

LOCAL

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Tar Heels enlist

North Carolina remains a strong source of Army recruits despite an unpopular war in Iraq that has left many soldiers dead. **Inside, B5**

"It was art from ceiling to floor."

Carla Butler, talking about the treasures that filled the home of the late John Philip Couch



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ/News & Record

Carla Butler, with Butler & Associates, is handling the estate sale. The eclectic property of John Philip Couch, who died in March, has been tagged for the sale at his home.

PROPERTY OF A GENTLEMAN

Former UNCG professor left house filled with art, assorted treasures

By JIM SCHLOSSER
Staff Writer

GREENSBORO — Carla Butler never met John Philip Couch.

Yet, after having practically lived in the late UNCG professor's home since May, "I feel like we know him, only through what he surrounded himself with."

She has been cataloging his treasures. She says when she first entered the lime-green, early 1900s Queen Anne house on South Mendenhall Street next to the railroad, "It was art from ceiling to floor."



Couch

Butler, of the personal property appraisal firm Butler & Associates, has cataloged in the Couch house more than 300 paintings and etchings, thousands of art, architecture and literary books, 2,500 vinyl record albums and 800 CDs, antique chests, pottery and china by pedigreed artists, even a toy armadillo collection from Mexico and a considerable collection of vintage model trains.

Butler is calling a tag sale at the house Saturday and Sunday

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The walls are filled with artwork. Couch taught French at UNCG for 30 years. He spent the summers in the south of France and traveled overseas frequently. Proceeds from the sale will go to charities and institutions.

WANT TO GO?

What: Estate sale of belongings of John Philip Couch.

When: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admittance cards in numbered sequence issued 90 minutes before the opening.

Where: Couch home, 628 S. Mendenhall St.



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ/News & Record

One room is full of model trains as well as books and videos about trains. Couch collected HO scale model trains. Boxes include a 1930 railroad post office car, a 1936 observation car and old steam engines.

Property

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"The Property of a Gentleman."

Couch, who taught French at UNCG for 30 years and died in March at age 77, wanted his belongings sold, with proceeds going to charities and institutions.

Visitors gasp entering the house. Art saturates every wall. Butler says bathrooms became art galleries.

When Couch added a two-story wing about six years ago, "It wasn't six months before that was filled up," said friend Virginia Tucker, whose husband, James Tucker, is retired curator of UNCG's Weather- spoon Art Museum. "There was no place to sit in the house."

Yet, friends managed to squeeze in for gourmet meals that Couch prepared.

"Once you get hooked, you can't stop," Couch once said about his collection.

He liked works by area artists and former art students such as Maud Gatewood.

A lifelong bachelor who came to UNCG in 1958, Couch wanted to live near trains that shake the house and to be able to walk to work.

"He'd listen to see if trains were on time," said Jean Buchert, a retired UNCG English teacher who met Couch in graduate school at Yale.

Couch collected HO scale model trains. Cars still boxed include a 1930 railroad post office car, a 1936 observation car and old steam engines. Train videos fill a chest and railroad



Various armadillos from Mexico line a shelf.

books are numerous.

He liked Jugtawn pottery, owning pieces by the renowned potter Ben Owen Sr.

Couch served on china by 1950s designer Russell Wright.

Cabinets crammed with LPs and CDs are mostly opera and classical music, with an occasional surprise such as music from "Midnight Cowboy."

Butler estimates Couch's book collection at several thousand volumes, hardback and paper, including one he wrote: "The Opera Lovers Guide to Europe."

Artworks include paintings by 19th-century French Impressionist Henri Morisset; the versatile man of letters and art Jean Cocteau; abstract artist Jean Arp; and Jean-Jacques Sempe, who did New Yorker magazine covers.

Couch summered in the south of France and traveled overseas frequently. Friends think Couch, the son of a botany professor at UNC-Chapel Hill, was an heir to oil money.

"He just lived a busy, intellectual life," Buchert said.

He was one of a kind," Vir-

ginia Tucker said. "We miss him."

Butler says she loves spanning the walls to see an artist's evolution.

Philip Moose's large painting of Grandfather Mountain contrasts with an abstract work he did later. It hangs across from a famed opera program signed by singer Leontyne Price.

Butler prefers estate sales over auctions.

"It's the most respectful and dignified way" she said. "People leave with a positive feeling about Dr. Couch or whomever we sell an estate for."

Her previous work has included the estate of tire heir Raymond Firestone of Pinehurst.

Couch enjoyed walking to class with his dog.

When he had to drive, he drove a heap. An old Chevy Cavalier, paint faded and engine dead, is parked next to the house. "That was his car," Butler said. "It's for sale, too."

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