

Yulmans make Tulane dream come true

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The Yulman family, from left, Katy Yulman Williamson, Brett Yulman, the late Janet Yulman and Richard Yulman, has played an instrumental role in bringing Tulane football back to campus for the first time in almost 40 years. (Photo from the Yulman family)

“I never anticipated this reaction,” Richard Yulman has said of his most recent major philanthropic endeavor. In fact, he says that quite often these days. For Yulman, being the namesake of the first on-campus football stadium at Tulane University in almost 40 years was never about recognition. It has always been about supporting an organization with which Yulman and his family share a deep connection.

Yulman was elected to the Board of Tulane in 2005, at the board meeting before Hurricane Katrina hit. His daughter, Katy Yulman Williamson, had graduated from Newcomb College just months before the storm swept through New Orleans, leaving university representatives struggling to find answers about the future.

Williamson immediately jumped into action. “I wanted to know what I could do,” she says. “I was deeply affected, as many people were.”

Yulman emailed Scott Cowen, then the president of Tulane, and asked if he needed volunteers in Houston, where Tulane headquarters had moved. He did, and Williamson made her way there.

“Katy’s time in Houston was probably the thing that solidified the relationship between the Yulman family and Tulane,” Yulman says. “She was just a 22-year-old, recent graduate moving to help her alma mater. They took care of Katy. We became family.”

A few months later, Tulane headquarters settled back in New Orleans and Yulman’s desire to help the university was stronger than ever. He recalls not knowing what it was like to talk about standard university business at board meetings because, for years, all that was discussed was the university’s survival.

Once Tulane seemed to begin operating “normally” again, momentum began to shift toward an Athletics Department that seemingly had become less competitive in the years following Katrina.

“Scott knew the only way for football to work was to build an on-campus stadium – it became his dream,” Yulman says. “And for me, it was the most important need at the moment. So I said we’ll do it. His pride and unbelievable inspiration as a leader had a lot to do with my desire to do something to help the university.”

Now, two years later, Williamson and Yulman are gearing up for the Sept. 6 opening of [Yulman Stadium](#), where the Green Wave will face Georgia Tech. The event will be bittersweet for them and the 100-plus members of their family and friends who plan to be with them on game day. In October 2013, Janet, Yulman’s wife of more than 37 years, and Williamson’s mother, died.

Their excitement will be mixed with sadness on opening day.

“She was very much a part of this. I think walking to the stadium will probably bring tears to my eyes,” Yulman says. “There’s no question that with our family and friends there, it’s going to be emotional.” Although they wish that Janet Yulman could be there to celebrate with them, this historic event will truly be special for the family.

Yulman says that his many discussions with alumni who remember football on campus have helped him understand the value and importance of Yulman Stadium.

“When I check in to my hotel, they thank me. If I have a driver that knows my name, they bring up the stadium. Perfect strangers have walked up to me at parties and thanked me,” he says. “It’s amazing. It’s more than I ever imagined.”

A list of all the donors who gave \$50,000 or more for Yulman Stadium is [here](#).

Allison Hjortsberg is a communications specialist in the Office of Development Communications.

The Yulman Stadium ‘... is more than I ever imagined.’ -- Richard Yulman