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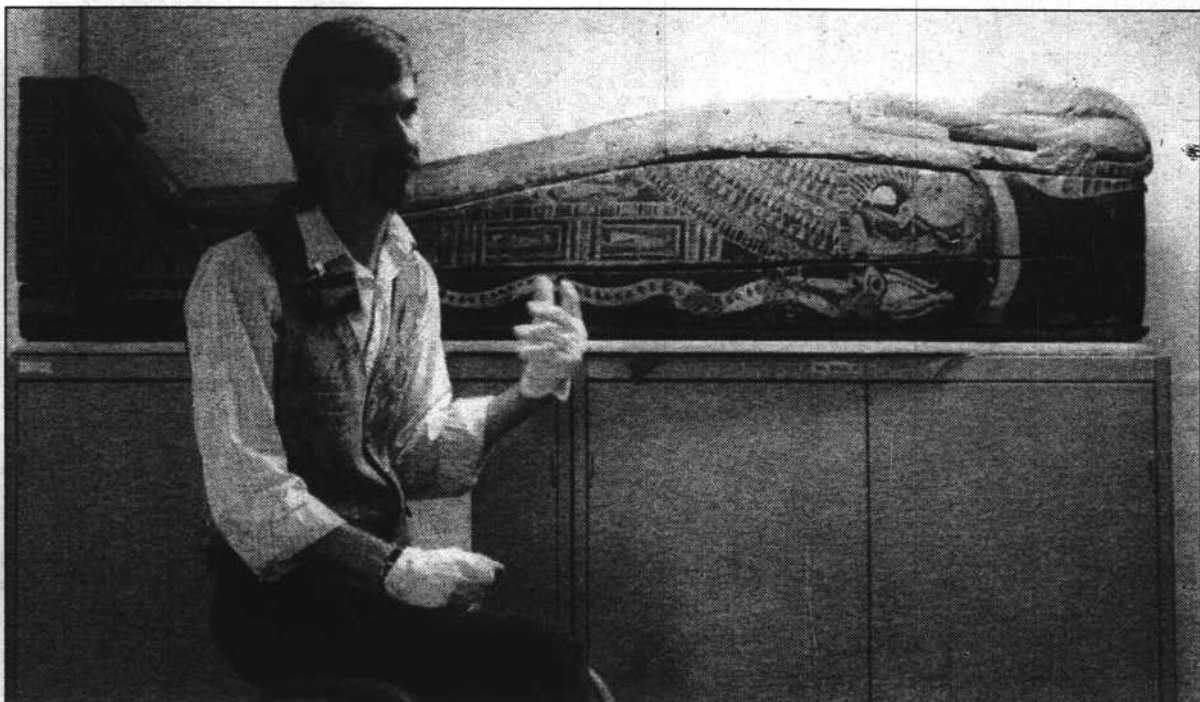


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Tanna Kinnaman/DN

UNL graduate student Alan Kirkland studies an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus, which holds a mummy. The sarcophagus now resides on top of a cabinet at Nebraska Hall because Kirkland lacks the funds needed to preserve the mummy.

UNL student dreams of mummies

By Wendy Thomas
Staff Reporter

A poster of Indiana Jones hangs over Alan Kirkland's desk. Beside it hangs a cloth bearing hieroglyphic words and dancing Egyptians. To Kirkland, a UNL graduate student, the items symbolize his dream.

Kirkland, who studies Egyptology in the Classics department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is researching several Egyptian artifacts—including three mummies—which were donated to the University of Nebraska State Museum by Nebraska collectors.

Although Kirkland has yet to visit Egypt, he said the project was his own personal crusade. Studying each artifact is an adventure, he said, a bit like the adventures depicted in Indiana Jones' movies.

Kirkland's dream is to turn his project—termed the Egyptian Collection Research Project—into an exhibit at Morrill Hall.

"The value is in being able to edu-

cate people about the individual piece and the culture that it comes from," Kirkland said.

Although Kirkland's goal is attainable, he lacks the funds needed to preserve the mummies. The university doesn't give grants for graduate research, he said.

"When I first tried to check into [funding] at this university, I was summarily informed that they didn't support graduate student research, and they didn't encourage it either.

"I thought that was deplorable," Kirkland said.

Even without funding, Kirkland has been studying the hundreds of artifacts ranging from tiny amulets to mummified cats for the last year.

He and his undergraduate anthropology assistant, Sarah Guthmann, finished Phase I of the project during the 1994-95 school year. The first phase concentrated on recording and analyzing the portable objects.

The project's first journal—outlining their work, accomplishments and plans—came out in June.

Kirkland said Phase II will focus on stabilizing the conditions of the mummies and trying to identify when and where they existed in Egypt, both of which will be difficult to do without funding.

The humidity-free lateral cabinets, which would effectively preserve the mummies, cost about \$3,500. And when the mummies are ready to be exhibited, Kirkland said, glass cabinets will need to be purchased.

Kirkland said he planned on making a public appeal to raise the money.

"After all, we are the custodians and trustees for the public of Nebraska," he said. "If they want to preserve a treasure then we certainly are more than happy to accept the help."

Kirkland, who speaks several languages and reads hieroglyphic writing, said he would graduate in 1996. By then, he hopes his research will be displayed.

"But," Kirkland said, "I will probably never totally divorce myself from this collection for the rest of my life."

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