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December 15, 2009 3:00 AM

Former NFL star gets a kick out of rare books

By PETER LARSEN
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Story Highlights

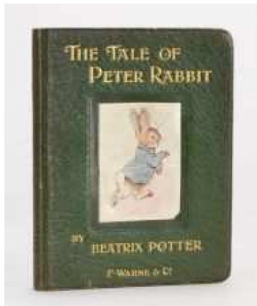
Pat McNally, who was a punter/receiver with the Cincinnati Bengals, auctions part of his rare book collection.

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After Pat McNally signed his rookie contract with the Cincinnati Bengals in 1975, the first thing he did with his new-found wealth was also the least likely: He bought a vintage book collection for the copy of "Winnie the Pooh" it contained.

A year or two later, the wide receiver and punter from Villa Park who now lives in Newport Beach remembers spending one off-day from practice to fly from Cincinnati to the West Coast and back in the same day, just to bid on two inscribed copies of Ian Fleming's James Bond series, "Casino Royale" and "Live And Let Die."



Author Beatrix Potter's personal copy of "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," one of two specially bound for her.

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It was a passion that over the next 35 years allowed McNally to piece together an impressive collection of rare books from which on Wednesday he will auction 101 lots.

Among the most special books up for sale are two with unique connections to their creators: Beatrix Potter's own copy of "The Tale Of Peter Rabbit" and a copy of Lewis Carroll's "Through The Looking Glass, and What Alice Saw There" that belonged to Alice Liddell, the real-life inspiration for Carroll's two "Alice In Wonderland" books.

Other volumes on the block for the auction that starts at 12 p.m. PST on Wednesday include a first edition of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," a first-edition of Fleming's "Goldfinger" inscribed to the man to whom it was dedicated, limited editions of three different "Winnie The Pooh" books signed by author A.A. Milne and illustrator Ernest H. Shepard, and a set of deluxe editions of the first four "Harry Potter" novels inscribed by author J.K. Rowling.

"The hardest thing to sell is Beatrix Potter's 'Peter Rabbit,'" McNally said of the works he's letting move on to other collectors. "That was her personal copy that she had bound. No one even knew it existed until six years ago or so.

"If I hadn't made the commitment to (auction house) Profiles in History to give them some unusual material, that's the one I would have kept."

The auction is mostly a tidying up of his collection, McNally said, not a departure from the field.

"I'm not retiring (from collecting)," he said. "I still have my Milne and Shepard collection. In fact, the day after this auction, there's an auction in London and I'm going to try to pick up some Shepard drawings from that."

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