

Presentation on the History of the OSU Emeriti Association Delivered at the 35th Anniversary Gala by Ronald Beer on Monday, September 11, 2023

Good evening, colleagues and friends of OSU. We are gathered to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the OSU Emeriti Association. Kent Sampson, President of the Association this past year, asked me several months ago to speak about the “history of the organization and to keep my remarks to 15 minutes or less”. That is a formidable task!!! So, my remarks will just scratch the surface of what I believe is an amazing organization that has accomplished a great deal in its relatively short history. The Emeriti Association is comparatively young, especially when compared to the beginning of the institution that permits the Association’s existence.

In reviewing historical records and documents, including in the library archives, I was surprised to be reminded that it was as recent as April, 1988, that the first meeting of the Interim Emeritus Faculty Association was held. Actually, the seed that started the birth of the Association was planted at a meeting in 1986 when a then active group of faculty members preparing for retirement heard then President Larry Boger comment during a brief, inconspicuous ceremony about how great the students, staff, faculty, and facilities were at the university. Each retiring faculty member received a certificate and a kind word of thanks, the extent of any recognition. One member of that group learned that the university did not even maintain records of the names and services of the faculty and staff once they retired. That revelation was what prompted Robert (Bob) Henrickson to make note - quote: “that did not set well with me”. That is what prompted Henrickson to confront President – Larry Boger – about this institution’s failure to acknowledge the continuing existence of the individuals who contributed to making the institution, for the most part, what it has grown to be academically over the past one-hundred twenty-three years, namely, former faculty and staff.

So, Bob wrote a letter to President Boger, stating that “what makes a great University was how the Emeriti were treated.” Within a few days, Dr. Jay Boggs – Provost – called Henrickson to ask if he would chair a committee for those seeking the desire of retirees to organize. Upon agreement, Henrickson was given three names to serve on the committee: Jean Agnew, Dick Jungers, and Ken McCollom (all now deceased). The committee of four, with Henrickson serving as the Chairperson, met, over a number of months, to prepare a proposed Constitution and set of By-laws and determine the need for an office and where to locate it, furnishing the office, a dues structure to generate funds to operate, frequency of meetings, location of meetings, services, benefits, programs, and so forth. A meeting to ascertain the degree of interest in creating such an organization was called to review the proposed organizational documents, with

- 83 persons attending, out of 247 letters mailed as notices of the meeting. Apparently, there were a number of ideas about how such an organization should be developed and operated, as it took a number of months from the first meeting of the interim-appointed group until April 15, 1988, when

- an Emeriti Faculty meeting was called to discuss the Constitution and Bylaws that had been distributed and were to be formally considered at a meeting scheduled for October 20, 1988.

- It was on that date where the constitution and bylaws, with some amendments, were approved and dues were set at \$10.00/year and a Life membership at \$100.00/year.

- During the first ten years, 1988 – 1998, individuals responsible for providing leadership, along with a Board of Directors, were referred to as CHAIRS. Of the two Chairs during that time still living, MARY FRYE, is in our presence this evening, having served in 1993-94. Mary, would you please stand to be recognized!!!! If there is a QUEEN of the organization it surely has to be Mary.

- The other living former Chair, to the best of my knowledge, is James Plaxico (1989-90), who now, I am told, resides in OKC in Epworth Villa.

- I think it is appropriate to name others who were instrumental in providing major leadership to the organization in its early years: Robert Henrickson, Harold Sare, Robert Fite, Kyle Yates, Idella Lohmann, J.O. Grantham, A.B. Harrison, Dan Lingelbach, Lynn Gee, Richard Leftwich, Wayne Miller, Jeanne Agnew, Mary Lou Sare, Walter Stark, Frances Stromberg, Bill Taggart, and Eric Williams.

- Since 1998, 20 individuals have served as President, seven of whom are deceased. I would ask any of the others: Larry Jones, Ken McKinley, Larry Zirkle, Russ Wright, Dave Lewis, Dennis Bertholf, Anne Matoy, Sharon Nivens, Kent Sampson, and the current President--Gary Sherrer--to STAND and be recognized for their leadership!!! I was among that group.

- Another group of individuals that deserve recognition are all of those who have served on the Emeriti Board of Directors since its beginning. I probably should refer to all of them by name given their willingness to serve but that would require me to go well beyond the fifteen minutes allotted. Therefore, I would ask ALL who served as a Board member since the association's beginning,

including the current BOD, to

- Please STAND to be recognized by our applause!!!.

It seems appropriate, at the risk of annoying or overlooking some, that two other members be recognized for giving "above and beyond":

- Ron Elliott served for seven years as the Treasurer and was just recently replaced by Ron Miller, and

- Zane Quible, who has created and maintained the Emeriti website and published the Newsletter and Directory, plus helping to organize several Interest groups, for a number of years.

Gentlemen, please rise to be recognized.

- The Association also owes a debt of gratitude to:
- Ms. Sofia Gustafson, who provides administrative support to the Association, and,
- Ms. Coral White who is very helpful in assisting the membership committee by providing a list of recent retired faculty and staff who are invited to join the Association – both university staff who offer their services at no cost to the Association.
- There are obviously a large number of folks who have served and deserve our Gratitude, who have willingly shared with their time and talent as:

Officers, Chairpersons of Association Committees and special projects, as well as appointees to university committees, too many to identify each individual.

The final segment of this brief overview of the Association's history deals with the SPECIAL PROJECTS and BENEFITS provided to the membership. I suspect most of us just think about those activities and programs in which we have participated, but the list of projects and benefits is impressive.

The list of services and benefits include:

- Membership dinner meetings with a program at each meeting
- Meet and Greet Reception, including a “minimal cash bar”
- Ten Newsletters/yr.
- Scholarship Program, currently sufficient funds to sponsor two scholarships/yr.
- Bridge Club
- Travel Club
- Investment Club
- International Committee
- Technology Committee
- Provost Office Assistance
- Use of Seretean Wellness Center and the Colvin Center
- Campus Parking Passes for retirees with 20 or more years of service to OSU
- Audit Courses for retirees, retired under the OTRS Rule of 80

or Rule 90 and anyone age 65 or older.

- Computer Purchase Discounts through the University Bookstore
- Use of OSU ID card
- Use of OSU Library
- Retain use of an individual's OSU email address
- Use of Lake Carl Blackwell for day visitations
- Use of Transit System at a discounted fee and trips to Tulsa on BOB at the same rate as for current faculty and staff
- Ticket discounts: School of Music, Theater, SGA events, Parking Garage, U-Club, and Athletic Events tickets
- Committee Appointments: University and Faculty Council
- Ambassadors at special events: commencement and select Alumni events
- 90 + club, members of that age and older receive complimentary meals at the monthly Association dinner
- Alumni Association Office space and maintenance of a web site for Emeriti memberships.
- 20th anniversary gala
- Donation for furnishing the Alumni Suite, through a major gift from the Harrisons and additional gifts from others
- OSU Foundation maintenance of endowed funds for the Association

There are 27 items on that list!!! There are two activities/projects deserving, in my opinion, special comments. A brief overview follows:

It is reported that a committee of 12 individuals were appointed in 1990 to pursue the initial effort to create a CCRC (Continuous Care Retirement Center). For reasons too complicated and lengthy for this event, suffice it to say that plans to raise sufficient funds for such an undertaking did not materialize and the project ceased any further efforts,

In 2002, the Emeriti Board of Directors agreed to establish a Board of Directors, separate from the Association, to pursue the development of a Senior Living Community in Stillwater, to provide a quality facility as an option for retirees to remain in the Stillwater community as opposed to moving to such facilities in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, or elsewhere.

It was the assessment of the Emeriti Board of Directors (BOD) that too many individuals who had been employed by OSU were finding it necessary to move elsewhere due to the lack of a Senior Living Community of the quality expected by retirees. A separate BOD was created primarily in order to ensure no financial obligations would be required of the Emeriti Association. The primary impetus for the development of this facility came from the incredibly generous offer of Mary Lou (White) and Milton Morris. Upon hearing of the plan to develop such a community the Morris' agreed to gift land at the corner of 19th and Range Road to the non-profit entity initially called the White Pony Campus, subsequently named "The Ranch." The second impetus came from the Executive Officer of Epworth Villa in OKC (a CCRC) expressing a desire of their BOD to create a second campus, to be located in Stillwater.

The story of that effort is long and complicated, far too many details to share in this brief history. Suffice it to say that The Ranch BOD worked diligently to bring a facility out of the ground but one thing after another happened, to send the project in to receivership. It was eventually purchased by two organizations located in Utah and they opened what is called Legacy Village in early March 2000, a few days prior to the national declaration of COVID. It is fully operational as a Senior Living Community providing Independent, Assisted, and Memory Care. It was all due to the initial efforts of the Emeriti BOD that brought a first-class facility for individuals to retire in a very professionally run community without having to leave Stillwater. Those who served on the BOD to make this happen were Esther Winterfeldt – Chair of the BOD, Ron Beer – Vice Chair, Bill Brown – Treasurer, Bob Henrickson – Secretary, Milt Morris, Andrea Arquitt, Mary Frye, Larry Perkins, Grace Provence, Jim Enix, and later in the process Louise Schroeder. A hearty thanks is extended to all.

The second story deserving mention is about providing an activity to keep the minds of elderly folks alert by providing presentations/discussions about events/concerns of the day. It was the same BOD, in 2002, as just shared, that created what was initially known as the Stillwater Academy for Lifelong Learning – SALL. I, as President of the BOD, remember asking a retired faculty member from the College of Education to chair a group to develop a program, thinking they would understand the importance of maintaining an active brain among elderly individuals. The person invited did not respond with sufficient enthusiasm so another person was appointed to provide the leadership. That individual was Mona Long, the spouse of Ed Long, who had served many years on the OSU Board of Regents. She had been instrumental in creating and managing such a program in the Enid/Garber area, where they resided prior to moving to Stillwater. She exhibited great excitement about developing such a program in Stillwater. A committee was established and the program was off and running in short order. During that first year, Ed Arquitt, a member of the committee, brought an organization known as the Osher Life Long Learning Institute to the table, resulting in the transition to OLLI, the organization which has provided an incredible array of subjects/programs/trips/ and individuals over the years. For those interested in the details on how to participate in OLLI, you can turn to an attractive and very informative brochure published by OLLI or call/visit their office (located in the

building occupied by the College of Human Environmental Sciences). May I ask all members of the OLLI BOD over the years to please stand to receive well deserved praise and applause for the wonderful work you do.

Colleagues, that is the end of my effort to provide a brief historical overview of what I believe to be a very important organization in our community and more specifically to OSU. As a collective group, you possess a significant amount of historical information from your experience at and service to OSU. I would urge you to stay abreast of what is taking place internally as well as efforts from outside individuals/groups to influence the university, not always in a positive direction and make your ideas, opinions, concerns, and recommendations known to the appropriate authorities and governing entities. Thank you for your patience and attention.

Respectfully,

Ronald Beer