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I REMEMBER

Faculty and staff recall a half-century's worth of remarkable—and laughable—moments

By Oriana Parker

We asked a number of emeritus faculty and staff, as well as a few current ASU employees, for some of their most indelible recollections from the past 50 years. What follows is a “scrapbook” of personal highlights—some humorous, some inspiring, and each one a small window into the university’s development.



publications for the College of Business in 1977, the expansion of the Tempe campus was mind-blowing.

“What a difference! Nothing was where it had been,” Nelda, who ended up working for five years at ASU. “College Avenue was no longer a real street; it was a mall! And where was the quaint old English Building I loved so? The library was huge, and there were separate libraries for certain units, including the College of Business.”

But the transformation from teacher’s college to university brought many benefits: “ASU’s resources had vastly improved. The Memorial Union, which we had watched being constructed, had a Burger King and an ATM, and there was a parking garage nearby—hooray!” Crowell enthused. “On a more serious side, I clearly saw the influence of faculty research on the world at large and on the local community. In the College of Business, the impact was tangible, ranging from real estate analyses to cost of living studies. I also think the university had become far more influential in the business and political life of the state through its institutes and service areas.”

Howard Voss: Having a blast can be an educational experience

Not all educational experiences at a university are glorious successes. “While lecturing one evening, I decided to demonstrate the conservation of momentum involving rockets by sitting on a wheeled cart and using an altered fire extinguisher as the source of thrust,” says Howard G. Voss, an emeritus physics professor. “I thought firing myself out of the lecture hall at lecture’s end would make a big impression. However, upon turning for my dramatic exit, I capsized and slithered across the stage area followed by a great cloud of carbon dioxide.”

Marilyn Wurtzberger: Library excitement

Libraries are often portrayed as boring places, but Marilyn Wurtzberger, a special collections librarian at Hayden Library on the Tempe campus and an employee of ASU for the past 48 years, insists nothing could be further from the truth.

“They filmed part of ‘The Nutty Professor’ at Hayden Library and we used to watch Jerry Lewis playing catch



The Whiteman report recommends establishing an upper-division campus of ASU in the West Valley.

1977

ASU begins offering courses at Metrocenter.

1978

School of Social Work creates its Tucson Component to serve the needs of southern Arizona.

1978

The College of Public Programs is established.

1979

The Arizona Board of Regents designates a plot of land at 47th Avenue and West Thunderbird Road as the site of ASU’s future West campus.

1980



with a baseball during lunch,” Wurzburger said. “(Radio/TV personality) Steve Allen attended ASU for three months and lived in East Hall, which was later razed to make room for the library. Several years ago we received gifts from Allen, including a mounted brick salvaged from East Hall. Enjoying ‘celebrity status,’ that brick is now housed permanently at the library.”

Len Gordon: Letter mix-up nixes course research

Len Gordon, dean of the Emeritus College at ASU and an emeritus sociology professor, recalled a simple letter transposition vexing his effort to find relevant course materials for his classes.

“Arriving at ASU in 1967, I made a big mistake the first week of the semester. While perusing the tables set up for extra-curricular activities on the mall, I spotted one that might

be a source of information for my Modern Social Problems course. The sign read ‘LDS’ and while picking up a brochure, asked if they also had material on cocaine and heroin.”

Although Gordon said he had attended the same school as GOP presidential contender Mitt Romney, he was not familiar with the term Latter Day Saints for the Mormon Church, or its acronym LDS. Apparently it mattered little: “As I did get tenured and was promoted, this mistake didn’t have a lasting effect,” he said.

Steve Nielsen: Building Tempe from the ground up

Steven Nielsen, who works in ASU’s University Real Estate Development Office, was profoundly influenced over the years by James Elmore, who arrived at ASU in 1949. Elmore built up the architecture

program from a few courses in the Industrial Arts Department to a full-fledged College of Architecture in 1964 and was also responsible for envisioning and championing the Rio Salado project, which later became Tempe Town Lake.

“I would see Dean Elmore most mornings while the Town Lake was under construction, ever-vigilant that his dream (became) a reality,” recalls Nielsen, who also worked as the city of Tempe’s Rio Salado project manager for 12 years.

Oriana Parker is a Scottsdale-based freelance writer.



J. Russell Nelson becomes president of ASU.

1981



The College of Architecture becomes the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

1983



The Department of Journalism and Telecommunication is renamed the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Telecommunication.

1984

ASU offers classes to West Valley residents at Alhambra Elementary School.

1980

The journalism department launches campus radio station KASR.

1982