



Making a rich history relevant by Kristine Toma

A primary goal of most archives is to actively engage the community it serves. This is especially true of the University Archives, as it strives to share the university's history with the campus community and to acquire materials that will expand the documented history of the institution. A new home for the University Archives opens to visitors this spring on the fifth floor of the Alkek Library.

The emerging Cat Camp tradition is one example of a current program that can benefit from the archives as well as enrich

the archival record. Cat Camp—a weekend that introduces incoming freshmen to Bobcat history and traditions—offered a wonderful opportunity for showcasing some of the “treasures” of the University Archives. In planning for the first Cat Camp in August, the archives provided the coordinating team with historical facts, photographs, postcards, videos and sound recordings to use in preparing the camp's various multimedia presentations. The team wanted to make history more available and relevant to the students, so the archives brought select artifacts for display during several scheduled events. Students

who attended the camp were among the first to see these items, as most were recent acquisitions.

Aquarena's Ralph the Swimming Pig mascot, an SWT band uniform from the 1970s, Oscar Strahan's letter sweater and the oldest known class ring were among the artifacts taken to the camp. Ranging from the whimsical to the deeply historical, each item tells part of the story of how the institution evolved into the Texas State of today.

Making artifacts accessible is an effective way to share the history of the insti-



This class ring belonged to Dora Anna Koch McCall (insert, from the 1917 *Pedagogs*, who earned her teachers certificate in 1918 and her B.S. in 1941. The SVVTH stands for Southwest Texas Normal.



tution because physical objects bring a tangible presence to bare historical facts. It's one thing to read that the coliseum was named for Oscar Strahan, the man who served as the school's athletic director and coach for 42 years. But seeing Strahan's own letter sweater up close can make the man behind the name seem more real. As staff began setting up the artifacts for the dance, several camp counselors noticed the name "Strahan" embroidered on a tag and requested photographs. Chances are that students who made the connection between the man and the current Texas State campus will remember some of the facts they learned about Coach Strahan. And students who noticed the detail on the 1918 class ring saw the patchwork of scuffs

and scratches created by decades of wear, a physical reminder of just how much this school meant to those who came before.

In its new space, the University Archives will be organized to facilitate research and make items accessible through exhibits. Researchers are asked to make appointments so that staff can prepare material related to the request prior to arrival. E-mail the university archivist at UnivArchives@txstate.edu to schedule an appointment. *

Check around the attic

The University Archives is interested in receiving donations of materials that document all aspects of university history. Individuals are invited to talk with Kristine Toma, university archivist, about possible donations.

Items of particular interest:

- Any SWT-related materials dated prior to 1950
- *Pedagogs*, especially for years prior to 1960
- Papers of presidents, provosts, administrative officers and faculty members
- Select artifacts tied to college tradition, such as freshman beanies, pledge caps, letter sweaters, pennants and class rings

Catalogs, calendars and schedules of classes

Invitations to campus events

- Records of student groups, such as constitutions and bylaws, meeting minutes, event files and scrapbooks