to charge students, who already have insurance or don't use the center, an additional fee.

"When you have a case of tuition going up, and then hear of an additional fee for the health center, you think 'isn't this a bit much?'" he said.

Winchell, in reply to Colebrook's remarks, said, "I think a health fee is important. We could greatly expand services and our building size."

Colebrook said that the student health educator's position, currently held by Ray Rodriguez, would be funded, with the help of student government, for another year.

"Because we think it's such an important position, we will support him," Colebrook said, adding he and Senate President Mike

Kennedy went to Carson City last spring and lobbied state legislators to approve \$22,000 out of the state budget for Rodriguez's position.

Colebrook said he and others will work to prevent large increases in tuition, although neither the Student Senate nor the Executive Board has authority over tuition hikes. Only the University of Nevada System Board of Regents can raise fees.

The regents recently voted to increase undergraduate credit fees to \$49, and another increase is planned for next year.

"Students do have a voice with the regents, but sometimes they (the regents) are in a predicament" because of the university's growth and the inability of the legislature to keep up, he said.

Regents and student representatives have agreed that fee raises, if they are necessary, should only be a few dollars at a time, Colebrook said.

"I hope the regents will realize that all students are not rich," he said. "I'm graduating next year, but I have to make sure that the burden isn't too heavy on future graduates."

Parking will be one of the big issues for student government this year, Colebrook said, pointing out he is against any parking fee, although the Parking and Traffic Committee is still deliberating the idea of one.

Colebrook, a senior majoring in hotel administra-

tion, said he is looking forward to running Student Government.

"Last year was not a great year for [us]," he said, referring to the controversies involving former President Joe Bunin, whose eligibility to serve was questioned. "We need to actively participate in events and what's best for the university. We have quality senators, directors and staff that will really make this student government the best anyone's ever seen."

The student president said there will be a much better Entertainment and Programming Board, headed by KUNV disc jockey Warren White and an improved Office of Student Information, headed by physical education Senator Joel Kostman.

The Publications Board will still exist, although Colebrook said there is no director and no final plans on how the board's members will operate, considering that *The Yellin' Rebel* staff no longer answers to them.

"I think the senate has always been watching *The Yell* carefully," he said.

Scholarships totaling \$50,000 will be offered also, Colebrook said.

A new program will be Operation Role Model, where one student is honored for outstanding achievement by Student Government leaders, he added.



photo by William Holt

Student Derrick Price assists Furtaw

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