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### "Here 'n' There" Column

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# Here 'n' there

With Katherine Rogers

There will be a Sock Hop in Sheridan Coliseum Nov. 15, sponsored by the Residence Hall Association and hopefully the public will participate. The theme is set in the 1950s and '60s with appropriate music and decor. This just might be the last such event in the venerable structure.

We've all heard about the hopes for the future of this building and right now seems a good time to look back over the 70 years it has stood as a great monument to faith in western Kansas.

Only if you have lived around here for 50 or more years could you have any real conception of the role the building has played in the cultural and sporting life of Kansas. It was built in 1915-17 in spite of protest, of course, because it was too big and would cost too much money (\$150,000). It was filled to capacity for the opera "Il Trovatore," — given for the Golden Belt Teachers Association — and Madame Schumann Heink was the prima donna.

Thaine Clark, retired agriculture professor at FHSU, recently wrote his memories of Sheridan and recalled the flying fingers of pianists Jose Iturbi and Van Cliburn, and a Japanese band that played the Star Spangled Banner, then followed with their own national anthem. Julie Harris played Hamlet. Baritone William Warfield, Marge and Gower Champion, Harry Belafonte, Al Hirt, and the US Marine Band all captivated big audiences.

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HAL HOLBROOK brought Mark Twain to life. James Whitmore became Will Rogers. Al Capp, Barry Goldwater and George McGovern drew crowds. Then there was George Lincoln Rockwell, an American Nazi, who could not understand a crowd making no response to his haranguing speech.

There were also other types of events. The building was designed to accommodate livestock shows; perhaps to rival the American Royal, but that never happened. The ground floor entry and the wide double doors at east and west were never needed for farm shows, but the building often overflowed anyway.

The annual early November Teachers Meetings always drew big crowds. The spring music festivals lasted a week and drew 2,000 or more high school youngsters. Many stayed in town for several days and it was a bonanza for merchants!

Probably the most vivid memories for most people are the basketball games when the very walls seemed to explode with excitement and noise. Maybe that's what caused the big crack in the west end of the building!

Remember 1935 when a horrendous dust storm blew in while the tournament was in session and no one was permitted to leave town? Teams

were bedded down in the Coliseum. Lights were on at every home to lend a glimmer for lost motorists who could not see their way about the city and the highways were closed because of dust.

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OLD SHERIDAN has squatted on the prairie like a great mother hen hovering over her brood. She has etched memories into the hearts and souls of tens of thousands of persons who would hate to see her days of usefulness end. Now people are asked to help save the Old Lady, restore her to a place of beauty and usefulness as a performing arts center, as well as administrative headquarters for the university.

If you ever attended or participated in an event in Sheridan; if you have any memories of hours spent within its walls; if you ever stood in line in the arena or at the administrative offices to enroll; or participated in commencement; or danced the evening away, wouldn't you like to help save the Old Lady?

Remember one December night when the governor (George Docking) led the Grand March for the Reveille Ball in Sheridan while a large crowd of onlookers peered down from above watching the beautifully gowned and corsaged ladies and their escorts dance (rather sedately to be sure)? The governor crowned the queen that night who had been chosen by a Hollywood celebrity.

If any of these recollections touch you and make you want to help with the restoration project, just slip your cash or check — whether it is for \$1 or \$10 or \$100 or \$1,000 — into an envelope and mail it to Sheridan Coliseum Campaign, Box 272, Fort Hays State University, Hays, 67601. It will take all we can raise to meet our share of the cost; then the state will do the rest. Thanks.