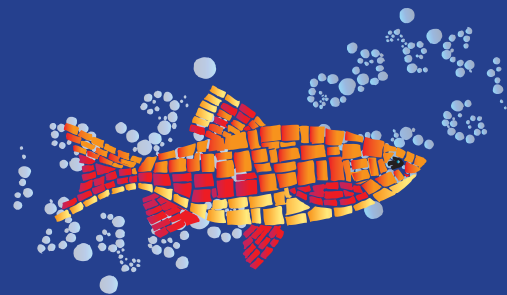


Pisces Progress

The Newsletter of the Pisces Project

Spring, 2011



The Norman Pools

By Diane Moershel

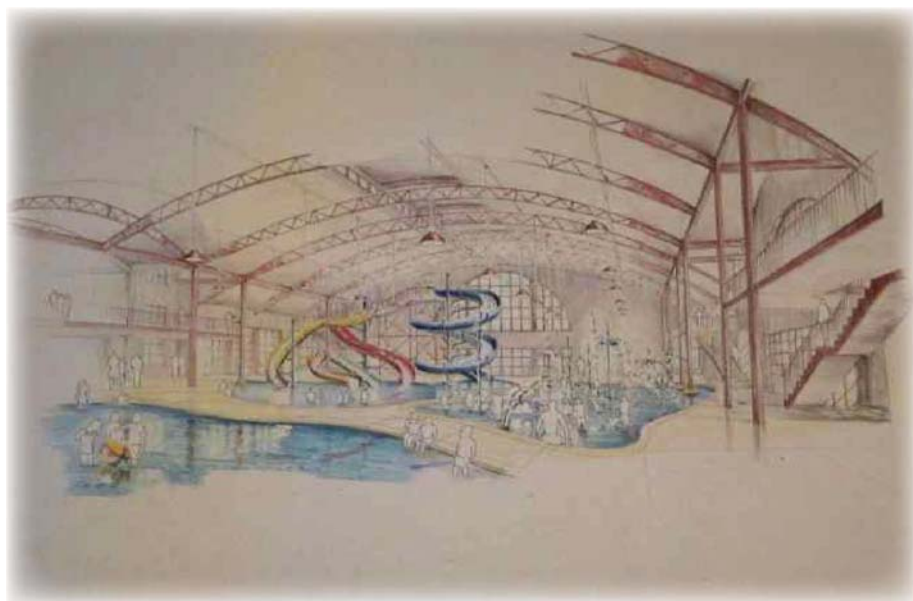
It was 79 degrees the day before this article was written. The next day, the high temperature was 45 degrees and falling to the single digits; a cold front was coming in with "winter mix". On winter days like this, wouldn't it be nice to be able to take the kids to warm indoor pool? They could slide down the slides and splash in the water. You could lounge at the side of the pool with a beverage and a magazine, watching the snow come down through the huge windows lining the pool. Or maybe put your suit on and walk across the lobby to the 50 meter pool set up with lap lanes where you could warm up by swimming yourself.



This is possible in Norman if private donors and public bond money join to build the Norman Pools, a four-pool recreation center on Norman's historic Naval Air Station, known locally as North Base.

This center would feature four indoor pools in an H shaped facility, with architecture echoing the vast airplane hangers that stood on North Base during World War II. Large energy efficient windows would send natural light throughout the building. A mural on the west wall would honor the Naval Airmen who trained here.

Each leg of the H would be filled with pools. The recreational leg would feature a large warm water pool with slides and zero entry. Children (and adults!) could frolic about in the warm water, slide down the slides, and perhaps set up an aquatic game of basketball after school, on holidays, and on long winter weekends.



The Norman Pools (Cont'd)

Adults could use the pool during the day for water walking; wheelchair bound citizens could relax in the warm water with the aid of the zero entry. Also in that leg would be a small, shallow warm water pool for year round swim lessons, taught by qualified instructors, so that everyone could learn the great sport of swimming. Other amenities: fountains, beaches, lazy rivers, are are limited only by the imagination and the funds.

The instructional pool will be the money maker; other for-profit pools have demonstrated that a well managed instructional pool providing weekly lessons year round to swim athletes can be the financial bedrock of any pool complex. As a model, think of the Bart Conner Gymnastics facility. It has been demonstrated that parents are willing to pay for quality instruction for their children in a sport where the children can excel. That will be the financial engine for the

pools, together with elite membership fees for community members, seasonal family passes and day admission fees.

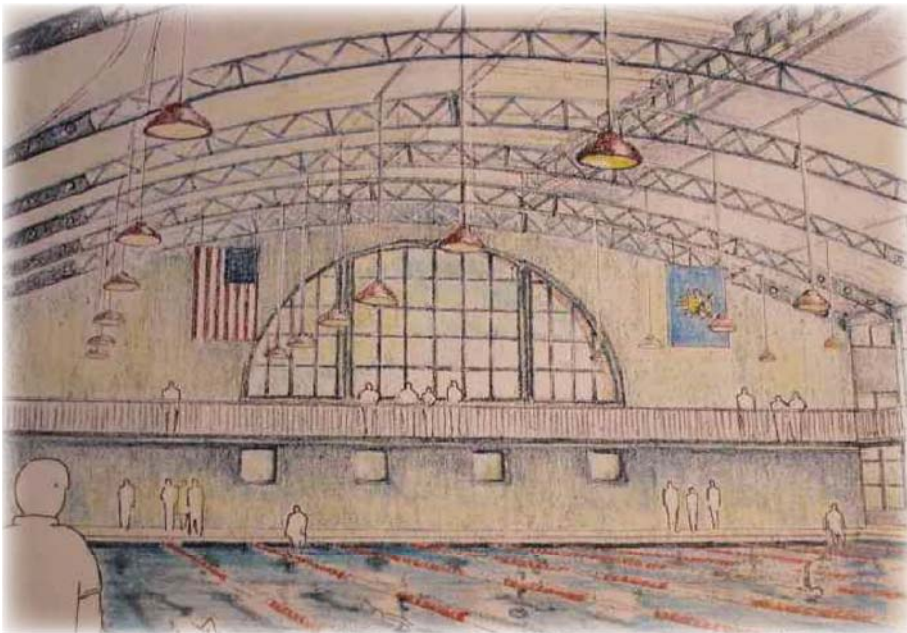
The area between the two legs of the H will house locker rooms (men, women, family/disabled) and offices on the first floor. For the second floor we plan glass walls which overlook each set of pools. The second floor will be a lounge area for parent and athlete seating, as well as have a beverage/food bar and wi fi.

The other leg of the H would feature a fifty meter Olympic size pool maintained at at competition temperatures. Lane ropes and diving blocks allow fitness swimming and rigorous practice by Norman tri-athletes. In the afternoon the competitive swim teams of Norman, ranging from second grade through High School, will practice and compete. On the weekends, regional and national

swim meets will bring hundreds of competitors, families and fans to watch the events, stay in Norman hotels and eat in Norman restaurants. A deep water diving well permits spectators to watch the breathtakingly beautiful sport of highboard diving, as well as to learn this sport for themselves.

Certainly the Norman Pools will be costly; the facility could cost as much as building a new jail on Franklin Road. The benefit to the community as a destination can be huge, however. Properly run, the facility could pay for its own operating costs, while providing access to all members of the community and region. Several models exist for such a pool, in Texas and in Missouri. The most notable is in Midland, TX, where a multi-pool facility has thrived as a non-profit venture for over fifteen years, without taking a dime of municipal funds.

We are committed to making the Norman Pools a reality. We are actively consulting with possible private donors and have ongoing discussions with the Superintendent of Norman Public Schools, the City Council, the Mayor, and the head of Norman Parks and Recreation. What we need from you is your support. Call or e-mail the Mayor; call or e-mail your Council representative or your School Board member and tell them you support funding such a facility. Together we can make this happen.



The Norman Pools (Cont'd)

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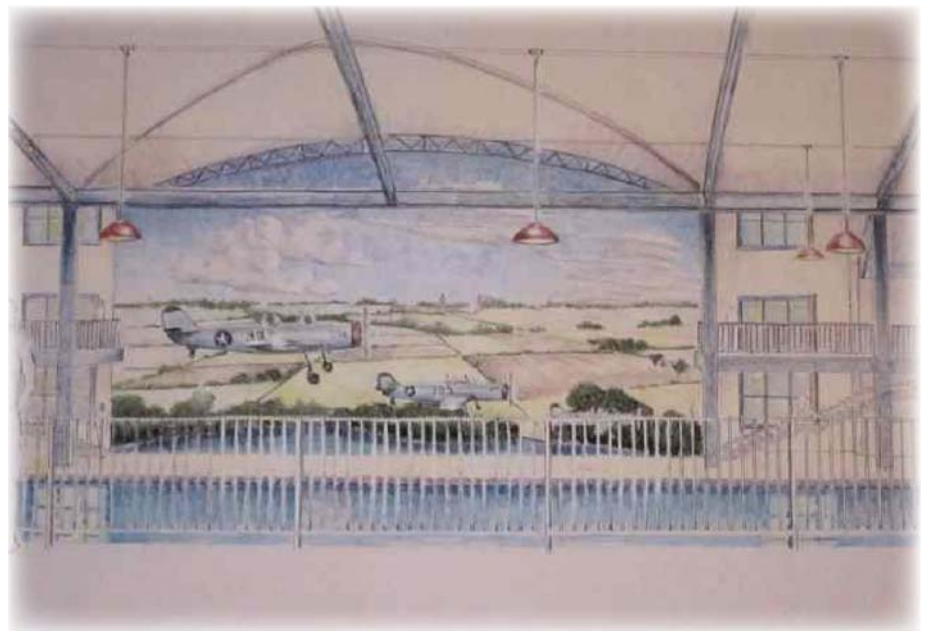
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2010 Year in Review

By Nancy Yoch

Chamber of Commerce: We have maintained our membership in the Chamber and several members of Pisces have attended Business After Hours to talk with other chamber members, business leaders, etc.

Cart Service: The Pisces bumper sticker is still traveling around Norman on the back of Bus 27. It can be seen on various routes including West Main, East and West Lindsey, and northeast Norman. The cost of this advertising has doubled over the past year—

from \$125 per month to \$250 per month. It still seems to be an effective way to keep Pisces in the public eye but requires additional fundraising.

Pisces members participated in the Community Engagement Dialog sponsored by United Way in partnership with Norman Public Schools. Approximately 90 attended, including 30-40 students. Shari Kinney was the facilitator. The subject under discussion was at-risk 11 to 15-year-olds. In the sixth grade, students start to become disengaged

in school. Eight percent of teens in Oklahoma are neither in school nor working. Fewer programs are available for this age group, and transportation is also a barrier. The students met separately and were asked to respond to five questions, including the biggest challenge in school, what it means to be successful, and what is the biggest challenge out of school. United Way of Norman's Children and Youth Council plans to use the responses to determine strategies and community initiatives.

Pisces Project Goes Social!

By Alva Brockus

The Pisces Project has recently revamped its website with a new look and content to match. Thanks to Karen Gibson's great design work and our shadow tech support Stephen Yoch, the Pisces Project website has been freshened up with some new content and information. If you have forgotten the website, it's at www.piscesproject.org. Plus, there you will find a "Donate Now" button. Please use it; feel free to use it often!

In addition, we have decided to embrace social networking, starting with a Facebook page. You will find our Facebook page by logging onto Facebook and searching for Pisces Project. There you will find a few pictures, some interesting information about swimming that you may not know, and an opportunity to shout out to all the other Pisces Project folks who have liked the Facebook page. And guess what?! There's a donate now button there, too! Feel free to use it as often as you like.

So, if you haven't found our Facebook page already, please do so and like it. While you are there, check out the beautiful drawings of what the outside of a pool could look like. And if you don't mind sharing your status with us, put a little note on your status letting your friends know that you support Pisces Project and they should too!

Next thing you know Pisces Project will be on Twitter too!

Pisces Project is Featured in Abner

We hope you saw a feature article on Pisces Project in the latest issue of Abner, the news magazine published by the Norman Transcript. The Transcript has graciously al-

lowed us to post it on Pisces Project's website. If you haven't read it yet, check it out! Natalie Wigglesworth, one of our great Norman High swimmers, graced the cover! And be sure to share

your copy with your friends and neighbors. The more people know about the great sport of swimming, the better!

Edmond's Getting a Pool!

By Dallas Schrems

If you haven't heard already, Edmond held a election on December 14 to determine whether to reallocate a previously authorized school bond to build a pool. Extreme Aquatic Team's parents worked hard to get out the yes votes; you may have seen them at swim meets wearing their "Build a Pool, Build a Future" t-shirts. I interviewed an EAT mom, Kathy Kersgeiter, at the recent Ice Breaker meet to find out more. She said most of the swim parents' efforts went to educate the public

that, since the bond funds were already approved, reallocating them to build a pool would not raise taxes. Originally, the funds had been intended to build a new school. But Edmond Schools determined that it couldn't afford the cost of overhead to operate a school. So instead, they proposed reallocating those funds to build a pool. The head coach at EAT asked every EAT family to contact EVERY member of the Edmond school board and city council to express what a swimming pool would mean to their kids. Their efforts

worked, and the city voted "Yes" by a wide margin. This is a strategy that Norman swim families could copy. Even though we don't have a bond election on the horizon, we could certainly keep the pressure on our school board and city council. You may have noticed that the contact information for our school board and city council members is in "The Norman Pools" article in this newsletter.)

Edmond is on it's way to a pool and Jenks and Ponca City have pools under construction. If they can do it, so can we!

The Future of Competitive Swimming In Norman

By Kent Nicholson

The fact that there is only one pool in Norman and it's availability causes swimming in Norman a unique set of problems that puts competitive swimming at risk. The reality of swimming in Norman is that there are two swim teams, the Sooner Swim Club for younger kids and the NPS teams for high school kids. While I coach both these teams, the distinction between the two doesn't mean much; the two teams act as one. If the two teams work together, Norman can have some success in building a competitive swimming program. It is limited because it is constrained by the size and availability of the pool, but working together the two teams can have some success. So, if Norman has a coach willing to do both jobs, swimming can flourish about to the point that is now.

If the two teams are not coached by the same person or

two people working closely together, both teams dwindle in size and success. The proof on this can be seen easily by looking at the history of the two programs. The reasons are fairly obvious as well. First, the high school program cannot be successful without a strong feeder program. So, the high school teams are dependent on the Sooner Swim Club.

The Sooner Swim Club cannot be successful independently. This is the problem that is unique to Norman. USA Swimming teams are successful independently all over the country, but SSC can't do it. The problem in Norman is that SSC is half a swim team, with less than half the income of a normal USA swimming team. The missing half is the senior team (high school kids) that don't pay dues during the school year because they swim for Norman Public Schools. The result is that the Sooner Swim Club cannot offer a salary that would provide a

professional coach a living.

In Norman, being a USA swim coach is a part-time gig with full time demands. Most US swimming teams in this state and across the country are coached by full time coaches. It is very difficult to find another job that fits with demands of being a USA coach. With the money available, SSC's labor pool becomes college kids, who may do a great job but are inexperienced and temporary in nature. So the team has inconsistent coaching and the numbers and success fall.

Ok, with that background this is the future of swimming in Norman as I see it. If the community comes together and builds a new pool and OU continues to have one, I think SSC would become a full fledge USA team with a full time coach. There would be plenty of water available for a USA team and the high school teams, and both teams would grow.