FROM LEAD & ZINC TO

Blue & Gold

THE EXPANSION OF Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College
VOLUME III: 1970-1984
This history is dedicated to all Golden Norsemen, past, present, and future.

“Once a Norseman, always a Norseman”
Among the characteristics I have come to recognize as integral to success at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College is a dedication to progress. At NEO progress is something we talk about all the time, as students advance toward their degree and career goals, as faculty members evolve in their instructional strategies, and as our entire campus marches forward in pursuit of ongoing excellence in education.

Over the past few years there have been lots of “Work in Progress” signs at NEO. We have raised, remodeled, and re-invested in our buildings, programs and people, and we’ve worked diligently to meet the growing needs of our students and community. All that hard work has been pursued with a plan in mind, to build a better tomorrow for everyone who calls northeast Oklahoma home.

When we challenge students to “Create your future at NEO,” it’s more than just a marketing pitch. It’s our hope that we will inspire and empower students to discover for themselves that forward motion implies a destination. The quality of life in northeastern Oklahoma improved tremendously between the years of 1970 and 1995, when this college built stronger academic programs, developed a solid fund-raising foundation, invested in new technology and committed to making educational opportunities accessible to everyone willing to work hard for their dreams.

For almost 100 years the men and women of this college have been dedicated to the pursuit of progress, because NEO is committed to the idea that enhancing what exists will always advance what can be, especially when we work together to create our future.

That concept is clearly illustrated in this third volume of NEO’s history entitled, ‘From Lead and Zinc to Blue and Gold, The Progression of Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College.” It is my hope that you will be informed and engaged by the people and events depicted in the following pages and moved to find your place in NEO’s Blue and Gold history.

Judd L. Hale
President, NEO A&M College
In January, 1970, 560 freshmen were pre-enrolled for the spring semester, the highest figure in the history of the school. Soon new programs, including Legal Secretary, Medical Secretary, Electromechanical Technology, and Nurses Aide would be part of the college’s focus on vocational education. Later Home Economics, Fashion Trades, Food Management and the Care and Guidance of Children would be added to the college curriculum.

The Board of Regents granted permission to use a four-room house located on campus as a Child Care Center, laying the foundation for the future Lab School.
In the early part of the 70’s, NEO’s Nursing program (housed in Ables Hall) was expanded from an LPN program to an Associate Degree of Nursing, and the State Regents approved adding a new nursing studies building to NEO’s campus master plan. Preliminary blueprints included classrooms, labs, office areas and other essential instruction space. The project would be delayed many times due to inadequate funding before a ground breaking was celebrated March 18, 1983, and NEO’s Health Science Building was dedicated on April 12, 1984.
A financial auditor’s report suggests NEO “modernize bookkeeping and accounting procedures and place all possible operations on computers,” prompting the college to take its first steps into the digital age.
All across Oklahoma computers became a powerful tool for higher education as a statewide talk-back television system was put in place and colleges began transmitting courses across the airwaves. Through OETA’s public broadcasting system, NEO offered tele-courses for college credit:

America: The Second Century (History)
The Computer Programme (Introduction to Computers)
Focus on Society (Sociology)
Understanding Human Behavior (Psychology)
Family Portraits (Marriage and Family)
American History to 1877 (History)
American National Government (American Government)

Later NEO would transmit athletic events, dramas, music programs and enrollment information on local channels.
April 23, 1933

Board of Regents
For A & M Colleges

Dear Sir:

It is with great pleasure that I present to NEO A & M College a collection of primitive tools to be displayed for the purpose of teaching what was used in the period of 1800-1900 in the woodworking field.

This collection was made possible by friends and former students of NEO and myself.

We present these with the following stipulations:

1. No article is to be removed from display case at any time.
2. In case this collection is ever deemed unsuitable to NEO, it is to be placed in the Osage County Historical Society Museum, Miami, Oklahoma.
3. A copy of this letter is to be filed with the permanent records of NEO A & M College and Osage County Historical Society, Miami, Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

Merrill Chaney

Dr. D. D. Crenshaw, President, NEO
Mrs. Elizabeth Bailey, Head Librarian, NEO
Mrs. Edna Mask, Osage County Historical Society

When Mr. Merrill Chaney, member of NEO’s Vocational-Technical faculty, retired after 28 years of service, he presented the college a collection of primitive woodworking tools for study.

Ever since 1967, when Miss Nellie Dobson left to NEO funds “for the purposes of scholarships for students attending the college at Miami, Oklahoma [...] and/or supplementing the income of persons teaching,” it had become increasingly clear the college needed a body to administrate the resources and materials donated by supporters.
The establishment of a formal fund-raising body at NEO was first discussed in 1972, and further explored in 1978, before the Articles of Incorporation for the NEO Development Foundation were finalized in the fall of 1983. As soon as the college began interviewing directors, the first fund-raising dinners were scheduled and more than $30,000.00 was raised in Miami, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Thirty-five years later the NEO Development Foundation routinely helps academic departments purchase special resources for instruction and administers more than 150 scholarships. More than one thousand students have graduated from NEO A&M College, thanks to the hard work of the NEO Development Foundation.

“I request permission to organize a development foundation for [NEO]. I believe that this time is right for public junior colleges to move in this direction. A foundation arrangement will afford us a flexibility of operation and variety of tax benefits.” ~ Dr. D. D. Creech (February, 1978)
When Dr. Creech retired his position as NEO’s eleventh president in June of 1982, some 400 people turned out for his retirement banquet. Creech had served as president of NEO from January, 1970 until July, 1982. For twelve and a half years the college administrator from Seiling, Oklahoma channeled his high regard for student success and pride in the college’s growth into a personal focus on the day-to-day affairs of NEO. Dr. Creech credited his dust bowl upbringing with his ability to work with tight budgets. Under his watchful eye, the college grew academically as well as fiscally, as new programs were added, the budget expanded and the value of the college’s property, buildings and equipment grew. “I got there at a time when the college was ready for new programs and new challenges,” said Dr. Creech.
After graduating from Oakwood HS in 1933, Dr. Crech earned a D.D. Crech earned a degree in education from Southwestern State College and a Masters degree in school administration from OSU. Prior to completing his doctorate of education honors from University of Oklahoma in 1966, D.D. Crech was a commissioned lieutenant in the US Navy. After being discharged in 1946, he devoted his life to Public education. Prior to being named President of NEO, Dr. Crech worked as a teacher, coach, and administrator. He had married Dorothy A. Buss in 1947 and had a daughter and two sons.
In addition to his outstanding accomplishments at the college, Dr. Creech was actively involved in civic matters. He served as President of the Miami Chamber of Commerce, was Vice President of the Cherokee Area Council Boy Scouts of America, was on the Board of the Miami United Way, stayed active with the Miami Community Concerts Association, routinely contributed his insights to the Northeast Counties of Oklahoma Economic Development Association, was an active member of the American Legion and Rotary Clubs and a devoted member of the First United Methodist Church where he attended the Builders Sunday School Class. Perhaps his proudest accomplishment was serving as the President of the Board of Directors that raised the funds to build the Miami Senior Center in 1993.
People who knew him and worked with him were always impressed with how he always had students in mind. Dr. Creech could be found backstage after plays praising the participants. While previous NEO presidents routinely attended athletic events and activities, Dr. Creech holds the all-time record for most unqualified support of Team NEO. With the exception of the period after his open-heart surgery, Dr. Creech attended each and every student event, usually accompanied by his wife, Dorothy. In instances when two events were going on simultaneously, they would each go to one event and then switch at the half or intermission.
Dr. Creech’s tremendous loyalty also extended to those with whom he worked, as he felt the secret to quality education was having good faculty and staff. “People are the most important ingredients in education. We must pay them to get the good ones, and we’ve always tried to pay well here.”

In gratitude the NEO staff commended the retiring president and the Regents for the A&M College passed a resolution naming the Library Administration building after him and citing Dr. Creech for “distinguished leadership in education” and “the most excellent manner in which he served as President of NEO.”

That’s the nicest thing you could have done for me,” stated Dr. Creech as he accepted the honor, “I will continue boosting NEO as long as I live. Once a Norseman, always a Norseman.”

D. D. Creech passed away August 2, 1999, and was buried in Miami’s GAR Cemetery, leaving behind a legacy of service and dedication that spanned more than 44 years. Until he died he actively supported the college, its programs and students. “I have become part of your great tradition for excellence and achievement, and I shall cherish every single memory.”
The proposed “Norse Park Project” to develop walking and bicycle trails, picnic areas, foot bridges and landscaping in a public park area around Tar Creek was abandoned on the drawing board even prior to concerns about pollutants from the Tri-State mining area. In September of 1983, the EPA officially listed Tar Creek as Superfund site OKD980629844.
When the B.F. Goodrich plant closed on Friday, February 28, 1986, it left the Miami community struggling with the loss of thousands of jobs. Working closely with Oklahoma Occupational Training Associates, NEO tried to assist with the retraining of laid-off employees in difficult economic times. During their most profitable years the plant was a financial contributor to the college and supporter of new technology initiatives for workforce development.
The plant closing occurred just one year after a February, 1985 flood, the second worst recorded for the area at the time. Floods occurring throughout the 80’s impacted the college, requiring restoration to streets and maintenance facilities and sewage line repair of damage to athletic areas.

In a constant struggle against the elements, NEO considered moving their baseball field out of the flood plain, after repair and renovation costs added up. New lights, utility poles and upgrades to the dugout areas had everyone looking forward to a first class baseball field at NEO.
The “Homa Thomas Baseball Field” was formally dedicated in 1984, recognizing the retired coach’s thirty-one years of service. A record of 300 wins and 59 losses, 13 state junior college championships, a place in the NJCAA Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame and a spot in the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame are just a few honors among a long list of distinctions earned in Mr. Thomas’ impressive career coaching and teaching at NEO.
Big changes were also on the way for NEO’s football team. In February, 1985, NEO coaches and administrators traveled to Austin, TX to discuss the possibility of NEO joining the Texas Junior College Football Conference. Ten years later, after a great deal of work and communication, NEO joined the Texas league and immediately began challenging rivals across the Red River for gridiron glory.
After many years of study and planning by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, the Highway 69 project became a reality, bisecting several acres at the college farm and creating a Miami bypass. Direct access to the college farm and a new Multi-Purpose Arena bolstered support for a new program in Equine Management. More than $100,000 in private community funds were donated for a 32,000 square foot facility designed to develop ranch managers and horse breeders as they learned to care for, treat, breed and develop livestock.

On campus there was popular support to build a sign identifying the college featuring the college mascot. Dr. Nicholas Calcagno and Marianna Burch designed an 8 ft Golden Norseman statue and a redwood walk, benches and three flagpoles to be located immediately northwest of the Library-Administration building.

School officials and civic leaders gathered on Tuesday, April 27, 1982, to dedicate NEO’s Norseman statue and honor everyone who had a hand in its creation.
Dr. Calcagno was previously awarded an Oklahoma Humanities Committee grant for “New Deal Murals in Oklahoma” as part of the Bicentennial activities at the college. Under his guidance NEO developed a slide, sound and narrative brochure on the topic, documenting Oklahoma’s WPA Art program.
At NEO Dr. Calcagno’s murals depicting campus life are treasured by faculty, staff, and students. When the student union was renovated, the murals were scanned and reproduced for display and preservation, and the ballroom was renamed in honor of the entire Calcagno family.
Not satisfied with just beautification, NEO also chose to tackle a variety of serious issues across campus during these years.

A heightened interest in the environment lead to the implementation of campus conservation programs and an energy audit of 14 buildings in cooperation with federal and state regulations. Students and faculty were encouraged to turn off lights, lower thermostats and reduce driving speeds to conserve fuel.

Next NEO developed an Affirmative Action Program and worked with federal officials in the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity to write policy statements ensuring equal opportunity for everyone in all personnel actions. Finally, college officials submitted a letter to the State Regents for Higher Education to be included in the State Plan for Civil Rights Compliance.

And finally campus remodeling for handicapped persons included the removal of architectural barriers, the installation of elevators, chairlifts, ramps, water fountains, accessible restrooms, modified seating, and parking areas reserved for handicapped parking, all bringing the campus into compliance with recommendations for campus accessibility.
Twenty Panamanian students sponsored by the Institute of International Education enrolled in an industrial maintenance program at NEO in 1985. Participants attended classes 7 hours a day and were given language assistance, encouraged to participate in cultural activities and helped to adjust to American culture in their new Oklahoma home-away-from-home.
In February, 1988, NEO Women donated a sign marking the southeast corner of the main campus. The civic organization comprised of female staff members or spouses dedicated time and fundraising efforts in support of the college and its students. Donations to the college were just one way the members of the college and Miami community showed their support for NEO.

P - OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS REQUIRING ACTION BY THE BOARD

1. Construction of Sign on Campus

The NEO Women, an organization of faculty and staff women and wives, are proposing to pay for the construction of a sign on the southeast corner of the campus. Attached is a drawing depicting the sign (Attachment 1). This organization proposes to pay the entire cost. I request permission for this organization to be allowed to sponsor this activity. Our Maintenance Department will supervise construction of the sign. Included is a map of the campus showing the location of this sign (Attachment 2).
Another donation brought the college back in touch with early history when Dr. Jack Robinson donated the 5-story, red brick Robinson building on Main Street in downtown Miami to the college. The Miami School of Mines originally held classes in the Robinson Building, and initial plans were to utilize the space for adult and continuing education, community activities, or a professional or small business incubator.
While the college eventually transferred ownership of the building to a church, administrators decided to keep college history alive by working with the Oklahoma Historical Society to obtain a property south of campus for a college museum. After renovating the space, it was used for academic, cultural and historical exhibits. The NEO Art Department held classes and provided studio space in the building until it was destroyed in 2007 by rising floodwaters.
The 12th president of the college was a native of Santo, Texas, who came to NEO after serving as Vice President of Howard College in Big Spring, Texas. Dr. Wright’s studies in agricultural education began at Sam Houston State University, where he completed B.S. and M. Ed. degrees before pursing an Ed. D. at Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Bobby Wright was President of NEO during a tremendously challenging 10-year period for the college and community.

In addition to the closing of the Goodrich tire plant, and a series of increasing damaging floods, the state endured the economic strains brought on by the end of the oil boom and the toxic legacy of tri-state mining. All these problems culminated in Dr. Wright’s resignation from his position with NEO at a press conference in April of 1992.
Starting in January, 1987, childcare was offered at NEO for working parents in an effort to support NEO’s educational mission of empowering all students to succeed. For a nominal fee, adult students may attend evening classes knowing their children are well supervised.
In compliance with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989, NEO staged “Risqué Business”, a theatrical drug-awareness play intended to educate K-12 and college students about unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol. In support, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health awarded NEO a $15,000 grant to perform the drama at schools across the state.

**The Cast**

Matt Beese, Miami
Chris Brown, Tulea
Kent Chrismon, Commerce

**Totals**

Risqué Business has engaged 2,816 and 3,548 by all means.
Risqué Business has attracted audiences, 9 convention center performances.
Risqué Business has performed in a total of 14 venues.
Risqué Business has been seen by the public.

**Audiences**

Miami Kiwanis Club
NEO A&M Employees
Fairland Schools
Miami Schools
Quapaw Schools
NEO A&M Students
Commerce Schools
Picher Schools
Columbus (KS) Schools
BACCHUS Nat'l. Conv.
Bethel Acres Schools
Earlsboro Schools
Faulkner County Schools

Mason Schools
McDonald County (MO) Schools
Turpin Schools
Drumright Schools

1990-1991
Tour
Summary

Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College
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To project a positive professional image, NEO established publication guidelines in July, 1989. Symbols of institutional identity – logos and emblems appearing on college materials or representing academic, administrative or athletic functions – were formalized and trademarked. The college seal, designed in 1986, is used for official publications, certification of degrees and on legal documents. The college font became “Bookman Bold” and high quality consistent use in letterhead, envelopes, and business cards reinforced a positive public image for the institution.

*The NEO seal depicting the NEO chimes towers and the inscription: ‘Preparing for Tomorrow’*
In October, 1993, NEO launched an American Indian Studies Program with the support of nine Native American Tribes located in northeast Oklahoma. Native Americans make up approximately 19 percent of the college’s student body population, giving NEO the largest Native American student enrollment of all the public colleges in the United States.

Classes in the program include American Indian Writers, The History of the American Indian, Traditional Indian Singing and Dance, Native American Art, Cherokee Language I and II, in an extensive mix of history, tribal government and art for 63 credit hours in the heritage study program.
Another new program focusing on wellness emphasized health, nutrition, biological science and elective management courses for students working toward an Associate of Arts degree in the Behavioral Science Division of the school.

In conjunction with the program, a Wellness Center was opened in the fall of 1995, one of only two cardiovascular programs in the state -- providing students, faculty and community a place to work out and improve their health.
From 1993 until 1997, Dr. Jerry Carroll was the thirteenth president at NEO A&M College. A native of Muskogee, Oklahoma, Dr. Carroll assumed his duties at NEO on January 4, 1993, as the top choice from a field of 76 candidates. Dr. Carroll came to NEO from Tulsa Junior College Metro Campus where he had worked for 22 years and served as Provost.

Dr. Carroll had progressive plans for NEO and the surrounding community; he was especially interested in recruiting industry to the Miami area in order to provide jobs for NEO graduates. In addition, Dr. Carroll made every effort to work collaboratively with NEO’s faculty and staff. “I fully intend to be a listening president that will involve the constituents of the campus, particularly when a decision might effect an individual’s area,” said Carroll, “I want their opinions and their thoughts.”

Under Carroll’s guidance, NEO expanded its academic programs and guided the college to a 10-year full accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission; under his guidance NEO established their first satellite, a Grove, OK campus, which opened its doors in 1998.
In October, 2009, the “Dr. Jerry and Jan Carroll Presidential Garden,” in the courtyard entrance to the Library Administration Building, was named for Dr. Carroll and his wife in recognition of their service to the college.
In 1994 the college celebrated its 75th birthday, showcasing academics and athletics at “the most unique two-year college in the US.” The celebration focused on looking toward the future.

“The 21st century is just over the horizon. NEO intends to offer students the courses, degree programs and technologies to meet the needs of this new era.” ~ Dr. Carroll
For three quarters of a century NEO A&M College had been working to prepare students to take their first steps into a wider world. The college had grown from a small school of mining to a college that offered all the benefits of a big university on a scale that was affordable, personal and adaptable to the needs of students. At the end of the 20th century, NEO’s Blue and Gold Tradition was alive and well in the hearts of those who draw strength from the belief that “Once A Norseman, Always a Norseman.”
MISSION AND PURPOSE (1994):

Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College is organized as a state-supported comprehensive college offering associate degrees and/or certificates while remaining sensitive to the specialized educational needs of the local community. The basic curricula contain freshman and sophomore courses for students who intend to pursue a baccalaureate degree after leaving Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College. Occupational programs provide opportunities for those who plan to enter the workforce upon graduation. Other educational programs provide opportunities for those in the community desiring to study without credit in specific areas of interest.