Chapel policy to be enforced

by Amy Blankenship
Assistant editor

The new regulations concerning chapel attendance will be strictly enforced, according to Dr. Maribeth Downing, associate dean of students and chairperson of the chapel attendance committee.

Previous policy stated that students who accumulated more than 10 unexcused absences from chapel would be dropped from classes, though Downing acknowledged that this policy was not strictly enforced. Under the new guidelines, students will be placed on chapel probation with the 11th unexcused absence. A 12th absence will result in dismissal from the University.

"This was a committee decision, as all of us were very concerned about chapel," said Downing. "We feel chapel is very important and we're monitoring absences a lot closer this semester."

Students were notified of the new policy through a memo from the committee, which made the decision on Jan. 19. One or more of the following steps may be taken when a student is placed on probation:

1. No club participation;
2. No club athletic participation;
3. No club Spring Sing participation;
4. No attendance at club banquets;
5. No use of car;
6. Reassignment of chapel seat;
7. Ineligible to represent the University in any extracurricular activities; and
8. Moving back on campus if living off campus.

The decision concerning which measures will be taken will be made by Downing, Butch Gardner, assistant dean of students and Dr. Ted Altman, vice president for student affairs.

Downing said that the committee has put a great deal of work into this new policy. "We looked at what some of the other Christian schools were doing, and some of them are doing similar things by placing restrictions on people."

"The committee as a whole came up with these options," said Downing. "There were already a number of students who had been over at least one absence for the spring semester."

"I think it's got some valid things in it," she said of the guidelines. "I just hope that every student takes this seriously."

Members of the chapel attendance committee are Downing, Gardner, Altman; faculty members Dr. Pat Garner, Dr. Steve Smith, Dr. Ed Baggett, Tom Alexander, Lou Butterfield and Virgil Beckett; and student representatives John Scott and Sheila Wood.

Final deadline is Feb. 29

The final deadline for the 1988 Petit Jean is Feb. 29, and according to editor David Dearin, a senior from Ames, Iowa, the staff is working many late hours to finish the book on time.

"For the last two weeks, I've been in the office until at least 4 a.m.," said Dearin. "Many of the staff members and section editors have been working all night, also."

Approximately 110 pages must be completed to finish the book, of which 30 are to be mailed today. "Actually, many of these pages are only lacking an article or picture, so it's just a matter of finishing the page," said Dearin. The book must be completed by the deadline so that students may receive their copies before summer.

Dearin also added, "If anyone would like to help out with getting the book out on time, their time would be much appreciated. Work can always be done, even by people who feel they don't have enough experience to work."

"Everybody on the staff is dedicated to getting this book done," said Dearin. "It takes a lot of dedication to give up activities on campus in order to work on it."

In addition to his staff of section editors, Dearin has several students in the yearbook practicum class working on the book. Advisor Jack Shock has also been working closely with the students.

Sharon Bowles is assistant editor and editor of the life section. Bill Tripp is the head photographer and Judith Yearry is photo editor.

Section editors of the 1988 yearbook are Jennifer Terry, achievements; Christy Cox, academics; John Folding, organizations; Don Strader, sports; Sheila Underwood, copy; Robin Pratt, social clubs; and Bill Everett, index.

In addition to being ultimately responsible for completing the book, Dearin is editing the student section, the first time in recent years the editor-in-chief has taken a specific section.

"It is very difficult for an editor to both edit the book and completely edit a section. It takes away from my time even more."

Despite the long hours and much stress associated with working on the Petit Jean, Dearin is optimistic about the book.

"I'm ready for it to be over, and I'm looking forward to seeing it in print. It is difficult, but I know God's got everything under control and the book is going to be finished."

SA plans activities

The Student Association is planning several activities for the spring semester, according to Mike Allen, S.A. president.

Open House for the spring semester will be held next week. Women's dormitories will be open Tuesday night from 7 to 9, while men's dormitories will be open Thursday night from 7 to 9.

The S.A. also sponsored a slam dunk contest at the Bison basketball game on Feb. 11. Keith Miller won first in the competition, followed by David White and Te Howard.

The Eskimo Classic softball tournament is also scheduled, said Allen. Games are scheduled to begin this weekend if the weather permits.

Allen said that the S.A. is investigating the possibility of sponsoring a "Battle of the Bands" sometime during this semester. He said auditions for the competition would be held, with three or four bands selected to compete for trophies and cash prizes.

More details on this competition will be decided later, Allen said.
Opinion

Christians must provide support for one another

Rubel Shelly, in one of his lessons this week, addressed a problem which unfortunately hits home for many of us, that being an attitude problem that has typically and notoriously been labeled on churches of Christ and her members. Very often the label is justified, sometimes not. Whatever the situation may be, it is a very real issue that hinders the Lord's work as long as action is not taken to right it.

It is not hard for some to recall a time when someone with a "dark past" desired to place membership but was met with opposition by the home congregation. Among sinners, whispers and judging glances, the hurting person who tried to respond to the gospel message instead felt no sympathy or support for change. This leaves a bad taste in one's mouth, the same mouth that will tell others of their treatment.

If those who have fallen on hard times — the poor, the divorced — or those who have experienced dependence on worldly things — alcoholics, drug addicts, homosexuals, prisoners — cannot depend on the church for support, Christians must provide for one another.

If we, as followers of Christ, cannot accept the responsibility to share genuine love and acceptance with these people, the very people that the Christian religion was founded to help the most?

Jesus said in Matthew 9:12-13, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Our aim needs to be one of practicing what Jesus preached. Truly opening our hearts and minds to the "untouchables" and not giving off an air of self-righteousness must be our goal. We cannot call ourselves Christians — followers of Christ — and keep elitist attitudes in a body established to spread love.

And it must start with us on this campus. People are crying out for love here, and it is up to us to supply it. Why not admit to ourselves that we are sinners, and form a core of support for each other, rather than condemn and criticize? It is demanded by God that we do this, but out of love for Jesus, it should automatically be felt in our hearts.

Jesus had this attitude, and even non-believers talk about him 2,000 years later.

Jesus helps conquer fear of death

The thought of death is a frightening one. It is especially bad if it is your own death you’re thinking about.

As unbelievable as it seems, high school Spanish class was fun sometimes. That is true mostly because of the guy who sat behind me. Scott. Scott was fun, easy-going and didn’t take Spanish too seriously. A friendship grew between us, confined to the walls of the Spanish room.

Yet eventually the day came when Scott spoke his last word of Spanish. A late night, a few drinks and a speeding car destroyed his life.

Expectedly, Scott’s death affected me. I was sorrowful at his leaving and I grieved for his family, but I felt something more than that. You see, Scott was about my age. We went to the same school, took the same class and were similar in some ways. The point is this: It could have been me in that car! All of a sudden death seemed a little closer to home.

I guess we’re all like that. Death seems so far away, so distant: that is, until someone our own age dies. It’s then that death takes a step closer and with sleigh hammer force causes us to accept its reality.

At Scott’s death I began to realize that I have no promises or guarantees of a long life. I began to experience the fear of the dying.

I don’t feel alone in my fear of death. I believe that Jesus felt it, too.

Jesus and John the Baptist had a bond between them. They knew each other, were about the same age and had very similar ministries. In fact, John’s ministry played a very vital role in the life of our Lord.

It’s no wonder that John’s death affected Jesus. After Jesus is told of John’s death, we read these words: “When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.”

For some reason our Lord wanted to be alone. Why? Was it just grief over the death of a friend or was it more than that? Jesus was obviously sorrowful over John’s death, but very possibly it may have involved a little bit more.

The news of John’s death may have brought the cross a little closer to home. At this time Jesus was just beginning his ministry. Three years down the road may have seemed like a long time; but the tragic death of a friend in a similar ministry may have started Jesus thinking about his own death.

Perhaps this was the first time, in his earthly life, that Jesus fully grappled with the stunning reality of a Roman cross. Death crept close and whispered in his ear.

However, our Lord was not to be defeated. With a triumphant spirit and the power of God, Jesus went to the cross with death clutching at his heels, teaching us that we can live with the fear of death. In fact we can do more than live with it. Our Lord showed us that we can conquer it.

Throw Momma is mediocre at best

Throw Momma from the Train

** Billy Crystal **

Danny DeVito

If you terrorize your children or have done your spouse wrong, you had better watch your step; this movie could suggest some rather permanent solutions that they might find appealing.

Danny DeVito and Billy Crystal star as two decent men whose lives are being made miserable by women. In DeVito’s case, he is a middle-aged man who is tied to his house like a small child because of this sense of responsibility to his momma, Momma, in this case, is the ugliest and most grotesque figure imaginable. DeVito attempts to kill her several times but is never able to go through with it.

Crystal’s problems rest with his ex-wife. He is a struggling, idealistic writer who after eight years of producing nothing finally writes a worthy book. Unfortunately, it seems that as his ex-wife left him she also stole his book and is now making millions as she passes it off as her own.

The embittered Crystal supports himself teaching a creative writing class at a nearby community college. DeVito enrolls in the class and soon discovers, along with the whole class, how deeply Crystal hates his ex-wife. Shortly after, DeVito has a conversation with Crystal on the correct way to write a murder mystery. He misinterprets the exchange and after watching an Alfred Hitchcock movie, DeVito hits on the idea of switching murders. He decides that he will kill Crystal’s ex-wife and that Crystal will return the favor only with Momma as the victim. The only difficulty arises when DeVito does not bother to inform Crystal of the plan before executing his part.

Throw Momma from the Train does have an excellent plot and fine actors, but somehow it never seems to stick.

REEL ACTION

by Christine Kernodle

Throw Momma from the Train

*** Billy Crystal ***

Danny DeVito

What’s Happening

TONIGHT

S.A. Movie Double Feature. Never Ending Story, 7; Six Weeks, 9:30, Benson Auditorium

Engaged and Newlywed Seminar, College Church

TOMORROW

S.A. Movie, Roster Cogburn, 7 and 9:30 p.m., Benson Auditorium

SUNDAY

Worship

MONDAY

Women’s Club Meetings

Basketball v. Southern Arkansas University (men and women), Ganus Athletic Center

TUESDAY

Women’s Open House, 7-9 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Classes

THURSDAY

Men’s Open House, 7-9 p.m.

Basketball at University of Arkansas at Monticello (men and women)
Finding the perfect Valentine card is hopeless task

With Valentine’s Day just past, I want to take this opportunity to get to the heart of this crimson holiday! Why the outpouring of gifts? — roses by the dozens and embossed chocolates. Surely Cupid must have had something in mind when he ventured out with his bow and arrow that mystical morning. All of a sudden he aimed his arrow toward the sky, let her sail, and it’s been raining red hot love ever since.

I think the whole scene is sweet, a little sappy maybe, but it will do. The hardest thing about Valentine’s Day, perhaps, is finding the “perfect” card for the “perfect” person. This compelling venture sends me back to the bookstore everyday for at least a week before Valentine’s Day. There aren’t a lot of choices.

You have the 80-year-old Aunt Ethel card covered with a decorator plastic coat. Underneath that is the inevitable plaster-of-paris looking vase with about 30 multicolored pastel flowers crammed in it. (I ask you if this a ploy to have Aunt Ethel send you a budding bouquet so you can tell everyone they’re from Mr. Wonderful?) The message on Ethel’s card is so long and dramatic you fell asleep reading it, but you know she’ll love it.

There is also the “I belong in the cradle-roll curriculum” card. These are easiest to spot. They almost always have a big dumb dog on the front, or a care bear or two turtles making cookies or something on it. They will forever rhyme, therefore, the following standard is no surprise: “Just Mr. Turtle passing your way to wish you a ... ” See — you know exactly what it says. Honestly! When was the last time you purposefully forked out a buck to greet someone with sappy sing song?

Next, there is the “I can’t live without you” Valentine card. These are usually the biggest, most dramatic, expensive, committed for life cards. They are so hot you can just feel the steam oozing off the rack. These scare me. A lot.

Fourth, there is the “I say absolutely nothing” card. It’s 99% white with one black mark down the front for contrast and your basic “hi.” Open it up “Valentine.” So what?

Finally, there is the perfect card, which I never find. Thank goodness Ziggy popped onto the scene a few years ago. Somehow we’re on the same wavelength in this life — except his feet are a little bigger. He has that endearing knack for bringing humor into drab situations and picking out the “card” at least that. So, I usually prefer to go the Ziggy route. Safe and sweet.

Decorating for Valentine’s Day is always fun! I just really get into holidays and take great delight in plastering some kind of appropriate ornament on anything in my apartment that doesn’t move. (Fortunately, for my roommates, they got out easy.) Red and white candies go over really well so do old February posters torn off dated calendars. But I don’t know, I may have overdone it this year. I don’t really think the plants appreciated being smothered with big red bows, especially Delphi, our tree plant. With but the shedding of three more leaves, she’s history. (If only she would have said something at Christmas like: “Is tinsel really necessary?”)

Anyway, it’s easy to tell when the Valentine charisma has gone: scale and the decorations have run their course. Yep, not long after V-tine’s, those budding, fragrant roses appear to be suffering from a severe hangover and passersby wonder if you’ve taken private stock in Avon’s To A Wild Rose collection. Empty Brach’s boxes prompt the woeful sight of roommates chanting, “I can’t believe these are easiest to spot. They almost always have a big dumb dog on the front, or a care bear or two turtles making cookies or something on it. They will forever rhyme, therefore, the following standard is no surprise: “Just Mr. Turtle passing your way to wish you a ... ” See — you know exactly what it says. Honestly! When was the last time you purposefully forked out a buck to greet someone with sappy sing song?

Confederate flags can suggest racism

The Civil War ended 123 years ago, but there are still a number of people who refuse to retire the emblem of the South — the Confederate flag. To most people the Confederate flag is not a flag supporting segregation and slavery, but instead a symbol of the country’s history. If everyone believed this the flag would have an appropriate place in public parades, incorporated on state’s flags, and atop capitols, but not everyone subscribes to this belief.

Blacks, along with many whites, view the Confederate flag as a symbol of slavery and segregation. The Confederate flag is to blacks what the swastika is to Jews, a symbol of oppression. Most of us are appalled when we see neo-Nazis wearing swastikas on their armbands, but not when we see a Confederate flag being used for the same purpose — showing dominance over a particular group of people.

George Wallace helped give the Confederate flag this significance when he hoisted it above the capitols at Montgomery, Ala. in 1963. He did so after proclaiming “segregation forever.” He obviously sees the Confederate flag as a symbol of segregation. The Ku Klux Klan also helped give the Confederate flag its negative connotation.

Reynolds Rap
by Karen Reynolds

They use it, along with an earlier flag of the United States ("Don’t Tread on Me") in parades and demonstrations to signify their racism.

Slavery ended at the end of the Civil War for the South and segregation ended, in law, in the 1950’s. Segregation and racism are still problems in the country today and they do not need to be aggravated by flying the Confederate flag on public buildings. The Ku Klux Klan and other private groups do have the constitutional right to fly the Confederate flag at their ceremonies, just as the neo-Nazis have the right to do the same with Hitler’s swastika.

The Confederate flag needs to be taken down from the capitols at Montgomery, Ala. and Columbia, S.C. The government is supposed to represent the people of the country, both majorities and minorities. If the Confederate flag represents slavery, segregation and racism in the minds of some, then it needs to be removed from where it is flying.
**Gore program to be shown**

The Young Democrats will present a program taped by presidential candidate Sen. Albert Gore (D, Tenn.) on Monday at 4:30 in American Heritage Auditorium.

On Sunday, Gore will conduct a question and answer program for college students, which will be broadcast via satellite to more than 200 colleges and universities. This will be shown on Monday, to be followed by a short organizational meeting for the Young Democrats.

"We feel that students should make a conscious effort to get as much information as possible about all of the candidates, both Democrat and Republican," said Mark Elrod, instructor in political science and co-sponsor of Young Democrats.

"This program is unique, in that it is directed specifically at college students," said Elrod. "It will deal with the types of questions of interest to them."

The public is also invited to attend the presentation.

**Yates scholarships available for math, science students**

Applications are now being accepted for the Timothy Edward Yates Memorial Scholarship, according to Dr. Dean Priest, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The scholarships were established in memory of Yates, a Harding alumnus. The awards, which consist of two scholarships valued at $1,000 each, are for students majoring in mathematics, computer science, biology and the physical sciences.

Applicants must be at least a junior, have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.4 in the major field, and have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2 overall.

Deadline for application is March 2. Further information may be obtained from Priest in room 102 of the science building.

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Ken Blanchard, author of the One Minute Manager and co-author of the Power of Ethical Management, conducts the annual management seminar in Benson Auditorium.

*Photo courtesy of Public Relations Office*
crystal stevens a recent transfer from david lipscomb college has spent several years acting in a series and commercials.
Bisons rally to defeat AIC foe

The Bison basketball team staged a second half comeback to defeat the Ouachita Baptist University Tigers Monday night in Arkadelphia, and in the process captured their second straight Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference game.

The 69-65 victory improved Harding's record to 5-9 in AIC play and 10-13 overall. As was the case Saturday night when they defeated Arkansas College 66-59, the Bisons pulled away in the second half after playing it close in the first half. Trailing 30-28 at halftime after leading by as many as nine points in the early going, the Bisons pulled away on the play of Rolando Garcia, David James and substitute Chad Bradley. Bradley hit two key buckets, including a conventional three-point play with 6:42 to play, to give the Bisons a 53-47 lead.

But OBU super sub Tony Price, who didn't earn his uniform until midway through the season and led all scorers with 21 points, kept the Tigers close. His pair of three-point shots in the final five minutes pulled Ouachita within six points after it trailed by nine.

It was Garcia, however, that became the game's hero. After leaving the game early in the second half with a leg cramp, the 6-8 sophomore postman returned and hit a layup with 35 seconds remaining, then sealed the win for the Bisons with two free throws with a second left.

James led the Bisons with 20 points, followed by Garcia with 12 points.

Lady Bisons win second straight game

With Teri Loven, Tomi Cragwall and Stephany Smith leading the way, the Lady Bison basketball team is currently riding the wings of a two game winning streak.

Monday night, the Lady Bisons pushed back a tough Ouachita Baptist University team in Arkadelphia in a 58-56 win. That added strength to Saturday night's 83-75 victory at home over Arkansas College. Head Coach Phil Watkins said his girls are playing as good as they have all season.

"We're doing it with several players out with injuries, too," he said Tuesday morning. "Last night we suited out only nine of 15 girls, so we're having to lean on only a few players right now."

Against the Lady Tigers, Harding jumped out to a 25-22 halftime lead and expanded it to as many as 11 points in the second half before OBU came alive in the closing minutes. Ouachita came as close as 53-52 before the Lady Bisons pulled away in the final seconds.

Shawn Bradford put the game on ice when her two free throws gave the Lady Bisons a 58-54 lead with 10 seconds left. Out of timeouts, the Lady Tigers sank an uncontested layup as the buzzer sounded to end the game.

Watkins noted the play of Cragwall, Smith and reserve guard Lisa Kirk, who got her second straight start against the Lady Tigers. Cragwall scored 16 points and pulled down 13 rebounds, as did Smith. Kirk chipped in six points and had eight rebounds. Bradford led the Lady Bisons with 19 points.

The Lady Bisons played one of their best games of the season Saturday night against (See LADY BISON'S, page 7)

David White, sophomore, jams the slam dunk that won him second place in last week's contest. (Photo courtesy of Public Relations Office)
Boontham Lek Jittimaporn, former Harding tennis standout, is making waves on the swim team.

LADY BISON

Arkansas College. Cragwall was one of the main reasons, according to Watkins, as was Loven.

"Toni can be a dominant force in a game if she gets hot," he said of his 6-2 freshman.

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Lady Bisons
(continued from page 6)

On the tennis court, Jittimaporn is, like his name, both intimidating and easygoing. Intimidating to opponents, who usually come out on the losing end, last year at the district tournament he swept through unbeaten winning the number two man division and the doubles qualifying for nationals. His record for the season was 15-9 with many of his losses coming at the hands of NCAA Division I competitors during the pre-conference schedule.

Water Buffalos and has clocked good times working at the breast stroke.

Remington Student ID

Students qualify for nationals

In last Saturday's indoor meet at the Arkansas State University Convocation Center in Jonesboro, four new school records were set. Records were set by Jon Murray in the 3000 meters, Cheryl Bednosky in the mile run, Harold "Peanut" Hall in the 200 meters, and the women's two mile relay team. Murray placed eighth in the 3000 meter run with a time of 8:47.7, setting a new school indoor record. In a time of 5:18.67, Bednosky placed fifth in the meet, barely missing national qualifying time by six seconds. The women's two mile relay consisting of Margaret Eoff, Bednosky, Teresa Durham and Jodie Murray placed second in the meet with a new school record of 10:03.2.

In the sprint events, Hall ran a 23.04 qualifying him for the finals in the meet and set a new 200 meter indoor school record. Also qualifying for the finals in the 200 meter was Barry Ford with a time of 24.44 seconds. Unfortunately, Ford came up with a lame leg before finals so he could not compete in them. Hall ran into some more "bad luck," at the starting line, disqualifying himself in the finals with a false start.

Also doing well in the meet were Te Howard who placed fifth in the high jump with a jump of 6'8", and Osterle Bernard who placed third in the shot put with a throw of 50 3/4".

There were several personal records (PR) at the meet. Tim Seay set a PR in the 800 meter run with a time of 2:00.57. 50.83 seconds was a PR for Eric VanMatre in the 400 meter run. Jimmy Sloan also had a good day Saturday with a jump of 14'6" in the pole vault continuing to be consistent in his performances.

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Former Bison tennis standout making waves on swim team

by Toby Taylor

After four years of competition in tennis at Paris Junior College in Texas and at Harding, which included one AIC championship and one runner-up AIC team, Boontham Lek Jittimaporn capped his senior year by qualifying for the NAIA national tennis tournament.

For most college athletes this would be enough. Most would be content to give collegiate sports a rest and enjoy the laid back life of the average 'Joe college.' But with a year of school left and another year of eligibility left for another sport, Jittimaporn has made waves on the Harding men's swim team.

"I like to swim," said Jittimaporn, "and some of the swimmers talked me into joining the team." Jittimaporn has competed mainly in the long distance events for the Water Buffalos and has clocked good times in the 1000 meters and 1000 meters. He is also working at the breast stroke. "I'm practicing my stroke for the long distance freestyle events. I'm pretty strong so I can swim far," Jittimaporn commented.

A native of Thailand, Jittimaporn came to the U.S. in 1983 to get an education and to play tennis. After studying English in Ohio, Jittimaporn travelled to Texas where he switched playing number one and two man for the Paris Junior College tennis team. Then in the fall of 1985, he settled in at Harding University to complete his formal education.

To the average American a name like Boontham Jittimaporn might seem a bit intimidating to the tongue, but his nickname is an informal name given to him by his parents, Jittimaporn said that most people in Thailand are given a nickname in addition to their formal name.

Jittimaporn will begin training to compete in triathlons. Jittimaporn will graduate this May with a degree in marketing and plans to remain in the U.S. for two or three years when he will return to Thailand to take a job his father has for him.

This summer will include a lot of tennis for Jittimaporn who plans to play on the tennis tour circuit. To qualify for the bigger tennis events, Jittimaporn must gain points by placing in other tournaments on the tour circuit. The U.S. Open is a goal he would like to reach this summer.

Jittimaporn said he came to the United States because, "I like the sports here. I love to play tennis and there's a lot of competition."

Let the competition beware. Jittimaporn has the tools to compete in any field of endeavor.

Students qualify for nationals

The wins also push the Lady Bisons' record to 6-13 overall and 3-9 in Arkansas Invitational soorts.

Students qualify for nationals

In last Saturday's indoor meet at the Arkansas State University Convocation Center in Jonesboro, four new school records were set. Records were set by Jon Murray in the 3000 meters, Cheryl Bednosky in the mile run, Harold "Peanut" Hall in the 200 meters, and the women's two mile relay team. Murray placed eighth in the 3000 meter run with a time of 8:47.7, setting a new school indoor record. In a time of 5:18.67, Bednosky placed fifth in the meet, barely missing national qualifying time by six seconds. The women's two mile relay consisting of Margaret Eoff, Bednosky, Teresa Durham and Jodie Murray placed second in

Students qualify for nationals
Dick Johnson to retire after 19 years as coach

For 19 years, Dick Johnson has laced up his spikes and led the Harding Bisons on the baseball diamond. But after this spring, he'll hang them up permanently.

The 63-year-old Johnson announced last weekend that he'll take advantage of early retirement at the end of the current semester and step down as head baseball coach and associate professor of physical education.

The Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference and NAIA District 17 Coach of the Year in 1975, 1984, 1985 and 1986, Johnson said the decision was a hard one to make, but it was right for the time.

"It's time for old blood to go out and young blood to come in," he said Friday. "That's the way it's supposed to be in this business."

Johnson will coach the Bisons through the upcoming spring season. Dr. Steve Smith, chairman of Harding's math department and assistant coach to Johnson the last eight seasons, has been named as Johnson's successor.

"I'm delighted that Steve has agreed to take the program after this season," Johnson said. "That was a key in my decision to take the early retirement. I wanted to be sure that the program would be in good hands, and I know it will be under Steve. He and I have been together for a long time, and I've never treated him as an assistant coach. He has been a co-head coach. He's had a great impact on the program and has been very instrumental in our success the last several seasons."

Johnson has enjoyed great success since the Bisons moved to Jerry Moore Memorial Field on campus in 1981. In 1984 the Bisons won the AIC championship and in 1985 and 1986 the NAIA District 17 title. His 1973 squad finished runner-up in the District 17 tournament.

Johnson said he did not feel any pressure to take early retirement, but that he felt it was time to step down.

A 1960 graduate of Harding, Johnson is a native of Memphis who began his baseball career as a speedy third baseman at Whitehaven High School. After high school and American Legion play concluded, he played minor league baseball, reaching as far as Class A with the Little Rock Travelers in 1965.

"That's a dream that I had had the nine years I was away," he said of the opportunity to come back to Searcy. "I told the folks here that if they ever had an opening, I'd like to be considered. I knew before I came that I'd take it if they offered me a job."

During his tenure as head baseball coach, the Bisons played on three fields. His first two teams played on a field near Alumni Field, the football Bisons' home. From there, his teams moved to Berryhill Park in Searcy until 1981, when they initiated Jerry Moore Memorial Field.

Johnson says the new field was one of three obvious reasons for the Bisons' success in the mid-1980s.

"It was attractive to the kids. I still think it's the third best field in the state, behind the Razorbacks' Astroturf field in Fayetteville and Ray Winder Field in Little Rock."

The other two factors in the success of his teams were the acquisition of Smith as assistant coach and the recruitment of outstanding talent, namely Randy Hindman and Greg Thompson.

A highlight in his career came in 1985 when the Bisons narrowly missed going to the NAIA World Series. After winning the District 17 crown, they hosted the NAIA Area V Tournament and were eliminated by Georgia College in the finals.

"I'm looking forward to this season, since it will be my last, and I'm excited about the program with Steve leading it," he said further. "I'm sure I'm going to miss it after it's over but it hasn't hit me quite yet. I'm sure it will when I start packing away my office."

Smith said, "Steve works well with young men and is highly respected by the baseball players. We believe he's eminently qualified and feel that he will do an excellent job in leading the team."

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