



# prologue.

## Some college pranks reek of creativity. Some make you wonder, “What were they thinking?”

**T**he oranges are back in the Seed Sower’s pouch; all’s right with the world.

When the Sooners’ surprising run to the 2000 national football championship began to take shape mid-season, oranges mysteriously appeared overnight in the pouch of the new Seed Sower statue on the south oval—with oranges even more mysteriously growing on all the oval’s trees. The gaudy fruit symbolized, of course, the Orange Bowl game where that year’s BCS championship would be decided. From a student prank a tradition was born; as the 2001 Sooners aimed for Pasadena, roses materialized in the pouch; the Seed Sower sported New Orleans Mardi Gras beads in 2003. A mid-season loss put a damper on the 2002 Fiesta Bowl prospects, so we can only imagine what the collegiate mind might have produced. And now we are back to oranges.

For its longevity potential, this little student stunt ranks high on the list of classic pranks, but well below the engineers’ penchant for painting Monnet Hall’s owl green—a continuing custom long after their rival lawyers vacated the so-called “Law Barn” in 1976 for the new south campus OU Law Center. Monnet’s sculpted owl nestles in a niche a good four stories up; the building is locked at night and, to the best of my knowledge, the offenders have never been caught. Another year the engineers added insult to insult by locating a source of water, hooking up a hose, running it down behind the owl, between his legs to produce an arching stream of water on unwary bystanders below.

The new Law Center somehow failed

to inspire the same degree of engineering disdain—except for one defining moment when an early morning arrival opened the elevator door and released a horde of green-dyed mice into lawyers’ staid confines. These highjinks—largely benign, except maybe for the mice—were the remnants of a more raucous interschool rivalry from OU’s early days marked by retaliatory kidnappings and other offenses best left unrecorded.

Poor Monnet Hall, however, was to suffer an indignity from another quarter, albeit a highly imaginative one: Still visible today in the elevator shaft is a four-story RUF/NEK paddle painted by a member of that august group and a RUF/NEK Li'l Sis. The story goes that they secreted themselves atop the elevator until the staff had left and locked the building. Then by moving the elevator up and down, they were able to outline the monster paddle, and then add paint between the lines; the job took seven hours.

My personal favorite from the '60s was the “Door Slam,” orchestrated by the finals-stressed inhabitants of the Women’s Quadrangle. That dormitory area consisted of four, four-story buildings of four houses each, arranged in two rows. In a masterpiece of synchronization, residents of the fourth floor of the first house slammed their doors in unison, followed immediately by the third floor, the second, and so on, across to the adjoining house, up and across, down and across throughout the center—the windows all being open, of course, to maximize the effect. It sounded as if war had been declared.

An enterprising group from a right-wing campus publication called *The Fountainhead* ingeniously planted winter rye grass seed on the south oval so that when the Bermuda went brown, the surviving green spelled out “The Head.” Even more artistic was the giant papier-mâché Easter egg, deposited with hundreds of small plastic eggs on the Boyd House lawn for the president’s enjoyment.

Less popular administratively was the papier-mâché-ing of “The Mustang,” the majestic fiberglass sculpture with the glowing red eyes that dominated the corner of Boyd and Elm. Some art appreciation-challenged students likened the sculpture to a merry-go-around horse, and one night fashioned a pink saddle for the trusty steed and planted a sign reading “25¢ a Ride”—both adornments being quickly removed.

Although the Mustang culprits remain at large, they will not be able to keep their triumph secret. At some reunion someday, they will have to talk about it. Just as a former governor bringing his freshman daughter to OU this year was moved to recount his role in painting the owl green. Just as an attorney and former big-city mayor, confident that the statute of limitations had expired, confessed in writing to liberating sorority and fraternity trophies and leaving them on the steps of the President George Cross’s house. Just as a senior OU administrator is not above proudly ratting out his wife as the paintbrush-wielding RUF/NEK Li'l Sis.

As for Easter eggs and oranges—give it 10 years, and there ought to be some good stories at the Pe-et reunions. You just gotta love 'em. —CJB