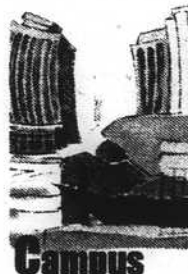


Devaneys donate Husker memorabilia

By Rob Winans
Staff Writer

The University of Nebraska Archives has received a significant addition to their collections, courtesy of one of the greatest figures in NU history.



Campus

Bob Devaney, former head coach of the Nebraska Cornhusker football team, donated the books detailing the years of his coaching career to the archives.

Devaney coached the football team to back-to-back national championships in 1971 and 1972. He was also a long-time athletic director prior to his recent retirement.

Michele Fagan, an assistant professor and archivist for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said the scrapbooks are a well-made and colorful addition to the NU collection.

"They are handily gathered together, making them useful for research purposes," she said.

The scrapbooks were originally put together by friends of Devaney and fans of Nebraska football. The books were given to him after the completion of each season that he was head coach of the Cornhuskers.

"Bob Devaney is one of the most significant figures in the history of Nebraska athletics," Fagan said. "He is often associated with the rise of Nebraska football to what it is today."

The Devaney scrapbooks document his entire career, including the time he spent in Wyoming coaching from 1960 to 1961.

Other books detail Devaney's time at UNL from 1964 through 1975.

The Devaney family chose to keep the 1972 national championship scrapbook.

Fagan said the scrapbooks consist of numerous newspaper clippings with various photographs, covering both personal and game-by-game features of each season.

Each one covers the entire Cornhusker season from the beginning of fall practice, through each game, to the bowl game.

The scrapbooks record all awards and recognition received by the coaches and players for that particular year, putting the history of Devaney's era into perspective.

The opening page of the 1967 book shows a press release for a freshman defensive lineman named Wayne Meylan, who later became an All-American.

As the book continues, now-familiar names appear. Former All-American linebacker Barry Alvarez, currently the head football coach at the University of Wisconsin, and Tom Osborne, who was an assistant to Devaney at the time, are sprinkled throughout the portfolio.

Fagan said the contribution will give the archives a valuable addition to its sports collection and will boost interest in the NU archives.

Since the press release for the collection, she said, several fans of Nebraska football have been in to see the collection.

"The addition of the Devaney scrapbooks has created a greater awareness of our department as a whole," Fagan said.

She said the study of sports history is of increasing interest to both professors and archivists around the country.

"These scrapbooks will be very valuable to anyone doing research on Nebraska athletics, and particularly Nebraska football," Fagan said.



Mami Speck/DN

Paul Mesner prepares for a show at the O'Donnell Auditorium Tuesday night.

Puppet man Storyteller makes laughs, living

By Heidi White
Staff Writer

Paul Mesner found his life-long love by driving his parents crazy.

At the age of 12 his parents prompted him to take a summer class at the Lincoln Community Playhouse, and it was here where he fell in love with puppets.

Mesner spent six years developing the puppeteering skills he learned that summer by apprenticing under Lee Ridge at the playhouse.

"It lets you step outside of yourself and get inside of another persona in a healthy way, which is great for a teenager," he said. Now, 20 years later, Mesner is still puppeteering and owns a professional theater company in Kansas City, Mo.

Mesner said he struggled and starved for years, but things eventually began to get better.

"I've finally gotten to the point in my career where I'm making a good living at it and my skills have matured," he said.

In 1992, Mesner received the Union Internationale de la Marionette Citation of Excellence in puppetry, created by Jim Henson, for his performance of "Wiley and the Hairy Man."

Mesner performed this show in O'Donnell Auditorium at Nebraska

Wesleyan University Tuesday night.

The story is an African-American folktale about a boy and his mother who work together to drive away a hairy monster living in a nearby swamp.

"Their relationship is the crux of the show," Mesner said.

Mesner said he has performed the one-man show over 700 times in the past eight years and is still not tired of the story.

"They're much more genuine characters than in lots of my other shows," he said.

Mesner found the idea for the performance when he was working at a grade school and picked up the book. He then used it as a workshop and realized there was something special in the story.

"It matured and grew into a really strong show, and it still is," he said.

Mesner has written some original stories for his performances, but usually begins with a well-known one and fractures it so it is still recognizable. Detours are taken in the original storyline however.

He said he made changes to keep the shows interesting, along with adding length to the stories, which are usually very short on their own.

"You have to put out a lot of energy to draw them in," he said.

Mesner said he usually researches a story for about a year, and then spends four to six months building props for the show.

He said he always relies on improvisation in new performances, and tries to build on any mistakes he's made.

"You never know what the audience will laugh at," Mesner said.

The first 20 times he performs something, he considers it a growth period to see if it works. If a show succeeds, he continues with it and adds it to his repertoire.

For older shows, Mesner will generally rest on them for a while and rebuild certain parts. He said constantly updating the jokes and humor is necessary.

Dance classes taken in his youth have also played an important part in Mesner's performances.

"Dance is all about movement and that's what puppets do very well," he said.

Mesner does a full season of theater in Kansas City every year, where he rotates his shows in and out.

While the steady work is what keeps him clothed and fed, Mesner said there is a much simpler reason why he still works with puppets after all these years.

"It's fun to make people laugh."

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