



The MULTI-PURPOSE ARENA A Kaleidoscope of Activities

by Connie Burke Ruggles

There's a standing joke around the University. It goes like this: "If it rains on Commencement Sunday, ceremonies will be held the preceding Saturday."

Fortunately it doesn't often rain for Commencement, but for years now there has been the nagging problem of nowhere to go for that important academic ceremony in case of bad weather.

The new multi-purpose arena will solve the Commencement problem along with a lot of others.

Campaign work on the multi-purpose arena is moving into high gear with committees across the state poised to begin one of the phases of securing funding for construction.

To some the arena is largely an athletic pavilion, and indeed that is one important aspect of what the multi-purpose arena will offer. But the multi-purpose designation is more than just a name, for the arena will serve an almost unlimited variety of purposes.

Item: With its 11,250 seats the arena can effectively be used for student convocations.

Item: In case the rain does fall during Commencement weekend, ceremonies can be moved indoors with plenty of room for graduates and guests alike.

Item: The old Field House is an acoustical nightmare, whereas the multi-purpose arena will have proper acoustics so people can hear and be heard.

Item: The city fire marshal can calm his shattered nerves because at last there will be a place where large crowds can safely and comfortably hear popular speakers.

Item: Entertainers can be booked into the multi-purpose arena with the guarantee that there is room for the necessary large crowd where everyone can hear and enjoy.

Item: Theatre and other arts productions with a crowd expectation in the neighborhood of 2,000 can effectively use the multi-purpose arena which will have equipment to close off a 2,000-plus portion of the seating for smaller events.

Item: If the basketball team, the wrestlers or the gymnasts are practicing it won't be necessary to close down the main arena. There are practice areas on the lower level.

Item: Should the University choose to offer closed-circuit broadcast of any event, the multi-purpose arena will be ready-made for that use.

Item: No more will there be the frantic search for parking around the main campus. The multi-purpose arena will be built south of the main campus near new Highway 9 with adequate parking adjacent to the building.

Anyone who has attended much of anything at OU can make his own list of advantages for a multi-purpose arena. Obviously lots of people have been making that kind of list because the arena is now one of the University's top priority items for new construction.

Actually there has been a recognized need for such a facility for a number of years. The problem has been to come up with a building that is financially feasible. Planners went to other schools where they looked at arenas that were cheaper than the \$5.3 million projected for OU's facility. They looked at others considerably more expensive. They examined several fine designs for the University. The result has been a plan that should meet the institution's needs for long years ahead, can be financed without detracting from the many other vital needs of the institution, will serve a multiplicity of purposes, and can be looked on with pride both by those who help build it and those who will use it in the years ahead.

Financing the arena is a two-fold proposition. About half the money will come from institutional sources with the remainder coming from private funding. Part of that private funding will be in the form of seat-option sales.

A seat-option is just what the name implies. A person who wishes to contribute to building the multi-purpose arena pays \$750 to the arena fund. In exchange he gets two things: a tax deductible donation to the University and a 10-year option on a prime seat in the multi-purpose arena beginning when the building is completed.

The first \$50 of each seat-option sale goes to preserve the 10-year option on the seat. The remaining \$700 is the tax deductible contribution toward construction of the building.

Pledges on the seat-options may be paid over a three-year period. The campaign for seat-option sales is scheduled to begin in late fall and will involve volunteer workers throughout the state.

Making the multi-purpose arena a reality certainly is a state-wide effort. Leadership for the private funding aspect of the campaign is coming from among the University's many alumni and friends.

John Houchin, '34 pet. eng. Bartlesville, recently elevated to Deputy Chairman of the Board of Phillips Petroleum Company, is over-all chairman of the multi-purpose arena work.

With the Office of University Development, under the vice presidency of David A. Burr, '52 journ., providing staff support, Houchin has marshaled a series of committees to aid him in the work ahead.

Chairmen and their committees are J. W. McLean, '43 bus., Oklahoma City, major gifts committee; Lou K. Sharpe, '42 bus., Checotah, seat option sales committee, and Howard Neumann, Oklahoma City, publicity and promotion committee.

"I am grateful to those who have agreed to serve on arena committees," Houchin says. "They are all able men and good friends of the University. They see the arena as an important facility for the University and the state, and I look forward to working with them in this project."

There's no doubt that Houchin, his committee chairmen and those who will work with them face a time-consuming task. But no one can deny they have a popular and important project with which to work.

Moral support for the arena has never been a problem, and the all-important fiscal aid already is beginning to come in. At a recent meeting of the Alumni Development Fund board, members voted a \$15,000 allocation to the multi-purpose arena. In addition pledges of assistance are coming in from a variety of people.

The University's new president, Dr. Paul F. Sharp, probably summed it up best. "The multi-purpose arena is aptly named. It will have many uses and will be a truly educational facility in the classic sense of the word. It is a project I think everyone can support."

(From left) — University of Oklahoma Executive Director Ron McDaniel and Bryan Arnn, chairman of the ADF Board of Directors, present John Houchin, a Phillips Petroleum Company executive and over-all chairman of the multi-purpose arena work, a check for \$15,000 from the Alumni Development Fund Board.

