

RIP SWOSU Union Elm

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There has been a death in the Southwestern Oklahoma State University campus family as a 100-year-old "Union Elm" tree was laid to rest in September, and two SWOSU students are helping alums and students with retaining some of the memories of the popular tree.

The tree was located in the middle of the east deck of the Memorial Student Center and had become diseased and breaking down, according to James Skinner, director of the SWOSU Physical Plant.

Over the years, the tree has seen first dates, break ups, Greek events, first kisses, marriage proposals, and countless other Bulldog activities. Under the Union Elm, Daniel Thompson, a junior business marketing major from Elk City, met Amber Bachiochi, a junior communications arts major from Sweetwater, and a bond was formed.

When the duo returned from the Labor Day weekend and the Union Elm was gone, they felt like they had to do something. The desire to remember the Union Elm led Thompson and Bachiochi to placing a small memorial shrine on the stump. They left an automatic burning candle and a memory book for any thoughts students would like to send to the tree.

The memorial was left for a week so students could write in the spiral notebook. During the week the notebook's pages were filled with well wishes and remembrances.

"When we saw the tree was gone, we were sad about it," said Bachiochi, "It was such an iconic part of campus and it will be missed."

The two have taken the small memorial shrine and made a permanent tribute to the Union Elm in the trophy case on the second floor of the Stafford Center on the Weatherford campus. All comments and love notes to the tree are posted there.

"We met there," Thompson said. "It was always super nice under that tree."

SWOSU plans to do something special in the near future for that side of the Memorial Student Center and is working with students on the project.

R.I.P. Union Elm.