

Welcome to BOYD HOUSE

BY CAROL J. BURR Photos by Robert Taylor

*The grand presidential home on Boyd Street
is a century old and celebrating in style
by opening its doors to the University family.*

After ten years of hosting every conceivable combination of students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, donors and visiting VIPs, David and Molly Shi Boren justifiably could have assumed that anyone who wanted to tour the magnificently enlarged and renovated Boyd House had done so. But as the official home of University of Oklahoma presidential families passed its 100th birthday, the Borens took no chances. For two days in September, the doors of Boyd House were opened to welcome the University family to one of Oklahoma's most storied structures.

"I have no idea how many people have come through Boyd House since November 1996 when we moved in," Molly Boren says. "We had a week of open houses that first month. It was very cold. The fence was not quite up, and the yard wasn't in—we had boards across what was almost a frozen tundra."

But the lack of landscaping did not deter the hundreds who could not wait to see what the vision of Washington, D.C.-based architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen and 18 months of reconstruction had accomplished within the walls of this beloved official residence.

What they found was a skillfully planned, elegantly furnished mansion that serves the University's entertainment needs while functioning as a real home for the present and any future presidential family.

"Any occupants of this house will do a lot of entertaining," Molly Boren says. "But when we're not entertaining, it's very much our home; we live all over the house. When we added the Cleo Cross Room, the architect created a very large master suite upstairs, a self-contained apartment; when we need to retreat, we can. We need that, and our successors will need that."

The structure has been significantly enlarged from the original house built in 1906 by OU's first president, David Ross Boyd, as his personal residence. The University acquired the house in 1914 and subsequent presidents have overseen several updates and re-

models over the years. President J. Herbert Hollomon preferred living off campus, and Boyd House was used for a variety of purposes for the next 27 years. When David Boren became president in 1994, a condition of his employment was a return to Boyd House. A com-



The Borens welcome visitors to Boyd House.



The traditionally furnished living room features a 600-year-old Chinese screen at left and an 1866 landscape above the fireplace on loan from the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art.

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The floral-themed guest room, left of the landing, has two impressive poster beds with an ancestral portrait above each.



A large, rust-colored antique carpet covers the floor of the guest bedroom above, which has twin beds dressed in blues and yellows and features, at left, a handsome armoire with inset floral panels.

plete, \$2 million, privately funded renovation and expansion ensued. In the first 22 months after the reopening, the Borens welcomed an estimated 15,000 visitors.

Besides adding the presidential master suite and the 1,000-square-foot entertainment area named for the late former

first lady Cleo Cross at the back of the structure, Jacobsen reconfigured the upstairs to accommodate three guest bedrooms. “Each bedroom is very private, with its own bath, and a common sitting area on the landing,” Mrs. Boren explains. “It’s easy to have houseguests and not be on top of each other.

“When we have official guests, we have a wonderful food service to cater the meals. We can serve buffet style; we can serve around the dining room table; we can take the furniture out of the Cleo Cross Room and have a seated dinner for 60 people. And weather permitting, we can use the terrace for

wonderful buffets outside. It's amazing how many people we can serve."

Outside entertaining is enhanced by three beautiful types of gardens—traditional, English cottage and natural woodland—which are Molly Boren's pride and joy—and a sprinkling of carefully selected trees. All were landscaped and installed and are maintained by OU's Landscape Department. Likewise the massive surrounding privacy fence was designed and built in-house, with OU Physical Plant employees designing hinged trellises that can be pulled outward to allow the fence to be painted without disturbing the climbing roses.

"I can't say enough about our physical plant and landscape people," Mrs. Boren



In spite of the complete interior renovation and expansion in 1996, historic Boyd House retains the familiar appearance from the 1922 addition of the trademark white pillars by President Brooks.

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The house's furnishings are nearly as impressive as the structure itself. Most of the furniture was purchased, but a significant number of pieces—and many of the

decorator items and art works—were donated by some very special people. An Oscar Jacobson painting and needlepoint chair from the family of former President and Mrs. William Bennett Bizzell. Several pieces of furniture from Clara Rosenthal Weitzenhoffer and a painting on loan from the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art that was an early gift from Mrs. Weitzenhoffer and her husband, Aaron. A

James Everett Stewart painting from OU Regent Jon Stuart and his wife, Dee Dee. Two exquisite Chinese export pieces, an 18th century porcelain tureen and a 600-year-old screen, that belonged to Mary Ellen Monroney, the late widow of U.S. Senator A.S. Mike Monroney. A grandfather clock from the local Chi Omega sorority. Numerous pieces of art and antiques from the Borens' personal collection, much of which will remain permanently in Boyd House.

"We have been fortunate that almost everything that has been offered to Boyd House has been esthetically beautiful and appropriate for the house and its décor," Mrs. Boren says.

The Borens' expectations for Boyd House mirror the future they envision for the University itself. In keeping with their tree-planting efforts throughout the campus and in Norman, Mrs. Boren wanted to add her favorite tulip trees to the Boyd House yard. Better adapted to the eastern deciduous forest than the Oklahoma plains, one of the 10-year-old tulip trees succumbed to the past summer's extreme drought. The replacement tree will be a white oak.

"We expect this house to go on and on," the first lady says, "and we wanted a tree that would go on with it. The white oak has a life expectancy of 500 years."



Overnight guests can retreat to the privacy of the three second-floor bedrooms, each with its own bath and access to a common sitting area on the landing, pictured above. The sitting area opens onto the front balcony, with views of Parrington Oval and the campus beyond.