

# Averyt leaves legacy

**David Grummon**

**Staff Writer**

A first time visitor to OU professor of history and political science Ronald A. Averyt's office will notice two things--a lot of books and a lot of signs.

"Just because I'm moody doesn't mean you're not irritating," reads one. "On Earth as it is in Texas," reads another. "Ashes of problem students," reads a jar on a shelf. Still another sign reads, "Politicians and Drunks not allowed on premises."

Without even meeting Averyt, these signs and many others (some that are best left unpublished) would tell a stranger that this man is one of the most colorful characters you will ever meet. Yet there are other signs on the walls that should also be read.

"Most inspirational faculty member—1986," reads one. "OU Oscars—Best Supporting Faculty/Staff Member—1989," reads another. Still another plaque reads, "To Dr. Ronald Averyt for your many years of service as adviser and as a friend to the Ottawa University Student Senate. Thanks, April 30, 1980."

In the annals of memorable OU professors, Averyt is a legend. His zealous support of OU teams often received quite a bit of attention, yet he denied that he was ever thrown out of a basketball game.

"That's an erroneous rumor," Averyt said, smiling.

He is notorious for being a tough teacher, the nemesis of

first-year students, and most of the others, too.

"I think it's fair to say that I'm no nonsense when it comes to class," Averyt said. "When it's time to work, we work hard. When it's time to play, we play hard. I didn't come here to be their buddy."

Those who have yet to pass through the gates into his classroom are warned no hats or putting your feet on empty chairs. Don't even think about chewing gum.

"I remember that I threw our current chairman of the Board of Trustees [Kevin Eichner] out of class because he didn't have socks on," Averyt said. "I may have mellowed some with age."

Yet to those who have survived him, he is one of the most generous and kindhearted of friends. He keeps in touch with scores of former students, faculty, and staff, maintaining a correspondence list 29 pages long with over 570 names.

Averyt came to OU in 1961, nine years before he received his doctorate in Political Science from the University of Kansas. When he retires with the Class of 1999 on May 16, he will have seen six different presidents of OU in office and will have watched a total of 34 classes come and go.

"I didn't intend to stay this long," Averyt said, "and if someone had suggested then that I would, I'd have told them to get a checkup at Osawatamie.

*(Continued on pg. 8)*

# Averyt leaves legacy

**[Cont'd. from pg. 1]**

Now that I've done it, maybe I should get a checkup at Osawatomic "

In his 38 years at OU, Averyt has seen some high times and some low times

"Though life at Ottawa has never been easy, nor was it meant to be, it has never been dull "

He remembers the turbulence of the 60s

"I do want to emphasize the efforts of students, faculty, staff and administrators to end discrimination among barbershops against blacks," Averyt said. These efforts resulted in the establishment of a barbershop on campus that would cut everyone's hair

Averyt remembers when someone tried to set Taury Jones on fire in 1970, and he remembers hearing of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy at the foot of the stairs in the Ad Building from a student with a transistor radio in hand

"People were just stunned, shocked," Averyt said. "Because he was young, and so were most of us. Those four days were kind of a blur "

Years later, Averyt faces retirement with a variety of emotions.

"It's a mixed bag," Averyt said. "Teaching is what I really have always wanted to do. Too much time is spent at meeting and committees, and though they might be necessary, they wear on you. If I ever returned as an adjunct, I'll just teach...that should be a novel experience "

After retirement, Averyt plans to read and rest for a little while, as well as travel.

"[But] I'm not ready for a rocking chair," Averyt said, "so I might still do something with the University in the teaching area " Averyt will speak at the Ottawa Breakfast at the American Baptist Churches National Convention in June, but he'll give his last lecture as a faculty member a week from Sunday as the commencement speaker for the Class of 1999.

Averyt fondly recalls having great academic freedom and making lasting friendships.

"I didn't realize I'd make so many friends and work with so many great people," Averyt said. "Of course I'll miss association with students, which keeps us young."

If nothing else can be said of Averyt, he has touched lives, and it is unlikely that OU will forget him anytime soon.