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January 28, 1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

RON LEATHERS TO RETIRE FROM EIU

CHARLESTON -- For Ron Leathers of Charleston, a 40-year affiliation with Eastern Illinois University has become more of a lifestyle than a career.

He and his wife, Sue, met and married while both students at Eastern. Their immediate family -- children, a brother, and in-laws -- includes nine Eastern graduates with a total of 11 different degrees. Leathers himself advanced from teacher and student teaching coordinator -- jobs he was hired for in 1965 -- to the position of assistant dean.

It's no wonder then that as he approaches his impending retirement, Leathers remains reluctant to cut all ties to EIU.

"I don't intend to get clearly away," he said. "There are very strong roots here for me."

Although his retirement won't be official until Aug. 1 of this year, Leathers' last day on campus will be Friday, Jan. 31. During the remaining six months of his employment, he will remain on administrative leave.

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LEATHERS

A reception in his honor will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30, in the 1895 Room of the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union. All friends, family, students and Eastern employees are invited to attend.

For Leathers, born and raised in Lawrenceville, it seemed always to be a given that he would grow up to attend Eastern. "My parents weren't college-educated, but they were bound and determined that their son would be. It was always 'When you grow up' or 'When you graduate, you're going to go to Eastern,'" Leathers said.

"And there was never any doubt that I'd be going to Eastern rather than some other school," he added. "Eastern was the state university for that area."

Leathers and his wife, Sue, met while both students at Eastern, but when the couple decided to marry before graduating, Sue dropped out. "Our plan -- which was a quite common plan among couples back then -- was for me to continue my education and graduate while she worked. She would finish up her degree work later," Leathers said.

Instead, he added, his wife began a very successful career in business and chose not to return to school.

Leathers graduated in 1960 and immediately began teaching high school English at Robinson High School. He spent five years there, four of which he served as a cooperative teacher with Eastern, supervising student teachers from the university within his classroom.

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While at Robinson, Leathers also began work toward his master's degree at Indiana State University. His timing was ideal, for he finished his degree work during the summer of 1965 -- just in time to join Eastern's staff.

"It was a dual appointment," Leathers said, noting that he spent part of his time teaching freshman English and literature, and the remaining time on the Faculty for Professional Education. This appointment, he explained, allowed him to coordinate student teaching activities for all of Eastern's English and speech communication students.

Eleven years later, in response to Illinois legislation requiring 100 additional clock hours of documented in-classroom training for education majors, Eastern developed the position of director of pre-student teaching clinical experiences. Leathers was named director in 1975, continuing in that capacity until 1980 when he assumed the position of assistant dean in what is now the College of Education and Professional Studies.

"I was very fortunate," Leathers said. "Over the years I have continued to receive fantastic opportunities that seemed tailored to my career."

For the past 15 years, Leathers and his wife, Sue, have made an impact in students' lives through avenues other than that of academics. They purchased Dale Bayles Clothier on Campus, located north of Old Main in University Village, and have consistently hired between 10 and 12 part-time students per semester since taking

ownership. The majority are hired as freshmen or sophomores, and continue to work for the Leathers' until graduation.

In addition to the financial impact, "Sue tends to be a sort of mother to them," Leathers said, "and we keep in contact with many of them after they graduate -- writing back and forth, sending Christmas cards and so forth."

After Friday, Leathers will more equally share responsibilities at the store with his wife, and both intend to make some extended trips. He promises himself to spend more time in his in-home woodworking shop, building furniture, and perhaps spend more time hunting -- a pastime he enjoys.

Leathers will also continue his participation with the Coles County Barbershop Singers, a non-profit community service group he co-founded along with fellow Eastern faculty member Tom Woodall, as well as with various athletic and community organizations which he's associated with for so many years. He admits he'll be hard pressed to become bored.

"But I will miss the socialization," he added. "Getting up, coming to work each morning and seeing everyone. It'll be a little difficult getting used to being alone."