

THE HOUSE THAT Faurot BUILT

By BOB BROEG

WHEN ALUMNUS Don Faurot came back to Columbia in 1935, he attempted to set an inquiring reporter straight.

"I don't know anything more overconfident," he said, "than for a Missouri football coach to build a house."

Three houses and 32 years later, a long-legged landmark on the campus with the columns, Faurot is retiring at Ol' Mizzou, stepping aside as athletic director at 65 to become associated in the alumni office with one of his greatest quarterbacks, Bus Entsminger.

In three decades as coach and administrator, Faurot took the red of embarrassment off Missouri football checks and the same color of financial distress off the athletic ledgers.

He created the Split-T formation and, even better, he created at Missouri a climate of athletic sanity, a middle-of-the-road policy that paid all the bills and not the players.

"The best thing I did was bringing in Dan Devine

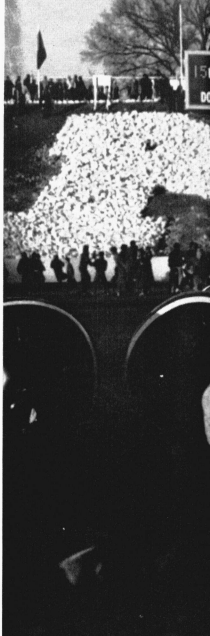
as football coach," said one topflight coach of another, referring to his successor as director of athletics.

Through Devine's dazzling efforts in the decade of the '60s, in which Missouri has been charged with only 14 defeats in seven seasons, the Tigers now average close to 50,000 spectators a game at home as one of top 10 box office draws in current college football.

"But," said Devine, saluting Faurot, "I inherited a much healthier situation than Don did."

When Missouri sent an S.O.S. to Kirksville and Faurot in the black heart of the Depression '30s, the University was saddled with \$500,000 in stadium and field house debts and—worse—a miserable situation in the money sport, football.

Playing like tabbies, not Tigers, the Black and Gold looked black and blue, a result of having won only six games in five years, just two in three seasons under Frank Carideo. They won not at all in 1934 for the former All-America quarterback, who had been given the job as head coach at a major university when he





His final game as MU's coach, Don Faurot is carried off the field after last-minute, 15-13 win over Kansas.



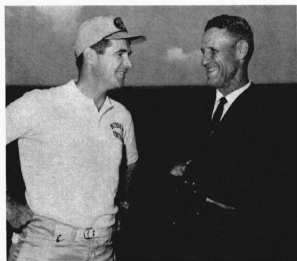
Tiger football fortunes hit the big time with arrival of its first all-American, Passin' Paul Christman. At right is the captain of the 1940 team, Jack Crocker. Despite his number, Crocker played guard.



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One of many honors, A. A. Stagg award was presented Faurot by American Coaches Association. Below he's with man who succeeded him as football coach and now as director, Dan Devine.



was only one year removed from the campus at Notre Dame.

Faurot, black-haired and jut-jawed, lean and bronzed, came briskly down from Kirksville, where he had turned a teachers' college team into a terror. Northeast Missouri State had posted a 63-13-3 record in nine seasons under the young man from Mountain Grove.

At Missouri, where he had majored in agriculture and written his masters' thesis on how to prune grapes, Don had succeeded as an improbable athlete, handicapped by loss of most of the first two fingers of his right hand in a boyhood farming accident.

He came from hardy Yankee stock. His father, F. W. Faurot, who lived past 90, was an old Nebraska and Iowa State football player who scrimmaged with the kids until he was past 65. So Don, a 145-pound full-back, passed, punted and ran for a Missouri team that posted a 7-2 season for Gwinn Henry in 1924. He lettered in baseball, too, and captained the basketball team.

In 1935, he came back with not enough over-confidence to build a house, but enough to buy one, and produced results immediately. His first M.U. football team won three, lost three and tied three, winning more in one season than in the previous three combined.

A year later, climaxing a 6-2-1 season, the finest since 7-2 under Henry had brought a championship in the final year (1927) of the old Missouri Valley Conference, Faurot saw his Tigers beat Kansas at Columbia, 19-3.

This marked the first time Ol' Mizzou had scored against the bitter athletic rival in seven seasons and began a mastery by which Faurot brought M.U. from far back to parity in its series with K.U.

Setting out to balance the books in the counting house as well as where it really counted—on the field—the coach put his squad through three games in eight days at the end of the 1937 season, playing Washington University at St. Louis on one Saturday, Kansas



Four Faurot players were named to all-American first teams: From the left are end Harold Burnine, '55; halfback Bob Stuber, '42; center Darold Jenkins, '41; and Christman, '39.

the following Thursday (Thanksgiving Day) at Lawrence and then catching a train immediately afterward to play UCLA 48 hours later in the Los Angeles Coliseum.

By 1939, Faurot had fielded a Big Six conference championship and Orange Bowl team, led by All-America quarterback Paul Christman. The Tigers were champions again in 1941, a year they went to the Sugar Bowl, and repeated once more in 1942 before many of them—and Coach Faurot—went into military service.

Although by then he had upgraded the Missouri schedule and was willing to go anywhere to make a buck—because Memorial Stadium still was too small to attract the best opponents—it's safe to say that the war, more than the opposition, dulled dauntless Don's dynasty.

After producing a championship team for the Iowa Seahawks, a Navy Pre-Flight team, Lt.-Commander Faurot returned to field strong 1948 and '49 squads that went to the Gator Bowl, but some of the pre-war momentum was gone.

In 1950, the year he turned down the most attractive of several outstanding coaching offers he had received, this one from Ohio State, Faurot experienced his first losing season in 12 years. Thereafter he had only two .500 seasons or better before voluntarily giving up coaching.

By the time he stepped down as coach in 1956, after producing 101 victories, 79 defeats and 10 ties, all athletic indebtedness was wiped out on the strength of \$1,000,000 profits, which led to the first two extensions of the sunken old stadium, built in 1926, that had only 21,000 permanent seats.

Although Faurot himself won't talk about this—out of characteristic loyalty—if a retired administrative university officer hadn't been ultra-conservative, much of subsequent stadium expansion would have been undertaken when costs weren't nearly so high.

The stadium, its capacity increased in 1948, '50,

'61 and '63, now has 47,939 concrete seats. With temporary facilities, a standing-room crowd of 57,206 was accommodated for the Nebraska game two years ago.

All of this has been accomplished without cost to the taxpayers because intercollegiate athletics are self-supporting at the University.

When Faurot became football coach, the entire athletic budget for 1935 was \$72,000. As the late business manager of athletics, Virgil Spurling, pointed out one time, within six years Faurot had taken in more money as Missouri's share of just one football game (1942 Sugar Bowl).

As Don turned the baton over to Dan, the stewardship of the athletic department, varsity sports, at Ol' Mizzou were budgeted at \$1,700,000 for the 1967-68 school year.

To try to evaluate Donald Burrows Faurot on money made or games lost would be to miss the measure of the man, honored as much by his profession for coaching conscience as for coaching achievement.

For his high standards of ethics, his ability to play the best and stay within the rules despite considerable hypocrisy, Faurot built himself a national reputation from which Missouri received considerable stature and benefit. As one of his last acts as athletic director, the university rejected an invitation to move up its season's opener next fall with Southern Methodist from Sept. 23 to Sept. 16 so that the game could be nationally televised.

"We'd like our share (\$35,000) of the money the Big Eight would receive, but we feel strongly that we owe it to the students not to play the game when they're not yet back on campus," said Faurot, who was saluted editorially by *Sports Illustrated* magazine.

Faurot was elected to the college football's Hall of Fame in 1961 and was given the Stagg award for meritorious service by the American Football Coaches Association, which he once headed. But his pride and feeling for both his home state and alma mater are so great

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that he glowed equally over his selection for the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame in 1953 and his appointment by the late Gov. James T. Blair as a Missouri Squire in '64.

Faurot went to great lengths to field Missouri teams with Missouri boys, a program hailed by the dean of American sports writers, the late Grantland Rice. But there was method to Don's madness.

"If," he said years ago, remembering Carideo's ill-fated term as coach, "you lose with home-state boys, that's bad, but if you lose with out-of-state boys, that's terrible. If you win with imported athletes, that's good. If you win with your own, that's great."

The only flaw, as Don's long-time friend and former assistant, John (Hi) Simmons, pointed out one time was that the state might not produce, say, a topflight quarterback for two years or so.

"And then," drawled John Hi, "if one does crop up and goes elsewhere, you're in a helluva shape."

Faurot never sought to foist his ideas or theories on either of his two young brilliant coaching successors, Frank Broyles or Dan Devine, except to insist on scrupulous recruiting within the rules. He, himself, campaigned actively and successfully for an above-board athletic scholarship, contending that present-day students could not study, play and work, too. Phony jobs, he argued, were a sham and a hypocrisy.

At 65, still trim and at the same weight at which he played back in the early '20s, Faurot looks years younger. The Mr. Fix-It of Missouri, the Old Master of Ol' Mizzou, he's the liveliest guy ever to play chief cook and bottle-washer on a float trip and the fastest-walking golfer ever to shame an out-of-condition opponent into a few morning exercises.

Nervously tapping with his right leg, like a jazz-era drummer, Faurot isn't ready for retirement, as wife Mary, his three daughters and seven grandchildren can agree, along with all others who try to keep up with dynamic Do-It-Yourself Don.

Happily, though required by university regulations to give up the department he headed so well for 32 years, Faurot will be able to give Missouri much of his time in a retirement that promises to be as busy now as when he was building a better football mousetrap, including the Split-T, a formation hailed by many as the greatest offensive contribution in the last 25 years.

An earnest speaker, but never eloquent, honored often over the years, Faurot was at his best the mid-December night in 1956 when he retired as coach.

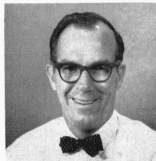
He reminisced about his All-America players (Christman, Darold Jenkins, Bob Steuber and Harold Burnine), soberly remembered former players killed in World War II (Bob Brenton, Jerry Notowitz, Jeff Davis, Jerry Davis, Marshall Sneed and his youngest brother, Bob Faurot), thanked his last team for its thrilling final-minute victory over Kansas, 15-13, and then praised the Missouri faculty and the men for whom he'd played and with whom he'd coached.

"It hasn't been hard to have a program of honesty when you've been taught by and surrounded with men of integrity," he said.

For the students and alumni he'd seen come and go, the long-legged landmark of Columbia had a word of gratitude, too. Smiling, he said:

"I never was hanged in effigy, though I'm afraid at times I deserved it."

Don Faurot never deserved anything except what he always gave the University of Missouri—the best. □



Sports editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* since 1958, Bob Broeg has been an interested and working-press observer of the University of Missouri sports scene since the late thirties when he was enrolled in Journalism School. He was graduated from J-School in 1941 and joined the *Post-Dispatch* in 1945 after a stint in the Marines. Among 12 Broeg stories which have appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* have been articles on both Don Faurot and Dan Devine, the new athletic director.