
PROLOGUE

The Centennial Arches: Leaving Your Mark on the Future

In my youth, back about the beginning of time, I wrote an editorial for *The Oklahoma Daily* deriding Homecoming for "wasting" \$300 per house on crepe paper and chicken wire for yard decorations. There were, I reasoned, so many causes more worthy of such expenditure. I always have regretted that editorial.

That bit of *Daily* pomposity wasn't responsible for the decline of Homecoming as a major University event; the cause-oriented '60s and '70s didn't need any help from me. But the guilt remains, even as the current crop of students strives valiantly to return Homecoming and other Sooner traditions to their proper places during this Centennial year. Perhaps to make amends, this column is devoted to the students' new project—one which will neither house the homeless nor feed the hungry but will add to the collegiate ambiance while leaving a monument to their presence at OU, something to say "We were here, and we cared."

The students want to build some arches.

The idea is not original. The classes of 1915 and 1917 built the first pair of arches, which they called gateways, at the Parrington (or north) Oval entrance to the campus at University Boulevard and Boyd Street; the classes of 1919 and 1920 gave the arches at the Asp Avenue entrance, while those on Brooks Street came from the classes of 1932 and 1933. Other classes of those early years left a couple of fountains, a reflecting pool, a stadium tower, some plaques, and of course, the statue of President Bizzell. The class of 1906 found an unfinished grave-

stone that had fallen off a freight train onto a railway siding near Oklahoma City, hauled it to the north oval and chiseled '06 on the side. (Times must have been hard in '06.) As memorials go, however, none has endured to become so symbolic of the OU campus as the arches.

The Centennial student body plans their arches for the Van Vleet (or south) Oval entrance, across Lindsey Street from the dormitory area. The design also calls for a landscaped plaza between and north of the arches. The

project planners have secured a good amount of donated services and materials, but the cash exposure for the student Centennial committee stands at approximately \$50,000.

Early in the project, the committee wanted to be able to build the arches strictly from student resources, but reality set in. Students are always broke, so their leaders settled for marshaling student efforts to raise the money—from fellow students, businesses, current and retired faculty and staff, the Norman community and alumni.

For most, this is their first venture into private fund raising. Naturally the University hopes the experience will ignite a spark that will reappear in them as alumni. Years from now, when Sooners of this era return and drive down Lindsey, they may recall with satisfaction their role in the Centennial and feel some pride in the tangible mark they left on the campus.

The committee has designed a logo, mimeographed some flyers, come up with "Leave Your Mark" lapel buttons and certificates for donors. At the conclusion of the Centennial Celebration in December 1990, they plan to bury a scroll inscribed with donors' names in a time capsule near the arches.

The student leaders are a little awestruck at the size of the project they have undertaken. And they probably will take some pot shots from naysayers who see no benefit in symbolism. Hopefully, however, no one will write something profound to dampen their newly kindled spirit of school tradition.

—CJB

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