



When the magnificently handcrafted grandfather clock was unveiled in President David Boren's office this fall, its creator, Regents Professor of Economics Alexander Holmes, commented that although he has taught a thousand students each year for 30 years, he will be remembered for a clock. But what a clock it is.

Standing 100 inches tall — one inch for every year the Pe-Et Elm stood in front of Evans Hall — the clock is one of two Holmes fashioned from the wood salvaged when the historic tree fell victim to age and disease in 2006. The smaller companion clock graces the Zarrow Reading Room in Bizzell Memorial Library.

When the word came down that the venerable elm had exhausted its last reprieve, as reported in the Spring 2006 *Sooner Magazine*, Pe-Et members sought a suitable commemorative use for the wood that had sheltered the senior honorary society's initiation ceremonies since 1910. Josh Woodward came up with the winning suggestion.

The recipient of one of the small wooden bowls Holmes gives annually to "A" students in his honors economics class, Woodward was acquainted with the professor's woodworking skills, which included making a number of grandfather clocks. Holmes agreed to Pe-Et's request — on the condition that Woodward become his apprentice.

Holmes supervised the actual felling of the tree, having it lowered to the ground by a large crane (rather than the standard piece-by-piece removal), then cut into sections. A sawyer in Blanchard cut the sections into one-inch thick planks, which dried naturally for some time before being put into a kiln. After the wood arrived at



The Pe-Et Clock, made of wood from the historic elm that stood for 100 years on the site of Evans Hall, towers over its creator, Professor Alexander Holmes, left, and President David Boren, in whose office the clock resides.

Holmes' workshop, he and Woodward spent approximately 250 to 300 hours constructing the clocks.

The smaller, 80-inch clock, destined for the library, was a snap for the skillful Holmes, who had made others in the Strickley Arts & Crafts style of the 1900s. The President's office clock was a larger challenge. OU law alumnus William Comfort, a knowledgeable antique collector, heard of the Pe-Et project and offered the works from a 300-year-old British clock by Dan Quare, London. The gifted works required an original design by Holmes, with stunning results.

When the venerable elm had exhausted its last reprieve, Pe-Et sought a suitable use for the historic wood.

Holmes was surprised with the quality of the wood the old elm produced — given that elm is not a furniture wood, its growth pattern limiting planks to no more than four feet — but the wood steam bent and turned well, and the grain is strikingly beautiful. Holmes had enough leftover wood to produce several bowls and plans to turn the chips into paperweights to be sent to all living Pe-Et members.

The first bowl, bearing the designation "Pe-Et No. 1," was sold at auction to a Pe-Et alumnus during the College of Arts and Sciences' Kaleidoscope fundraiser, reportedly for \$2,700. With the second-place bidder already awaiting "Pe-Et No. 1A," the college has ordered several more for similar events.

Legend has it that the Pe-Et Elm was the last survivor of thousands that OU's first president, David Ross Boyd, had planted on campus and throughout Norman. If he had only known how cherished the wood would be 100 years later, he might have planted even more.

—CJB