

LaFortune Golf Course, the David L. Moss Correctional Center, Vision 2025 projects and many road and bridge projects have a common denominator. They have Ray Jordan's touch. Jordan, Tulsa County Engineer, retires Friday, Dec. 31 after 39 years and 9 months in a position where he didn't think he would stay and where he didn't think about longevity. Looking back over the nearly four decades of service, he points with pride not only at the projects, but also the relationships he has built with Tulsa city and county elected officials and officials in those many cities and towns and in adjoining counties. Jordan had just earned his bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering from Oklahoma State University when he went to work for the county in March, 1971. Lewis Harris was in his first term as District One County Commissioner, and Floyd Oakley was the County Engineer. Burkett Wamsley was the District Two Commissioner and Robert Newhouse held the District Three post. Oakley was elected to the district two post in 1975 and held that position until his death. The commissioners named his wife Ruth to fill out his term. Terry Young was elected and he was followed by John Selph. Next was Randi Miller and the post currently is held by Karen Keith. Mel Rice, Bob Dick and Fred Perry served in district three. Wilbert Collins, Sr. and John Smaligo have been the district one commissioners since Harris retired. Jordan, named county engineer in 1975, would earn his masters degree in civil engineering from OSU. During that time he would be dealing with floods and tornadoes that hit Tulsa County and work closely with FEMA in obtaining the needed disaster funding. He was part of the Department of Emergency Management, the predecessor to FEMA. Jordan was initially responsible for nearly 1,000 miles of county roads and bridges early in his career. That number has changed only slightly, to about 730 miles today, the drop attributed to the annexations by Tulsa and Broken Arrow. Similarly, the county was responsible for about 230 bridges in 1971, a number that has dropped to about 190 today. Those bridges aren't culverts, Jordan said. Each structure was at least

20 feet long. Destructive forces seemed bent on wiping out county bridges during the 1990s, he added. One was hit by a trash truck, another by an earth mover and others were casualties of floods. Another less visible casualty was the county budget. Initially, asphalt cost \$4 per ton back when Jordan began his career. Those number escalated, spiking at between \$40 to \$50 per ton during the 1980s. Now the numbers are in the mid \$30 per ton range. The biggest problem is that while costs increased, the county budget remained flat, he said. Despite financial difficulties, county crews did their best to do quality work, Jordan said. They took pride in their efforts and the results, while not always apparent to county residents -- taxpayers -- quality was present. It took effort to find and keep quality people whose quality work was competitive with contractors. Jordan also made an effort to go to the various job sites each week to see the progress that was being made. His visibility made the difference to the employees because they knew someone was very interested in their work. "I had a real sense of accomplishment when I was able to put a project on paper, then go to the field and see it built," he said. "I take a lot of pride in my work, the staff and the guys in the field. There is a great deal of camaraderie among everyone. "It's when people lose pride in their work that everyone loses out." Jordan has several projects that he is proud to have been a part of. One is at Jenks, from Peoria to 121st St. Another is on West 71st St. to Highway 75 and the Arkansas River. The City of Tulsa has taken on additional work and look at the corridor that has opened. Then there was work involved in upgrading LaFortune Park," he said. County crews did the rough work and drainage. Add the 4 to Fix projects that required engineering work, and even before that, the engineering required for the courthouse. Jordan said he was deeply involved in the research when a new jail facility was being considered. The Board

of County Commissioners were considering a high rise jail facility in 1998 and sent Jordan on a tour to review various facilities in San Antonio, San Diego, Golden Colo., and other sites. "My job was to inquire about the consulting companies involved in the projects," he said. "I was to learn about their workmanship and how reliable they were on projects." Changes were being made within the county structure to more effectively serve taxpayers. Commissioners asked Jordan if it were possible to combine services offered by individual districts that could be coordinated as one unit. "We had three pieces of machinery in each of the three districts," he said. After the equipment was purchased for each district there was no money left for material to repair roads. Combining services made the operation more efficient and cost effective. It was positive for the county and the cities needing assistance on projects. Working with elected officials also presented challenges since each had their own ideas about how to serve the public. Jordan said he would listen, then take the ideas and form the projects. He then would present several options to the elected officials and let them choose the project they wanted to move ahead on. That effort was vital because the general public didn't see political boundaries. They just wanted good roads, bridges and facilities. That was why it was so important that projects were blended. Jordan also is very proud of his work on dealing with floodwaters during the 1980s, floodplain management work that continued as additional needs were identified. Another big effort has been involvement in the Circuit Engineering District that includes 11 area counties that also make up Division 8 of the State Highway Department. CED members get together, share ideas, equipment and sometimes money, Jordan said. "We shared our money with other CED members in the past," he said. When stimulus funding became available and those counties didn't need the monies for projects, they were sent to Tulsa County where the funds were spent on local needs. As Jordan ends his career, he plans to do some traveling. One journey will be to New Zealand to visit his son. Another will

be to attend the wedding of his grandson. Those events will be during the first quarter of 2011. After that, his calendar is open, but with attention being turned to the golf course, other leisure activities -- and perhaps a job or two. «