

# To Save the Cypress

By Marty Curtis

The native habitat of *Taxodium distichum* (that's a swamp cypress, or bald cypress, for those who don't speak botany) is the wet lowlands, or swamp area, of the southeastern United States and Mexico.

Yet one picturesque swamp cypress has been at home on the campus, definitely not a swamp area, for the past 40 to 50 years, some people estimate.

The already historic coniferous tree north of Holmberg Hall on the North Oval is probably the largest cypress growing in Oklahoma upland area.

Thanks to some final re-arranging by University architects, the tree might just survive in the face of progress and continue to thrive for another 50 to 100 years since it is a cousin to the sequoia, or redwood.

It all started when planning got under way for the new art building and museum, the second phase of the Fine Arts Center, now being constructed north of Holmberg Hall along Boyd Street.

Originally, the proposed building was close enough to Boyd Street (and far enough from the cypress) that construction work wouldn't jeopardize the life of the conifer.

But later the proposed building was moved back south when the campus planners noticed it had sneaked a bit too close to Boyd Street (when their backs were turned) and was out of line with the Engineering Center farther east on Boyd.

That move south put it too close for comfort to the cypress, or so some concerned conservationists, botanists and horticulturists thought.

So more shuffling of plans was in order as the time neared for construction to begin. The University considered and discarded the idea of having the architects re-design the building to accommodate a tree. Instead the building resorted to hopping again, this time three feet north.

Once when the building was playing the hopscotch game north and south it was thought that perhaps the swamp cypress could be moved and saved. But it was finally decided that the tree would stay in its natural unnatural habitat.

So OU's towering swamp cypress stands, its roots exposed. And workmen down below aren't even aware that the tree's presence is unique. To them it's just a nice shade tree.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available  
at call number LH 1 .06S6 in  
Bizzell Memorial Library.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAIL-  
ABLE ONLINE DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT RESTRIC-  
TIONS.

A paper copy of  
this issue is  
available at call  
number LH 1 .06S6  
in Bizzell Memorial  
Library.