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Veterinarian Adds Another Honor

Veterinarian James Nave returns to Missouri to receive Iron Paw Award.

Story by Erik Potter

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Veterinary medicine has been a constant in James Nave's career, but it certainly hasn't been his only interest.

Within veterinary medicine, Nave, BS Ag '66, DVM '68, was the U.S. representative to the World Veterinary Association and served as president of the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Nevada Veterinary Medical Association and the Western Veterinary Conference, among other positions. He founded Tropicana Animal Hospital in Las Vegas in 1974 and has grown his holdings to include 16 veterinary hospitals.

In the "other" category, Nave served 12 years on the Nevada Athletic Commission, which oversees boxing in the state, and was named the World Boxing Council's Boxing Commissioner of the Year five times.



James Nave, BS Ag '66, DVM '68, credits Mizzou for launching his career as a veterinarian. Nave practices small animal care in Las Vegas at Tropicana Animal Hospital, one of 16 animal hospitals he owns. On Aug. 26, Nave will accept the Iron Paw Award from the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, an association of animal health interests. Photo courtesy of James Nave.

Earlier this month he was one of 19 inaugural inductees to the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame. He also serves on the board of directors for Station Casinos LLC, Western Alliance Bancorporation and Bank West of Nevada.

He'll add another accolade Aug. 26 in Kansas City when he will receive the Iron Paw Award during the eighth annual homecoming dinner of the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, an association of companies, schools and trade groups between Manhattan, Kan., and Fulton, Mo., with animal health interests.

“All the things that have happened to me happened because of Tropicana Animal Hospital,” Nave says, “[which] happened because of the University of Missouri.”

Nave came to Mizzou in 1962 from rural Protem, Mo. He intended to major in engineering as an entrée to the United States Military Academy at West Point, which he saw as his path out of poverty. But after one semester, he knew engineering was not for him. He'd always loved animals, so he decided his sophomore year to enroll in pre-veterinary medicine courses.

“If I hadn't been on the campus I'd never have had

those thoughts,” Nave says. “I did pre-vet medicine, and, right or wrong, the admissions committee accepted my [DVM] application. I feel very blessed they made that decision. I absolutely love being a vet.”

After three years’ service in the U.S. Army, he thought he’d end up settling in Kansas City, Mo. But when his best friend from vet school fell in love with a woman from Las Vegas, he convinced Nave to give the city in the desert a try.

Though he’s lived in Nevada more than 40 years, Nave says he still loves Missouri and Mizzou. “I’m still amazed that vet med accepted me, and I’m honored they did,” he says. “If I haven’t adequately shown that to the university, then I’ve failed.”

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