

THE HOUSE THAT SOONERS BUILT

BY CHIP MINTY

University of Oklahoma graduates

Amy Hufnagel and Anna Price have been living parallel lives for a long time, but it took a \$160 million stadium renovation project to finally bring them together.

Both women are dedicated Sooner fans who were on campus in the era of Sam Bradford and Blake Griffin. Both gravitated toward the construction industry; Hufnagel studied engineering and Price majored in architecture.

While both were from out of state, they were raised in families deeply rooted in Sooner tradition. Hufnagel is from Texas, but both her parents and a sister graduated from OU. Price is from Missouri, but her father and her grandfather are doctors with medical degrees from OU.

Of course, both of them had season tickets in the student section and may have even rubbed elbows at the concession stand.

But the biggest thing they have in common is the Gaylord Family – Oklahoma Memorial Stadium renovation and expansion project.

continued



Travis Caperton

The Gaylord Family – Oklahoma Memorial Stadium project brought architect Anna Price full circle as an alumna, Sooner fan and the great-granddaughter of a construction contractor who helped build the stadium’s original west-side stands.



Travis Caperton

When Houston-based firm Walter P. Moore landed the job of renovating OU’s storied stadium, they made sure that OU graduate Amy Hufnagel was at the forefront as project engineer. The firm even pitched Hufnagel’s Sooner legacy as part of its project proposal.

Many talented OU alumni helped to transform the stadium where their beloved Sooners play. Here is the tale of two.

The massive project overhauled the south end zone and shaped the stadium into a traditional bowl, ending nearly 100 years of exposure to Oklahoma's sweeping south wind.

The renovation increased seating capacity and added concession stands, restrooms, suites, club rooms, plaza areas and the second-largest video board in college football.

In 2014, Hufnagel and Price found themselves in the thick of the project's design and engineering process. Hufnagel works for Houston-based engineering firm Walter P. Moore and Price works for Kansas City-based architecture firm Populous.

“Everyone in the office knows how much of a Sooner fan I am. With all the Aggies and Longhorns, they are aware.”

After OU hired Walter P. Moore and Populous to do the design and engineering work, the two firms assigned their young OU grads to the project teams. Hufnagel was the project engineer and Price was one of the architects.

As it turned out, Hufnagel had a small role in her company's successful bid for the job.

Leaders at Walter P. Moore mentioned her strong Sooner background in their contract proposal, illustrating her unique familiarity with the stadium and Sooner tradition.

“I was really excited that my project managers went out of their way to make sure I could work on this project,” Hufnagel says. “Everyone in the office knows how much of a Sooner fan I am. With all the Aggies and Longhorns, they are aware.”

From the beginning, Hufnagel says she was very involved with the project, traveling to Kansas City for meetings with architects at Populous.

“Young engineers don't usually get to go to the coordination meetings, so that was really cool,” she says.

That first Kansas City meeting was where Hufnagel and Price finally met.

After the team meetings, Price and Hufnagel joined the group for dinner at a Kansas City barbeque place, and that is where the pieces began to fall together.

They not only knew a lot of the same people, but they loved Oklahoma football and both considered themselves a “Sam fan.” In fact, they even agreed on the best game of all time: it was the Texas Tech rout of 2008, when the Sooners beat the No. 2 ranked Red Raiders, setting OU up to play Missouri for the Big 12 title.

As they sat together at the end of the table, their colleagues took notice, recognized their bond and gave them nicknames: Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

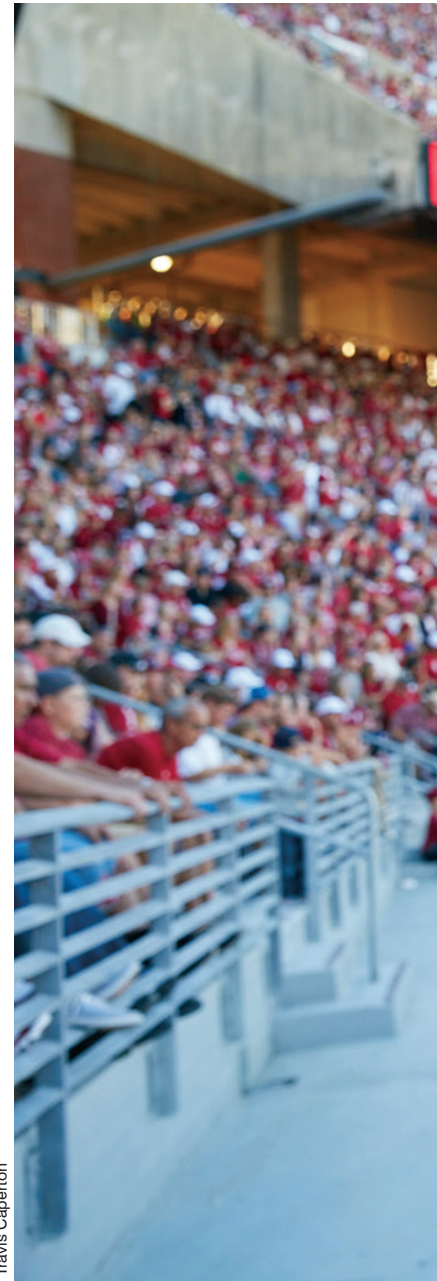
Beyond their love for the Sooners, their work on the OU stadium was an important milestone in both their careers.

“It's definitely what I would consider my dream project,” Hufnagel says. “It's a sports project, and I love sports. I have worked on hospitals and other projects, but stadiums are just different.”

As an example, she points to the vibration caused by thousands of people moving and cheering in the stands. That has to be accounted for in the engineering, she says. Also, stadium construction is often done in confined spaces, so that adds to the engineering and constructability challenge.

Price says the architecture of stadiums can be complicated.

“Designing a stadium is not like designing any other



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Engineer Amy Hufnagel and architect Anna Price, whom co-workers nicknamed “Tweedledum and Tweedledee” for their shared love of all things Sooner, take a moment to revel in their completed work with nearly 88,000 like-minded fans in the renovated stadium.

building,” she says. “There are so many things about designing a stadium that you don’t even think about. You have to make sure every fan has a sight line, and they have the same enjoyable experience, no matter where their seat is.”

Hufnagel and Price were at the construction site last April for the stadium’s topping-out ceremony, an important milestone for projects nearing completion. They saw OU quarterback Baker Mayfield and got their picture taken with coach Bob Stoops.

Both women say game days were special to them while

they were students.

“I’ll never forget my time in that stadium. It was a big part of my life,” Hufnagel says.

The stadium allows tens of thousands of people to come and watch the team, and now, because of the renovations, that experience will be even better.

Hufnagel considers the project her opportunity to give back.

Price’s contributions to the stadium project are not the first in her family’s history. During the 1920s, her great-



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Though Hufnagel and Price were on the front lines, it took the work of many alumni to refashion the stadium into a stunning showplace worthy of the Sooner legacy.

Gaylord Family–Oklahoma Memorial Stadium’s new 170-foot-wide video board was tested and retested before opening day to ensure that it was ready to bring Sooner Magic to life for fans.

grandfather was a construction contractor hired to help build the stadium’s west stands.

“It was really cool for me. My great grandfather built this original thing,” Price says.

Someday, Price plans to return to OU with her children. She looks forward to sharing the legacy of Sooner football, and while she’s there, she will point to the stadium’s south end zone.

“That was one of the first projects I worked on,” she will tell them. Then she will tell them about their great-great grandfather.

“It has come full circle in my family. I was able to complete the bowl that he started.”



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