Native Nevadan Stanley Paher ’69 M.A. (political science) spends a lot of time exploring Nevada’s backcountry, mapping it for publication. As a publisher/editor/author with 124 books in his catalog focusing on various Nevada themes, southwestern ghost towns, Lake Tahoe and Death Valley—19 of which he penned himself—Stan is an avid hiker and 4-wheeler, happily tooling around Nevada from spring until fall in one of his three Jeeps, ever seeking details to keep his books up to date. Stan’s classic Nevada Ghost Towns & Mining Camps is Nevada’s all-time best selling history book with more than 66,500 copies sold. The 500-page tome describes 668 ghost towns with maps, pictures and travel directions. The book is paired with his two-volume Desert Atlas, in its seventh edition, which includes 71 color maps and more than 2,200 places of interest for both the casual explorer and serious off-road enthusiast. Stan has also written six religious-historical books, numerous magazine articles and about 550 book reviews.

Stan is proud of his collection of Nevada historical paper collectibles, which includes about 1,500 rare books, maps and about 14,000 photographs and negatives, territorial stock certificates and hundreds of first editions of books dating back to 1845. When he moved to Reno in 1982, he built his home around a secure, 150-square-foot, fireproof vault to store his treasures.

Stan is a frequent lecturer at the University and across Nevada, teaching students the history of the state, as well as the ins and outs of publishing and writing. He supports scholarships in English and history at Nevada. To learn more about the scholarships, please contact Stuart Golder, (775) 784-1222 or sgolder@unr.edu.

What is your fondest memory from your days at Nevada?

It was May 9, 1968, a date that coincides with the 100th anniversary of the founding of Reno. At that time I was in a master’s program in the Department of Political Science, and obtaining my degree was not assured. I had taken a series of four comprehensive tests, and received a C grade on two of them, meaning not satisfactory and no granting of the degree. That very May 9th the department met to decide whether or not to allow me to retake the tests. I had, however, written a detailed story about the events surrounding Reno’s founding, and that morning the local newspaper, Nevada State Journal, ran it with a headline on the front page. Surely members of the department saw my work, and I have always believed that various factors of fate met that day to allow me to retake the tests and graduate the next year.

What have you done that you are most proud of?

I am most proud of founding Nevada Publications in 1970 and working with about 55 authors on Nevada book-length manuscripts, guiding them through the production stage and the final product, then marketing them. Skills in these areas were attained simply by watching “over the shoulders” of various editors, publishers and distributors, not from formal schooling. Initial profits from books issued in the early 1970s allowed me to fuel real estate investments, and over the years, profits have sustained the business and a quality life. I experienced great joy in interacting with 300 Nevada amateur writers, each of whom had a family story or favorite historical topic, to compile the Nevada Official Bicentennial Book in 1976. Of course, pros like Walter Van Tilburg Clark and Robert Laxalt were included in that best-selling volume. But over the years the book’s chief value has been the recording by everyday people of “slices of life” that would otherwise be lost. By 1992, I saw a need for a companion atlas to my ghost town book issued in 1970, and the newer book has experienced seven printings. After 40 years in the publishing business, I find myself just as enthusiastic as ever about the publishing game, ready to meet changing business challenges, but now time and advice is given to younger writers and their manuscripts. It is part of my philosophy of life to “give back to the community,” even as I learned from others: “Freely you have received, now freely give.”

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

After getting my bachelor’s, I traveled in Europe and Asia for exactly five months. The exposure to many cultures gave me an understanding of other people and their ways. Graduates should do something similarly, and then settle into a job or profession. Whereas getting through college is like running hurdles—preparing and passing test after test and final examinations—the work-a-day world should not be approached in that way. Rather, as you settle into a new job, take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow in the knowledge of your chosen craft, and realize that ambition and dependability are two key factors for advancement.