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The heart of the renovated Sheridan Coliseum will be the Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center.

Building better second time around

By ALAN WILDS
Hays Daily News

History will be reborn next year when the 73-year-old Sheridan Coliseum, containing the new Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center, reopens in April after eight fiscal years of planning and renovation.

The project, which began in 1982, is currently in its third and final phase. Eric King, director of facilities planning, said things are right on schedule for the completion date, set for Dec. 26. Work left to be done includes painting, carpeting and installation of wallboards and theater equipment.

"We are on schedule barring any unforeseen problems," King said. "Right now, I don't see any since we have already gotten through the tough things."

The renovation schedule was revised after additional state funding for the project was received. The original completion date was set for fiscal year 1990.

The new and improved Sheridan will feature a 1,100 seat theater with an orchestra lift and sophisticated sound and lighting systems. The lobby will have marble floors and three new chandeliers. Backstage, there will be three star dressing rooms and two large dressing rooms.

Sheridan also will be the home once again of the president's office and other administrative suites.

"It is going to be a marvelous facility," King said.

Administrative offices are temporarily housed in Picken Hall. Although a few offices will remain in Picken, King said most will move back to Sheridan. Plans then will get under way for the renovation of Picken for the college of business.

The formal rededication of the building

is scheduled for the afternoon of Feb. 9. Larry Miller, vice president for institutional advancement and head of the Sheridan dedication committee, said it would include a ribbon cutting and other ceremonies.

After administrators move into their new offices in Sheridan during spring break, the gala grand opening will take place on April 18, 19 and 20. A variety of entertainment will be offered all three days.

Miller said the French symphony, Orchestre National De Lyon, already has been booked for the first day. A variety production and a comedy act are in the works for the remainder of the grand opening.

"That is just kind of a capsule of events we have going on," Miller said. "It is kind of unusual because the first production ever in Sheridan was performed by an opera company from France and now we have a French symphony for the reopening."

The original ground breaking for Sheridan was April 2, 1916, after President William Lewis (1914-1933) secured from the Legislature the only building appropriation of any state school at the time. Funding was given to the university as part of its general appropriation. The formal opening was March 23, 1917.

The tough things which slowed the renovation process at times included a bid discrepancy in February of 1988, when the lowest bid submitted for Phase II of the renovation totaled \$6,195,000, more than \$1.5 million above the architect's original estimate of \$4.5 million.

After some debate, FHSU asked for additional state funding to complete the project and extended the completion date from fiscal year 1990 to Fiscal Year 1991, which began July 1.

Initially, the entire Sheridan project was supposed to cost \$6,012,000 with the state picking up \$4,012,000. The university was responsible for seeking private donations for the remaining \$2 million. King said the final cost will be \$8,412,000, which includes an additional \$2.4 million from the state.

Another wrench was thrown into the machinery when \$900,000 in Fiscal Year 1989 state funds for Sheridan lapsed in June 1989 due to an inappropriately worded bill in the Legislature.

"The way that bill was written required us to spend a certain amount of money by the end of the fiscal year or it would no longer be available to us," King said. "We had to go back in and redo the bill."

King said there was a timing problem involved because if full funding was not restored by the Legislature, the contractor would no longer hold his bid, forcing a rebid which would have delayed the project.

FHSU went ahead with structural work with the funding it had available. King said a third phase was scheduled to be added to the original two phase program when the state appropriated the additional money.

A bill restoring full funding was passed and signed by Gov. Mike Hayden last February. Things were on schedule once again.

King said he feels the additional \$2.4 million was necessary to renovate the building satisfactorily.

"I definitely think it was the right way to go," he said. "This way we were able to renovate everything according to the original plans without compromising or cutting back anywhere."

■ Several remember Sheridan Coliseum's varied past. Page 6-D.

Tom Klein



Sheridan Coliseum rises toward its second floor during construction in 1916. The structure was completed the next spring, with the opening March 23, 1917.

Rogers, Wilson recall Sheridan's varied past

By ALAN WILDS
Hays Daily News

For Katherine Rogers, a retired Fort Hays State University communication professor, the reopening of Sheridan Coliseum means the culmination of many people's efforts to preserve a piece of history.

As the newly renovated building prepares to enter a new era, the tradition and history of Sheridan remains important to the people involved with FHSU since the coliseum's 1917 opening.

Rogers, who went to FHSU as a student in 1928, said musical programs developed for western Kansas is what made Sheridan the place to be. Henry Edward Malloy with the theme of "Singing Western Kansas into Tune" proved Sheridan could be a diversified building.

"Malloy's efforts to bring the New York theater out here every spring for a week drew many people," Rogers said.

Malloy also held music contests in the building in which students from all of western Kansas would compete.

Other artists, such as Rosa Ponselle and Earnest Davis and organizations such as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra also were brought to the college.

The coliseum was almost always filled for musical events such as a French opera company's production of "Il Traviatore" which was the first performance ever in the building.

In 1922 Madame Schumann-Heink of the New York Metropolitan Opera performed. Festivals ended each year with a performance of "Handel's Messiah."

"The music department was just great," Rogers said. "The festive air of those students being in town in their school's uniforms and colors is what I remember most."

Other events held in Sheridan included livestock shows, the Ice Capades and of course the "snake-pit" era of basketball under coach Paul "Busch" Gross.

Erna Wilson, Gross' widow, said it was called the snake-pit because the loud crowd was so close to and overlooking the court. Opposing teams always felt uneasy when they entered.

The same building that had been used for military housing during World War I was also a basketball showcase.

"The college games here were very well attended for the times and there was really no place for overflow," Wilson said. "It was crowded and FHSU was very tough to beat in Sheridan."

Rogers also remembered the era well.

"That was when Sheridan was packed to the rafters until the fire marshal was pulling his hair out," she said. "Things like that are what made it great."

Wilson said the foyer was always a nice place to gather before and after the games, but it too was almost always too crowded to move. Despite the close crowds



Students, faculty members and administrators participate in groundbreaking ceremonies April 2, 1916.

SHERIDAN: 'Snake Pit' housed intense games

Continued from page 6-D

and the intensity of the games, Wilson said the atmosphere was "very sportsmanlike."

"In any crowd there are going to be troublemakers," she said. "For the most part, it went pretty well. A lot of fine men played in that building."

During the depression years, little money was available for an electric scoreboard, so the job was left to manual labor.

"Busch just had two kids get up on ladders on either side of the scoreboard and flip the numbers over every time a basket was scored," Wilson said.

Hays High School and Thomas More Preparatory school also played their basketball games in Sheridan.

"There were so many things that went on in that building," Wilson said. "It was definitely a heavily used multipurpose building, always the center of campus affairs."

The building also contained a pool in which Rogers learned to be a lifeguard. As a journalism student, she attended classes and worked on the old college press located in the northwest corner of the building under the seats.

Being able to return as a professor and teach in the same classrooms where she learned is a "very pungent memory" she said.

The president and other administrative officials had their offices in Sheridan since its opening and will again when the remodeling project is complete.

Rogers said she remembers each president bringing his own distinct personality to the Sheridan office.

"I remember president (Morton) Cunningham saying he liked to have

■ "Sheridan Coliseum is just a symbol of the university. There are many people who went to school here that just couldn't imagine coming back to visit and not seeing it there."

— Erna Wilson

his Sheridan windows open all the time so he could look out on the campus and see the students," she said. "He wanted to know every student by name and he had a yearbook in his office to help him."

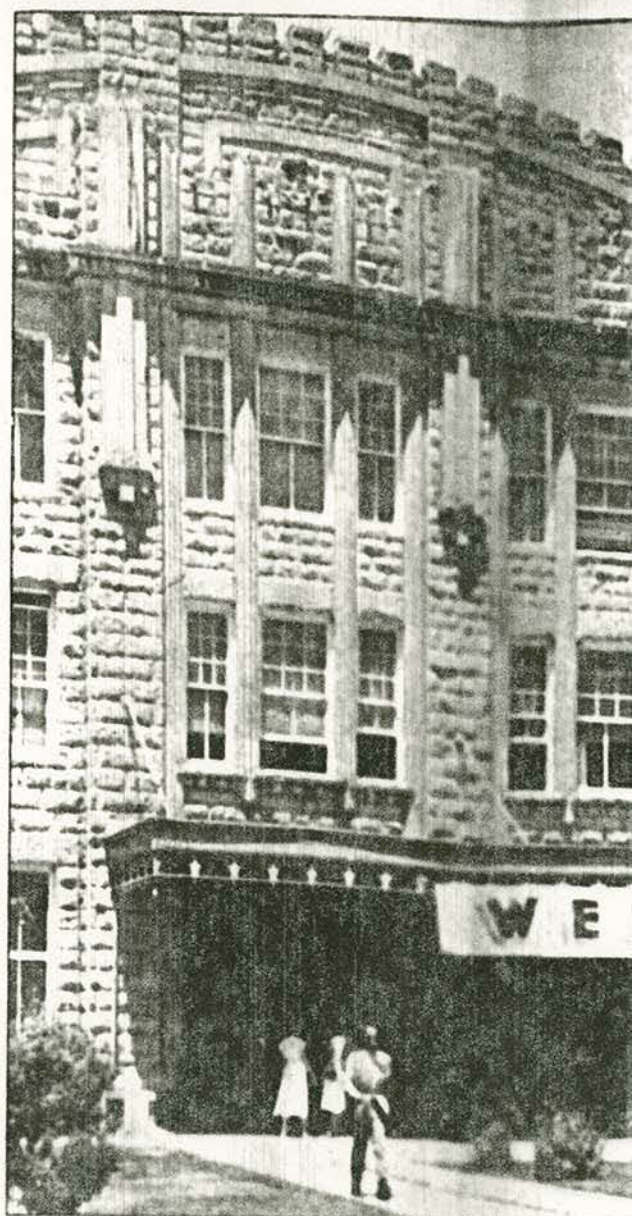
Activity began to slow down when the athletic department moved out of Sheridan in the early 1970's to the Cunningham Hall-Gross Memorial Coliseum complex.

Wilson said basketball is now in a different era at Gross Memorial Coliseum, but she still enjoys the games.

"I liked the padded seats in Sheridan better," she said with a smile. "I don't get to all the games anymore, but I am still very interested and I always will be."

She said there was some talk of demolishing Sheridan at one time, but then President Gerald Tomanek would not let it happen. The building had become a landmark and there was a movement on campus to save it.

The university had needed a larger theater for sometime, therefore the solution was born.



Visitors to Fort Hays State University attend 50th anniversary

Tomanek said the suggestion for a performing arts center came from Sen. Gus Bogina, R-Shawnee — who was chairman of the state building committee — in the late 1970's. During this time the Legislature was considering demolition.

Bogina and Tomanek combined

their efforts and did e could to talk the Leg hearing the building do

"I'm just thrilled because it is going vation thing for west Tomanek said. "The will be centralized in

GEOLOGY:

Students use Gopher program

Continued from page 6-D

"The students learned a great deal

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FHSU ARCHIVES

Fort Hays State University attend 50th anniversary festivities for Sheridan Coliseum.

...said the suggestion for a arts center came from ogina, R Shawnee who an of the state building — in the late 1970's. s time the Legislature ring demolition and Tomanek combined

their efforts and did everything they could to talk the Legislature out of tearing the building down.

"I'm just thrilled it turned out because it is going to be a marvelous thing for western Kansas," Tomanek said. "The administration will be centralized in their offices

and students will be able to find everything."

Tomanek is not the only one to feel this way.

"Sheridan Coliseum is just a symbol of the university," Wilson said. "There are many people who went to school here that just

couldn't imagine coming back to visit and not seeing it there."

Rogers said she feels all of western Kansas owns a part of Sheridan and it was through their interest the renovation came about.

"It's marvelous people from so far away have contributed.

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