

## What I've Learned

# Dick Trachok

'49 (Secondary Education), '54M.A.

I was born in a house in Jerome, Pa. There weren't too many births to my knowledge at that time in the hospital. There were seven of us and I was the youngest. My older brother gave the orders. I remember he said, "If I ever catch you smoking, I'm going to knock your head off."

My mom and dad came from Lithuania and a bunch of the neighbors came from Poland and Italy. There was no such thing as English as a second language at that time. So they just learned in a hurry.

I went to Pitt in fall 1943 with my friend Tom Kalmanir [a teammate of Trachok's in the 1946-'48 Nevada backfield and NFL player with the Los Angeles Rams and Baltimore Colts]. I was 17. We had practiced that summer, played the '43 season and then we went into the service with the U. S. Army Air Corps. I tried to get into the Navy at first, but I flunked the colorblind test. How I passed into the Air Force and Air Corps, I don't know.

I was discharged in 1946. I wasn't interested in staying in. The idea was now we can go back to college. We checked on going to schools. We didn't want to go back to Pitt. We wanted something that had a campus. Pittsburgh had the Cathedral of Learning, 42 stories high, and they have a lot of classes in there.

And then coach [Jim] Aiken from Nevada went back to Pittsburgh and rented a

room at a hotel not too far from campus. He put the word out he was looking for players and talked to Tom about coming to Nevada. After we looked at several schools, Tommy said, "Should we consider Nevada?" He called coach Aiken and said, "I've got another player here that would like to come out." Aiken never asked, "What's his name? What position does he play? How big is he?" He said, "Just bring him."

My mom thought I was out of my mind for wanting to come to a place called *Nevada*. People back East thought the place was still filled with hostile Indians.

I never looked at football as a job. It wasn't like, "God, I've got to go to work today." It was more of an opportunity. I played with the greatest people in the country. We were a very close-knit group and I felt very fortunate to have them as teammates.

I coached Bishop Manogue's first basketball team in 1948-49 when I was still a student at the University, then got a job

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as the track coach at Reno High School. They knew I ran track here and the principal asked

if I'd be the coach. That was R. Guild Gray ['35 (education) '48M.Ed]. He asked me if I'd be interested in being the football coach at Reno. I said, "Yes." Later, I was walking up North Virginia and my Nevada teammate

Jim Wilson pulled his car over and yelled, "Congratulations." I said, "What for?" He said, "I heard you're the new football coach at Reno High." That's how I found out.

When I coached football or basketball, I was the head coach. I wasn't the assistant. When I came into college coaching, I was the head coach. I was never an assistant. Being an assistant has a lot of merit. It would have helped. I knew nothing about recruiting. When I started coaching football here [in 1959], we didn't have any scholarships so that made it a little harder. I was worried about getting enough players. We could offer a tuition waiver, but in California they had that. We had one assistant coach who was the track coach and one who was the baseball coach.

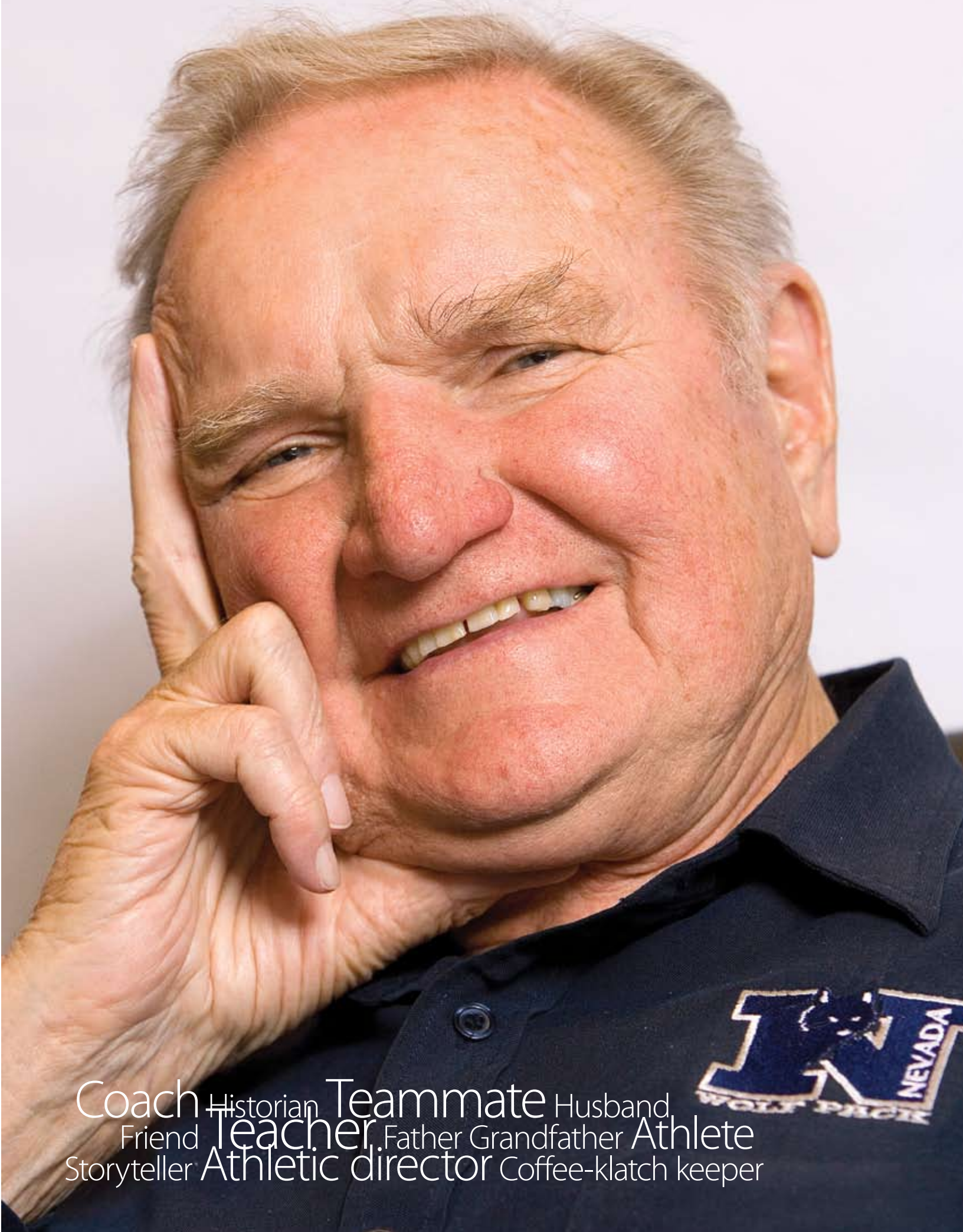
Coach [Chris] Ault gets here about 5:30 in the morning. When I was athletic director and he was coaching, I said, "Take it easy a little bit." He said, "What do you mean? We get here at 7 and we do this and then have practice, the team meets and we have training table, and then we have a meeting after and at 9 we're home." I said, "Chris, that's 14 hours." It didn't bother him at all. That was a normal day and he still does it.

I'm like a lot of people who get a little older, the ones who can remember something from 40 years and don't remember where they parked their car today. I'm getting in that category a little bit.

I don't fear death. I'm hoping that I don't have time to think about those things. But you have to be smart enough to know that nobody lives forever. The time comes for everybody.

*From a conversation with Pat McDonnell in April 2007. Trachok, 81, was a top Wolf Pack running back in football as well as a track and field athlete (1946-48), head football coach (1959-68), a track and field and golf coach, and athletic director (1970-86). Now University athletic director emeritus, Trachok was inducted into the Nevada athletics Hall of Fame in 1975 and named to the Wolf Pack football Team of the Century in 1998.*

Photo by John Byrne



Coach Historian Teammate Husband  
Friend Teacher Father Grandfather Athlete  
Storyteller Athletic director Coffee-klatch keeper

