

Big Red on Broadway



Big Red spirit doesn't stop at the Missouri River. In a small cafe in Council Bluffs, Iowa, George Pappas said "There's nothing like a good old football game."

Pappas, owner of "George's" for 21 years, was in the restaurant business "as a boy." His father owned the Coney Island restaurant in Lincoln which Pappas said was the "big time." The restaurant was going strong when soldiers came back from the war.

"We had M.P.'s sergeants, corporals, you name it, they were there," Pappas said.

Pappas said he began as a carhop at the restaurant and never went to college, "even though Dad wanted me to," because he said he liked what he was doing and wanted to stay in it.

He said he bought "George's" as an investment and is ready to sell, but if he can't get enough money he will tear it down and leave the land to his little granddaughter.

Pictures of his two children on the wall get equal play with Big Red plaques and statuettes.

"And of course this is me, because I'm boss," he said as he picked up a dime-store statuette of a little pot-bellied man.

"Now, what do you think of this?" he said cradling a clock-shaped Big Red football.

Big Red fever brimmed over in the small cafe as Pappas explained how he obtained tickets to the games.

He said he waits until right before the game and approaches ticket scalpers just as a police officer walks by. "And then I get 'em for the regular price."

Pappas said he likes the campus and especially the city because it is a clean town with a family atmosphere.

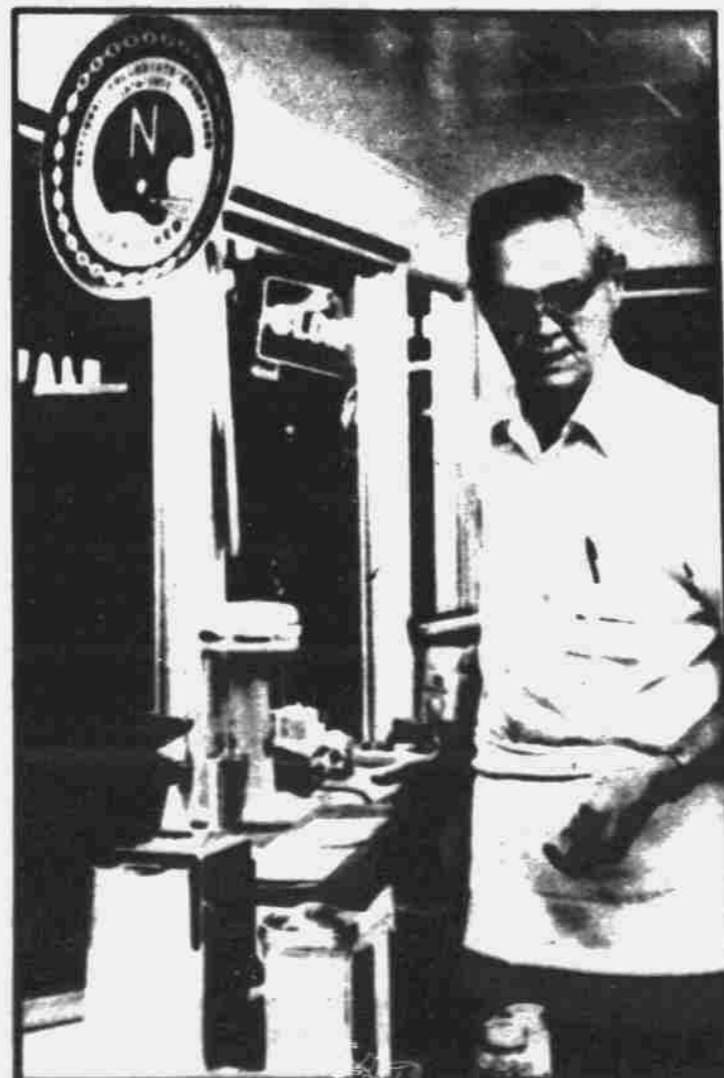
He also said he liked the police control.

"You can drive around on any street and see a cruiser out. They're always on the job."

When the game's ended, Pappas returns to the small cafe and carries his memories of Lincoln and Big Red with him.

Pappas said he doesn't have much problem with his Iowa friends when he and his wife walk down the street in their Big Red attire.

"At least, they better not bother me."



Photos by Mark Billingsley
 Story by Jill Denning