http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/112912/bieverSM.png**In 2002, Vernon Biever of Port Washington became the first photographer inducted into the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame. Now, two years after his death, his work as the team's beloved lensman is memorialized in that very hall**

The late Vernon Biever, whose iconic photographs of the Green Bay Packers through the decades have given fans glimpses of the emotions of the game and the personalities of the people who played it, both on and off the field, is being honored with an exhibit at the Packers Hall of Fame.

"The Man Behind the Camera: The Life and Work of Vernon Biever" features not only his photographs, but also memorabilia — including his darkroom, which was removed from his house and brought to the Hall of Fame.

"That's kind of the highlight," Vernon's son Jim said of the 60-squre-foot darkroom. "I think people will be really surprised at how little the space is and how many pictures came out of it.

"As a youngster, I can remember peeking over the sink and watching these pictures develop. And as we got older, both my brother (John, a photographer for Sports Illustrated) and I learned to develop photos there."

Hall of Fame Manager Krissy Zegers said the temporary exhibit is intended to honor Vernon, who spent 60 years of his life chronicling the Packers after essentially creating the position of team photographer.

"We wanted to capture the man behind the images. He really captured our history from a very early point," she said. "He was able to use his skills to help us tell the story of the Packers organization and who we are.

"For a lot of our younger visitors, they know the photographs but for the older people, they remember a lot of these games."

The darkroom, she said, adds a special dimension to the exhibit.

It may also have promoted one of the most unusual clauses in local real estate history.

Hall of Fame officials began talking about the idea of an exhibit around the same time Vernon Biever died in 2010, so when his house was sold, the family included a clause in the contract specifying that if the Hall of Fame wanted the darkroom, they could remove it, Jim said.

The darkroom isn't the only area of the house depicted, Jim said. The exhibit also recreates the viewing area where Vernon would review his photos each week during the football season, complete with his slide projector, the stool he sat on and his martini glass.

"It was a Monday night ritual for him to look at his slides from Sunday's game," Jim said. "There were so many, it usually took a martini or two to get through." The exhibit also includes a display of between 200 and 300 of Vernon's press passes —including those for Super Bowls I and II — the khaki Lands End jacket Vernon wore to Packers games, the cameras he used, newspaper stories about Vernon's career that were published in the New York Times and Ozaukee Press, letters and autographed items Vernon received.

One wall of the exhibit is devoted to Vernon's life, reflecting not only his time with the Packers but also his high school years, career as an Army photographer with the 100th Infantry Division and his years as a Port businessman, operating the Ben Franklin store in downtown.

But central to the exhibit are the photographs, which span 30 years of Vernon's work with the Packers, beginning with the 1954 season and ending in 1984.

"They were looking for his favorite photos," Jim said.

About 20 of these photos are in the exhibit, culled from a collection of thousands that the family helped narrow initially to about 100.

While the number may seem small, it helps to remember that Vernon's photographs can be seen throughout the Hall of Fame — not just in the exhibit, Jim said.

"Just about every picture there is my father's," he said.

Vernon's favorite, Jim said, was of legendary coach Vince Lombardi receiving the Super Bowl I trophy from NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle in the Packer locker room. Vernon was the only still photographer in the room at the time.

"He knew it was the start of big things to come," Jim said. "He had a feeling the Super Bowl was going to become huge."

Vernon's favorite action photo, which is included in the exhibit, depicts Bart Starr, Jim Taylor, Jerry Kramer and Fuzzy Thurston as they executed the famed Lombardi sweep, Jim said. In the background, Lombardi is watching the action unfold.

"You couldn't script a better picture," Jim said. "It really described the era. They ran that play 1,000 times."

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