

Future students will never know the true UNLV Rebel

By DiAnna Mashburn
Contributing Features Writer

Evan Blythin, associate professor in the Greenspun School of Communications, will be retiring at the end of this semester after 29 years of student centered teaching at UNLV.

Blythin's mission as a faculty member has been students and service.

"I like students. I like people who are learning, changing, altering, pushing the envelope and going to it," he said.

Part of why Blythin is leaving UNLV is because he feels that teaching and service have gone by the way and publication and research have become the principle values.

"I've always felt that my first juices belong to my students. My second juices belong to my community, and then what I have left in my midnight hours, I would burn on books and articles," Blythin explained.

He feels that state institutions across the country are set up in such a way now that if young faculty don't publish at a very rigorous standard within their first five years, they are history.

"It's clear, and I don't care what the rhetoric may be from higher administration on campuses across this country," he said. "That the emphasis is on research and not what you give to your students."

"Blythin cares," Rachel Wagner, two-time Blythin student and senior, said. "He has so much wisdom. He makes people like Julius Caesar become real to us."

"I try to share with students the things that have turned me from a savage to a civilized person," Blythin said.

He was born in 1942 on a ranch in Arizona, 45 miles from the nearest town. He rode a horse to his two-room school house to attend class. He grew up with one brother and one sister.

"I was into hunting, fishing, fighting and cussing."

His father died when he was two years old, and his mother married an electrical contractor. Blythin considers his mother the most significant influence in his life.

"She's as hard as nails," he said. "She has a very strong personality and a very sharp mind."

Blythin admits the only reason he became serious about education was because he was working construction and was hurt in an accident. As he was lying in traction, a doctor leaned over and told him he would never do it with his back, he would have to do it with his brain.

"It was a very pithy comment, but one I took to heart."

Blythin went on to attain degrees from San Diego State University and eventually a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado.

He has written four books and publishes in some of the



by Erik Thompson / The Rebel Yell
Evan Blythin (center) poses with Dr. Stephen Nielsen (right) and friends at their retirement party Wednesday afternoon.

best journals in the communications field.

Blythin met his wife of 32 years, Barbara, when he was a teaching assistant in San Diego in a debate room. He stated that it wasn't too long after that it was obvious they were a match.

"We tied the knot and 'high-ho, Silver!' We saddled up the Palomino and headed to Colorado together."

Barbara Blythin also teaches at UNLV. She is a math teacher and has won two teaching awards in the nine years she has been at UNLV. Their only child, however, "is the apple of my eye," he said.

Kendra Blythin is a graduate student at UNLV studying communications. Blythin says that she also reflects his feelings about Nevada.

"Nevada is such a wonderful state," he said.

Every year for the past 10 years he has tried to invest himself more by taking the time to explore. He has traveled dirt roads, off roads and paved roads and says he enjoys the people and culture he finds along the way.

Blythin also has pursued sculpture for the last 30 years. He is currently working on a cottonwood kachina doll that stands eight feet tall.

He has been a member of a band for the last eight years playing a nylon string guitar and singing original urban folk music. He is also an avid gardener.

Although Blythin enjoys those things, he feels of all his outside interests that community service is the most important.

"I believe I am almost a crusader of the notion that we should bring what we have to the community," he said.

Blythin is chairman of the Redrock Citizens Advisory Council, Blue Diamond Charitable Association and, for the last 10 years, an active member of the Blue Diamond Volunteer Fire Department.

Blythin is a conservative. He believes in conserving resources, protecting species and individual responsibility.

"I believe on going easy on the earth."

He admits that, because he dresses very liberally in people's estimation, it often confuses people that he is a conservative.

"I dress independently, and my mom doesn't dress me."

Blythin is thin and has long, gray hair that he pulls back into a pony tail. He generally wear a leather hat that resembles Indiana Jones' hat in "Raiders of the Lost Arc" and leather boots that lace to the ankle. He wears small spectacles and has a leather bag he takes with him to class.

"I thought he looked like a nomad, a wanderer," Wagner said, remembering the first time she saw him.

"I wish more faculty had the courage to dress the way they wanted to instead of fitting into a mold," Andrew Keroles, a senior who took one of Blythin's classes last summer.

Blythin has enjoyed being a teacher and one highlight in his career was spending a semester in Spain.

"Blythin needs to go where his heart takes him," Wagner said. "I just feel sorry for future students who will not have the opportunity to have him as an instructor."

PRIMAL SQUAT

By Jerry Thompson

