



Postscript

Seminole, Okla., first-grade teacher Ruth Robinson never forgot the day she met her most famous pupil. A six-year-old David L. Boren had plunked himself onto the floor of his mother's car, resolutely refusing to join his classmates on the first day of school in 1947. Gentle hands coaxed him from car to classroom and, with help from Mrs. Robinson, the young Boren soon overcame his initial resistance to public education. It was an auspicious beginning for the man who would devote his life to public service, ultimately as president of the University of Oklahoma.

Boren's mother was a teacher; his father, an Oklahoma congressman. The younger Boren would follow both careers — often simultaneously.

After graduating from Yale, Boren became a Rhodes Scholar, earning his master's degree in philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford University. In 1966, he was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives and continued to serve while working toward his OU law degree. Upon receiving his juris doctorate in 1968, he taught political science at Oklahoma Baptist University, frequently rushing from class to his duties at the state capitol.

During his fourth term in the House, Boren was persuaded to run for governor and, in 1974, at the age of 33, he became the youngest governor in the nation. He also began dating Molly Shi, a former schoolteacher and OU law graduate from Ada, Okla. Shi was a special district judge in Pontotoc County when the couple married in 1977.

In 1979 Boren was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he became the longest-serving chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. An adviser to presidents Reagan, both Bushes, Clinton and Obama, many believed Boren had a shot at the Oval Office himself, but in 1994 he traded Washington for Norman to become OU's 13th president.

Boren brought years of public service, political contacts and administrative acumen to his role as university president. He was a consummate fundraiser and, under his leadership, OU experienced transformational growth in programs, endowed faculty positions and scholarships. So, when faculty, staff and students were invited to a special announcement from Boren on Sept. 29, they packed the Reynolds Performing Arts Center to hear from the only OU president most of them had ever known.

"I always understood that there would come a time when I would pass the baton to a new president," Boren began. "And thought I would plan for a time when the university was at maximum strength. I believe that the right time has come." He then announced his retirement, effective June 30.

At his inauguration in 1995, President Boren said he was convinced that a public university could have an honors program as robust as that at a private institution. He said he believed that a public university could prepare OU students to compete in an international environment. And he said that, working together, OU could build a community of scholars who could argue and challenge each other without forgetting

Teach them how to say goodbye.

how to respect and love each other.

In the past 23 years under Boren's leadership, OU has established the Honors College, the College of International Studies and international campuses in Italy, Brazil and Mexico. Two new residential colleges for upper-division students are nurturing the same kind of live-in faculty accessibility, mentorship and scholarly dialogue that inspired and challenged a younger Boren as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.

During Boren's tenure, a new home for OU-Tulsa was created on the former site of BP Petroleum, which transformed into the Schusterman Campus. The Wayman Tisdale Specialty Health Clinic in north Tulsa is one of many community outreach programs OU-Tulsa provides for its health-care students to get real-life experience and its underserved citizens to get the treatment they need. The OU-TU School of Community Medicine, the first of its kind in the nation, was created in partnership with the University of Tulsa.

At the OU Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, the Stephenson Cancer Center and Harold Hamm Diabetes Center have become regional centers for research and treatment of two of the deadliest diseases in the U.S. New facilities for the College of Allied Health and the construction of a new student union have also enhanced OUHSC.

Under Boren's leadership, the Presbyterian Research Park in Oklahoma City became OU's University Research Park. The research campus he established on the Norman campus was named the best of its kind in the nation in 2013.

During his remarks, the president was quick to thank his partner, OU's First Lady Molly Shi Boren, for her campus beautification projects, her vision for the university to establish a Religious Studies Program and the Institute for Quality Communities. "Molly has been a constant source of strength for me and a champion of educational opportunities for others," he said.

The Borens welcomed some of the most influential scholars, artists and politicians to campus, always giving students a front-row seat. Desmond Tutu, Madeleine Albright, Philippe de Montebello, George Tenet, Harry Belafonte, Tom Brokaw and others shared their different viewpoints and perspectives. Authors and historians like David McCullough were frequent visitors for the president's Teach-In, a day of free public lectures on topics from America's founding to the First World War, in conjunction with the Institute for the American Constitutional Heritage.

"Never in our history has the university been more important than it is today. It is the guardian of intellectual freedom, the place we learn to think for ourselves and connect to our past. Because it is the contact point between generations, the university is the greatest creator of intellectual energy and creativity in our entire society," said Boren, who plans on continuing to teach his OU honors class in political science.

"Serving as your president has been the most rewarding period of my life, and our university will live on, like the OU chant says, stronger than ever."
— *Lynette Lobban*