



# Safran's stash

*Rather than sitting under glass, rare Gamecock memorabilia stocks shelves of Whaley Street antique shop*

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The old saying goes along the lines of "Those who don't remember their past are doomed to repeat it."

That statement could easily apply to the athletic endeavors of the Gamecocks, as little remembrance of USC's past has been given to players, fans and students over the years, causing Gamecock faithful to be stuck in an almost melancholy state of mind.

But USC sports history is

something hard to run across if you look outside of the brief section devoted to the greats who have passed through Columbia in a media guide.

That's where Mike Safran comes in.

Safran, a third-generation antique dealer in the Midlands, has created what many have called the only Gamecock museum to ever exist. Of the warehouse-sized facility on Whaley Street that he calls home, about one-third is enshrined in Gamecock garb, with pieces of USC's past that will boggle the mind.

"I started wanting to collect something," Safran said. "I got into sports memorabilia in the early 1980s and just starting thinking that I would collect the Gamecocks, because there was nobody collecting the Gamecocks."

That attitude landed Safran with a monstrous collection of USC's past, ranging from programs to jerseys to bowl rings. While his collection was growing, Safran came to the realization that all this stuff couldn't be his forever. Attempts to set up a USC hall of fame have been fruitless, leaving the curator of this one-man time capsule in a position to do one thing: Sell to those who will appreciate it.

"I'm not saving this anymore," Safran said. "I was saving because it seemed somebody had to save it. And I knew that there wasn't anybody saving this. It just kind of became an obsession because somebody had to do it."

"There was nobody I was aware of working to keep this stuff, so I appointed me."

If you can read it in a Carolina record book or hear older fans relive the moments, Safran probably has it



Shop owner Mike Safran poses with USC President Andrew Sorensen. *Manuel Gaetan / special to THE GAMECOCK*

## Flag on play: In vile move, rookie staffers sack Fulton

### Legendary announcer discarded after 43 years of loyal service

The storm had almost cleared. The bad news riding the tail of USC athletics had almost lost its grip. It was all too good to be true.

USC received its punishment from the NCAA for violations of policy, and to the delight of fans, a postseason game is still a possibility this fall. No players have been arrested, suspended or court-martialed in the last month. It was almost a scandalous day.

That was until the most stable figure in USC sports history found himself on the receiving end of an unexpected dismissal from the athletics department staff.

If you've been a Gamecock fan for a long time, the name Bob Fulton should mean something to you. If not, let me introduce you.

Fulton was the play-by-play commentator for USC football, basketball and some baseball games for 43 years. He was renowned as one of the premiere commentators in college sports history and a figure that shined like a beacon to fans everywhere.

The eight-time South Carolina Broadcaster of the Year outlasted nine football coaches, 13 basketball coaches and 11 athletics directors during his tenure at USC. When he called his final season in 1995, the Gamecock basketball team honored Fulton by retiring a jersey that read "Fulton — The Voice of the Gamecocks."

When he finally came out from behind the microphone, Fulton became a consultant to the athletics department, and was a tutor to USC's current play-by-play announcers Todd Ellis, Mike Morgan and Casey Manning.

Despite all that Fulton had done for Carolina sports, it wasn't enough to save him from being released by the new athletics administration earlier in the week.

Fulton was told by an athletics department assistant over the phone and in a letter that his services would no longer be needed. The department said they couldn't "budget" anything for him, and they were having to "cut expenses."

This was said to a man whose highest grossing year finished at \$29,000, while other commentators around the South were earning upwards of \$100,000.

What makes the whole story so depressing is that Fulton never even got to speak to new Athletics Director Eric Hyman, the man who put the actions into motion.

Repeated calls to the athletics department office turned up nothing but a dead end. No one wanted to take responsibilities for this senseless act and could offer no justification for it. Every time someone picked up the phone, I was transferred to another office or department and received less answers than before.

The no-response factor speaks for itself. No one seemed to man up and take responsibility for their actions, leaving fans guessing what the thought process behind the drastic steps taken was.

While I talked with Fulton, he never said a cross word about the incident. The harshest tone he took during our conversation was that he was called by someone he didn't even know and told the news.

This man knew legendary basketball coach Frank McGuire better than anyone in the state of South Carolina. At 85, Fulton is still traveling the state to



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**Safran's Collection**

**Top photograph:** A game-used jersey from hall of fame running back Harold Green, who played for Carolina from 1986-1989.

**Bottom left:** An autographed photograph of Carolina's only duo to rush for 1,000 yards each in a single season, Clarence Williams, left, and Kevin Long, sits next to a program from Williams' funeral. Williams, who was later shot and killed, wore the jersey displayed in the background.

**Bottom right:** A basketball signed by the 1971 ACC Championship team sits underneath the team photograph. The ball's signees include the third-leading scorer in Gamecock history, John Roche and 1,000-point club member Kevin Joyce.

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