

# CENTENNIAL COUNTDOWN



*Former Sooner band directors Gene Braught and wife Kay, left, and Leonard Haug and wife Irene enjoy Lunch on the Lawn with members of the Alumni Band during the Centennial Countdown.*

W

hatever its historical significance, December 19 is not a good date to kick off a once-in-a-hundred-years celebration. On-campus extracurricular life is on hiatus as students and faculty grapple with the grim reality of final examinations. Off campus the populace is deep into the holiday season, where red and white means Santa, not Sooner.

Not content to ease into the Centennial amidst such competing forces, the commission opted to preview the gala year on one of OU's traditional festival days, a Homecoming football Saturday, November 4, 1989. The fall weather gamble paid off with a picture-perfect Oklahoma day—blue skies and bright sunshine with barely a nip in the air, autumn leaves and mounds of chrysanthemums still flashing their colors in the gardens on the south oval.

Dubbed the "Centennial Countdown," with Oklahoma City alumni Larry Bledsoe and Jackie Jones as co-chairmen, the preview event began early with open houses, special exhibits and presentations in academic units throughout the campus. Visitors to the College of Education could step back into the past with the replica of a turn-of-the-century one-room school or examine the latest in teaching materials. They could observe music, dance and drama students in rehearsal or view the work of art and architecture students. After touring the sparkling new laboratories of the massive Sarkeys Energy Center, the more adventuresome could survey the campus from atop the 200-foot-tall Energy Center tower, which then was still a year from completion.



*The Centennial edition of the Pride of Oklahoma Marching Band supplies rousing Sooner music for the south oval lunch crowd during the preview.*



*From his perch on Dad's shoulders, a young Sooner shields his ears from the University band's enthusiastic rendition of the school fight song.*

Libraries, museums, colleges, departments, honors housing and research units also rolled out their red carpets for the returning Sooners. Not to be outdone in these Norman-centered festivities, the Oklahoma City and Tulsa campuses of the Health Sciences Center set up medical displays in Dale Hall, blending the oldest traditions with the latest technology.

Long before noon, patrons of "Lunch on the Lawn" jammed the south oval for barbecue, good fellowship and entertainment featuring the Pride of Oklahoma Marching Band, the alumni band, OU cheerleaders, Ruf/Neks, Pompon squad and the Sooner Schooner. During the show, the student performers of the Broadway Gala premiered "A Time for Greatness," the OU Centennial Anthem with music by James Faulconer, arranged by Vernon Whaley, both of the School of Music. Words to the anthem were written by veteran faculty member and administrator J. R. Morris Jr.

During halftime of the OU-Missouri game, after the crowning of the Homecoming King and Queen, the Pride offered its rendition of the anthem and for the first time unfurled the Centennial flags. The Big Red did its part on this momentous occasion with a 52-14 victory over the hapless Tigers.

Then it was on to the Oklahoma Memorial Union for "Sooner Shindig," an evening featuring a variety of dance bands and other strolling entertainers. By the time the bands closed down on Saturday night, there was no doubt in the minds of any of the more than 3,000 weekend celebrators that the Centennial had begun.



*The November 4, 1989, Lunch on the Lawn came in the form of barbecue-in-a-box as hundreds of returning Sooners joined President Van Horn, second from right, to preview the Centennial.*



*Broadway Gala, the popular student entertainment group directed by Irvin Wagner, takes the stage at the south oval phase of the Centennial Countdown, which included the OU-Missouri game.*