

"Ballparks are museums for memories ... the backdrop for people to play out the most touching moments of their lives."

GUEST COLUMN

A place where hope is always alive

We did it! It has been said that there is dignity in all work. If that is true, and I believe that it is, then there are some very dignified people walking around this morning.

People have asked me if I could see how nice this was going to be when I started. The answer is no. No one person has the ability to see something as grand as this.

The Ballpark in Arlington is the product of an incredibly creative team that believed anything was possible and that every obstacle could be overcome if we thought about it and worked at it long enough.

But before I tell you about the team I should tell you about the City. The citizens of Arlington could not have been more supportive. They recognized what their City could become and seized the opportunity.

We are all grateful. The partnership we formed is unique. It worked because we believed in each other.

Personally, I had the opportunity to be a part of that team because of some wonderful partners of my own. Roland Betts first suggested to me that building a ballpark was the chance of a lifetime. George Bush and Rusty Rose gave me that chance. Their mandate was simple-build the best - and they gave me the encouragement and freedom to do just that.

The City was led, of course, by Richard Greene, a public servant of enormous vision and selfless dedication. He never cared who got the credit as long as the job got done. In these times of

upheaval in our cities, the citizens of Arlington should feel fortunate to have a leader of his capacity. Mayor, generations from now will praise your vision, your integrity and your ability to get things done.

The City Council you led and the Sports Authority they appointed are the finest examples of local government that can be imagined. They realized that the private sector and government could be joined to produce the public good. And they worked tirelessly toward that end.

The City staff was peopled by folks who wanted to help. I cannot tell you how many times a contractor said to me that Arlington is different. It is a place where staff is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

The first two people hired for the team were extraordinary fellows - Max Chapman and Jack Hill. They have encyclopedic memories for building costs. They can tell you the cost of the last nail in this project. They assisted in the hiring of the architects and contractors. Time and again we drew on their experience and their know-how to achieve the dream. By any measure of cost we built more for less than has ever been done before. It was not by accident, it was because Max and Jack made it so.

I received much good advice from around the baseball world! The best of it came from Janet Marie Smith and Larry Lucchino of the Baltimore Orioles. They told me to find the best architect I could and not to worry about whether or not they had ever done a ballpark before. David Schwarz was that architect. David had never done a ballpark. I am not sure that he had ever even been to a Major League baseball game. But he did bring a devotion to his profession. He is a fountain of creativity and a genius for detail. To watch him come up with solutions is inspiring. David Schwarz is an artist. His art is in his architecture and I believe he

will one day be recognized as one of the master architects of the world.

David also has an eye for talent. His office is full of bright creative people who love what they are doing. One in particular should be mentioned, Glenn MacCullough, David's project architect combined a love of architecture with a love of baseball. He married them both in The Ballpark. So many of the little baseball touches that you see in this park came from Glenn's hand. Whatever it took was what Glenn gave it.

These fine design architects were partnered up with the Harwood K. Smith Architectural firm of Dallas. HKS did the hard work of translating the innovative design concepts into the construction drawings that could be built. Bobby Booth, Ernie Hanchey, Gary MacCullough, Jim Alotto and Joe Laakman labored deep into the night, night after night, to get it done. They deserve to share in the joy of achievement.

We were blessed with great companies to build The Ballpark. Manhattan Construction was the first corporation chartered when Oklahoma became a state. Led by Francis Rooney, the grandson of its founder, Manhattan was committed to delivering a ballpark on time and on budget, and they did it.

But great companies have to bring more than tradition to the table. Manhattan did. Gary Tanner, Bob Bowen, Al Syverson and a host of others too numerous to mention would settle for nothing less than the best. They took pride in their work and they built it with craftsmanship. They also brought with them a set of subs committed to excellence, T.D. Mechanical and Walker Electric, the two larger subs, set an example for all others to follow.

People have asked me when I knew that we were going to create something special. I think I

realized that when I watched a bricklayer reset a course of block because it just was not right. No one told him to do it. He just did it because it needed to be done. Over and over I saw others do the same thing. I watched Bob Lowe walk the concourses to hide pipes behind columns so that the views would be better as you walked around. I saw John Zelman make arrangements to get light fixtures from Germany at the same cost because the items specified in the project were not up to his standard of excellence. Over and over again people did things, not because they were told to do them, but because they were right. They believed they could make a difference and they did.

This summer we will unveil a plaque that contains the names of all those people who helped build The Ballpark. More than five thousand names will be on that plaque. They all deserve our thanks and recognition.

On a personal note. I could not let this moment pass with out saying how grateful I am for having had the opportunity. I recognized early on that building a ballpark was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I did not know how much I would learn out of the process. It has been the most rewarding and exhilarating experience of my life. I shall be eternally grateful for having had the chance. I came to appreciate so much more the importance of family. My wife Susanne and my son Paul could not have been more helpful or supportive. They are the perfect wife and son and I love them very much. I often thought of parents during this process. Of my mother who set a standard for her children that we simply were not allowed to fall below. Of my father who was in the construction business. I came to realize how much he must have enjoyed building things. I thought of my sister and my brother who it seems to me always took a special interest in my welfare. To them, and to my sisters-in-law, my brother-in-law, my nieces and my mother-and father-in-law, I must say thank you.

I also want to say thank you to David Schwarz for opening the world of architecture to me. I came to understand through this that

architecture matters. It shapes our cities and the way we live. Good architecture can create a place where the human spirit can soar. Bad architecture can make it wither.

I cannot help but think that if we still took as much time to design our schools, our libraries and our city halls as we used to, as much time as we took to design this ballpark, then I think they would probably work better. We can do that as a society and we ought to. The benefits are worth it.

Finally, I want to thank the thousands of fans who taught me and all of us about baseball. They have a special affection for this game, it has been played on a professional basis for a hundred and twenty-five years and if we are good stewards, it will be played another hundred and twenty-five.

There is a cycle in baseball and it is as constant as the seasons. It is hope, disappointment and renewal. It can play itself out in a single game, a single season or a lifetime, but it is always the same -- hope, disappointment, renewal. It is a cycle that gives strength because it always offers the promise of a better day.

When I went around the country, I discovered that ballparks are special. People spend more time in them and they have a greater affection for them than they do other sports facilities. I realized somewhere along the way that ballparks are museums for memories. They are the backdrop for people to play out the most touching moments of their lives. They are the places where the grass is always green and hope is always alive.

This morning we open a ballpark. May you enjoy it as much as we all enjoyed bringing it to you.