

I.S.U.

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Yearbook
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CENTENNIAL ALBUM

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Renovating the Carillon

Nestled in a tower on the center of campus, the bells of the campanile have played their harmonic music for decades while students journeyed to and from class. Built in 1898, the campanile has been a renowned symbol of Iowa State University, giving alumni fond memories of their alma mater.

However, necessary restoration caused the bells to stop playing for a while. On August 1, 1992, the campanile was silenced so repair work to its structure could begin.

Like any other 94-year-old structure, age had taken its toll. The condition of the structure had deteriorated due to wind, heat, cold and water penetration. "When water soaks into the wall, it freezes and penetrates the mortar material holding it all together," said Dean Morton, University Architect.

The first phase of the renovation involved rebuilding the brick structure, the roof and the clock. "Bad deterioration has forced us to rebuild the wall with new brick. All the roof structure and pinnacles will be taken down. The mortar joints and terra cotta will be fixed. We'll replace the broken pieces and use whatever is leftover," said Morton.

Morton said that because most of the damage was at least 90 feet in the air, he doubted that most students would notice the changes other than the new landscaping around the base of the tower and the new colored roof.

Having changed color due to pollutants in the atmosphere, the existing green copper roof was to be replaced with a new brown one. "Chemicals in the atmosphere have turned it green fairly quickly," said Morton. "Fortunately, we won't be having to renovate again for 90 years, until the roof turns green again."

Renovations to the carillon, or bells, brought about the second phase of the renovation. Among the major changes to the bells was the replacement of the clavier. Also, the bells were to be rearranged with cables and rods to make the chimes "much more musically enhanced," said Morton.

The costs of the renovations were high and many donations were needed to cover the expenses. In 1988, a study revealed that \$350,000 would be needed to renovate the tower and bells. In response, the classes of 1940 and 1987 designated their class project funds toward the campanile. However, this was not enough. For the first time in 93 years, the bells stopped in May, 1991, following a cut in financial support for a carillonneur. The tower stood silent for over three months.

On September 19, 1991, students and faculty tuned their ears to the long awaited sounds coming from the campanile. However, instead of the bells, the amplified sounds of "Louie, Louie" boomed across campus. Kenn McCloud, an Ames disc jockey, had locked himself inside the tower, vowing not to come out until \$10,000 was raised — enough to pay a guest carillonneur. Interests were aroused as students, faculty and alumni stopped by and dropped contributions into McCloud's box.

"The crusade to save the campanile all started with 'Bucks for Bells' which raised \$10,700 for that campaign," said Murray Blackwelder, Associate Vice President of the ISU Foundation. Next came a string of donations. Jean and Michael Steffenson of Davenport, Iowa, donated \$25,000. In October, the Class of 1942, selected the renovation as the

focus of its 50-year class gift project, raising another \$25,000. The Board of the Stanton Memorial Carillon Foundation also donated \$50,000 for the bells alone. Then, ISU and its campanile were publicized to the whole world because of what happened to one famous alumnus.

On November, 18, 1991, Thomas Sutherland was released after six-and-a-half years of captivity in Lebanon. Miraculously, he had heard 72 bells ring out — one for each of his 72 months in captivity. "Announcing how happy he was, he said that he wanted to make sure the renovation happens," said Blackwelder. "Sutherland's speech turned the alumni around."

Following Sutherland's speech, an anonymous alum pledged an \$87,500 gift, if alumni would match the pledge by VEI\$HEA. And they did.

On December 16, Charles and Ivadelle Cownie from Des Moines Iowa, who both graduated from ISU in the mid 1920s, took it upon themselves to make sure the bells would always ring. The Cownie's contributed \$250,000 to provide a full-time carillonneur.

"The campanile was the center piece of campus when my wife and I went to school at ISU, and I think it still is," said Cownie. "We listened to the bells going to and from campus and it became a part of our lives."

Cownie said using a disc jockey to ask for donations was not a proper way to handle the campaign. "We contributed so that it would be played, and if the campanile needs restoring, the bells wouldn't play. We were pleased to see the renovation taking place," said Cownie.

After recognizing the amount of alumni pledges from around the world, the same anonymous donor stepped forward with a second gift of \$1 million. This brought the total pledges to \$1,610,700 and made possible Iowa State President Martin Jischke's announcement that the campaign was complete. Jischke made his announcement at a ceremony honoring Thomas Sutherland on May 1.

Blackwelder described the ceremony as one of the top highlights of the year. Jean and Thomas Sutherland each told a story of how much the bells meant to them. After cutting a ribbon to symbolize the start of the new renovation, Sutherland added a final touch by ringing a hand-held bell.

"There was not a dry eye in the house," Blackwelder said. "This famous hostage described that through his terrible experience, the bells gave him the strength to live."

Along with many others, Morton was moved by the ceremony. "Sutherland described something that was near and dear to my heart," he said. "Since I'm an alumni of Iowa State, it brought many good feelings."

Cownie was also very touched and pleased by Sutherland's comments. "I think it was an expression shared by him and thousands of other Iowa Staters," Cownie said.

Blackwelder viewed the tradition of Iowa State to be the reason for the campaign's success. "We're a very traditional institution and we have those kinds of values. The bell tower and the carillon is Iowa State, and it just reeks of tradition. The donors say things like 'I kissed my wife twice under the campanile.'"

"The campanile campaign has been very exciting, but beyond my wildest dreams," Blackwelder said with wide-eyed amazement. "Every time it got bigger and better, it just kind of blew my mind."

By Shelley Whitehill