



Then and Now

The Second 80 Years

When I was “asked” to write this article, my reaction was “why me?” What am I remembering? Yes, I knew I was involved in the Friends of the Community Center and the Foundation, but I never attended the school which would eventually become the Stillwater Community Center!

Being a somewhat stereotypical engineering graduate, I really don’t like to admit I’m wrong. But upon reflection, I was wrong.

Previous “Remember When” articles were lovely, heartfelt renderings of memories from when the complex was a school. To those authors, the buildings spoke to them through their past experiences as students and teachers.

For me, proud old buildings in general conjure memories and reflection. I believe they can educate and inspire us, if we let them.

My work with our community center has caused me to reflect and be inspired to make Stillwater even better than it already is.

Our center makes me remember and learn from another dear “center” about 400 miles north of us.

The auditorium in the village of Platte Center, Nebraska, was originally the high school basketball court dating back to the 1940s. A similar vintage to our community center. School consolidation in the 1960s resulted in the village taking ownership of the auditorium.

Uncles played basketball there. Mom danced to polka and big bands. My parent’s 1956 wedding reception was there. A cousin’s 40th anniversary was there last year.

Citizens of Platte Center, population 338, take pride and love their auditorium. Volunteer labor, donations, and a trickle of tax revenue keeps their auditorium alive. It was recently refreshed with new heating and cooling, and a new, much larger commercial grade kitchen. She’ll probably be there another 80 years.

The shell of their old auditorium is a large metal Quonset hut. Simplicity helps, with much maintenance and repair work and all management by volunteers. But, its scope of service and scale pales in comparison to our robust brick and mortar Stillwater Community Center that serves 100,000 plus each year.

The old Stillwater (North) High School forms the backbone of our community center. Built when radios had become common household items, farm tractors had essentially replaced horses, many families owned a car and “computers” were people who computed.

Yes, much has changed, but volunteerism and private contributions keep our community going and improving.

If we listen, these stately old buildings teach us the importance of our special community places, and remind us of the personal satisfaction we get from giving our time and effort to preserve and improve them for us and future generations.

We are now kicking off the second 80 years of community service from the Stillwater Community Center complex. Volunteer work and contributions play a key role.

There will be a volunteer workday Oct. 7. Join us in keeping this stately city “sister” alive and well. Go to sccfriends.com to learn more, to sign up to volunteer or drop a note to FSCC, Inc., PO Box 24, Stillwater, OK 74076.



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Jim Beckstrom, is an active member of the Stillwater Community Center Foundation, serving as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees in 2020.

The Stillwater Community Center Foundation and the Friends of Stillwater Community Center strive to provide supplemental resources for the Stillwater Community Center to ensure its accessibility, affordability and sustainability for its use by residents and visitors of Stillwater and surrounding area. Visit www.sccfriends.com for more information.

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