What is your fondest memory from your days at the University of Nevada, Reno?

Our fondest memories are watching our students over the years walk across the stage at commencement, shake hands with the president, and receive their degrees. Between us we supervised nearly 50 master’s theses and doctoral dissertations. Those students all went on to distinguished careers. We taught many hundreds of undergraduate students over the years. By the late 1980s we began hearing from undergraduate students that, “my parent (insert proper gender term here) took your class in (insert any one of a dozen classes here)…” “We have so far escaped hearing “my grandparent(s) took your class in…”

Other fond memories are of our many fine colleagues at the University. The faculty is outstanding in so many ways, and are noted for their dedication to the institution, state and students. Several are among our best friends. One particular friend was Molly Plagg Knudtsen, regent extraordinaire and renaissance woman. She was a driving force in getting the anthropology department established. In the 1960s, many universities would not hire married couples—especially those in the same field. Molly told us “We don’t believe in that, we’ll take you both.”

What have you done that you’re most proud of?

We are very proud of having been named University Foundation Professors (Kay 1991-94, Don 1988-91), and University of Nevada, Reno Outstanding Researcher of the Year (Kay 1995, Don 2003).

Kay is most proud of work through the years that has been of at least some help to the Great Basin’s Native peoples. This includes work on the Timbisha Shoshone’s land restoration project, successfully completed in 2000 with the return of some 6,000 acres to them, and on their continuing project to reintroduce indigenous management of natural resources into Death Valley National Park. Also included is work over many years with various Native language programs toward restoration of indigenous languages in their communities.

Don is most proud of an innovative and award-winning Continuing Education Program in Heritage Resources Management, which he and then dean of Continuing Education, Neal Ferguson, created in 1987. The program brought national and international recognition to the University and became the model for current ongoing professional development programs nationwide.

What advice would you give someone just starting out after college?

To students who are starting out, no matter what their majors and long term goals may be, we advise them to take advantage of the outstanding programs in the humanities and social sciences in the College of Liberal Arts. There are excellent nationally and internationally recognized faculty members in anthropology, history, art, music, English, the Core Humanities Program, philosophy, political science, and other departments. Finally, and most importantly, learn how to write, and write well. No matter what your career path, good writing skills are absolutely essential to your success.