

# Pinkston 'takes care of bug business'

Real bugs, plastic bugs, wooden bugs, bug coat racks and toys with bugs in them. Bugs are everywhere. Bug, bugs and more bugs are what you see when you enter the office of Ken Pinkston.

When you meet Pinkston, it does not take long to discover he is full of energy, with a quick wit and a humorous side and is serious about teaching students about bugs.

The idea that good bugs are not necessarily dead bugs is a philosophy he learned working weekends and school breaks for his father's pest control company in Oklahoma City.

"I figured out there was something better than killing bugs," said Pinkston.

After high school, Pinkston applied and was accepted into Oklahoma State University's entomology program with the idea that people should try to get along with insects because insects will always be here.

"I got into entomology more or less trying to figure out a way to help people better understand solve problems with insects," said Pinkston.

Pinkston's first academic adviser told him he would not pass his first semester at OSU. It was an experience that set a desire in him to succeed.

He went on to be one of the top students in his class. After receiving his bachelor's degree in entomology, he spent four years in the military as an Air Force communications officer. Upon completion of his military career, Pinkston returned to OSU to pursue a doctorate in entomology.

With his new degree in hand, Pinkston went to Muskogee, Okla. in 1970. Here he worked for the Extension Service as an area entomologist, working in integrated pest management and with students in eastern Oklahoma.

In 1975, he went to work in the entomology department at OSU where he worked in the Cooperative Extension Service, helping county extension offices with programs and developing extension literature on insects and their control.

In 1992, when instructing staff fell short in the entomology department, he was asked to teach Entomology 2003, Insects in Society.

Since his first semester, the course

has continued to grow. It is popular because it provides a natural science credit and because Pinkston is known as a teacher who cares about learning and keeps the class entertained with his humor.

His style came from watching and evaluating his instructors.

"An instructor told me the primary way to be a successful teacher is to have the desire to teach," said Pinkston. "I watched and learned from the teachers I had in class."

Russell Wright, professor and department head of entomology and plant pathology, said Pinkston's success in teaching is due to his charisma.

"The students tell other students about his class and about Dr. Pinkston's teaching style, so more kids want to take the class," said Wright.

The students agree Pinkston is full of energy and makes class fun, reminding them to TCB — Take Care of Business — one of his favorite clichés.

"He wants to keep you awake so he keeps you laughing," said Lindsey VonTungeln, an agricultural communications sophomore at OSU.

Pinkston said learning about bugs may not be the most interesting thing students do, so he finds different things to keep the class interesting.

Pinkston's build-a-bug project allows groups of students to build a bug that is different than today's bugs. The students must make it from every day things and explain how it is different.

"You don't just build the bug but you have to describe the bug and what makes it a bug in a paper," said Pinkston. "This bug cannot be like any normal bug. It must be different."

Another thing that Pinkston does is have his students participate in the Bug Bowl. This quiz bowl is just like any other except it is all about — you guessed it — bugs.

"He is really cool," said John Koesler, agricultural education senior from Vinita, Okla. "It is a really good class."

Despite the fact that Pinkston is



Quick with a smile, Pinkston takes a break from class.

Shelly Sifton

widely known for his entomology class, Pinkston's life is not just about insects.

"I used to fish and play golf in my spare time," said Pinkston. "But as you can see, this class takes a lot of time."

However, Pinkston has found time to be involved in the building of four houses since he has moved to Stillwater.

Pinkston has decided to retire, but is going to teach on a contract basis for one more year to allow the department time to find his replacement.

"It is really a shame to see Dr. Pinkston retire," said VonTungeln. "There will be a lot of students who will miss out and not be able to enjoy his teaching style."

When asked what he wants to do when he retires, Pinkston pulled out a list of the things he plans to do.

"I plan to golf, take classes and learn to play the guitar. I can pick some now, but I want to play well," said Pinkston. "I have been thinking about this for a while so when ever I think of something to do, I write it down." *Cy*

By Richard Conner  
Pawhuska, Okla.