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August 1995

Tomanek Hall: Newspaper, Tomanek humbled, says others deserving; Hundreds honor hall's namesake: University dedicates Jerry Tomanek Hall at Saturday ceremony

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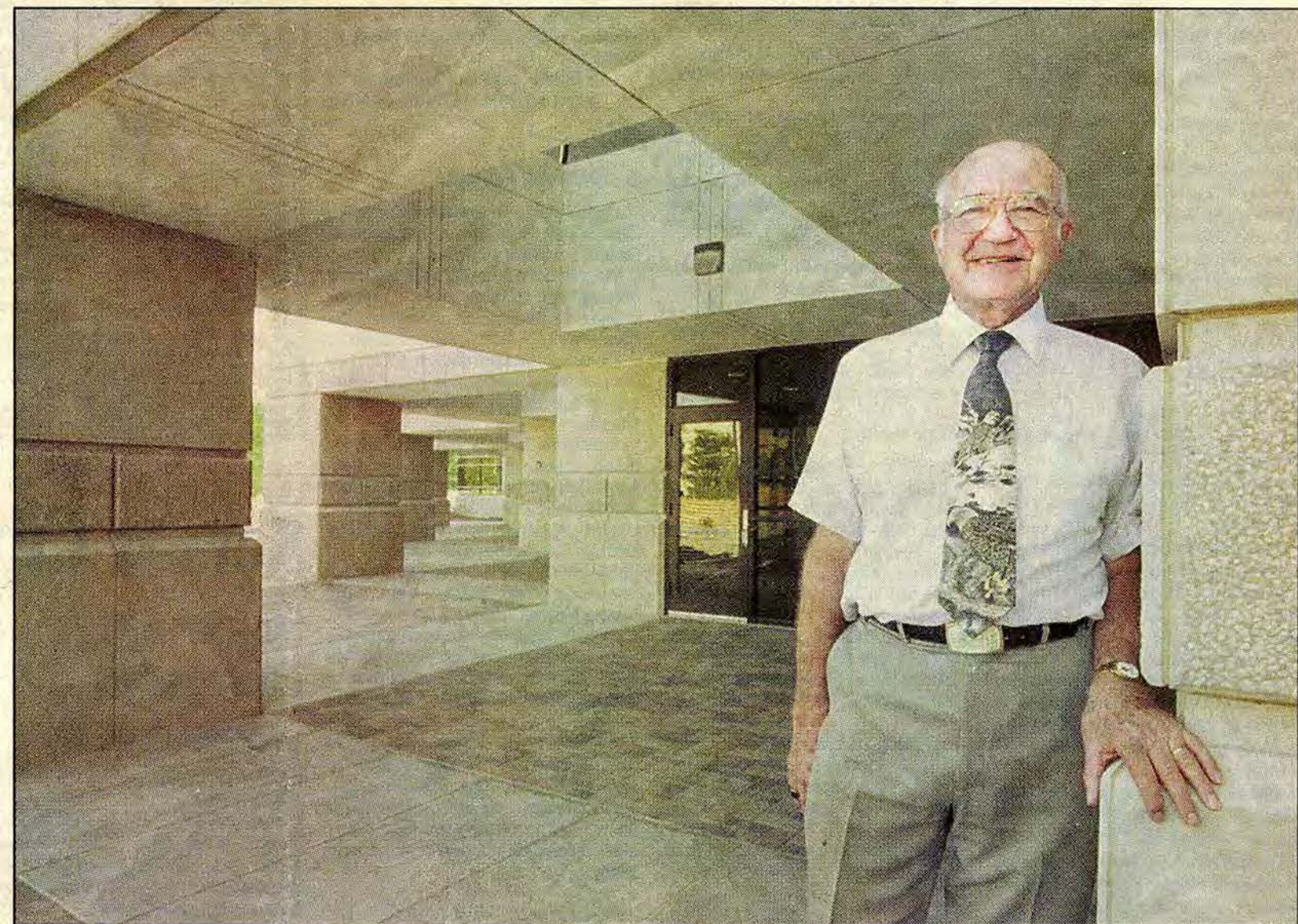
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Recommended Citation

Corn, Mike and Anderson, Kevin, "Tomanek Hall: Newspaper, Tomanek humbled, says others deserving; Hundreds honor hall's namesake: University dedicates Jerry Tomanek Hall at Saturday ceremony" (1995). *Tomanek Hall*. 29.

<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/tomanek/29>

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CHARLIE RIEDEL / Hays Daily News

Former Fort Hays State University President Jerry Tomanek stands in front of Tomanek Hall Friday prior to its dedication Saturday.

Tomanek humbled, says others deserving

But former FHSU president proud of accomplishments

By MIKE CORN
Hays Daily News

Jerry Tomanek is honored that a new \$12 million Fort Hays State University building will bear his name.

But in usual Tomanek fashion, he is humbled, pointing out that with just a little time he could come up with dozens of people equally deserving of the honor.

Just the same, Tomanek — the university's seventh president — admits that "it's a tremendous honor."

"I have really a feeling of tremendous pride," he said as he took his first look at the inside of the nearly completed building, "coupled with a huge dose of humility.

"I know a huge number of people who could have their name on this building. I don't deserve it anymore than 100 or 200 people."

Tomanek's wife of nearly 50 years, Ardis, understands.

"It's kind of humbling," she said. "You wonder if you're worth it."

It will not, however, be the Gerald W. Tomanek

building. Instead, in keeping with his personable style, it will be "Jerry Tomanek Hall."

The Tomanek name is nearly synonymous with FHSU.

After all, he's been associated with the college for decades. And except for the last six months and a stint in the Marines, he has been a resident of western Kansas nearly all his life. Most of that time has been with FHSU.

Even the extended Tomanek family, they think, has had almost 100 FHSU students. More than half have graduated.

"You can see why we're pretty close" to the university, he said.

The Tomaneks recently moved to Olathe, where they can be closer to two of their three children and six grandchildren.

"We miss Hays," Tomanek said. "We enjoy our grandkids and kids a lot. But we really miss our friends and the university a lot."

Saturday's dedication ceremonies served as something of a homecoming as well, as Tomanek said all of his children and grandchildren planned to be on hand.

"Tons of relatives," he said.

Gerald W. Tomanek first came to FHSU in 1938 as a student. He obtained a bachelor's degree in botany in 1942 and his master's in 1947 — the same year he joined the university faculty. He obtained his doctorate in 1951.

His ascension in the ranks of the university soon followed.

In 1958, he was named chairman of the biology department and a year later the chairman of the division of natural science and mathematics.

He was named vice president for academic affairs in 1972 and finally named president in 1976.

Tomanek retired as president of the university on May 17, 1987.

But he was not just an administrator. He also was a conservationist, specializing in grasslands.

Now, nearly 74 years after he was born in the short-grass prairie of western Kansas, near Collyer, Tomanek returned home to receive the accolades that were bestowed upon him at dedication ceremonies Saturday.

Ironically, because of the persistent heat, dedication ceremonies were conducted in Sheridan Coliseum — saved from the wrecking ball as a result of efforts by Tomanek and former state Sen. Gus Bogina.

Today, the building is something of a showcase, housing administrative offices and the Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center.

Tomanek, however, said it was Bogina's idea to save the building. And he credits current FHSU President Edward Hammond for seeing the project through to completion.

Hundreds honor hall's namesake

University dedicates Jerry Tomanek Hall at Saturday ceremony

By KEVIN ANDERSON

Hays Daily News

Morris Talbert made the trip from Stockton to Fort Hays State University Saturday to "honor Jerry."

Jerry Tomanek was Talbert's freshman advisor in 1954, and Talbert echoed the praise paid to the

Heat and the large expected turnout motivated university officials to move the dedication ceremonies inside Sheridan Hall, which Tomanek had helped to save from a wrecking ball and worked to renovate during his tenure as university president.

The ceremony also recognized the late Keith Sebelius who served for six years in the Kansas Senate before being elected for the first of six terms in the U.S. Congress.

The lobby of Tomanek Hall is named for Sebelius.

The ultra-modern facility was made possible in part by a \$4 million grant to develop a showcase for the integration of technology and the teaching of chemistry and physics, said university President Edward Hammond.

Hammond thanked Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., who helped secure a federal grant to pay for the construction. Dole, campaigning for the Republican nomination for

president, was not able to attend.

Hammond also expressed his appreciation for state government support of higher education to state Sens. Jerry Moran, R-Hays, Carol Dawson, R-Russell, and Robin Jennison, R-Healy, who attended the ceremony.

After speeches by U.S. Rep. Pat Roberts, R-First, and Kansas Regent Ken Havner, Former Kansas Gov. Mike Hayden told the audience that when he walked into Albertson Hall 25 years ago and "met this tall professor that when he spoke of the prairies and the grasslands, his arms reminded me of a windmill."

Hayden earned his master's degree under Tomanek, and "I wasn't in his class 10 minutes before he conveyed his great love and concern for his students."

Tomanek had a special gift for teaching, Hayden said. "He could take very scientific and sometimes boring information and turn it into something exciting."

That excitement came in part from Tomanek's "greatest laboratories," the prairies of western Kansas, Hayden said.



STEVEN HAUSLER / Hays Daily News

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Hays, left, talks with FHSU president Edward Hammond, center, and his administrative assistant, Sandra Rupp, in the Sebelius Lobby in Tomanek Hall.

former student, professor and president of the university.

Naming the \$12 million "classroom of the future" after Tomanek hinged not only on the veteran educator's almost 50-year association with the university but also because of the depth of his impact not only on the university as a whole but more importantly on the lives of individual students.

"You remember what is important to you," Talbert said, and students were important to Tomanek.

He not only knew his students by first name, he also knew the names of older brothers and sisters who had attended the university, and he knew your major and your home town, Talbert said.

Students reciprocated this caring by working hard for Tomanek.

"You wanted to do good on a test because you didn't want to let him down," Talbert said. "It was for Jerry's honor."

And hundreds of former students, friends, family members and university and government officials turned out Saturday for ceremonies officially dedicating Jerry Tomanek Hall to honor the veteran educator.