
PROLOGUE

Towers and Flowers and Fountains and Trees



The University of Oklahoma is building a clock tower. Standing in front of the new Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell Memorial Library, the tower is 125 feet tall, imposing, graceful and is costing over \$300,000. As far as I can see, other than presenting a constant reminder of the passage of time, the tower will serve no utilitarian purpose whatsoever. Its primary function is to look great. That's purpose enough.

The entire new library addition is looking great — an extraordinary job of blending the gargoyled prairie gothic architecture of the University's first half century with the bland, red brick boxes of the 1950s. Yet the new library wing wouldn't look nearly so good without the tower. Destined to be the new focal point of the campus, the tower is a necessary luxury, the kind of "frill" that sets a college campus apart from a General Motors plant.

The Oklahomans who established this University, those hardened pioneers and their school-hungry offspring, understood the use of "frills;" they knew instinctively what a campus should look like. The buildings they erected were symbols of the better life for which they hungered. The examples they left us — the buildings that didn't burn down in those precarious early days — are tributes to their ambition. Turrets and gargoyles, carved woodwork and stonemason's artistry, leaded glass windows, columns and statuary. They built for the ages.

No one in his right mind would suggest gargoyles these days. The stone and wood carvers are gone. But the legacy they left is worth preserving, and their spirit and purpose is applicable to the development of today's campus. We have already had that period when practical meant

homely, and more than minimum upkeep was considered extravagant.

During the late '60s and '70s, budgets were tight and times were tense. There wasn't time, energy or resources to worry about cutting the grass, trimming the hedges or planting flowers; the campus buildings were allowed to run down. The critics of "campus unrest" thought universities had lost their minds; actually they had lost their pride.

About that time a delegation of OU hourly employees met with certain administrators to voice complaints, discuss priorities and offer suggestions. Present were representatives of the hundreds of folks who keep the University in operation — food service cooks, secretaries, housekeepers, electricians, clerks. Higher salaries were mentioned, of course, but their No. 1 dissatisfaction was with the shabby condition of the campus.

Considerable effort in the past few years is succeeding in turning that situation around. The sandblasting crews have given new life to old facades. Evans Hall (the administration building) has undergone the cosmetic surgery, while Jacobson and Carpenter Halls (facing Boyd Street across from Campus Corner) positively gleam. The memorial arches, which stand sentinel at the Parrington Oval, Asp Street and Brooks Street entrances to the campus, look brand new. Just behind Adams Hall, the picturesque fountain erected by students and friends in memory of Professor Patricio Gimeno is being restored.

From early spring to late fall, a succession of flowers, trees and shrubs bloom in profusion. The flower beds are being carefully relandscaped, complete with benches for the passersby. Several thousand new trees are being planted around new

Continued on Inside Back Cover

PROLOGUE

Towers & Flowers

Continued from Inside Front Cover

construction areas and on the barren south campus.

All these projects cost money, private and public. The clock tower for the library was an architectural option, made possible by a private gift. The trees are being purchased with donations to the David Ross Boyd Tree Planting Project. Just as the Class of 1943 and the generosity of Sculptor Joe Taylor made possible the magnificent statue of William Bennett Bizzell on the south oval, so the former students of Julian Monnet have added a touch of tradition to the new Law Center with an imposing statue of their late dean.

Increased funding from the legislature, through the State Regents for Higher Education, has made it possible to renovate several older buildings and to spruce up the campus in general.

Pride in the campus is back, hopefully to stay. There is a growing acceptance of the idea that the atmosphere of a college campus should be conducive to thought and contemplation. What students learn in the classroom and laboratory is vital to their professional development. What they experience outside their classes is essential to their development as persons. Appreciation of beauty isn't a classroom course, but students can take it with them from the campus along with the desire to make every place they live better than they found it.

The University of Oklahoma never will have the most beautiful college campus in the country. We lack the Jeffersonian architectural charm of the University of Virginia, the physical uniformity and Rocky Mountain backdrop of the University of Colorado. We don't have the Malibu beaches of Pepperdine, and the climate is against us. But we do have our own Southwestern brand of class, and it's worth all the time, effort and money that it takes to preserve it.

—CAROL J. BURR

E. T. Dunlap Tower, at right, in front of the Doris W. Neustadt Library Wing.

