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2003-2004 *Feature Section*

Oklahoma's Dome *A Crowning Achievement*

Well, *finally!* Can you believe it? Eight and a half decades after we Oklahomans started, we're now, at least most would argue, finally *finished* with our State Capitol Building.

This country, and in keeping with that fine tradition, this state, have seen some intense debates: The Civil Rights Amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment, several Flag Burning amendments, and more. In Oklahoma, some of our debates have been settled by rather extreme measures: bayonets used by Governor Walton, the National Guard called to defend a bridge against Texas, numerous debates ultimately settled by decisions of various courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court (re-apportionment fights of the 1960s come to mind), and a propensity to settle things via impeachment at several times the rate of other states. But none of these debates has been any longer running nor more momentarily intense than the debate surrounding The Oklahoma Dome and What To Do About It.

Part of the difficulty, politics and finances aside, is that the dome, once it was *not* built as part of the original structure, became not only an addition, but a renovation, a restoration, and, especially as the decades went by, a historical *creation*. By the time we got around to building it, as one member of the construction team perhaps understated, it was difficult to find people to do some of the work, because, "nobody's built a dome in a long time." It was difficult to put a "dome building" team together because, well, frankly, there isn't any demand for it.

But decades later, through the debates, decisions, discoveries, dogfights, and devotion, the dome is now real. Debuted November 16, 2002, Statehood Day, the dome is some of the best evidence of Oklahomans' stay-with-it-ness. J. Blake Wade, executive director of the Oklahoma Centennial Commission and the primary fundraiser for the dome effort, commented that a project such as the dome takes "a driven governor, and one who is not up for re-election."

English writer and art critic John Ruskin said the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones or gold, but in its age, "and that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy ... which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing wave of humanity." The Oklahoma State Capitol Building now speaks with a more powerful, and more beautiful voice. Of course, Ruskin also said, "Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies, for instance." Some would add "domes" to the list, but I, for one, do not.

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