
PROLOGUE

Find the month of October in your 2000 journal—and circle it in red

Sometimes everything seems to come together in a most delightful way. A record-breaking private fund-raising campaign culminates in totals far beyond even the most optimistic expectations. A gift of world-class French Impressionist paintings propels Oklahoma into the upper echelon among university art museums. And, oh, those ever-lovin' Sooners . . .

Elsewhere it might have been "a good run"—or even "a lucky streak." At the University of Oklahoma this year, we just called it "Red October."

To fully make this case, however, some editorial license is required, i.e., borrowing a couple of days from the end of September.

September 29 alone would qualify for a month's worth of celebration. The conclusion of the Reach for Excellence Campaign could have been an anticlimax. Record-setting announcement after record-setting announcement had marked the five-year fund-raising effort. After only a year, the original \$200-million goal was adjusted upward to \$250 million, a milestone surpassed just two years later. Exceeding the objective was a given; it was merely a question of "by how much?"

Ever the master of timing, President David Boren saved a couple of surprises for the campaign's end: first, the grand total of funds raised—\$514 million; second, the mind-boggling bequest that pushed the campaign over the half-billion mark—the \$50 million Clara and Aaron Weitzenhoffer Collection. The revelations came in reverse order.

A. Max Weitzenhoffer, son of the late Oklahoma City couple, joined Boren on September 28 to announce the most important gift of French Im-

pressionist art ever made to a public university. The 33 artworks, virtually unexhibited for the last 50 years, bear signatures such as Degas, Gauguin, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and Vuillard. A new wing for the collection will be added to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art to house the collection and Clara Weitzenhoffer's 17th- and 18th-century decorative arts, including period furniture, porcelain and silver.

The Campaign Celebration the following evening highlighted the University's fund-raising totals and \$550 million permanent endowment but was not all about numbers, impressive as they were. The focus was on endowed professorships, scholarships, new programs, capital improvements, campus beautification, strengthened resources and new visions for a very promising future.

One of the ongoing "visions" was the October expansion of the Campaign for Sooner Sports from \$25 million to \$100 million—with \$56 million already raised, sweetened by a previously unannounced \$5 million from Edward L. Gaylord of Oklahoma City. Now that's the way to conduct a campaign. The athletic effort impacts each of OU's intercollegiate sports, the marquee projects being expansion and improvement of Lloyd Noble Center and Oklahoma Memorial Stadium. And again, the timing could not have been better.

Coach Bob Stoops' troops chose October to serve notice of OU's return to football glory days. After thrashing four lesser foes in September, the Sooners ran the table, knocking off No. 11 Texas, No. 2 Kansas State and No. 1 Nebraska in successive weeks, landing on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and atop all the polls. Red October was just the preamble to the Big 12

championship and a perfect 12-0 record heading to the Orange Bowl to play for the national championship. Coach- and player-of-the-year honors abounded for Stoops and quarterback Josh Heupel, the Heisman favorite as *Sooner Magazine* goes to press.

Other significant, if less publicized, accomplishments were occurring throughout the University as well. The College of Law, for instance, currently undergoing a major facility upgrade and expansion, was ranked among the top 15 in the country—this for a program that a few short years ago was teetering on the brink of serious problems.

"Has this been a stop-the-presses kind of month at OU or what?" OU alumnus Ed Frost emailed after the Nebraska game. "We were watching highlights after the you-know-what game, and some guy on some network (I was too delirious to know which) prefaced his sports remarks with some others about that French Impressionist art given to the University. And this was on a sports show! I guess his point was that things seem to be going swimmingly in Norman at the moment. Did you have to scrap whatever you were planning for your next issue and replace it with all these wonderful developments?"

Well, not exactly—but count on reading more in future issues; we have enough material for articles ad infinitum. Most journalists fantasize about that "Stop the presses!" thing, but it would make sense only if such happenings were once-in-a-lifetime events. Since David Boren moved into Evans Hall and Joe Castiglione brought Bob Stoops to Norman, we have come to expect the unexpected and regularly revel in the momentous occasion. —CJB