

# Professor recounts growth, involvement in construction

By Eric Peterson

When talking with Verner Meyers, associate professor of construction management at UNL, one gets a sense of an entire downtown city being constructed, building by building.

"I've been in the construction business all my life here in Lincoln, either by myself or (in partnership) with other people," he said. Meyers worked primarily with large-scale commercial construction, including the Banker's Life and J C Penney buildings, the University Club addition on top of the Stuart Building, which Meyers said was unusual because the construction techniques used were dangerous at the time, and the Brandeis building, which is now vacant. Meyers said he is pleased that developers are going to turn the Brandeis space into offices and stores.

"That's just great. They'll do a good job there," he said.

Meyers said the developers intend to open the center of the building and convert it into an atrium.

Meyers said he has done a lot of work for the university. As director of the Division of Planning and Construction in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he worked with the designs for the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, the Woods art building and Abel-Sandoz residence hall complex. He also has worked for the Army-Corps of Engineers.

Meyers said he may leave the university after this semester, but he has not yet decided. If he does, Meyers said, he will devote more time to a downtown job.

"There was very, very little going on then," Meyers said, noting it was during the Great Depression. "Everything was shut down.



Photo by Jodie Fields

Verner Meyers

Yet, I might have three or four jobs to do at one time. I married my wife in 1937 - we didn't have it too badly because all our friends were in the same boat." Meyers said social resentment may be greater in hard times today because economic problems aren't spread evenly.

Meyers said the construction business improved only after the rest of the economy did.

"I've noticed that in bad times, like the depression or the recession in the '70s, constructions stop, but that doesn't mean they go away. Projects are just postponed. You'll find that construction is the last industry to be affected by a depression and the last one to recover from it."

Meyers never got a degree beyond a bachelor's, and he said this made the transition from business to teaching more difficult. Meyers began working at UNL when his own firm closed down.

"There have been some

problems, but the university has been very accepting to a certain extent because of the years of experience I had." Meyers began teaching construction management at UNL in 1975.

Meyers said he loves teaching and following the progress of former students.

Construction management students are still finding good jobs in spite of the state of the construction industry, Meyers asserted, although they may have to go into an allied field like subcontracting or construction equipment.

"Generally, they're finding pretty good jobs - not in Lincoln, but in other pockets of the country, on the East Coast, in the Sunbelt, on the West Coast."

Meyers graduated from NU in 1934 with a bachelor's degree in Architecture. He combined postgraduate work in the School of Architecture with apprentice work at Davis and Wilson, an architectural firm which is now Davis Fenton Stange & Darling.

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## Shorts

Public night at Behlen Observatory will be Friday from 8 to 11 p.m. Observations of the planets will be featured. Behlen Observatory is located at the NU Field Laboratory in Mead on Avenue C between Third and Fourth streets.

The Rape/Spouse Crisis Center and Friendship Home are offering two support groups for abused women. One group meets Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m. and the other meets Thursday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m.

The 47th annual all-state summer residential programs in art, theater, dance and music, have been scheduled this year for June 6 through 18 on the UNL Campus. Contact Raymond Miller or Becky Hanson, 472-2490 for more information.

Hyde Memorial Observatory will be open to the public, free of charge, each Saturday night from sundown until 11:00 p.m.



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