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MSU field house marks anniversary: financing, program, future

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MSU FIELD HOUSE MARKS ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday marks the fourth anniversary of the formal opening of the Montana State University Field House on December 18, 1953. On that date the Grizzlies played a basketball game with the Indiana Hoosiers before some 6,500 fans. Many times that number have witnessed a variety of athletic, academic, and social events in the versatile structure since then.

Field-House operations continue to expand, on a financially solvent basis, University officials said Tuesday. At the end of the 1956-57 fiscal year, after three and one-half years of operation, the Field House had not only met all payments on principal and interest due for the building and equipment but had deposited $35,701.70 in the required "reserve fund," according to MSU President Carl McFarland.

Financing

The Field House construction was financed without use of state funds under an $800,000 revenue bond issue. The financing plan was approved by the State Board of Education on Dec. 15, 1952. Advertising for the bids for sale of the bonds and for bids for construction was begun Jan. 15, 1953, bids were received by the Board of Education February 16, contracts were let March 2, and ground was broken March 12, with Gov. Aronson officiating.

The 1952 bond agreement contained an "open-end" provision permitting additional bonds to be issued up to a total of two million dollars, President McFarland explained. While the $800,000 from the 1953 bond issue was enough for the construction of the building proper and the customary attached fixtures, additional financing was needed for special equipment required to use the Field House to the fullest extent, he said. On May 14, 1956, the state board entered into an agreement for the issuance (more)
of $200,000 additional revenue to finance Field-House equipment and also a skating
ing, bowling alleys, and a storage building.

Equipment financed by this bond issue includes the portable stage, one of the
largest in any field house in the country, and the removable basketball floor, the
dance floor, bleacher and balcony seats, and the sound equipment.

Under the terms of the two bond agreements the University must, by April 1,
1958, accumulate a reserve fund equal to the average annual principal and interest
payments on both series ($59,165), Dr. McFarland said. In 1958 and each year after
at least $3,000 of the balance in the fund must be used to redeem bonds maturing
in 1983, until the latter are reduced to an amount not exceeding the accumulated re­
serve, he explained. The amount in the reserve fund had reached $35,701.70 by June
30, 1957, and it is expected that the full requirement will be met by April 1, 1958,
he said.

Program

Since its opening in 1953, the Field House has been the scene of MSU’s intra­
mural basketball games and its intercollegiate home games. It has also been used
for practice or exhibition in baseball, football, track, and boxing.

Each spring since 1954, hundreds of high-school musicians have participated
in the All-State Music Festival in the Field House. Other musical events there
have included the Community Concert series, the Air Force Band Concert, and the
Victor Borge show. Foresters' Ball, student dances featuring name bands, and the
annual Charity Ball sponsored by the Missoula County Crippled Children's Assn.
have been given in the Field House.

The first nonathletic event in the Field House was the Western Montana Auto­
mobile Show in March 1954, which has been repeated each year since under the sponsor­
ship of the Missoula Automobile Dealers' Assn. Other annual affairs in the Field

(more)
House are the Shrine Circus, for the benefit of crippled children, and the Treasure State Horse Show, sponsored by the Missoula Saddle Club and the Lions Club for the benefit of the visually handicapped.

Montana's first and second annual science fairs brought high-school students from throughout the state to the Field House to show exhibits that had won sectional competitions. The boy and the girl placing highest at the state fair receive expense-paid trips to the National Science Fair, sponsored by Science Service. The Montana fair, designed to stimulate interest in science and so help to alleviate the shortage of trained scientists, will be conducted in the Field House this year on April 11 and 12.

Two historical pageants have been staged in the building, which is well adapted to the production of spectacles by its size. Another large-scale display that has become an annual affair is the Better Living Show, put on by Missoula merchants to exhibit the latest in home appliances and equipment as well as a completely furnished and landscaped house.

The largest single group ever to use the Field House was the International Young People's Luther League convention in July 1957, with a total registration of about 9,250.

In addition to these and other extracurricular uses, the Field House performs functions more directly related to the academic life of the University. Since 1954 June commencement exercises have taken place there, making it possible for each senior to invite as many relatives and friends as he wishes. Registration activities are conducted in the Field House, resulting in a saving of time for both students and staff. The arena and lobbies are used for military drill; and office space is occupied by the athletic staff, the Planning and Construction Office, and the superintendent of buildings and grounds.
The Field House is designed to allow for extension on three sides when more space is needed. At present the building covers a ground floor area of 49,480 square feet, with a total volume of 2,895,500 cubic feet. It has a seating capacity of 6,521 for basketball games, with room for an additional 2,300 for events requiring only a stage.