

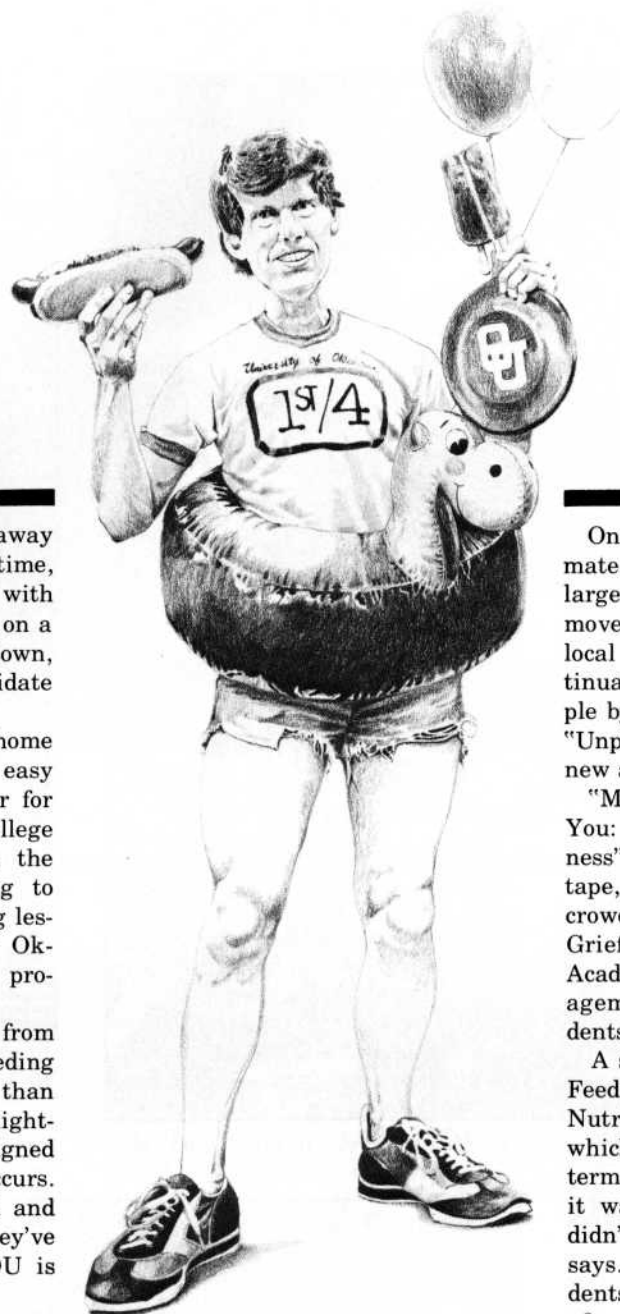
Show me an 18-year-old away from home for the first time, sharing a 12-by-15 room with someone he's never seen before, on a campus larger than his hometown, and I'll show you a prime candidate for acute confusion.

Making the transition from home to university campus is never easy for the traditional freshman, or for his colleagues — the junior college transfer, the married student, the commuter, the adult returning to college — but the shock is being lessened at the University of Oklahoma with a four-year-old program called 1st/4.

1st/4, which takes its name from the four days immediately preceding classes in the fall, is more than freshman orientation. 1st/4 is light-hearted survival training, designed to head off trouble before it occurs. For new students able to read and willing to listen, everything they've ever wanted to know about OU is there for the asking.

Four years ago, the first 1st/4 drew fewer than 700 participants. But the word got around. This year more than 1,600 new Sooners checked in under the giant red-and-white striped tent on Walker Tower Mall in the heart of the residential housing area. In addition to assistance in getting settled in housing, the students were offered a wide range of seminars, some of which were repeated several times during the four-day period, and a variety of social events.

Parents had their own orientation sessions, which drew 450 this year, compared to 200 last year, and some parents also sat in on other discussions with their sons or daughters.



One of the sessions, "My Roommate, My Friend," attracted such a large audience that it had to be moved to a larger room. Meanwhile, local campus ministers had a continual flow of interested young people by their individual booths at the "Unpacking Your Faith" session, a new addition to 1st/4 this year.

"Making the System Work for You: Communication and Assertiveness" — or how to deal with red tape, long lines and hassle — drew a crowd, as did "Graduating Without Grief: How to Work With Your Academic Advisor" and "Time Management Seminar for New Students."

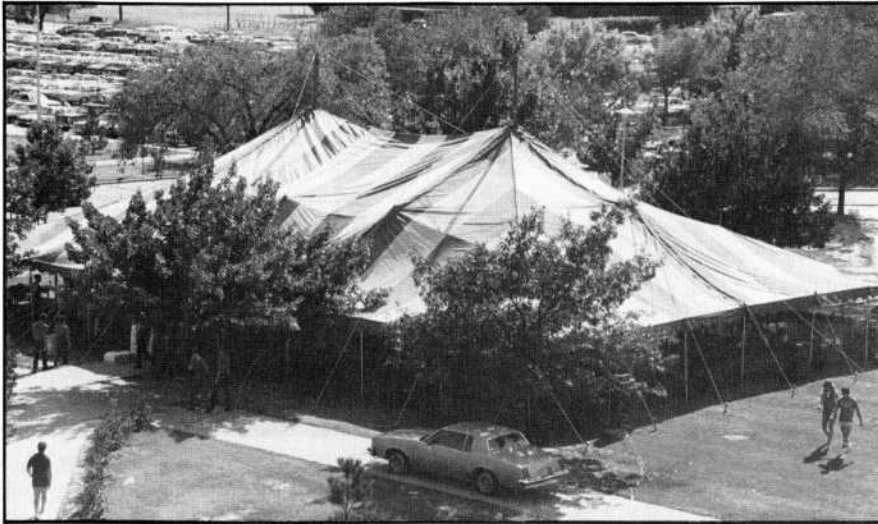
A surprise hit was "The Care and Feeding of the Student Stomach: Nutrition Basics for New Students," which 1st/4 director Joe Johnson termed a gamble. "The staff believed it was a good idea, but we really didn't expect much response," he says. "We felt that the older students would realize the importance of good nutrition — we didn't think freshmen would — but they did."

Attracting smaller crowds were special sessions for women returning to college, minorities and handicapped students and students who are also parents. Other discussions centered on financial planning, career choices, study/travel abroad, the Greeks, and drinking behavior.

At the tent registration, new students were encouraged to sign special interests lists — everything from tennis and racquetball to Dungeons and Dragons, chess and politics — in order to find new "Sooner Friends" who shared those interests. At a dinner in Couch Cafeteria on the first night of 1st/4,

1ST/4

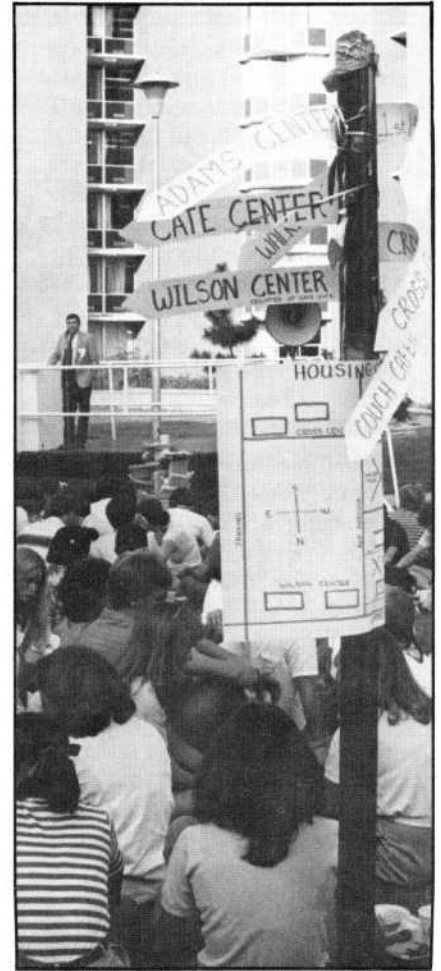
All You Ever Wanted To Know About OU



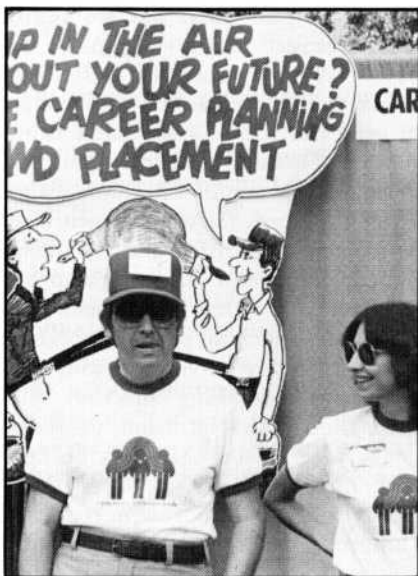
1st/4 activities begin with registration in the big red-and-white striped tent.



The happy student is the well-fed student. Food is the order of the day at 1st/4.



New students gather around a general all-purpose campus signpost to hear Interim President J. R. Morris welcome them to the University.



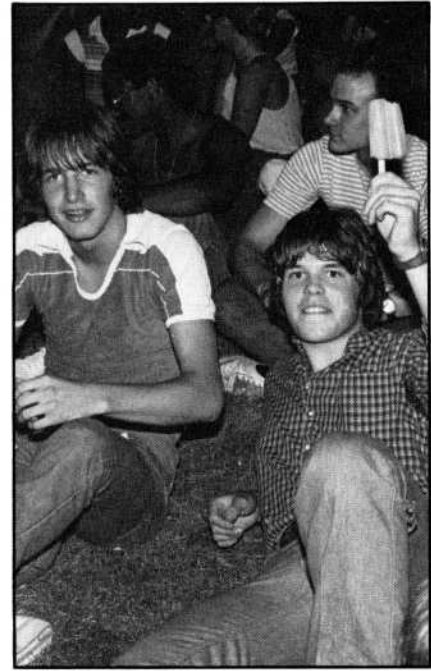
Representatives from OU services man booths for 1st/4 Fest to acquaint students with available help.



1st/4 events are planned with something for every one of the 1,600 participants. Seminars, pool parties, street dances, an ice cream social and a marching band, and when all else fails, call them back to the big tent and feed them again.



Those long, hot lines for late enrollees didn't seem quite so bureaucratic with cool drinks served by Rich Coberg and other OU student affairs staffers.



Free outdoor movies and popsicles were one 1st/4 entertainment option.

tables were arranged according to those interest groups to give students a chance to meet face to face.

1st/4 Fest, held on the last evening of the orientation, featured booths manned by representatives of service agencies on campus and in the city of Norman.

Thirty-minute trolley tours of the campus were offered throughout the four days, but students also could schedule small group walking tours, conducted by upperclassmen, to find their individual classes.

However utilitarian 1st/4 may have been, many of the events were just for fun. More than 1,200 attended the pool party and picnic lunch at the OU Swim Complex. About 2,000 — upperclassmen as well as freshmen — jammed Third Street between the Towers for a street dance. The Pride of Oklahoma marching band made its first public appearance of the year, and the gymnastics teams staged an exhibition. There were free outdoor movies and an ice cream social.

The stars of this year's 1st/4 were the 125 "Ask Me!" volunteers, upperclassmen wearing "Ask Me!" t-shirts and buttons, who had attended a day-long orientation to bone up on OU facts and figures.

"They did everything from searching for lost souls to meeting students and parents at their cars to help carry baggage up to the rooms," Johnson explains.

Although 1st/4 is free to the participants, the program is not cheap. The total cost is approximately \$11,000, but with various departments throughout the University donating services, notably Food Service and the Physical Plant, the actual cash outlay is less than \$9,000, split between five different budget areas of cooperating University agencies.

Housing Director David Schrage was elated with this year's effort. "The whole University gathered its resources together," he insists, "and it paid off. The year got off to a really good start in housing. We cracked down pretty hard on housing violations, and the kids responded well. I hear from the staff that residents are more willing to respect each other's privacy, and that they are more interested in getting involved on the campus."

Pleased as student affairs staffers are with the success of 1st/4 for traditional new students, especially those who live in University housing, they see a need for involving

commuters and married students.

"Considering the large number of commuters enrolled in OU," Johnson explains, "we haven't had a large number of commuter participants in 1st/4 — and yet they are the ones who need (orientation) the most."

The response from married students also was disappointing, since special social events and help sessions for this group were included on this fall's 1st/4 schedule.

Get-acquainted efforts for new students don't end with 1st/4 and the beginning of classes. Howdy Week continues through the first week of the fall semester with evening social gatherings, bands and films, climaxing with Kaleidoscope, an activities carnival sponsored by the OU Student Association to enlist new students into a variety of campus organizations.

No orientation program, even one as thorough and imaginative as 1st/4, can solve all the problems faced by the new university student, nor can it remove all the confusion in an inherently confusing time of life. But 1st/4 takes a long step in the right direction by anticipating questions, providing answers and teaching at least the basics in the ancient art of survival—CJB 