



postscript.

Victim of Progress

With the Norman campus becoming ever more pedestrian-friendly, the malling of the west side of Van Vleet (south) Oval was inevitable. Neighboring Brooks long ago surrendered its street status to be transformed into Brooks Mall, a spacious walkway now stretching the width of the main campus from Elm to Jenkins. Nearby, the recently completed Price Hall straddles what was once a section of Asp Avenue, creating a cul de sac on its north side as well as a fountain-centered plaza. The new mall, like the new hall, will bear the name of benefactor Michael F. Price. And if it is as tastefully done as other recent beautification projects, the result will be a welcome addition.

But with progress comes pain for someone. When bulldozers ripped through the asphalt surface fronting Dale, Copeland, Collings, Kaufman, Gittinger and Nielsen halls, the pangs were felt by the RUF/NEKS. The devoted, often-rowdy men's spirit group—bearers of the giant flag and shotguns, guardians of the white ponies Boomer and Sooner, drivers of the Sooner Schooner—had a vested interest in the crumbling bits of paving. The painting of that stretch of pavement had been part of the organization's pledging rituals for the past two decades.

In October 1983, on the Wednesday night before the OU-Texas football game, RUF/NEK pledges gathered on the oval armed with cans of red and white paint and a handful of brushes and took turns fleshing out bold letters proclaiming "Beat the Hell Out of Texas," followed by the year. Subsequent pledge classes repeated the process annually, sprucing up the declaration and adding the appropriate date. Then the pledges, usually numbering 10 or so, would meet the 15 to 25 active RUF/NEKs at the sunken garden, popularly known as the Passion Pit, to celebrate the continuing tradition. As with most traditions that begin as a prank, administrative sanction was never sought nor forthcoming but neither was the practice condemned.

A RUF/NEK president of the '80s decided to have the lowly

ones add his own initials to the artwork. They also painted "OU" on a manhole cover and adorned a fire hydrant. A more mysterious addition was the word "FADADA," referencing the chant intoned by the RUF/NEKs beneath Owen Field's north goal post at the beginning of each half. When accompanied by the firing of the shotguns, the chant reportedly scares the evil spirits out of "The Pit," as the stadium was once called. And who can doubt its effectiveness?

*FADADA FADADA FADADA
Deton boten doten
Raddy daddy
Do hey
Feendit feendit feendit fa
Sooners Sooners
Rah rah rah*

Not one to stomp on tradition, OU President David Boren was sympathetic to the current RUF/NEKs' anguish

and took a walk with Student Affairs Vice President Clarke Stroud (himself a former RUF/NEK president) to find a spot to continue the annual paint party. Since restoring the fragmented asphalt was impractical—never having been an ideal surface in the first place—a section of Brooks Mall concrete was selected, 100 feet east of Elm Street with plenty of room for the dates to string out ad infinitum. From photographs and mea-

surements taken before the destruction, a graphic artist will duplicate the old lettering—minus the group's presidential initials, which over time had grown in size if not importance.

The new version will undoubtedly be an artistic improvement, the inscription more permanent, more visible and safe from the wear and tear of vehicle traffic. But with official accommodation comes official sanction. Given their past history, is this something the RUF/NEKs can handle? Only time will tell.

—CJB



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