











# THE MID-PLAINS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BOOK 1: EARLY HISTORY AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLLEGES  
AND FORMATION OF THE AREA

1926 - 1974

Copyright 2008 Mid-Plains Community College

All right reserved under international and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Author.

1st ed.

Published by The Old 101 Press  
PO Box 203  
North Platte, Ne 69103

Printed in the United States of America

Design by Expertise Inc

Cover design by Martin Mora

Editing by Ford Craig

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008936426

Aten, Kenneth  
Craig, Ford  
Garey, Jerda Thompson  
Hasemeyer, William  
Koch, Ivan

Summary:

ISBN: 0-9763676-6-1

# THE MID-PLAINS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BOOK 1: EARLY HISTORY AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLLEGES  
AND FORMATION OF THE AREA

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is extended to the following individuals and groups who provided valuable support as this book was being written:

- Myrna Bollerup – for research support
- McCook Community College Library Staff – for research support
- Beth Hasemeyer, Carol Aten, and Doris Craig – for excellent culinary support for the early morning History Writer’s Meetings.



# CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Purpose and Place.....	1
Chapter 2. McCook Junior College from its Origin to the Time of the Merger.....	3
1926-1936: THE FOUNDING AND FIRST DECADE	
1936-1945: FROM DEPRESSION TO WAR	
1946-1956: VISIBLE YEARS	
1956-1965: GAINING STATUS.	
1966-1976: CHANGE	
Chapter 3. North Platte Junior College from its Origin to the Time of the Merger.....	42
Chapter 4. Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College from its Legislative Beginning through Merger into Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area.....	69
Chapter 5. Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area.....	97
Post-script.....	104
Appendix A A Legislative Act.....	111
Appendix B A Report on College Location.....	120
Appendix C Preparing for the Merger.....	125



# Chapter 1

## Purpose and Place

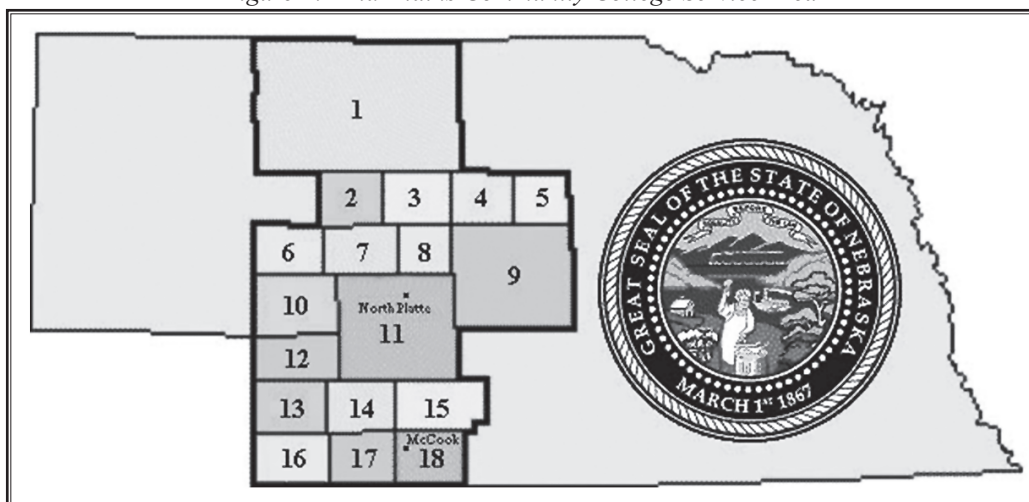
### *Origins and Purpose of This Book*

The kernel idea of a Mid-Plains Community College (Area) history came from its current President Dr. Michael Chipps. What the writers of this publication suspected and have confirmed is that various bits and pieces and partial segments of MPCC (Area) history (and its member Colleges) have been written over the years at one location or another. However, no history that includes all of the member Colleges (McCook, the two North Platte locations, and the four extended campus locations) has been written to date. That was task of these writers, and this is Book 1 which traces the early beginnings of the colleges that in time would comprise Mid-Plains Community College as it is known today.

### *Setting: MPCC - The Place, The People, and Lifestyles*

Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC) serves a vast 18-county area of west-central and southwest Nebraska. Figure 1 (below) shows the service area and its relationship to the other five community college areas in Nebraska.

Figure 1: Mid-Plains Community College Service Area



MPCC's service area encompasses more than 20,000 square miles or nearly 30% of the state's total area, but its 94,000 people (general population) represent only 5.5% of the state's total population. The total population in the area is declining, but the rate of decline has tapered off somewhat. Between 1980 and



1990, the population decreased 10.3%, but between 1990 and 2000 it decreased only an additional 0.4%. Fifteen of the 18 counties experienced negative population growth between 1990 and 2000. Nine of the 18 counties have population densities under two people per square mile.

The six largest population centers within the service area are North Platte (23,878), McCook (7,994), Ogallala (4,930), Broken Bow (3,491), Valentine (2,820), and Imperial (1,982).

The geography of the area defines, in part, its major economic activities. Farming prevails along the North Platte, South Platte, and Republican River valleys. In the Nebraska Sandhills area, which lies north of the North Platte River, ranching and cattle production dominate.

The Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington Northern Railroad have a large presence in Nebraska, with the Union Pacific's Bailey Yard in North Platte being recognized as the largest railcar classification yard in the world. The two railroads employ about 2,800 people in the MPCC area.

Small to mid-size service industries and manufacturing firms generate payrolls in Broken Bow, North Platte, McCook, Ogallala, Imperial, and Valentine. Also included in the economic picture are agri-business activities, wholesale and retail sales, educational institutions, health and human services, and the operations of federal, state, and local government. Along the southern border of the district, a limited amount of oil production accounts for some jobs and income.

In all 18 counties, both the median household income and the percentage of the population 25 years and older that hold at least a bachelor's degree are lower than the state average, and in 13 counties, the all-ages poverty rate is higher than the state average. Blaine County has the lowest median household income at \$25, 278 and the highest poverty rate for all ages at 19.4%. Logan County has the lowest percentage of people with at least a bachelor's degree at 10.5 percent.

*References Consulted*

*2004 Self-Study – Mid-Plains Community College. North Platte, NE, 2004.*

---

## Chapter 2

# McCook Junior College from its Origin to the Time of the Merger

### 1926-1973

## 1926-1936 THE FOUNDING AND FIRST DECADE

In the early 1920's, McCook was a prosperous, growing regional trade center. The economic climate was oriented toward expansion and development. Population was increasing rapidly. Construction of a major north-south Highway 83, and a major east-west Highway 6, both transcontinental highways, spurred the growth outlook for McCook and southwest Nebraska.

Business owners and concerned citizens felt that a higher education facility in the community would be a great asset for the young people of the area and a boon to the community, both culturally and economically. Wendell Cheney, a 1928 graduate of McCook Junior College, was proud of his college attendance. During a 1996 alumni event, McCook *Daily Gazette*, 9/23/96, page 1, he reported that the dream of a college began in the mind of one man, Charles Boyle, a successful early day resident of McCook who also had a residence in California. He became impressed with the wisdom of the junior college movement on the west coast and brought the idea back to J.A. True, McCook Schools Superintendent. True carried the idea to reality, selling it as "two more years of high school." Harry C. Strunk and Mark H. Knight, editors of the McCook *Daily Gazette* also promoted the college, and The *Gazette* ran a series about the Junior College movement.

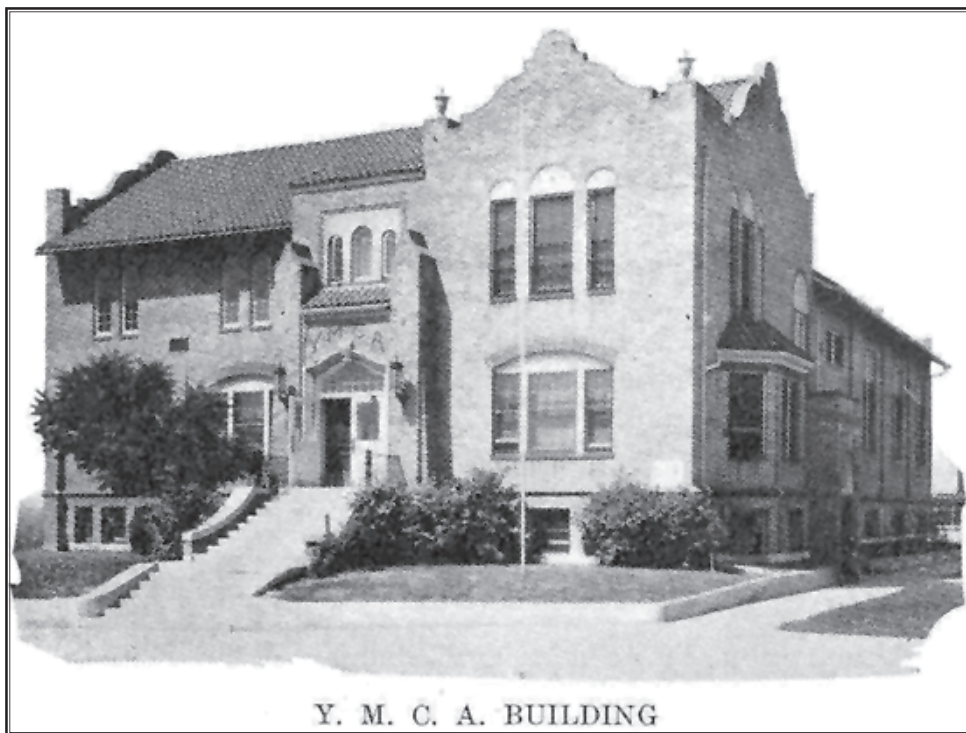
Dean W. E. Sealock, from the University of Nebraska Teachers College agreed to serve as a resource person for a McCook town meeting to discuss the merits of a junior college. He stated that a junior college was feasible in any town of thirty-five hundred or more, citing Clarinda Junior College in Iowa as an example. The Chamber of Commerce supported a project to establish a college at the time when less than two percent of high school graduates went on to college. Locally, it was felt that the private colleges were too expensive, the

University of Nebraska was too far from home, classes were too large, and the whole University experience was too intimidating for freshmen.

Developers J.E. and Charles Kelly proposed donating a parcel of land to the school district for the college. At the December 9, 1925, School Board meeting the Board voted to start a junior college the following September. It was reported that the board received more public support than any other project previous considered by the board.

By 1926, spurred on by the leadership of School Board member Harry Stewart, Superintendent of Schools J.A. True, and the crusading Chamber of Commerce, the dream of affordable, student-friendly higher education school for the young people of McCook and the surrounding area became a reality. McCook Junior College opened its doors on the second floor of the old YMCA on Main Street in downtown McCook, adopting the motto, ***“Small enough to give attention. Good enough to demand attention.”***

Because there was no legislation to authorize such a college, the McCook School Board assumed the responsibility for opening the school and keeping it open for the 43 students.



## *Board of Regent's Approval*

Originally, the board planned to seek accreditation from the North Central Association. A.A. Reed, the director of the Extension Division also worked with Dean Sealock, University of Nebraska Teacher's College, to gain initial recognition for the McCook Junior College curriculum from the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

In the plan, McCook Junior College agreed to offer courses of comparable curriculum to that taught by the University and those courses were to be taught by instructors deemed by the University to be adequately prepared. In exchange, the college was to receive full recognition by the Extension Division of the University. The Board of Regents gave their approval to the plan in May 1926.

## *College Catalog Information*

Just because McCook Junior College was a new institution, venturing into uncharted territory did not mean that the administration entered the school year unprepared and with a lack of confidence. Superintendent True, with the wholehearted backing of the Board of Education, assembled a qualified faculty for the college. In 1926, the writer of the college catalog stated, "The College extends to the graduates in the territory adjacent to McCook the opportunity to complete the first two years of a college education at half the cost or less of going elsewhere. The graduate finds it much easier to adjust himself to college work in the college where enrollment is smaller, than in the crowded condition of our large colleges and universities. The classes are smaller. The individual receives more assistance from the instructors, and there is a closer personal touch between the pupils than is possible in larger institutions." (p.8)

The promoters extolled the YMCA setting with a statement that the white tile swimming pool, reading room, lounge, fully equipped gymnasium and women's department of the new YMCA surrounded the students of the college with a most ideal Christian setting and influence. There were four full-time and five part-time faculty. Each faculty member held a Master's degree and was endorsed by the University of Nebraska as meeting every requirement for college instructors.

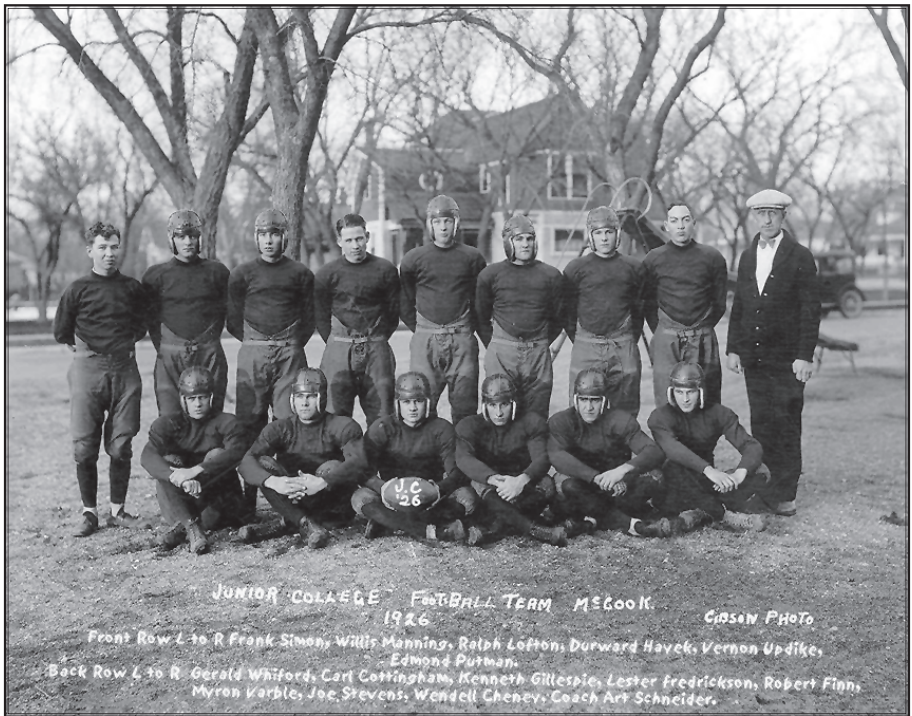
Full tuition was \$50 per semester. If a student elected to take fewer than 15 semester hours, tuition was charged at the rate of \$3.50 per semester hour. The curriculum included science and arts, and pre-law for transfer, and a two-year normal school curriculum leading to a Nebraska life teaching certificate. A preserved human brain was the first gift for the zoology department which was housed in the high school. Night classes were offered.

The 1926 attendance policy allowed only substantial reasons for absence from classes. A penalty of a three points deducted from a student's semester grade was given for an unexcused absence. Being tardy three times counted as one absence, and students were excused only on approval of the Dean and the instructor.

### *Activities*

Activities began immediately with a football team, a basketball team, a track team, an orchestra, and a glee club. Students chose the name "Indians" as their athletic team name. The football team practiced with the high school team, and games were played at the fairgrounds. Fourteen of the 19 boys enrolled were on the team. The first game was lost to the Kearney College reserves 2-0.

The McCook School Board decided to add a second year curriculum for those eligible to take those second year courses, signaling that McCook Junior College was for real and was going to be around for a long time.



### *Legislation*

The state-level legislative process began in 1927 through House Resolution 351 offered by Representative Carson Russell of McCook. This bill

provided for establishment of junior colleges in districts with a population of 5,000 or more. After a lengthy debate on March 14, an amendment was made to strike population requirements. The next day the bill was defeated because of the concern that this was a forerunner to a request for state funds.



1927

Though there were only 45 day and 54 night students in 1927, there was no lack of activities in which they could participate. According the 1927 catalog, "The splendid morale of the student body has been maintained by the various activities available, including class organizations, men's and women's clubs, glee club, debating team, women's athletic association, football, basketball and track."(p.9) Home economics and business administration were curriculum additions, along with classes in bacteriology, Latin, organic biochemistry, analytical geometry, and calculus. The catalogs reported that board and room could be procured in good homes at rates as low as \$1.00 a day.

### *Tuition Incentives*

The McCook *Daily Gazette* offered an opportunity for a free college education by getting new subscriptions for the paper with incentives of free tuition for one year with 75 subscriptions. The highest incentive of free tuition, free room and board, two \$40.00 suits or dress, two \$5.00 hats, two pair \$7.00 shoes, one YMCA membership and \$100.00 in cash was offered for a student gaining 500 new subscriptions.

### *Continuation*

The local School Board needed to decide, without legislation, if they wanted to continue the college. The McCook *Daily Gazette*, page one, reported of comments made at a mass meeting, March 9, 1927, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Victor Westermarck, Benkelman, President of the Twin Valley Organization, stated that "we are sitting on a bag of gold and don't know it." He reiterated that the "time may have been when small towns of this territory looked upon McCook with suspicion and jealousy, but that time had passed and people now realized that what was good for McCook was good for Southwest Nebraska, and as McCook grew, so the surrounding area would grow." By a unanimous consent, the Board of Education voted to carry on the Junior College. That year 300 attended the college football banquet in support of the program.

### *Tuition and Recruiting*

Since the college was operated by the public school, the board sought volunteer tuition of \$50.00 a semester. However, it was stated that should parents demand free tuition there was no way of refusing them. The local Rotary club proposed a loan fund to assist students.

Recruiters were sent to talk to area high school graduates, urging them to attend the college. They were paid ten per cent of the tuition money for each student

they registered. Forty dollar scholarships were offered to the top student in each school district represented in the college student body.

## Notes

Interesting notes of 1928 included:

- Eighty-one students were enrolled compared to 63 in 1927. Hazing rules for freshmen girls included calling the sophomore girls “Miss,” carrying books for sophomores, and no make-up or dating was allowed during the week.
- Soccer was a new sport for girls and a decision was made to print a school annual.
- The zoology class entertained the public on May 15, 1928, by displaying zoology specimens used during the year including an alligator, fire-eating salamander, intestinal parasite, star fish and native reptiles.
- The student survey revealed the strengths of the institution including statements concerning personal attention, ability, friendliness, and spirit of the faculty.
- Twenty five students graduated from the college in the spring, and five students were elected to teach in the McCook school system for 1929.

## Legislative Battle

The legislative battle continued, and in 1929 a bill was introduced and supported by the state superintendent of public instruction. Opponents of the legislation claimed that the local tax bases were insufficient to support the college. The bill was postponed indefinitely; this time by a narrow margin. Local comments included thoughts from Ed Hoyt, stating that he personally considered the defeat of the bill a direct slap in the face of southwestern Nebraska. Mr. Strunk added his editorial comment in the McCook *Daily Gazette* stating: “the defeat of this bill is the direct result of selfish interest on part of the state normals, the University of Nebraska and the church schools.” (p.1) Senator P.W Scott of McCook, chair of the *Nebraska Senate School Committee* responded, as reported in the McCook *Daily Gazette*, “Junior colleges are builders and not competitors of the church colleges and state schools.” (p.1)

## Legislation Passed

In 1931, the Nebraska legislature finally authorized junior colleges in Nebraska by a vote of 58-26 and Governor Charles W. Bryan signed the bill that made junior colleges a legal part of the educational organization of the state. (See Appendix A) It was reported by the *Tri-State Weekly Tribune* that the McCook booster bunch did the work and that the North Platte’s Chamber of Commerce



also did good work. The pen used by the Governor was sent back to McCook with Senator Scott to be kept there and used by the heads of the school in signing the certificates of graduation for future graduates. The pen is now on display in the college memorabilia room in a case built by Stan Garretson, retired division chair and mathematics instructor.

After the legislation passed, a special election was held. School district taxpayers agreed by a 60 percent majority to take on the financial burden of the college permanently, and voted to make the boundaries of the junior college district the same as those of the McCook school district. The proceedings also indicated that the Superintendent of McCook Schools would serve as the President of the college---a system which was in place for many years.

### *Speakers*

State Senator Kenneth S. Wherry, of the 16th District, and later U.S. Senator was the commencement speaker in 1930. U.S. Senator Norris addressed the college convocation in 1931 on the subject of modern state government and described a unicameral process of state government.

### *Policy and Activities*

By 1932, the class attendance policy was strengthened by a statement that when the total number of absences exceed ten percent of the meetings of the class for the semester, credit would be granted only upon action of the faculty. The Women's Athletic Association was started, along with a women's self governing association. The dramatics classes produced the plays, "The Servant in the House" and "Three Live Ghosts." The student body organized and created a student executive council, and the A Capella Choir was formed in 1933. Student tuition was dropped to \$36.00 a semester as a result of increasing student numbers and the new taxing authority of the college district. Room and board was reported to be \$14.00 a week.



Another important recruiting tool for the college, begun in 1928, was an annual spring goodwill bus tour of area high schools by the drama and music departments. At each stop, the college students would entertain the school with a short one act play and vocal numbers by the glee club, followed by a short recruiting pitch by the Dean.

Football was dropped in 1933 at the depth of the Depression, but reinstated for the 1934 season. Seven students were engaged in work with the Federal emergency relief administration doing office and assistant principal work at the schools.

### *Student Memories—John Batty, Dorothy Fitch Nicholson, Flora Dutcher, Henry Weeth*

**D**r. John Batty was an early student at McCook Junior College. He remembers the recruiting tours as lengthy and exhausting, but the boys compensated for the demanding schedule by vying for the privilege to sit in the back seat of the bus with girls from the glee club on the long ride home.

Soon after leaving Elsie, Nebraska, the last stop on the 1934 tour, one of the two MJC buses broke down. There wasn't room on the remaining bus for all of the students, so after much discussion, it was decided to put all the girls on one bus, deliver them to McCook, then come back for the boys. However, the boys elected to walk home rather than stay with the disabled bus. Three hours later they were in Hayes Center, where they waited for the MJC bus to pick them up. It was near midnight when they finally got back to McCook.

Dorothy Nicholson, a lifelong McCook resident recalled her college experience. In a November 3, 2006, interview she stated that the library across the street from the Y also seemed like a class because everyone went together to study. There were four students in her chemistry class, and she was the only female. In her interview, she could not remember making a career selection, or why chemistry was required in her course of study, but only that her parents wanted her to get an education. However, she credited John Batty for “getting me through the class.” For her, attending the college was a “huge stepping stone” in her life.

One of the first non-traditional students was Flora Dutcher, who later became an instructor and librarian for the college. In an August 2006 interview she stated that she had been out of school for nine years, teaching in rural schools, when she decided to become a full time student in the 30’s. I was “scared stiff and didn’t know what it would be like.” However, her independent spirit prevailed and she said that she even attended the student dances, knowing she would be the oldest, and probably one of the tallest, but she was determined to be an involved college student. The college experience, according to Flora, was “A big blessing.” She taught in the McCook Public Schools, eventually serving as principal. Ralph G. Brooks then asked her to teach at the college.

Another legend of the era was Dr. Henry Weeth. Henry was offered a job teaching music in the McCook Junior High School in 1930 for \$60.00 a month. Although he came to McCook for less monthly pay, he was intrigued by the offer of free tuition to the college as a benefit with his contract and the possibility of furthering his education.

While attending the college he married June Hill, the first Dean of Women at MJC, and shared his musical talent with the community. His time at the college gave him a jump start to complete his degree; and eventually, he became a successful dentist in Seattle, Washington, while at the same time mastering many musical instruments and playing in Seattle dance bands. He credited his professional and musical success to the incentives and encouragement he received as a McCook Junior College student.

He and his wife provided over one million dollars in funds through their wills that have been used for McCook College scholarships, the development of the Weeth Mini-theater, and donations of musical charts and scores. Dr. Weeth’s band concerts during the years when he brought his band to McCook are a positive memory, as was his enthusiasm for life.

## *Special Convocation*

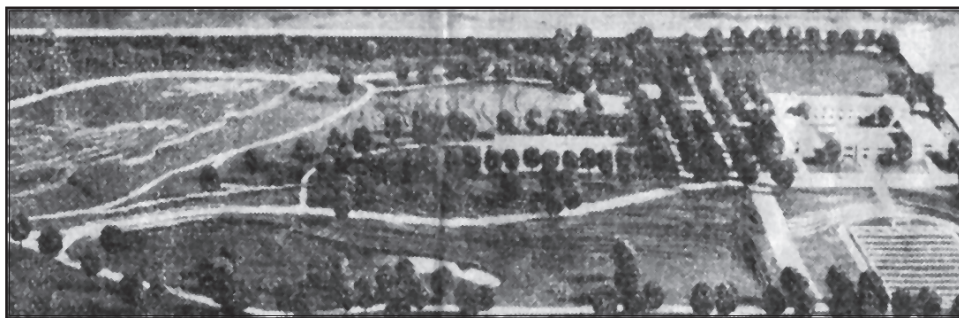
A special convocation was held February 24, 1933 to honor Senator P.W. Scott who died February 8, 1933. He was called the veteran patron of McCook Junior College and foster father.

Dean Johnson announced in the McCook *Tri-Weekly Tribune* that the class of 1933 would be the first class to graduate under the Nebraska Junior College law, and that their diplomas would be the first to be signed with the pen which Governor Charles W. Bryan used when his signature legalized junior colleges in Nebraska. A new enrollment record of 106 students was set in September of 1934.

## *Building Gifts*

Another special moment in McCook Junior College history came in the winter of 1934 when local drug store owner, Mrs. Maude McMillen, presented her contribution to the Board of Education for a building as a memorial to her son, Cecil McMillen.

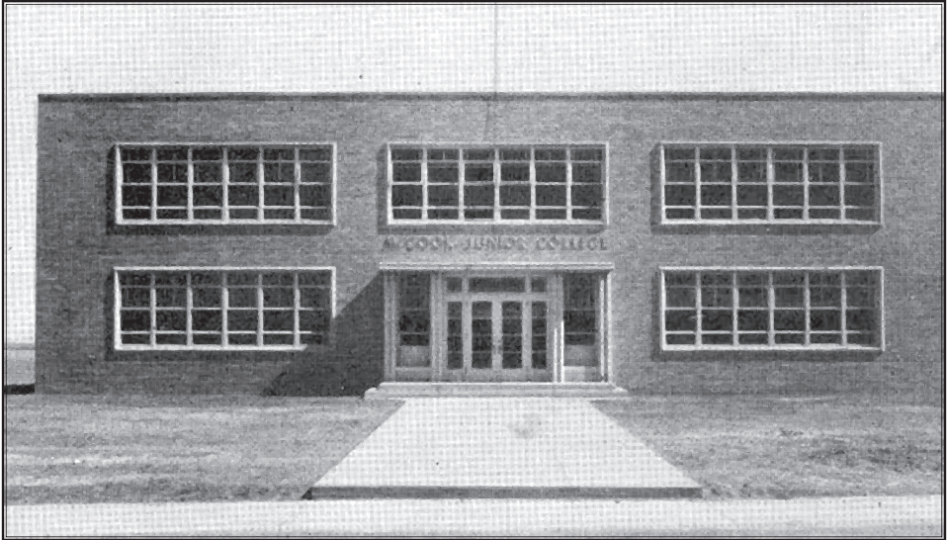
John E. Kelley stepped forward keeping his promise of a land donation for the placement of the future campus “way out on the prairie” at the north end of East Third Street. Architect Sheldon Brumbaugh designed the building, and Conrad Fahrenbruch constructed an exact scale model which was placed in the drugstore window.



*McCook Junior College scale model*

The model also featured a new college bowl for athletic events that was eventually built on donated Kelley land. Work was completed on the athletic field in the fall of 1935, making it one of the most up-to-date facilities in the state. The bowl was designed along the concept of a sunken garden and landscaped with buffalo grass. Concrete seating was placed on the south with seating for 2,500. Its original name was Kelley Bowl, but it was changed in 1937 to honor Frank M. Wieland, a biology and zoology teacher at the college who had died that fall.

McMillen Hall opened September 3, 1936, ten years to the day after the first class started in the YMCA. The ground floor featured a library, general offices, lounge, two classrooms and two small offices. The second floor housed physics, zoology, and chemistry laboratories, a lecture room, two class rooms, a kitchenette, and an office. The classrooms on the second floor could be opened up to form a large auditorium with a stage. This building continues to be the cornerstone of the campus today.



*McMillen Hall*

## *Personnel*

J.C. Mitchell was superintendent from 1931 through 1935, and J.E. Shedd became the superintendent for the 1935-36 year.

- Two deans' positions identified were the Dean of Chemistry and Mathematics and Dean of Women.
- Faculty included the following: J.R. Johnson, Eunice Hilton, J.S. Cameron, Irvetta Smith, J.S. True, Helen Shurtleff, Gladys Tipton, Mildred B. Wohlford, Al Schneider, Gertrude G. Sherk, Anne Marshall, George Bennett, Dora G. Nyrop, Maurice Gardner, R.A. Bunney, June Hill, Dorothy N. Lindsay, Edward Panzer, Louise Snapp, E.W. Patten, and Hewitt B. Vinnedge.



## 1936-1945: FROM DEPRESSION TO WAR

With a new McMillen Building college activities flourished. The tenth anniversary alumni banquet had one hundred guests and J.A. True, former college leader and then superintendent of the Council Bluff, Iowa, public schools was the main speaker. The area spring music and drama tours continued. It was reported that 200 attended the 1937 spring prom and danced to an eleven piece orchestra. The *Thunderbird* newspaper made its first appearance.

### *Program Additions*

After conducting a community survey of business leaders concerning their requirement for technical skills, the Department of Commerce was added to the college curriculum in 1938. A one year teacher's certificate program enabling students to teach in rural school became a reality. In November of 1938 a "Charm School" was added to the extra curricular activities through the Girl's Organization, along with a "Big Sisters" program. Athletic teams continued to expand schedules with Denver Regis College, Fort Hayes, Kansas, Kearney Teachers B teams and Hastings College.

### *Expansion Continued*

Campus expansion continued with the completion of the new auditorium-gymnasium in 1939.



A federal grant of \$24,545 was received and with local funding the project cost was \$61,000. The grant award listed the project as a high school project because

the Board of Education received the grant. The project included class rooms and laboratories and a playing floor 50' by 98', making it one of the largest in western Nebraska. Collapsible bleachers, locker rooms for 12, along with accessible coal bins were a feature of the building. A challenge for basketball players was the fan shaped backboards.

### *New Chimes*

The electric carillon chimes were donated by Mrs. McMillen and included a loud speaker broadcasting system providing the college an audible identity for the whole city. It was reported in the McCook Daily Gazette that Mrs. McMillen asked that the donation simply be accredited to "an old citizen who thinks like the Poet Tupper." The reported cost was \$7,000.

The chimes were rebuilt and rededicated in 2006.

### *Purpose Statements*

Purpose statements, developed for the college catalog, stated that McCook Junior College was established with a four-fold purpose in mind:

1. To provide a two year program of studies for high school graduates who desire to enter the professions or to continue in college for academic degrees.
2. To provide a two year program of studies for high school graduates who desire to continue in college after a two year course, but who want to be trained for a vocation.
3. To provide educational and cultural leadership training for the community and vicinity.
4. To provide educational and cultural facilities for adults of the community who have a desire to improve themselves during spare time. (The fourth statement was added in 1941.)

### *Major Student Activities*

Major student activities included the Christmas Prom with tickets at \$1.00 per couple, the production of *Merchant of Venice*, and in 1940, participation of the Junior College students with the high school for a combined musical. The football team played Trinidad College, and after a two day road trip to get there, won the game 27-13. The annual Ivy Day exercise and presentation of awards were held on the lawn and included the reading of an original poem by a student and the traditional planting of the Ivy, including passing of the trowel

from the sophomore class president to the freshman class president. Invitational track meets continued to be held for area high school track teams.

### *Meeting War Demands*

By 1941 a Junior College ground school course was initiated and secretarial training courses were added. Civilian Pilot Training was made available at the college by the Department of Civil Aeronautics of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The war presented new problems and demands, and the college began operating with a speed-up program started in June 1943 that permitted high school graduates to enter college in June and to graduate with two full years of college in August of the following year.

New program areas included commerce, dramatic art, rural education, commercial art, and Distributive Education night classes were held in 1942 with costs paid for by the Federal Vocational Education Funds. Young men were urged to remain in college until called into service, and with college, would possibly qualify for rapid promotion in the armed forces. Supervised sleeping quarters at the college buildings for \$1.50 a week were offered to meet the critical housing shortage in the community.

College students participated in an all school pageant, "Let Freedom Ring" to an overflow crowd of 5,000 in the college bowl. The new student lounge in McMillen Hall was decorated with cream colored walls and furnished in maroon and blue. A radio was installed. The war years affected participation in men's athletics, and the football team rosters only listed 19 players. The college freshmen initiation required new male enrolled students to wear girls' clothes and facial makeup.

Tuition increased back to \$50.00 a semester, and a new college loan fund and Junior College Scholarship Program was initiated. Loans could be attained for a small rate of interest. The college players produced "The Man Who Came to Dinner."

### *Student Memories - Mary Ellen Marshall Goodenberger and Harold Kay*

Mary Ellen Marshall Goodenberger (class of 1943) shared some memories of her college experiences in several writings she shared in January, 2007. She had taught a year prior to entering college. Her brother had toured in a bus with Gladys Tipton's college choir so she looked forward to the experience. However, during the war years, gas and tire rationing, plus a tight budget limited the tour group to the college quartet and drama and music teachers who squeezed into a station wagon to travel about the area. The quartet of Patty



Burton, Mary Ellen, Dick Gruver, and Dale Waddell sang and then performed a Shakespeare's farce, "Prymaus and Thisbe:"

"In those pre-TV years, the live entertainment that was available out here in the boonies was much appreciated. As for us entertainers, this experience helped to prepare us for the wider world awaiting us," she wrote. She also went on to relate information about her chemistry class. "I was the only girl in this group of farm kids. We develop a modus operandi that worked for us. The guys would set up the experiment but allowed me to help. The gal would write the basic report and then my buddies produced their personal versions. They all were accepted. As my classmates were gentlemen, they took turns paying my way to the matinees (25 cents) at the Fox Theater. A natural-born mother hen, who had already taught a year, I was like an older sister." She stated that all of them went on to impressive careers.

In her final story she related, "During my sojourn at McCook Junior College, the small student body was like a family. We were slowly losing our young men to the armed forces. They felt it was their duty to serve their country. They were not drafted; they volunteered. As a result, the rest of us were subdued and serious kids, but we still knew how to have fun-on the cheap."

She went on to describe their winter prom activities. "One council member was Don Rider from Imperial, an accomplished artist." She described how he reproduced "Bambi" figures and through the use of cardboard boxes, white sheets, cotton batting, frosted tumbleweeds and a shower of mica flakes they created a winter landscape in the center of the gym, complete with Santa in an open car chassis—without tires.

Harold Kay described his experience as a U.S. Navy veteran in 1946, in a story related in February 7, 2007. As a McCook native he said, "I was well aware of the fact the MJC was a very good college. My girlfriend was a student at the college which was also a factor in my returning to McCook."

He stated that most of the male students were returning veterans and enrollment was at an all time high. "While some of the members of the faculty were new, they all went out of their way to help all students to adjust to college life. They put me on the right path."

Instructors he identified who helped put him on the right path were Charles McCarl, Dean Melvin, Louise Acker, and Mrs. Green. He discussed their social life stating, "We had an excellent social life. I made many lifetime friends. The college had very good football and basketball teams. Mr. Confer was also a veteran and was a fine gentleman and a good coach. Needless to say, he related to the older students."

He went on to state that he would never forget his days at MJC and during that time he learned to study and realize that higher education was a necessity in life. In his concluding paragraph he stated, “ MJC opened the path for me at the University of Nebraska, and UNL gave me credit for all the hours I earned at McCook.” Mr. Kay has practiced law for 55 years, and he did marry his girl friend who helped put him through college.

### *Dormitory Plans Presented*

Plans were being made to have a dormitory for girls in 1941-42. However, the plans were not enacted. New program areas included commerce, dramatic art, rural education, commercial art, and commercial arts. Distributive Education night classes were held in 1942 with costs paid for by the Federal Vocational Education Funds.

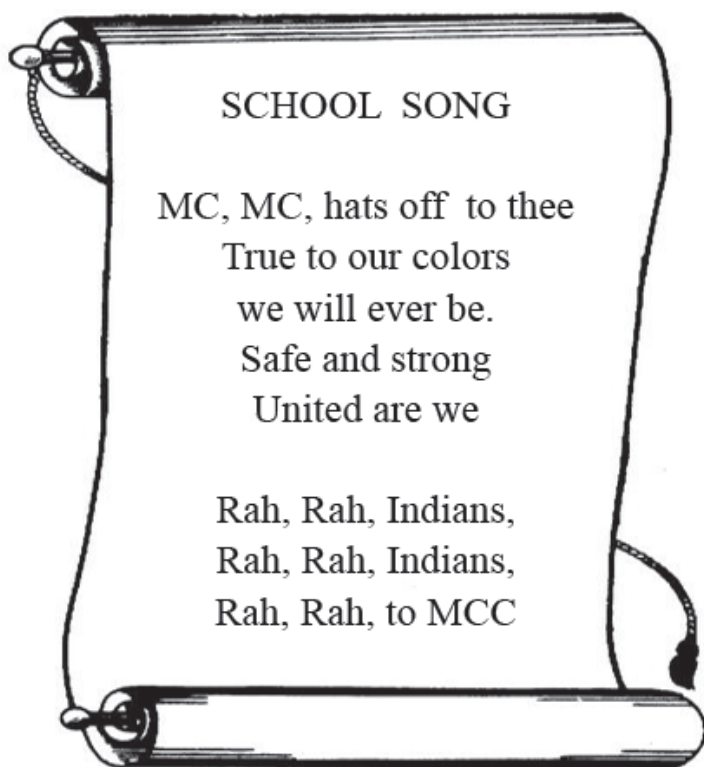
### *Other points of interest*

- Phi Theta Kappa and Phi Rho Pi were identified as student organizations.
- The women’s organization now named Aowakiya.
- The first *Chieftain* yearbook was printed in 1947 and dedicated to the MJC students who lost their lives in WWII.
- Dedicated the college football bowl as the Francis N. Weiland stadium on November 11, 1948.
- A weekly radio program to promote the college began in 1948.

### *Personnel*

H.M. Robb became the first director of athletics and F.L. Holmes became superintendent in 1941. Leonard Larson was superintendent in 1944, and Carle W. Wiltse was named president. P.M. Johnston was named acting dean and registrar, and Polly Ann Bignell was named dean of women. Adahbelle Snodgrass became the librarian.

Faculty included J.E. Shedd, J.R. Johnson, Louise Snapp, George Bennett, R.L. Clem, Robert Craig, Hallene Haxthausen, P.M. Johnson, Dorothy Lindsay, E.W. Patten, H.M. Robb, Helen Shurtleff, Eleanor Tipton, Asa Wolfe, Jessie Cleveland, Paul Gilbert, Ruth Lindsay, Everett Lowery, Charles Parriott, Carl J. Peterson, Irmel Louise Williams, Agnes Jensen, Alice Middlebrook, Lorene Calloway, Fred T. Hanson, Helen Korph, Virginia Marshall, R.H. McCann, Wendell Dodd, Polly Bignell, William Bogar, Martha Watson Green, Anna Bearg, Ermine Tatka, Ruth Herrmann, Jennie Potter, Josephine Behrends, Emma Heesch, Wanda Crawmer, Margreta Schlueter, Clarence Perisho, and Frank Wieland.



## 1946-1956: VISIBLE YEARS

The 1951 catalog celebrated the first 25 years of McCook Junior College. The residents of McCook continued to support the college with local tax revenues and through generous gifts for building. The GI bill created an influx of male students to the campus. There continued to be a major interest in securing funds to build a dormitory. The north stadium of the football field and classrooms under the stadium were added in 1949. It was reported that over three thousand students had enrolled in the college since 1926 and 584 had graduated. The Associate of Arts degree was formally instituted in 1948.

### *Merle Confer*

Merle Confer began coaching football, basketball, and track at McCook Junior College in 1946. As a returning veteran himself, he found that he bonded with the returning veterans, and in his first season they finished six and two. Their first 1946 road trip was to Norfolk, Nebraska, and Merle drove his own team in the bus, staying at the Hotel Madison.

McCook won the game, and after the team had eaten and discussed the game, he announced it was bed time and he retired to bed. He was awakened later by red and green flashing on the ceiling of his room. He looked out the window to view two police cars herding his very happy, loudly singing football team up the middle of the street. He then realized that his team was made up of “men” who no longer were the high school boys whom he had previously coached. He took appropriate steps to ensure that there were no other incidents.

Walt Sehnert interviewed Lloyd Benjamin August 15, 2006 and Lloyd recalled a time when Fairbury Junior College had a good team, and their coach had made a statement to the Omaha *World Herald* that this was the year they would beat McCook. Confer responded to the coach with a letter stating that McCook would be using just three plays, which he identified. Using just one of those plays, an end sweep, McCook scored repeatedly, winning the game. Mr. Benjamin cited Confer as a “Builder of Men—strict and precise.”

McCook Junior College dominated the Nebraska Junior College Conference and Confer’s record was 85 wins, 25 losses, and five ties. In 1954, one of Confer’s players, Richard Coba was selected on the first annual Junior College All-American Football Index Team.

Confer was also successful with his basketball teams, winning the Nebraska Junior College Conference in 1952, 1953, 1954, and in 1955 they won their third straight titles in both football, basketball, and track. In his final years of coaching he retired as basketball coach and started the very successful wrestling program.

## *The Dream Team*

The golden era of basketball for the college from 1949-1970 when the college won eleven conference titles, and the high point was the “Dream Team” of 1954-55. This team posted a 10-6 record, winning championships in the 5-JC Conference, as well as winning the northern division crown in the Empire Conference.

This team also earned a coveted trip to the National Junior College Athletic Association basketball championship in Hutchinson, Kansas. Each of the five starters grew up less than a two hour’s drive from McCook. Leroy Sprague of Edison was the center, along with forwards, Jim Muehe of Goodland, Kansas, and Gene Malleck of Red Willow. Gene still has records of his own in 2007 with his free throw percentage of 97.7% at the McCook YMCA based upon 45,000 attempts from January 1 through March 31 of 2006. Young players often challenge the “old man” and are humbled when they realize he made 400 in a row.

The guard positions were McCook High graduates, Bill O’Brien and Lamoine (Hoagy) Carmichael. Hoagy eventually coached women’s basketball at the college and served as Dean of Students. The other members of that team included Larry Carpenter, Dick Daniels, Paul Sieck, Max Winter, Jim Solomon, Gene Rodenbeck, Ken Kircher, Dale Crocker, Henry Krug, Jack Lytle, Warren Chandler, and Larry O’Donnell.

## *Brooks Dormitory*

Student housing became a reality in 1955 because of a \$240,000 federal loan. The loan was the final step in a 16 year long fund drive to raise funds for a dormitory. The 60 bed building was constructed in the 1200 block of East First and was named for Ralph Brooks, who had first presented the idea to the board when superintendent. It was dedicated in November 1960. Statewide attention was focused on this coeducational dormitory, and everyone was informed that there were locked doors between the men’s and women’s sections.



### *Campus Changes*

Campus changes included a new lounge in McMillen Hall for students, new furniture, and wall-to-wall carpeting in the late 50's. It was not unusual for students in search of pocket change to check under the cushions of the lounge couches at the end of the day. A ladies' restroom was installed in the north stadium of Weiland Field.

### *Teas and Smokers*

Providing experiences for learning etiquette continued to be important and several teas were held during the year. The annual Christmas teas for the home economics department were held in the home of instructor Mary Elliott. They continued into the '80's and were held as a special invitation event for student guests and faculty. Senior Women (first year Junior College students were referred to as "juniors" and second year students as "seniors"). Another social gathering was the college president's reception held at the beginning of the school year for all new students.

Male students continued to carry out traditional "smoker" events. According to the 1956 *Chieftain*, "Approximately 50 bucks smoked it up in the biology room, played pinochle, black jack, poker, and pitch at the December smoker." The smokers eventually included gym activities for the non-smokers in later years. The fall reception tradition did change in 1957 and the All School Picnic started that year, followed by an "hour" dance.

## *Leaders and Activities*

Some of the student leaders during this decade included Peggy Kelly, Rose Metz, Vilma Daffer, Kay Cashen, Ron Painter, Ruth Ann Lennemann, Ken Foster, Bob Halsey, Don Harpst, Alice Hiatt, Thomas Hinnerichs, Lamoine Carmichael, Ernestine Fiddler, Dick Makings, Bob Morris, Gary Benda, Margaret Tell, Norma Lebsack, and Carol Morthole.

In 1953, the Preview Players was a new club on campus. They produced a full length play, *Angel Street*. Instead of selecting a homecoming king, the “man of the year” was selected. Keith Chapl was selected for this honor and Peggy Scott was named queen. Through the leadership of Kay Cashen, pep club vice president, a pep band was formed.

## *Other Highlights*

- Ralph Brooks became Superintendent of Schools and President of McCook Junior College in 1947, and Keith Melvin was named Dean of the college.
- New courses and programs included business law, journalism, business administration, instrumental music, German, Spanish and French, agriculture, home economics, geography, and debate.
- Flying school for veterans was established. Any male or female who was in active service for ninety days or more was eligible to receive flight training under the G.I. Bill. Civilians could pay \$375.00 for 55 hours of flying time.
- An agriculture program targeting veterans was also started.
- Home economics students used the North Ward (school) cafeteria kitchen for a laboratory.
- The 1955 *Chieftain* was dedicated to Kent Palmer, a Stratton, Nebraska, senior who lost his life in an automobile accident.
- Eric Ray and Don Baruth joined the cheerleading squad.
- Floyd Hershberger continued the annual spring tours for the music department.
- Annual college games were held in the spring.

## *Personnel*

Faculty through these years included Leonard Larson, Martha Watson Green, Margie Smith, Anna Bearg, Adahbelle Snodgrass, P.M. Johnston, Charles McCarl, Frank Weiland, Josephine Behrends, Clarence Perisho, Emma Heesch,

Louise Childs Spence, Eldred Shirk, Hazel Furman, Merle Confer, Margie Smith, Mary Ungles, Helen Storms, Donald Dorre, Lydia Butler, Lillie Doll, Robert Thompson, Walter Murrish, Sara Jane Cunningham, William Kelly, Charles Jonas, Noel Tyson, Marylouise Kennedy, Edgar Neal, Ruth Coover, Carvel Jolt, Eugene Smith, Robert Rouch, A.L. Kuper, Emma Imm, Lloyd McCullough, Robert Henigan, Donald Pavelka, Robert Seeley, E.P. Baruth, Mary Elliott, Frieda Arnold, Lester Mathias, Jack Merritt, Jeanne Mathis, Illene Rosenberg, Ronald Smith, Hugh Yeats, Richard Erno, Jennie May Pepper, Floyd Hershberger, Louis Gachic, Glenn Rogers, Robert Pullen, John Erickson, Rosemary Schultz, and H.W. Williams.



## 1956-1965: GAINING STATUS

McCook Junior College continued to gain status as a transfer institution and for preparation of students for four-year degrees. The reputation of the athletic teams, the journalism products and debate teams placed McCook on the map. History was made when College President Ralph G. Brooks was elected Governor of Nebraska in the fall of 1958. Fred Bremer became the new president and Dean Wayne Loomis continued the day-to-day operations. In 1964 N. Dallas Evans was named President.

### *Activities*

In 1956 an All Veteran Organization was established for any honorable discharged former member of the armed forces. Thirty two students became members and established fundraising for scholarships for children of veterans.

College dances were influenced by the “Twirp Season” theme of the times, and roles were reversed so that females asked the males for a date. The “Bunny Hop” was the favorite dance for mixers. Elmer Trail was voted on the All-American Junior College Team of 1957 and was also named homecoming king. LeAnn Lindbeck was queen.

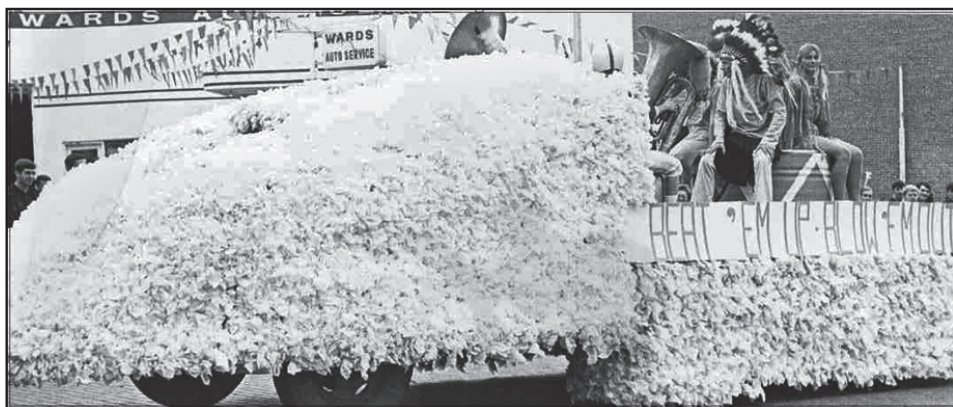
Other campus leaders who headed up organizations and took leadership positions during the late 50’s were Larry Frazier, Elda Broomfield, J.T.Harris, Melvin Hockemier, Gene Russell, J.B. Fournier, Eleanor Lawton, Karen Scott, Ted Perry, Betty Murphy, Douglas Brown, Gary Randel, Lloyd Benjamin, Steve Frazier, Betty Batterton, Sharon McBride, Richard Ruby, Linda Peterson, Roger Masters, Don Hauxwell, Jerda Thompson, Martha Brashers, Patricia Sramek, Marilyn Meyers, Jim McIlmoyle, Freda Sis, Marilyn Trail, Shirley Vap, Jim Koetter, Leon Janovy, Ralph Franzen, Bill Broomfield, Dick Kraft, David Skoumel, and Sharon Parker. Larry Reiners was a national meet discus champion in 1959.

### *Homecoming Traditions*

Homecoming preparations involved all students. A general convocation was held in the gym, and every student was assigned to a committee for decorating the college, the park, and the islands on Norris Avenue. Helen Storm’s garage was always used for one of the sites for building displays or floats. Homecoming skits were planned, and the event ended after the game with the coronation of the king and queen at the dance.

The skits were not always appreciated by the faculty. There was voiced concern over one skit that was based upon the game show, the \$64,000 question. Noted students and teachers participated and were stumped by very technical questions. The final question was asked of the football captain, and of course

he knew the answer to the question, “Who will win the game?” More than once Gwen McKenzie voiced her disapproval of this attention to athletics.



### *Gwen McKenzie*

Gwen McKenzie found her way to McCook Junior College because of a visit to her friend, Ralph Brooks. She had been offered a job at the Prudential Insurance Company at twice the salary she made teaching mathematics at Norfolk Junior College. As a former navy veteran she also had been in charge of G.I. affairs at the college. While visiting with Mr. Brooks, he offered her a job in the McCook school system, and he was so convincing that she remained in McCook for 32 years.

After teaching three years at the high school, she was asked to take over the math department at the college. Former students remember Gwen as an excellent mathematics teacher who demanded a no-nonsense order in her class and had high expectations. After teaching for 15 years, the college board asked her to take over the duties of President of the College for just one year.

That year the college separated from the public school system, built von Riesen Library, eliminated football from the athletic program, introduced Adult Basic Education and started an art program.

At the end of the year she set off for Europe with an art group; and when she returned she spearheaded a group which raised money for a new fine arts building. She later served two terms on the Mid-Plains Vocational Education Board. She was also a charter member of the McCook College Foundation Board. Her will left an important bequest to the College Foundation.

## *Ivy Day*

Ivy Day had been a long-standing graduation day tradition. In the beginning poems and essays were written in competition, with the best being selected for reading at the event. The senior class president planted the ivy and handed the trowel over to the incoming president. There was singing and the Ivy Day Queen was selected from the graduating senior women and crowned at the event.

A decision was made in 1959 to dispense with the ceremony and to begin a senior breakfast event instead; this was later discontinued for a reception for the graduates held in the student union, then eventually the library.

## *Dorm Rules Change*

Dorm rules were approved in 1963 that required all single women students who did not live with their parents or legal guardians while attending McCook Junior College to live in the dormitory. If the dormitory was not filled, single men who did not live with parents or guardians would be assigned to the dorm. Initial dorm rates were \$279.00 per student per semester.

Two tuition rate changes occurred within three years. Rates were increased to \$70.00 per semester in 1958 and to \$80.00 per semester in 1960. An active alumni organization assisted students in raising funds to build the student union which was dedicated in the spring of 1960.

## *Highlights*

- *Chieftain* was named “national winning yearbook” for 1958.
- Don Hauxwell became the first student to receive all 9’s.
- Music groups toured the area, and the first college/community orchestra was directed by Dr. Louis Trinskinsky from the University of Nebraska.

In the 1960-1965 era Janet Browning and Mary Lee Mohr were co-editors of the *Chieftain*. Senator Don Thompson was the 1960 convocation speaker. Jo Burton and Gerald Ellers were crowned Indian Princess and Brave and the dance was titled the Tribal Dance. Royce Hamala and Bill Loeh were named members of the Junior College All-America football team. Other student leaders included Darryl Moore, Agnes Snodderly, Jon Messer, Honey Lou McDonald, Jim Burdick, and Lester O’Donnell. Honor roll 425 was established to honor the number of students and former students who had fought in wars.

## *Building Improvements*

A new library was created in the auditorium/gymnasium by converting a storage room. It was available to students in the fall of 1964. Revenue bonds for construction of a student union were approved during a board meeting held November 2, 1964. The board also approved a bid by prison industries to provide the furniture at the student union, which was built in 1963.

## *Personnel*

Wayne Loomis served as Dean of the college and Flora Dutcher was Dean of Women. Durward Hayek became Dean in 1962. E.P. Baruth was named Dean of Men in 1963. Gerald Sughroue was named Dean of the college in 1965.

Faculty through these years were Wayne Loomis, Dean, Ralph G. Brooks, Anna Bearg, Jennie May Pepper, Floyd Hershberger, Helen Storms, Merle Confer, A.W. Kuper, Emma Imm, E.P. Baruth, Mary Elliott, Hubert Hutt, Shirley Rehn, Robert Pullen, John Erickson, Rosemary Schultz, Clarence Wright, Flora Dutcher, Shirley Ann Harrison, Norma Jean Gerdes, Reba Doris Gallatin, C. Ward Rounds, Doria Growcock, Ione Nelson, A.W. Autio, Marjorie Eisenhart, Eleanor Steffensmeyer, Gwendolyn McKenzie, Emma Heesch, Roger Gilmore, Albert Carr, Robert Henton, Donald McKillip, Nye Joynson, Thomas Ledbetter, Harlan Wyrick, Paul Rosewell, Mary Smith, Kenneth Gansebom, Edward Mitchell, James Erdmann, Herman Hinkle, Alberto Martinez, Rex Grossart, Lyle Moskal, Juanita Sigerson, Harold Weinhold, Nancy Jo Westbrook, and Maxine Jarvis Johnson.

## 1966-1976: CHANGE

This decade, the College faced many challenges. The junior college mission was expanded to the role and mission of a community college. Governance and tax support responsibility was enhanced through the expansion of the college district to an area. McCook school district residents no longer were expected to carry the total support. The Mid-Plains Area Board of Education began operations in 1973.

### *The Wigwam*

Students worked diligently to create another dream. The student union campus center was opened at a cost of \$35,000. Located on the southeast corner of the stadium, it linked the campus together. The Junior College Alumni Association presented a resolution to the College Board on April 5, 1965, requesting that the student body select a name for the student union. The name “The Wigwam” was selected and within five years, with the use of student activity fees and union earnings, one half of the cost of the union was paid.



*The Wigwam*

### *Brooks Hall*

At the April meeting the Board also requested a plan from the President on how to increase the earnings of Brooks Hall. In 1966 dorm rates were raised to \$675.00 a year and the dorm was designated as a “women” only dorm

requiring that all single women students reside in the dorm. However, by 1969, the motion was made to have a coeducational environment again.

The issue of needed dormitory space again emerged. The City Council was asked to donate land in Kelley Park for a men's dormitory site in January of 1967. Pete Graff presented a proposal to the Board on October 16, 1967 to use the Keystone Hotel for a dormitory. Eventually applications were made for federal funds for an eight bed dorm. The land issue was again on the City Council agenda on May 22, 1969, when Dr. John Batty told the Council that if money becomes available for a dormitory, a site in Kelley Park would be a must. He also stated that the Kelley family would be in favor of building a men's dormitory on park land if it were named after their father.

### *Needs Emerge*

**D**ue to the increased enrollment, the old McCook Senior High School was the site of many college classes. This building was known as the Annex, and students often complained about the time it took to get to class from the Annex building to campus. The building also lacked adequate science laboratory facilities. Even so, the Annex was used for history, political science, natural science, languages, and English. English instructor Jim Steward recalled that it was "a cold, depressing building with the character of a stone castle." The Sertoma Club requested approval to launch a community fund drive for a building project to be built north of McMillen Hall. This building did not become a reality.

### *Tipton*

**I**n June of 1968, the Board authorized the construction of a block and metal building to house the college's music and wrestling programs. The entire framework for the building went into place in one day at a cost of \$32,850.00. Approval was given to take bids for a home economics food laboratory in the building at the June 24, 1969, Board meeting with a proposal from Dr. John Batty to develop the foods laboratory at a cost of \$14,000. The building was named Tipton Building in honor of Gladys Tipton and opened in 1969. Later history shows that this building has survived many transitions through the years for day care, maintenance, theater, temporary administrative services, and enhanced music and theater.

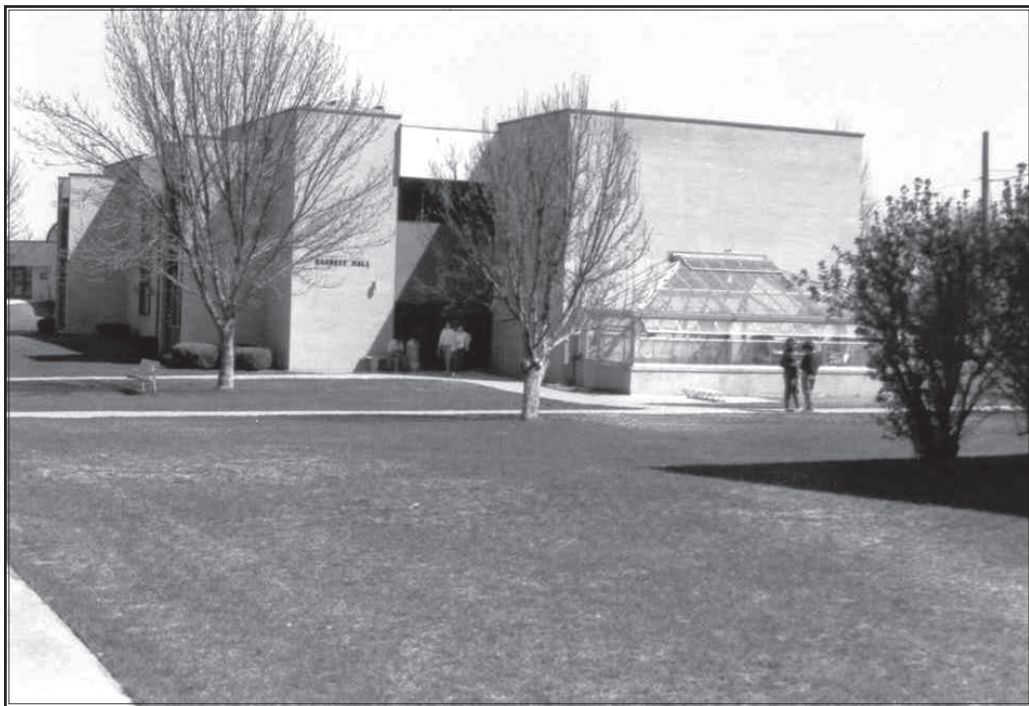




*Tipton Hall*

### *Library and Science Building*

In December of 1968, Ralph von Riesen pledged \$10,000 as a memorial to his late wife Elna Mary Keller von Riesen for the college building fund. Other donations of \$5,000 each, in the names of Maurice P. Wrightstone, Frank Barnett, and Albert Barnett, were added to the fund. Later that year, 24 McCookites met to plan expansion and improvement of the college. A goal of \$750,000 was set for construction of a library and science buildings. At the January 1, 1969, meeting the Board appointed 12 members and the Chamber of Commerce appointed 12 members to act as a steering committee for the bond issue for college construction. This group gained public support through a campaign of written testimonials and public statements. Leon Flaska and Mrs. Eugene Bush were named co-chairpersons of the Citizen's Committee. Dennis Utter was named to work with the Jaycees in attempting to line up a student demonstration - an orderly "riot" to express student favor of progress in contrast to the popular outbreaks that were disrupting education across the nation.



*Barnett Hall*

On February 12, 1969, the McCook Business and Professional Women contributed \$5,000 to the building fund. The contribution was given with the stipulation that a room in the proposed college building would be named in honor of former National BPW President Sally Cunningham, from McCook.

More than \$110,000.00 was raised and the bond issue passed by an overwhelming 72.2 percent.

A discussion concerning parking problems created with new buildings was held at the October Board meeting. President Charles Clauser suggested that a cut and replacement of curbs would cost \$6,800 and that the city portion of the cost should be included in the six year plan for street improvement. In a heated discussion, Board President Dr. John Batty countered that the city should stand all of the cost. "If they'd let us put the library where we wanted to, we'd have no parking problem." (McCook *Daily Gazette*, 10/27/70, pg.1.) Batty had made an earlier request that land north of the college be made available, but the request was denied by the City Council.

It took City Council action to vacate a street formally so that the proposed library and science building would have a clear title for federal grants. McCook became first priority for a \$274,044 matching grant. In February, plans were



presented for the library and classroom building. Local donations, a federal grant and a successful \$300,000 bond issue eventually funded the projects.

A ground breaking ceremony for the science and library buildings was held on April 8, 1971, with Dr. John Batty at the shovel. The library of 10,000 square feet was planned to contain two classrooms and total library facilities. The science building of 15,000 square feet was planned to contain two biology, one physics and one chemistry laboratories, along with a 125 seat lecture hall and six faculty offices. The von Riesen Library was occupied in April of 1972.



*Von Riesen Library*

Dr. Gene Budig, former MJC student and Illinois State University chief academic officer was the featured speaker at the science and library building dedication. He said, “this community has dramatically expressed an unselfish willingness to support public high education.” (*McCook Daily Gazette*, 5/6/72, p. 1.) Sarah Jane Cunningham was the mistress of ceremonies for the event.

### *Academic Changes*

An open door policy of admissions was adopted. College students became involved with the public school special education program and volunteered to assist with swimming. The night curriculum was expanded with no minimum number requirement. Accreditation was sought in North Central Association

and NCA cited that new buildings would need to be built and several areas would need to be addressed prior to seeking accreditation.

The attendance policy was revised in 1966 stating that a student was expected to attend classes. There was to be no regulation which permitted cuts, and a student was required to have approval from the Dean for sponsored activities absences or illness. Students were successful in getting the strict dress code abolished.

New programs proposed included aviation that was aligned with Metro at Denver and Sister Paschala Noonan, hospital administrator, urged the board to pursue a two-year nursing degree. The Board considered pursuing a Registered Nursing Program at the February 1970 Board meeting. However, after receiving a study in June, the proposal was dropped. A study by Herman Smith and Associates concluded that the lack of accreditation was a stumbling block for establishing the program.

The first computer science program in the state for junior colleges was established in December of 1970. A piano laboratory was established at the east end of the gymnasium in 1972. The college received \$3,255 in federal aid for new police officer training. An Early Start Program for high school seniors began in 1972.

Dr. Charles Barnes, troubleshooter with the federal government's Program With Developing Institutions advised the college that they needed to attract students who have not historically gone to college and suggested developing a dietetic training, secretarial science and clerical accounting programs. As a result of the study, the board then developed a secretarial science program. The other programs followed. The first preregistration for high school seniors was held in 1970. The second fine arts camp was scheduled in 1970, and the Kiwanis Club continued its annual career day. The music program was marketed, and at the August 12, 1968, board meeting, the Board authorized music scholarships in the amount of \$2,465.00 to give the program a boost.

### *Athletic Success and Issues*

The Board approved 44 football, 12 basketball, and four track scholarships in 1966. Six thousand fans in Weiland stadium watched the University of Nebraska Freshman defeat the College football team 43-6 on November 16, 1968. At that time, Nebraska was quarterbacked by Jerry Tagge, and Jeff Kinney was the half back. However, by 1969, a motion was approved stating that all out-of-state athletic scholarships would be limited to those athletes whose ACT composite score was 13 or above. Dr. Bruce Snyder, Board member offered a motion to drop "all major athletics at McCook College as they now exist" as reported in the *McCook Daily Gazette*, April 12, 1969 edition. Later that

year the Board gave a vote of confidence for football. However, Larry Kramer resigned as coach and the following year athletic director Rudy Gerstner resigned.

The first annual rodeo for the rodeo club was held in 1970, and that year golfers won the Nebraska Junior College golf title. The 1970 wrestling team won the Empire Conference championship, and was undefeated in dual meets, and was ranked third in the National Junior College Athletic Association poll. Ken Friche set a new college two-mile record.

### *E.P. Baruth*

Most students who had E.P. Baruth as a coach or instructor from 1950-1972 when he retired would say that E.P. was a legend. In the classroom E.P. taught business, economics, and typing, but his good nature and confidence building made him special. He was known for handing students a tootsie roll when they needed a boost or he recognized a special deed or an accomplishment. Once he gave a timed test in typing class at the beginning of the session. Someone finally discovered that E.P. had placed his tootsie rolls in the cartridges so that everything locked.

His track teams won the Nebraska Junior College Championship trophy an unprecedented 12 times and won four Empire Conference titles. His teams placed in the top ten nationally five times and the 1955 team placed second, the highest ever ranking for a McCook team. He assisted football coaches by keeping statistics, managing equipment, and other tasks that were assigned. Running the sidelines during a football game kept him in shape and it was not uncommon to see him sprint the sidelines from one end of the field to the other with a clipboard in hand.

Most radio listeners and area coaches remember his regular appearance on "Coaches Coffee Club" on Saturday mornings. He was always the last to speak and would sign off the show with the words: "Today is Saturday. Tomorrow is Sunday. On Sunday, go to church. Go to the church of your choice, but go. Now, my time is up. Thank you for yours."

### *Other Changes*

Over \$60,000 was left in the special construction fund after the completion of the buildings. As a result, the board decided to remodel McMillen Hall, and added a new secretarial and business occupations department. The science building was named Barnett Hall, and the Wrightstone Building for fine arts was also constructed, completing a full decade of change and growth.

The carillon chimes were ringing again in 1969 as the result of an effort by Debra Jones who questioned President Hap Potter about why the chimes were

not ringing. A repair effort followed, and chimes were repaired—one of the two sets west of the Mississippi River. The other chimes are at the Will Rogers Memorial at Pike’s Peak.

### *Merger or Separate Board?*

Funding and the future of the college emerged at the November 11, 1966, meeting, and as a result of the discussion, a motion was approved that stated that if state aid was not passed by the 1967 Legislature, the Board of Education would affiliate the McCook Junior College with the University of Nebraska.

By January of 1967, however, the Board took faster action approving a motion that the administration of McCook Junior College and the McCook City Schools be separated as of July 1, 1967. Board minutes show that in February of 1968 the Board sent a letter to the University of Nebraska Chancellor Clifford Hardin seeking action to affiliate the college with the University. On October 19, 1968, Robert Raun, University Regent, was quoted in the *McCook Daily Gazette*, stating, “a resolution was passed last spring authorizing the Regent’s attorney to sit down with the McCook Board and draft legislation to create a merger for the institution.” (p. 1)

With this discussion occurring, the 1969 Legislature did approve a state aid increase so no formal action followed the resolution for merger. At a later board meeting on September 25, 1969, Dr. Bruce Snyder announced, “I feel this to be an appropriate time to constitute a separate college board.” (*McCook Daily Gazette*, 9/26/69 p.1). Action did ensue and in the spring of 1971, with an overwhelming three to one public vote, the McCook Junior College was separated from McCook Public Schools and became a political subdivision gaining its own board and taxing authority.

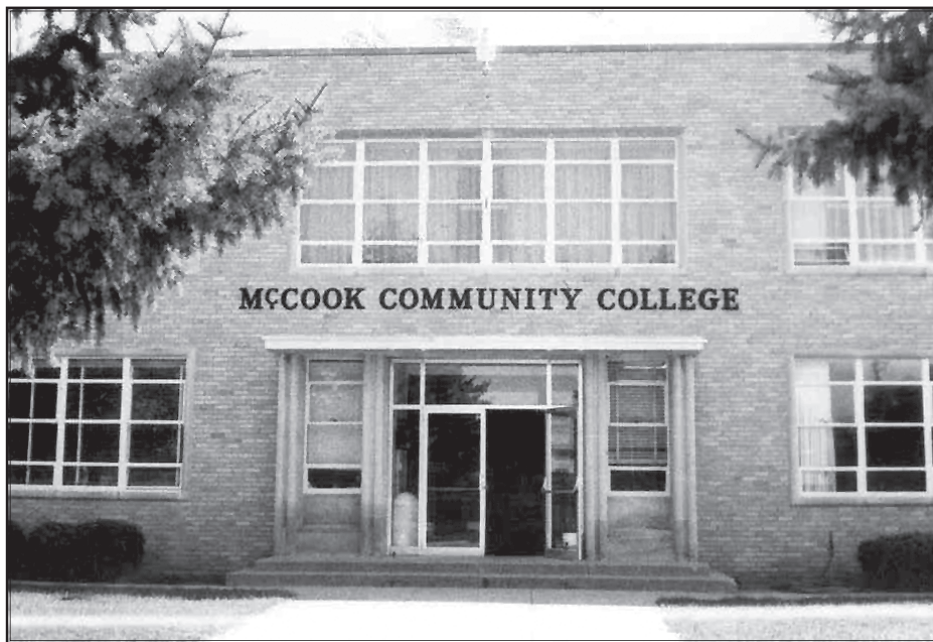
### *More Legislation*

In an effort to address the financial crunch for postsecondary education in Nebraska, LB 1280 permitted colleges in Nebraska to bill the school districts from which students came to a college in an amount equal to per credit hour cost. The statements sent by McCook College for \$113,760.00 produced collections of only \$680.00.

Facing the impending financial crunch, a meeting was held on December 15, 1970, with 100 businessmen and community leaders to continue to work at affiliating with the University of Nebraska and to revamp LB 979 that would create junior college vocational technical school districts. Dr. John Batty pointed out the strong need for a board of higher education to coordinate all aspects of postsecondary education in Nebraska.

## *Of Interest*

- Tuition rates increased to \$90.00 per semester.
- The last *Chieftain* was published.
- Three associate degrees were now conferred: Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Arts, and Associate of General Studies.
- Student Senate members became members of instructional and administrative committees.
- The golf program began in 1967 with Robert Christie as coach. They won the Nebraska Community College Championships in 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975 and 1982.
- Track was discontinued.
- A scoreboard memorial was erected honoring Michael Confer at Weiland Field in 1968.
- *Music Man* was performed in March of 1970.
- Wrestling and golf were added as an intercollegiate sports.
- Individualized learning and adult basic education center was established in the library.
- Red Willow County voted by an 84 percent margin to remove themselves from the Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical School District.
- Criminal Justice Program was added to the curriculum.
- Tuition was raised to \$100.00 a semester in 1973.
- College operational committee structure was initiated in 1974 to include the administrative, business affairs, curriculum, student affairs and community services councils.
- Faculty numbers, full and part time, and course offerings increased.
- Community services offerings for non-credit were encouraged and supported.
- The name was changed from McCook Junior College to McCook Community College.



- The 1969 basketball team played 36 games with a 22-14 record.
- MJC wrestlers beat the Air Force Academy.

### *Other Highlights*

- A book drive by McCook College students produced 6,671 books and 11,879 magazines as a part of an effort to improve library holdings required for accreditation.
- The music department performed *River City* in March of 1970 and a Fine Arts Camp for Youth, held in June of 1970, had participants from 17 communities.
- Sophomores who had a high distinction honor roll honor included Ellen Garretson, Terri Swanson, Leslie Nokes, Gerald Ingersall, and Walter Valentine. Freshmen were Susan Butherus and John W. Brown.
- The “Leatherneck Square Memorial Scholarship” was donated by Mike McGarry, former MJC grad grid star wounded in Vietnam.
- Dale Travis was elected sophomore class president.
- Bob Christie, golf coach, announced that the winners at the NJCC golf meet included Dennis Burns, Paul Gaygnan, Max Devitt, John Nothnagel and Rex Backer.





- Barb Lehmkuhl was named drum majorette of the 40 piece band. Twirlers were Laura James, Kathy Stewart, Karen Weimers, Patty Morosic, and Denise Pinkal.
- Former football star Kevin Gilmore was killed in the airplane crash that took the lives of 36 other Marshall University football players.
- Outstanding Instructors of America” awards were presented to Robert Paschall, Robert Christie, Robert Hokom, and Harlan Wyrick in 1972.
- Jerry Bowker, 1951 graduate and University of Nebraska Registrar, addressed the 1972 graduation class.
- Youth Conservation Camp was held at college.
- Science Fair winners were Gary Clatterbuck and Stephen Harr.

### *Personnel*

Administrative leadership changed several times during the decade. Presidents included: N. Dallas Evans, 1966-67, Earlyon J. Lamberty, 1967-68, A.W. Kuper 1968-71, Charles Clauser, 1971-72, Dr. M.L. Potter, 1972-73, Dr. John Harms completed the decade. Gwendolyn McKenzie served as chief Administrative Dean in 1971 and also served acting president in 1971.

Other administrators during the decade included Robert Paschall, Director of Financial Aid and Dean of Community services; Stanley Garretson, Registrar and Dean of Admissions; Lamoine Carmichael, Registrar, Dean of

Administrative Services and Director of Financial Aid; Gary Stover, Dean of Administrative Services; and Gil Taylor, Dean of Instructional Services.

FACULTY, part-time and full-time, through the decade: G.J. Sughroue, Juanita Sigerson, Marjorie Eisenhart, Harold Weinhold, Rudolph Gerstner, Mary Sue Harris, Kenneth Gansebom, Edward Mitchell, Rex Grossart, Al Kuper, Nye Johnson, E.P. Baruth, Mary Elliott, Hubert Hutt, Robert Pullen, Harlan Wyrick, Norma Jean Gerdes, Flora Dutcher, Shirley Adkinson, Emma Heesch, Elwin Langhoff, Maxine Jarvis Johnson, Gwendolyn McKenzie, Lyle Moskal, Louis Dale Thompson, Larry Theye, Richard Markoff, George Berver, Audrey Crosby, Robert Ferril, Louis Harris, Larry Kramer, Doris Minney, Stephen Schneider, Gary Winter, Stanley Garretson, Loretta Hesterwerth, Jean Johnson, Ray Judkins, Joseph McNulty, Robert Paschall, Lucille Senner, Gary Shafer, Jim Steward, Dallas Talkington, Susan Carson, Carolyn Christie, Joyce Hershberger, Walter Jones, Ray Judkins, Pat Keitges, Jody Modrell, Paul Robinson, Fred Corey, Ted Fellers, Jean Hauxwell, Jody Hokom, Robert Hokom, Milton Johnson, Gene Morris, John Perry, Gary Shafer, Roger Wilson, Linda Witty, Cloyd Clark, Dale Crutcher, John Craig, William Green, Ralph Herrick, Jo Keeler, Rose Klemm, Rich Mousel, Jacqueline Southard, Gerald Springer, Gary Winn, Gaylene Flood, Nancy Carr, Peggy Collins, Jerda Garey, Maurice Rayer, Camila Chavez, Donald Dernovich, Jean Hauxwell, Jim Mansfield, Allen Reynolds, Gil Taylor, Pamela Andrews, Sylvia Bare, Bill Dicke, Byron Fox, Linda Frickey, Stan Goodwin, Glenn Haney, Judi Haney, Hector Lanza, Richard Shigley, and Bruce Watne.

*Resources Consulted*

*MJC Handbooks 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, and 1934.*

*Ratcliff, James L., "First" Public Junior Colleges in An Age of Reform, Journal of Higher Education, No. 1, 1987.*

*McCook Daily Gazette*

*Tri State Weekly Tribune*

*Chieftain*

*Thunderbird*

*McCook Junior College Board Minutes.*

*McCook Community College Board Minutes.*



---

## Chapter 3

### North Platte Junior College from its Origin to the Time of the Merger

1965-1973

The idea of a college in North Platte was not new, but the process which converted the long-held idea into a concrete reality began in December 1960. A brief, early history written by Larry Fauss, journalism instructor at North Platte Senior High School and part time journalism instructor-to-be at North Platte College, was published in the North Platte *Telegraph-Bulletin* on August 27, 1965, two days before the open house showing off the new college and four days before the first classes began. (North Platte *Telegraph Bulletin*, August 27, 1965 p. 5 ff) Larry Fauss' history for this period of time follows in its entirety.

“It is a trite old story with a North Platte twist but the inauguration of North Platte College is a dream come true for a multitude of people who have worked for many years to place an institution of higher learning in Lincoln County.

“Ideas for college education in North Platte have been many and voiced by several but North Platte College draws on a heritage of defeat and regrouping to stand as a symbol of the torch of learning in North Platte.

“Although many of the North Platte and Lincoln county residents who had visions of college education for North Platte and area youth have long since passed from the scene, their efforts are marked on the browned brick edifice at the corner of Fifth and Jeffers Streets.

“Inscribed above the double aluminum and glass doors in a bright blue are the words—North Platte College.

## *Branch University*

“Several years ago, in the time after the fall of the Axis Powers of World War II, and truce in Korea, talk of higher education in North Platte spread among the populace. A proposal was put forth that the University of Nebraska, located over 200 miles to the east, establish and operate a branch university in North Platte.

“The idea sounded good and several persons were eligible to attend such an institution of the G.I. Bill, a boon to soldiers of the Second World War and Korean conflict. The G.I. Bill flooded colleges and universities with ex-service men eager for a chance at a college education paid for by the federal government.

“A survey was made in North Platte and several surrounding counties to determine the need for a branch of the University in North Platte. It was found that nearly 4,500 persons could be served by such an institution. Then the bottom dropped out of the planning when the University determined that it had no power to create a branch in North Platte or elsewhere, for that matter.

## *December Snowball*

“But the establishment of North Platte College, a two-year institution, didn’t begin to snowball until December of 1960.

“At that time Harold Kay, North Platte attorney, was serving his first year on the School Board and held the post of vice-president of the board. During a regular meeting of the board during December, Kay made a motion.

“Records in the Superintendent of Schools office read: “Motion that the school attorney be asked to prepare an opinion on the steps to follow in order to organize a Junior College district, . . .”

”Kay’s motion was seconded and passed before the meeting adjourned and the college concept began to materialize.

“Three methods were available for the creation of a junior college. One would have been to form a junior college district coinciding with the boundaries of School District One, the North Platte unit. Another would have been a combination of two or more districts of the area. The third would have been a county wide junior college district.

“Meanwhile, the news media of North Platte were actively engaged in the establishment of a junior college. On March 2, 1961, the *Telegraph-*

---

*Bulletin* began an eight part series written by Gordon Young, then area editor of the newspaper, explaining the role of the junior college in North Platte.

“Young researched the subject for almost a week, traveling to McCook College, reading, and interviewing before he began to write. The area editor received the impetus of the *Telegraph-Bulletin* as incentive for the series. Kay attributes much of the actuality of the college to the *Telegraph-Bulletin*. He said hardly anyone pushed it more than the newspaper and its personnel to keep the issue of college education alive in North Platte.

“The first of Young’s articles told of the opportunities found in junior colleges and the establishment of McCook College 39 years ago.

“In the second installment Young interviewed students at McCook College, one of whom declared that the junior college ‘didn’t lend itself to playboy activities.’

### *Pocket Book Story*

“The third of the series stroked the economy of the situation. Young told of a Fairbury Junior College economics class under Professor Paul C. Larsen that wanted to see how much the college meant to the town in Southeast Nebraska. The class found that for an 11-year period, an estimated \$1 million was spent by students, their families and faculty members. In one year, Young’s report continued, students spent an estimated \$100,800.

“Young discussed the 3 R’s of North Platte in the fourth article—Retailing, Ranching, and Railroading—and how each would benefit from a North Platte Junior College.

“In the fifth article Young reported the effect of the Glenny Report to the state legislature which recommended the establishment of junior colleges in Nebraska and the defeat of state aid to junior colleges by the 1961 session of the Unicameral.

“Story six emphasized how the junior college could complement the state’s senior colleges by easing enrollment pressures, allowing four-year institutions to concentrate on upper-division courses, and acting as a distributing agency screening students and sending on the cream of the crop.

“The seventh of the series said the projected enrollment potential in North Platte and 14 surrounding central and western counties would be approximately 6,000 students.

### *Can We Afford It?*

**T**he last of the series asked, “Can We Afford It?” On March 6, 1961, the issue got off the ground with a School Board proposal. Nine days later, the board named a committee to contact other School Boards in Lincoln County communities that maintained a high school to discuss the junior college.

“To form a county-wide district, the boards of four of the six high school districts, Brady, Maxwell, Hershey, Sutherland, Wallace, and North Platte would have to give approval to put the question on the ballot.

“Of course, the North Platte board had already approved the issue and only three other approvals were needed. On March 26, the Brady Board of Education refused to submit the junior college question to the voters.

“On April 10, Wallace followed with a rejection after Sutherland had nixed the proposal four days earlier.

### *Two In Favor*

“**H**ershey and Maxwell had voted for the vote of the county but one too many schools failed to deliver an affirmative decision.

“If the school was to become a reality, the school district of North Platte would have to do it alone. Three days after the Wallace decision, the School Board decided to follow the loner route.

“Petitions had to be first circulated for a minimum of 500 signatures. The North Platte Chapter of the Parents and Teachers Association undertook the duty to obtain as many signatures as possible. After the petitions had been approved by the county superintendent of schools, they had to be submitted to the state education commissioner, Freeman Decker, for his approval before the school district could have a special election to create the junior college district.

### *Petitions Presented*

“**T**hen on October 9, 1961, Kay, as president of the board of education, and Lincoln County Superintendent Alice Simpson presented petitions bearing the names of 2,400 voters of North Platte to Decker in Lincoln.

“Approval followed and the issue went to the voters on November 14.

“The results were overwhelmingly in favor of the district creation. By a two-to-one margin, 2,733 in favor and 1,326 no votes, the district was formed.

“Propelled by the success of the vote, the School Board prepared the next major hurdle in the establishment of a junior college—one that proved to be a two-year stumbling block—passage of a bond issue to construct facilities for the college.

“The board had obtained an option on land in the southwest portion of the city consisting of 53 acres which Kay described as minimum figures to allow for expansion as the college grew and prospered.

“On March 1, 1962 The *Telegraph-Bulletin* carried a story describing the plans for construction. The college was proposed to be the first circular educational building in the state. The North Platte architects who developed the circular concept for the college building cited several reasons for the unconventional construction.

### *Chips Are Down*

“**I**n an editorial the following day, the *Telegraph-Bulletin* said: “The chips are down. For years we have talked about it but we have never before been this close to having a college here.

“The editorial concluded: ‘Let us take nothing for granted. If you are for this proposition be sure to go to the polls Tuesday and vote FOR. Your vote is vitally important in this crucial election.

“The editorial was accurate. Every vote was vital. Every vote was a bombshell.

“After absentee votes were tallied on the \$647,000 bond issue, the proposal missed passage by two-tenths of one per cent. Eleven more votes would have passed the bond issue and assured success and implementation of the junior college plan.

### *Another Attempt*

“**A**bout 65 persons appeared before the Board of Education when it met to canvass the ballots and the group pledged its full support for a second bond election. With the narrowness of the issue, the board decided to give it another try and set April 3 as election date.

“Board president Kay told the group, ‘It was a hard pill to swallow, when we lost by about 10 votes.’ Several persons in the group felt over-confidence that the issue would pass was the reason the vote failed to carry.

“But this time, the decision lacked the full support of the Board of Education as Orvil Kuhlmann abstained from the decision. On March 13, Kuhlmann issued a statement opposing the second election but not the college issue.

“Then, a few days before the second election, on March 28 the board felt itself compelled to issue a statement in regards to the McDonald Road site which it had an option to purchase. The statement sought to combat rumors and other talk detrimental to an upcoming election.

### *Laid To Rest*

“**W**hen absentee ballots had again been counted, the issue fell again, this time with less than 50 per cent approval. The Board of Education decided to let the matter rest.

“Before developments began to materialize another bond issue election, the school district employed a new assistant superintendent of schools who later figured prominently in junior college plans.

“William J. Ptacek was hired by the board of education to come to North Platte in the fall of 1963 from a post of superintendent of the Kimball Public Schools.

“Later, after the bond issue of 1964 had been passed, the board of trustees for the junior college hired Ptacek as the first dean of the college.

### *Quitclaim Deed*

“**W**ith construction and completion of a new post office and federal courthouse for North Platte in the summer of 1964, the movement for a junior college again gained impetus and on July 3 the federal government officially transferred title to the former post office at Fifth and Jeffers to the Junior College District. The action followed the granting of a quitclaim deed to the junior college district on June 17 on the post office property.

“On July 8, during a regular meeting of the board of education, Bruce Allen made a motion that the School Board submit a \$197,000 bond issue to the voters for remodeling the building. Two days later, the board set aside \$16,000 for administrative purposes.

“The bond issue was set for October 6 and this time, the reduced fare from the original issues won a 67.72 per cent majority to pass the required 55 per cent test.

### *Clinched Existence*

“The favorable vote clinched the college’s existence and plans for remodeling and operation of the college for the 1965 school year began.

“Originally, officials hoped for 100 students to register for the first term. By opening day, almost 200 students will be on hand, double the original estimate.” (North Platte *Telegraph Bulletin*, August 27, 1965, p. 6)

“North Platte College officially opened August 31, 1965, with Otto Oakes in the dual role of Superintendent of North Platte Public Schools and President of North Platte College. Dr. William Ptacek was Dean of Students. The all-new faculty were Boyd Gentry, chemistry; Joy White, Women’s PE; Michael Varney, social sciences and basketball coach; Eloise Schwab, business administration and secretarial; Donald Reed, biology; Virgil Nelson, mathematics; Dale Nelson, business administration; Lesley Loutzenheiser, library; Darrell Hildebrand, men’s PE, engineering drawing and track coach; Marilyn Harper, speech; Donald Leonard, English; Ivan Peterson, education. Part time instructors shared with the high school were Larry Peterson, art; Robert Rouch, music; Mary Salcetti, Spanish; and Larry Fauss, journalism. (North Platte *Telegraph Bulletin*, August 27, 1965, p. 5ff.)

The anticipated enrollment for the beginning of classes was expected to be approximately 200 students. The tuition for resident students was seven dollars per semester hour or \$80.00 per semester for full time students. North Platte began with 92 courses listed in the college catalog. Since the listing contained both freshman classes (100 level) and sophomore classes (200 level), not all of the classes would be offered the first year. The course numbering system and description were modeled on that in use at the University of Nebraska.

The second year of North Platte College began with a new Dean of Students, Dr. Eugene Hunt and a greatly increased enrollment. At the August NPC Board meeting President Otto Oakes reported that 322 full-time students had already enrolled. The commencement exercises for the first graduating class from North Platte College were held May 22, 1967. There were 45 Associate of Arts degrees awarded and six 2-year diplomas.

The 1967 year saw yet another new Dean of Students, Dr. William Hasemeyer. There was also a substantial increase in the number of enrolled students. The

semester began with 360 enrolled. The fall semester also saw the first night classes offered at NPJC (North Platte Junior College). At the November NPJC Board meeting, Dr. Hasemeyer reported that there were 75 students enrolled in the night credit program with 24 of them from outside the school district. Dr. Hasemeyer also announced that the adult education non-credit courses had 109 people enrolled.

At the September 1968 NPJC Board meeting the Board moved to obtain an option on a site of 100.7 acres for an NPJC campus. (NPJC Board Minutes, 9/2/68) At the November Board meeting the decision was made to purchase the site. (Board Minutes, 11/11/68)

On March 10, 1969, President Otto Oakes informed the Board of his intention to retire effective July 1, 1969. Dr. William Hasemeyer, Dean of Students, was chosen at that time as the successor. The first session of summer classes at NPJC began during the summer of 1969.

In the fall semester of 1972 NPJC began an off-campus site offering classes for college credit in Mullen. In the spring semester, after lengthy negotiations, Kearney State College, now the University of Nebraska at Kearney, began offering classes at North Platte Junior College.

NPJC had been the recipient of a generous bequest in the will of the late Janet McDonald, a bequest which was to aid in the establishment of a campus on land the College already owned. (NPJC Board Minutes June 9, 1972) In April 1973, a bid from the James E. Simon Company for site preparation work was accepted by the Board. (NPJC Board minutes 4/26/73) On June 15, 1973, the bid for the construction of the McDonald-Belton Building was awarded to James E. Simon. (NPJC Board Minutes 6/15/73)

An editorial in the May 10, 1973, North Platte *Telegraph* touched on the frustrations and disappointments of bringing NPJC to this point and the optimism of looking into the future. Two paragraphs in the editorial specifically reflect this.

“What satisfaction for the North Platte Board of Education, which until this month was also the governing board for the junior college. And what a challenge for the new organization, the regional Mid-Plains Technical College Board.

“It was good to see, in spite of some past differences of opinion as to location and procedure, that Darrell Peters of Mid Plains and Don Pederson of the North Platte board joined hands in the official groundbreaking.”



An issue that had been hanging over the area since before the area was formed was the location of NPJC. (See Appenidx B) NPJC had in 1968 agreed to purchase a site for the College. In 1972, NPJC was the recipient of a generous bequest in the will of the late Janet McDonald. In April 1973 a bid from James E. Simon Company for site preparation work was accepted and in June the bid for the construction of the McDonald-Belton Building was awarded. This issue was taken up at the August Board meeting. The issue, of course, was should there be two campuses which was the current plan or would the Area be better served by having both units on the site where the vocational-technical campus operation was already located? Would it be financially advantageous to be on one campus rather than two? Would the wording of the will making the bequest permit such a change and would the money still be available for the one campus site? This was discussed at length, but no decision was reached so the matter was tabled pending some resolution of the legal ramifications of the precise meaning and intent of the will.

Meanwhile the work of the McDonald-Belton building was continuing. (North Platte *Telegraph*, August 28, 1973) Further clarification of the financial issue was made by Board member Dallas Darland in a letter to the editor of the North Platte *Telegraph*. (August 28, 1973) A special meeting of the Board was called for the purpose of resolving the problem. After a great deal of heated discussion, for and against, the proposal to have separate campus sites passed by a 6 to 5 vote.

In the September 17, 1973, edition of the North Platte *Telegraph* marking the centennial of North Platte, the *Telegraph* had a brief history of higher education from the beginning efforts in 1961 to the beginning of the 1973-1974 school year.

### *Early Educational Programs*

As noted in preceding paragraphs, the academic side of North Platte Junior College was relatively easy to develop. Primarily, it was a matter of following the University of Nebraska catalog for comparable classes and copying course numbers and descriptions. However, NPJC's adult and continuing education developed in a different manner.

### *Adult and Continuing Education/Community Services*

In 1967, Robert Lopez was one of six new instructors at North Platte Junior College. As was generally true, there were often duties assigned in addition to the teaching responsibilities. Mr. Lopez's teaching responsibilities were psychology and education, but during the fall semester of 1967, he also began what eventually evolved into continuing education. In the beginning, however, these courses were just referred to as non-credit courses or sometimes

continuing education since they did not generate any class credit for the student. These classes were recreational—such as bridge or playing a guitar or photography—or they were self-improvement—such as stocks and bonds, or cooking, or painting, or language study.

The process of making the classes succeed was relatively simple. If an instructor had a class he was willing to teach, then it was only a matter of finding enough students to pay the cost of providing the class; or if there were enough students willing to take a class, then it was only a matter of finding an instructor to teach the class. The initial minimum requirement of the number of students necessary for a class was based on generating enough tuition income to pay the instructor.

There were six courses offered the fall semester of 1967. The enrollment was not especially large, but it was sufficient for the classes to be self-supporting. One of the classes offered was cake decorating which has remained a favorite ever since. The second semester had four classes being offered with two of them, bridge and stocks and bonds, being continuations of first semester classes.

After the 1967-1968 year Robert Lopez left North Platte College to take a non-teaching position in Colorado. James Ihrig joined the staff as a new academic dean. He also became the non-credit class schedule person. The second year of classes began an almost continuous upward spiral in the number of classes offered and the variety of classes. This also obviously resulted in an upward spiral of student participation.

### *Early ABE*

**A**BE (Adult Basic Education Classes) also began in 1968 with Mrs. Lucille Aditton developing the program. Even though serving a different clientele, the ABE program was listed under the non-credit/continuing education heading in the table of organization. The purpose of ABE classes was to provide people with less than a high school education an opportunity to study for and pass the GED exams and be awarded a high school equivalency diploma.

Tom Gorman joined the faculty in 1970 as an instructor in the business department. He also replaced Jim Ihrig as director of the flourishing non-credit classes which were in the process of becoming continuing education. In 1978 Sharron Hollen in an article in the North Platte *Telegraph* summarized the first eleven years of the program, eight of them with Tom Gorman as the director, and its success. In the first semester, the classes were offered there were five classes of the six offered that actually developed with 109 students in those five classes. In 1969 there were 10 classes with an enrollment of 189. During

the 1977-1978 year there were 180 non-credit classes offered and over 2600 enrolled in them.

The continuing education courses were so successful that in 1975 Tom Gorman left teaching in the business department and became the Dean of Continuing Education. The numbers for classes taught and for the number of students that attended them are not all available, but the numbers for the years 1972-1973 through 1997-1998 show an almost continuous increase in the number of students taking the classes.

### *Early Student Organizations and Activities*

Extra-curricular activities such as clubs, organizations and scheduled activities, and athletics developed incrementally and by fits and starts over the early years.

### *Scribes*

One such group which began the first year of the college was the Scribes. Begun in the academic year 1965-1966, Scribes was an organization for secretarial science majors pursuing a one-year or a two-year program. The group was formed when several secretarial science majors that first year wanted to form a special interest group which was career-oriented and social in nature. The secretarial majors forming the group selected the name Scribes in keeping with the college name, Knights. The president, secretary and treasurer were elected by the membership. The purposes of the group were to bring the interests of the students together to deal with vocational preparation, to develop competent leadership, to develop character and qualities that would enable them to participate effectively in business, to engage in individual and group projects of a business nature, and to encourage improvement of scholarship and college loyalty. It also gave students an opportunity to develop leadership capabilities by being an officer in or by setting up programs of interest for the group. Eloise Schwab, the instructor for secretarial sciences, was the sponsor of the Scribes until her retirement in 1997.



*Members this year were: (L-R): BACK ROW: L. Hermansen, D. Flowers, D. Reynolds, B. Krason, C. Tilford, K. Davis, J. Sweeney, B. Molly, and Miss Schwab. FRONT ROW: S. Williams, B. Jackson, D. Sayer, and L. Osborne.*

### *Phi Beta Lambda*

The Sigma Omega Chapter of Phi Beta Lambda at North Platte Junior College (later North Platte Community College then Mid Plains Community College and now North Platte Community College again) was organized in May of 1970 by Roy Deeds, accounting instructor. The organization remained active for two years until Mr. Deeds took a leave absence to complete his doctoral studies. Unfortunately, the group remained inactive until 1997 when Jean Condon and Kent Weilage were instrumental in getting the Sigma Omega Chapter reinstated during the 1996-1997 year.



*The beginning of the Phi Beta Lamda charter at North Platte College. It is a national organization for college business students.*

## *Drama Club*

The drama club also dates back to the beginning, but unfortunately it was an orphan. It had no name, and it had no home. While the college did have a separate building, there was space only for classrooms and administrative offices; but since the college was closely affiliated with the public schools, whenever the drama club needed a stage, they made arrangements to use whichever one of the stages in an elementary school would be temporarily available. Another effect of the limited stages which could be used was that it severely limited the kinds of offerings that could be presented. Aside from the fact that the stages were not designed to be used for these kinds of presentation, there was also the problem of logistics: getting the material--sets and costumes, seating, etc.-- to the stage at the last possible moment so there would be minimum disruption of the elementary school routine and then removing all that had been brought at the first possible moment, usually immediately after the final performance was over.

Marilyn Harper was the first speech teacher at the college as well as the play director. At the end of her third year at North Platte College, Miss Harper resigned and was replaced by Nadyne Hengen. Nadyne had to deal with the same problems of staging, but one partial solution she used was to alternate full stage productions with readers' theater productions which did not impose so many problems for presentation on the limited stages available.



There were two memorable events during Nadyne's tenure as director. On the morning of the day one play was to open, the leading lady learned that her father had been involved in a vehicle/train collision. Her father was driving the vehicle. This created a real problem for the director because it was far too late to try to get someone else prepared for the role, and postponing the play was also difficult if not impossible because of the limited time access to the stage. As it turned out the solution was relatively simple. With fewer than eight hours notice, the understudy/director took the role for the first performance very satisfactorily. The full cast was able to come back for the second performance. The other event occurred at the Adams Junior High School stage. The group presented *Reynard the Fox*, a children's play. The reason for using the larger stage here was obvious: more room on the stage for more actors and more activity. But also there was much more seating capacity. They had a matinee performance and invited most of the elementary pupils in the area to attend. The play was designed to provide an interactive experience from the audience. Evidently the children (most of the audience) were really caught up in the drama, and the fine line between reality and fantasy became blurred. At one point in the play the villain was captured and a rhetorical question was asked the audience: "What shall we do with him? Shall we kill him?" Many in the audience were ready to charge the stage and try to do just that. Audience members were restrained, but there had been the potential for a riot of the six to ten year olds.

By 1971 the student enrollment had increased to the point that another instructor was added to the faculty. Kurt Conrad was to split his time between the English and speech departments to ease the overload in the two disciplines and also to direct the plays. The time and space limitations that had plagued the drama club since the beginning had not changed significantly and were no better than they had been at the beginning. By 1974 Kurt Conrad was wishing to pursue other options in education and resigned at the end of the spring semester.

Colin Taylor joined the faculty for the fall semester. Since he had a better background and more interest in theater, he took over as the Director. One of the first changes Colin made was securing a name for the club. They were now the Court Jesters, a name that seemed compatible with the nickname for the college. The same limitations still existed as for the preceding years, but now there was HOPE. Despite the problems and delays in getting a new building, work at the McDonald-Belton Building (now the South Campus) was finally progressing. It appeared quite likely there would indeed be a building and in the middle of the building was the location of the new theater. But until the work was completed, the Court Jesters would remain vagabonds.

## *Additional Early Student Groups*

Many other student groups and organizations were a part of the early North Platte Junior College. Some were a part of the College from the beginning and have lasted. Others had a brief shelf-life and quickly passed from the scene.

### *Chorus*

The Chorus has been one of the most stable student groups over time. This is a picture of the chorus from the second year.



*CHOIR MEMBERS: (L-R): BACK: Les Sayles, Bob Welliver, Wayne Shattuck, Tom Krause, John Townshend, Larry Janeck, Sid Baker, Richard Campbell, Larry Zidmund; ROW 2: Pat Buechle, Nicki Wright, Connie Pulver, Lynda Dringman, Louise Wenz, Marietta Schmidt, Charlotte Froman, Rogene Hansen, Marilyn Karr, Dennis Milsap; FRONT: Marlene McKain, Patricia Bates, Janet Einspahr, Thelma Johnson, Ellen Roseblad, Deanna Dunkin, Mary Johnson, Karen Hunter, Mary McNeal. ACCOMPANIST: Bob Uebele.*

## Rodeo Club

Another enduring activity, from the beginning, was the Rodeo Club. The following picture is a collection of the awards by one of the Club members.



*A collection of belt buckles won by All-Around Cowgirl, Laura Newton.*



## *Cavaliers*

The Cavaliers were a women's drill team. In the following photo, the group is accompanied by a pre-school mascot.



*Cavaliers this year included: (L-R): BACK ROW: Vickie Mora, Ronda Burch, Karen Jones, Betty Brown, and Janice Price. FRONT ROW: Viki Land, Debra Hiatt, Christy Gosnell, Karen Bodenstab and Janet Stivers.*

*I.O.C.*

The Inter-Organization Council was a coordinating group for student activities.



## Circle K

Circle K was and is the college wing of the Kiwanis family. A picture of the early Circle K chapter at NJC follows:



*CIRCLE K MEMBERS: (L-R) BACK ROW: Kevin Peterson, Todd Bissell, Don Diener, Advisor Boyd Gentry, Kiwanis advisor; Reverand W. Spellman. FRONT ROW: Paul Cooper, Larry Parker, John Nelson, Jim Huff, Larry Ransdell, and Stan Poff.*

## Radio Club

The students had a Radio Club that was active for two years, 1970 and 1971. The students were allowed to broadcast over a commercial station in North Platte.

### Radio Club Had a Successful Year



Charles Swartz is writing the latest college news.



Some of the members are picking out a record for a little bit of music on Knight's Night.



KNOP lets the radio club use their station.

A few of the students got together this year and formed a radio club. Every Tuesday night at 6:30 they came on the air with the cooperation of KNOP. This club was enjoyed by every student that tuned in to KNOP on Tuesday nights.



A little bit of talk always helps the subject.



Tom Campbell is one of the members of the club.



Is this the radio club?

## *Phi Theta Kappa*

“The purpose of Phi Theta Kappa shall be to recognize and encourage scholarship among two-year students. To achieve this purpose, Phi Theta Kappa shall provide opportunity for the development of leadership and service, for an intellectual climate for exchange of ideas and ideals, for lively fellowship for scholars, and for stimulation of interest in continuing academic excellence.”

Phi Theta Kappa’s mission (then and now) is two-fold: 1) recognize and encourage the academic development of two-year college students and 2) provide opportunities for individual growth and development through participation in honors, leadership, service and fellowship programming. (PTK website)

Phi Theta Kappa was organized in 1918 for junior colleges for women. Its name is modeled after the senior college honorary society Phi Beta Kappa. In 1926 the Society was changed to permit expansion into coeducational institutions.

The charter date for the Alpha Beta Theta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at Mid-Plains Community College was April 17, 1975, with Margaret Kreuzberger and Virgil Nelson as co-sponsors. The Alpha Beta Theta Chapter at Mid-Plains Community College has been a part of college life continuously since this time.

## *Early Student Publications*

In the first year of North Platte College, two student publications were established. The newspaper, *THE KNIGHT’S PAGE*, was written by and for the students with minimal faculty involvement. The student interest in and involvement with the paper slowly but steadily diminished until finally at the end of the 1972-1973 year, it was cancelled. The yearbook, *THE ROUNDTABLE*, was also a student enterprise with only a faculty sponsor. The yearbook provided a look at college life showing students in formal poses and then in less posed situations. Faculty staff and administration were included. There was a gathering of photos about organizations, activities, clubs, in which students were generally involved. But with the yearbook, as with the college newspaper, there was a steady diminishing of interest in and involvement with the publication. After an eight-year run, the yearbook was cancelled at the end of the 1972-1973 year.

## *Early Men’s Sports at NPJC*

When North Platte College began, it was a given that there would be athletics as a part of the college experience, and that these would be football, basketball, and track. In the beginning, though, there would not be



football the first year at least in part because of the timing. There just wasn't enough time to get football players, to get uniforms, or to get access to the required facilities because these would have to be shared with the high school which presumably would still have first choice. The second year began still without football. Before the third year, the decision was finally made not to have football at all at North Platte College because of the cost, because of the continuing problem of shared facilities, and finally because of the realization that junior colleges generally were dropping football which would make the scheduling more and more difficult and expensive.

There would be basketball though. The first basketball coach was Mike Varney who was also and primarily a history instructor. Mike Varney had some of the same problems with facilities that existed for all sports, but there were more practice facilities in the North Platte Public School system for basketball than there would have been for football. The first year the team was made up of walk-on players and won only one game out of 16. The second year was an improvement with a record of 11 and 17, and the third year the team had a 10 and 13 record. Coach Varney's three year coaching record at the new institution was 22 and 46 with a winning percentage of .324.

In 1967 the idea of football was abandoned, but three other interscholastic sports were added—cross-country, golf, and tennis. Darrell Hildebrand then became the coach of cross-country as well as track. Warren Oldham, dean of students, became the golf coach. Even though tennis was listed as a sport at the college, it never developed as one. So the end result of the 1967 decision was to drop one sport that had never become active and add three others, only two of which were actually made available. Thus, there was a gain of one sport which Warren Oldham coached until he retired in 1978.

### *Early Recruiting for Sports*

Another decision made in 1967 was to allow the recruitment of players from over a wider area. Some athletes from out-of-state were recruited to participate in basketball and in track. One of the athletes to come to North Platte College was Shedrick Bell III from the Bronx in New York. He was probably the most popular player then and perhaps in the time since. He was both very good and very entertaining as a basketball player, but he was also named best actor in a supporting role with the drama club, and he was an attendant to the King at the Spring Ball. After graduating from North Platte College, he played for and graduated from the University of Missouri, Saint Louis. He is currently teaching on Long Island, New York.

## Basketball

Mike Varney resigned at the end of the 1967-1968 year and was replaced by Richard Kimbrough who taught history as well as coached basketball. After the 1970-1971 basketball season with a three-year coaching record of 26-49 and a winning percentage of .347 Richard Kimbrough gave up coaching but remained on the faculty as an instructor in history and philosophy.



LEFT TO RIGHT: BACK ROW: Ron McKain, Dennis Poll, Tom Ridenour, Dean Keally.  
FRONT ROW: Rick McLaughlin, Randy Pulls, Derrick Gray, and L. A. Gray.

The new coach for the 1971-1972 season was Doug Schakel. During his second year as coach, Schakel took the team on a two game road trip to Florida which was sponsored by the Cage Club. The team had a two for two success rate on this trip. After a three-year coaching span Coach Schakel had a 67-32 record and a winning percentage of .667. After the 1973-1974 season, Coach Schakel resigned to return to high school coaching. In 1974 Steve Aggers who had played for the Knights in the second and third years of the college, came back



as head coach. In his four years as coach, Aggers compiled a 76-48 record with a .613 winning percentage.

## Track

The first and only track coach (with the exception of the final season) was Darrell Hildebrand. The track team suffered from the same limitations that basketball suffered from and that football would have suffered from if it had ever been started—having to share all facilities with the public schools.

Darrell Hildebrand had a very successful run as coach of the North Platte College track team during its brief nine year existence. Beginning in the 1967-1968 track season, his teams won six consecutive conference championships. In 1969 his team went to the national junior college track meet. Bill Pile was the only member of this squad to place at the meet, but his throw in the javelin event would have earned him the same position at the Big Eight conference meet that year. The team returned to the national meet again in 1970.



*TRACK MEMBERS: (L-R): BACK ROW: Coach D. Hildebrand, Jim Dobbs, Casper, Wyo.; Tom Pankonin, North Platte; Larry Simpson, Westminster, Colo.; Dennis Poll, Sheridan, Wyo.; Russ Morrell, North Platte; Dennis Flynn, Silt, Colo.; John Loftus, Castle Rock, Colo.; Jerry Steadman, Knoxville, Pa. FRONT ROW: Rudolph Story, Lacombe, Fla.; Greg Hudon, Lombard, Ill.; Tom Camargo, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Bruce Borden, Littleton, Colo.; Kevin Schreiner, Castle Rock, Colo.; Dennis Miller, Ogallala, Nebr.*

In 1971 the team won its fourth consecutive conference title and went on to place fourth at the national meet. Bruce Borden won the discus event, Karl Webb won the 220 and placed third in the 100, and Ralph Fisher won the 120 high hurdles.



*North Platte Jr. College track team took four boys to the national track meet and came home with fourth place. Shown above with their trophy are: (L-R) BACK ROW: Larry Sandoval, Bruce Borden, Ralph Fisher. CENTER: Karl Webb and Coach Hildebrand.*

In 1972 at an indoor meet at the University of Colorado, Ralph Fisher tied a decades old field house record in the high hurdles. The team returned to the national meet where they again took fourth place. Ralph Fisher took first in the high hurdles, tying the national junior college record for the event. He also had fourth place in the intermediate hurdles. Karl Webb had third in the 220 and fourth in the 100. Tim Taylor had a sixth place finish, and the 440 relay team took second.



*Karl Webb and National Trophy*

*The track team won its final JUCO championship in 1973.*

Coach Hildebrand took a leave of absence for the second semester of the 1973-1974 year in order to complete his doctorate. In his absence Kevin Schreiner, a former member of the track team, took over as coach and continued the success of the track team. But for some reason, five members of the track team chose not to participate at the conference track meet and so were not eligible for the regional meet. Thus, they could not qualify for the national meet.

But this was not the low point of the track season. During the spring the Board of Governors had decided to drop both track and cross country, citing finances as the primary factor in their decision since those two sports were not revenue-generating activities. This was no doubt true, but another significant factor was also involved. In March the Mid Plains Technical Community College Area received from the state (a result of the merger process mandated by the state) the 1974-1975 budget. The amount established for the Mid-Plains Area for all extracurricular activities, including athletics, would be less than one-third that of the 1973-1974 budget. Some of this money was later restored to the budget, but the decisions for the budget year had, of necessity, already been made. Another element was probably involved in this decision although it doesn't seem to appear in the deliberations. TITLE IX had just been enacted and was becoming a significant force in all athletics.

## *Women's Athletics at NPJC*

### *Women's Volleyball and the Beginnings of Basketball*

Women's athletics began at Mid Plains Community College in 1974 with volleyball. The first volleyball coach was Barb Reifler who was doing her student teaching in North Platte that semester and agreed to be the coach of the fledgling team.

Girl's athletics in the high schools was also relatively new, especially in the large high schools, so the pool of talent for the new sport was quite limited. However, unlike the beginning years of basketball at the college, this was a common problem for all of the competing colleges in Nebraska. The record for the first year of women's athletics at MPCC was 12-4, a winning percentage of .750.

---

## Chapter 4

# Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College from Its Legislative Beginning through Merger into Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area

1966-1973

### *Previous Post-secondary Vocational Technical Schools*

In the State of Nebraska there was originally only one post-secondary vocational school which was located at Milford and state supported. In 1964 a Nebraska legislative interim study indicated that the state was overdue in providing sufficient post-secondary vocational technical education and recommended adding six to ten schools. The State added just one more school with North Platte being a priority location. However, in the bid by communities for the school, North Platte's twenty-six acre site lost out to Sidney's Sioux Ordinance Depot buildings even though these buildings needed considerable repair and adaptation.

In 1965 when the second state vocational school at Sidney was approved by the State Legislature, they also approved legislation which would provide for the establishment of area supported, local vocational schools funded by local property tax and some State aid.

Nebraska Vocational Technical School number one was started almost immediately in the central area of Kearney/Grand Island/Hastings utilizing the World War II Naval Ammunition Depot buildings at Hastings. North Platte supporters of vocational-technical education followed the Central Area plan in setting up the Mid-Plains Area of ten counties with Nebraska Vocational-Technical School number two. The name Nebraska Vocational Technical School #2 was the original State Legislative terminology. However, the college almost immediately went by the name Mid-Plains Vocational Technical School, and within two years the name was changed to Mid-Plains Vocational Technical

College. The administrative position titles similarly changed: Superintendent became Director and finally College President; Director of Instruction or Students, etc., became College Deans.

### *Establishment of Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College*

**T**he 1966 vote by the area to establish the school was successful overall in spite of strong opposition from Red Willow County which had the State's oldest junior college at McCook.

In March of 1967 Kenneth Aten was hired by the Governing Board of Nebraska Vocational-Technical School Number 2 as Superintendent to begin in June of 1967. James E. Doyle was hired by December of the same year as Director of Students and Instruction. (Just as Ken Aten had come to North Platte from Norfolk, Virginia, to find that lawsuits and legislation had complicated the possibility of a college, Jim Doyle's entrance into the picture was not without incident. Jim was preparing to start work for the College by doing some preparations in his soon-to-be office. No one else was around when an officer of the Court appeared and served him with notice of another impending lawsuit. Since he was not yet in the employ of Area, it would have been easy to assume this position was going to be too insecure for a man with a young family. But, stay he did, until twenty-five years later when he retired because of health after helping establish and maintain the growth of Mid-Plains Community College.

With the employment of Jim Doyle, the administrative staff was now complete until instructors were hired to start the 1968-69 school term. Aten and Doyle began to set up a college—first by determining occupational needs and then proceeding to serve those needs by locating instructional personnel, developing curriculum, obtaining equipment and providing temporary facilities. During the first year, Aten, Doyle and a secretary, Sherry Lewendoski, were the only employees. They were first housed in the Arney Building on east Second Street and then in the old North Platte Library building that was being remodeled to prepare for the start of classes. Sometimes there was heat, but there was always noise and dust until the remodeling could be completed. That first year was a jumble of trying to open a college with little help or money. In the beginning a catalog, promotional materials, promotion of the College by speaking at area schools and organizations, constant contact with the State Legislature to prevent the passage of legislation detrimental to the college, constant trips to Lincoln to work with the State Department of Vocational Education, the preparation of temporary facilities, and purchasing of equipment and materials to start programs all consumed enormous amounts of time. Twenty and twenty-four hour days were the norm and not the exception.

The only answer was support, and wives and children didn't charge much. Since Aten and Doyle were often away from the "college" during the day, there



often was a need to receive and unload equipment and materials. Many times their wives had to help with that job since they were the only available help. All went reasonably well until the day the equipment for machine shop arrived, and the two wives with some help had to figure out how to put the lathes and milling machines in place.

Limited budget and time repeatedly called for ingenuity. Even though years later the College had its own print shop with presses, cameras, collator and staff, such was not the case in 1967-68. One of the major problems was to let the world know that Mid-Plains existed and that it would offer programs of vocational technical instruction. The only way for students to know what would be the curriculum was having the catalog, and there was only one way the new school could afford it. Ken Aten and Jim Doyle designed and developed it. The secretary typed the material, and Don Rockafellow, who by now had been hired to teach drafting, came in to run a small offset press, but now they needed a crew to collate and staple the material into a catalog. If one were to ask the Aten and Doyle children how this happened, they all remember very well. Pages were placed in stacks on a table in proper order and in the evenings this group of five Aten children and four Doyle children went around and around the tables as human collators. The sixth Aten child was two and was not a lot of help, although she says she tried. It was crude operation, but served its purpose.

While all this work was continuing to open a college by September of 1968, the problems were not over. When opponents of the Area Vocational Technical School law failed to prove that law unconstitutional, a petition drive was begun to allow nine of the ten counties to withdraw from the area. Had this drive been successful the area and its college would have been destroyed because there would not have been a large enough tax base for support. In November 1968, the “vote-outs” narrowly failed with strong support shown for the College in Logan County and the two largest counties, Lincoln and Custer. The legal support area remained the ten counties: Arthur, Chase, Custer, Dundy, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, Perkins, Red Willow and Thomas.

The first Mid-Plains Governing Board was appointed by the Governor consisting of

- Mendel Hirschfeld, President, North Platte
- Dick Wilkerson, Vice-President, Broken Bow
- Don McGinley, Secretary, Ogallala
- Charles Heider, Jr., North Platte
- Guy Curtis, Imperial



- Raymond Goedert, Sutherland
- Darrel Peters, Arnold
- Ben Hormel, McCook (resigned immediately because his community was against the Area Voc-Tech)
- Ronald Hull, McCook (resigned immediately because his community was against the Area Voc-Tech)

The college opened its doors for students in September 1968 in temporary facilities. All programs offered were accredited by the Nebraska State Board of Vocational Education. These programs were Auto Mechanics, Diesel Mechanics, Welding and Metallurgy, Machine Shop, Refrigeration-Air Conditioning and Heating, Electronics Technology, Building Construction, Drafting, Dental Technician, Dental Assisting, and Data Processing. All were vocational programs taught by vocationally approved instructors. One instructor was hired for each of eleven departments. Related instructors were hired to assist with related instruction for all departments.

Non-contractual part-time instructors, usually from business and industry, were hired for some classes in the full-time day programs but mostly they taught the part-time night student classes both on and off campus. Off campus class sites, usually in other Area communities were held at public schools and industrial facilities. The location of the off campus classes varied from year to year but usually included McCook, Ogallala, Broken Bow, Grant, and Valentine.

*First Governing Board Receiving Honorary Associate of  
Technology Degrees*



*From left to right: Mendel Hirschfeld, Don McGinley, Darrel Peters,  
Raymond Goedert, Charles Heider Jr., Guy Curtis*



*Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College First Graduating Class of 85 students in Saint Patrick  
High School gym June 1970*

The uncertainty of the College because of the lawsuit and the attempted vote-out could have stopped the Area Vocational Technical School from materializing. This caused some of the instructional personnel who had committed to teaching positions for the following year to resign and stay in their present secure jobs. These teaching positions had to be refilled to complete the personnel necessary to start the school's first year of vocational programs. Administration and instructional personnel that started the college were as follows:

- Kenneth Aten – Superintendent – B. A. and M. S. Degrees. Taught school and Principal of public school. Building contractor. Director of Vocational Division of Old Dominion University at Norfolk, Virginia.
- Donald Wederquist – Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Business – B. A. Degree. Taught school, Service Supervisor for International Harvester.
- Jim Doyle – Director of Students – B. A. Degree. Taught school. Business experience, guidance and placement work for State Employment Office.
- Charles Suiter – Building Construction – B. A. Degree. Taught high school and adult classes. Experienced as a carpenter and contractor in all phases of building construction.
- Glenn Yont – Air Conditioning and Refrigeration – B. A. Degree. Taught high school and Air Conditioning and Refrigeration at the Nebraska Vocational Technical School at Milford, Nebraska. Had been self-employed in the field for many years.
- Donald Rockafellow – Drafting and Design Technology – B. A. and M. S. Degrees. Taught at Central Nebraska Tech at Hastings, Nebraska. Don also had a number of years of practical drafting experience at Rockwell Manufacturing at Kearney, Nebraska.
- Ronald Vorderstrasse – Electronics – B. A. Degree. Teaching experience and electronic experience in armed forces and industry.
- Rex Cross – Auto Mechanics & Machine Shop – B. A. Degree. Teaching experience in high school and adult classes. Work experience in machine shop and mechanics, both self-employed and employed by others.
- Willis Tuxhorn – Welding. Chief Petty Officer, U. S. Navy, Retired. 20 years Navy welding experience, 2 years industrial welding experience, instructor in the Navy.
- Mickey M. Gerdon – Data Processing – A. A. S. Degree. Experience in data processing operations and programming for government research projects and Idaho State University.

- John E. Banning – Dental Technician – U. S. Air Force, Retired. 20 years dental assistant and dental technician for the Air Force. Instructed students and set up programs.
- Milton F. Mack, D. D. S. – Dental Assisting. North Platte practicing dentist.
- Maurice Bayne – Mechanics – Graduate of Nebraska Voc-Tech School at Milford, Nebraska. Experience as Maintenance Supervisor for Colorado Motors, Inc., Denver, Colorado. Practical experience in all phases of Mechanics and teaching experience as an on-the-job instructor.
- Richard Hawley – Related Instruction in Mathematics and Science – B. A. and M. N. S. Degrees. Experienced teacher and worked in many practical phases of industry.

The college was approved for students who were receiving assistance for the visually impaired, for rehabilitation, for veterans or for attending on financial aid through the Federal Insurance Student Loan Act of 1965 and financial grants.

Financing for the school was originally provided by property taxes and tuition. The maximum property tax allowed by State Law was 2 mills. 1¼ mills were used for the first school year 1968-69. All incurred expenses had to be included in the 2-mill limit including any capital expenses for building. Although the school had initially received \$100,000.00 from the State of Nebraska, it received no other federal or state money the first few years. Mid-Plains met all the necessary qualifications and was eligible for and entitled to federal funds when they became available.

Full-time tuition for 18 semester credit hours was:

In Area (the ten county supporting area)	\$ 84.00
Out-of-area	\$300.00
Out-of-state	\$400.00

The school provided books and tools.

Part-time Night class tuition for 3 semester credit hours was

In Area	\$12.00 to \$16.00 Depending on amount of materials and supplies by the student
Out-of-area	\$25.00 to \$35.00

## *Temporary Facilities*

The Governing Board's original plans to design and construct a new building for instruction of vocational programs were halted. Post-secondary vocational education programs had been determined by potential employment opportunities and the interests of a sufficient number of area students. The Board had hoped to use the first two or three years of area property tax funds to provide for proper facilities before having additional expenses for operation of programs of instruction.

However, because of efforts to stop Mid-Plains Area Vocational Technical College from materializing, it was thought necessary to provide programs of instruction immediately to show the interest, demand, and need in the area for vocational technical education in order to help counteract efforts to get rid of the school.

The temporary facilities were leased and remodeled in order to be able to provide programs almost immediately (within a year). The original plan was to utilize most of the first two years of income on equipment and buildings before actually starting vocational programs.

The Administrative Building, formerly the old North Platte City Library which is located just west of the Lincoln County Court House, was leased from the city for a term of two and one half years for a sum of \$4,500.00 to be paid monthly at a rate of \$150.00 per month from January 1, 1968, through June 30, 1970. In addition to administrative offices and supporting classrooms, it would house the data processing, dental assisting, and dental technician programs on the bottom floor and electronic and drafting programs on the top floor. The lease allowed the use of the former library's furnishings which included considerable shelving, chairs and tables. Any extra remodeling to adapt the building for instructional needs was allowable, but at the expense of the college. This lease agreement was extended for another two and one half years from July 1, 1970, to December 31, 1972. Even though the afore mentioned programs would be provided in the new building on the Technical College site, the now available space would be needed temporarily for a new, large enrollment program in Practical Nursing.

The last half of the new building being built on site to accommodate the technical programs needed large shop labs as well as classrooms. Consequently two 2 1/2 year contracts for \$9,000.00 per contract payable at \$300.00 per month were entered into with Cohagen and Wilson for a large warehouse building that would accommodate large shop spaces when remodeled. This rental provided space for Auto Mechanics, Diesel Mechanics, Heating and Air Conditioning, Building Construction, Machine Shop, and Welding programs. This facility

was called the Technology Building and located on the south and west corner of the intersection of Poplar and Front Streets.

The approximate cost for remodeling the Administrative Building was \$6,000.00 and \$29,000.00 for the Technology Building.

Classes were held in the two temporary leased facilities: the old North Platte Public Library building and a warehouse about eight blocks from the library in downtown North Platte. The first year full-time day enrollment was 111 students with 300 more night students. There were 19 women and 92 men with an average age of 25 in the day programs.

Requests from the community for students wanting part-time work exceeded the supply of available students. At this time, 90 percent of the students were commuting from in town and surrounding area.

### *Mid Plains Vocational Technical College Buildings*



*Administrative Building Main Entrance*





*Jim Doyle, Dean of Student Instruction  
at first college open house Spring 1968*



*Air Conditioning, Auto and Diesel Mechanics Entrance*





*Welding, Machine Shop and Building Construction Entrance*

### *Development of Vocational Technical College Campus*

In order to make financing of the more appropriately designed new buildings possible, an early Board member and supporter of the school, Wendell Wood, came up with a plan to finance the new facility that was approved by the Governing Board by establishing a foundation for funding. The Mid-Nebraska Foundation investors provided the funding up front. The investors were paid back in a short period of time from income the school received from tax funds that were received annually. This method of funding proved to be very effective and plans for building began again. The Mid-Nebraska Foundation Board of Directors were:

- Harry D. Peck, President
- Wendell W. Wood, Vice President
- Fred E. Shrake, Vice President
- Donald H. Kelly, Secretary
- Charles Fuenning, Treasurer

After accomplishing its goal of providing facilities for the Vocational Technical College, this foundation was dissolved and has no connection with the present day Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation for this area of the state.

Before original building plans were halted, the Governing Board had obtained the Sternberg Architectural firm of Denver as the primary designer with the local architectural firm of Hahn, Dunn, and Gardner working with him to supervise the construction. The Sternberg firm's plans were more concerned with the beauty rather than the practicality of the building, and this did not meet the Board's needs. An example of the problems that could not be resolved was the placement of major labs. Even though the College had more than sufficient land to put all of the programs such as Building Construction, Machine Shop, Welding, and Heating and Air Conditioning on a ground floor, the design for the building was multiple stories with all of these over a fountain and library. The large, fancy central library was not practical for the vocational-technical programs. Instead it was replaced with departmental reference areas located in the classroom and office area of each program. Consequently, since this design could not be reconciled with the needs, the firm was dismissed, and the firm of Bill Hahn, Dick Dunn, and Jack Gardner became responsible for the entire project, both its design and construction. At this time the project was again delayed because of the uncertainty of the College's status. The building project would remain on hold until the status of the College Area was assured, financing was secured and economical and functional building plans were designed by the local architects working closely with administration and all departments of instruction.

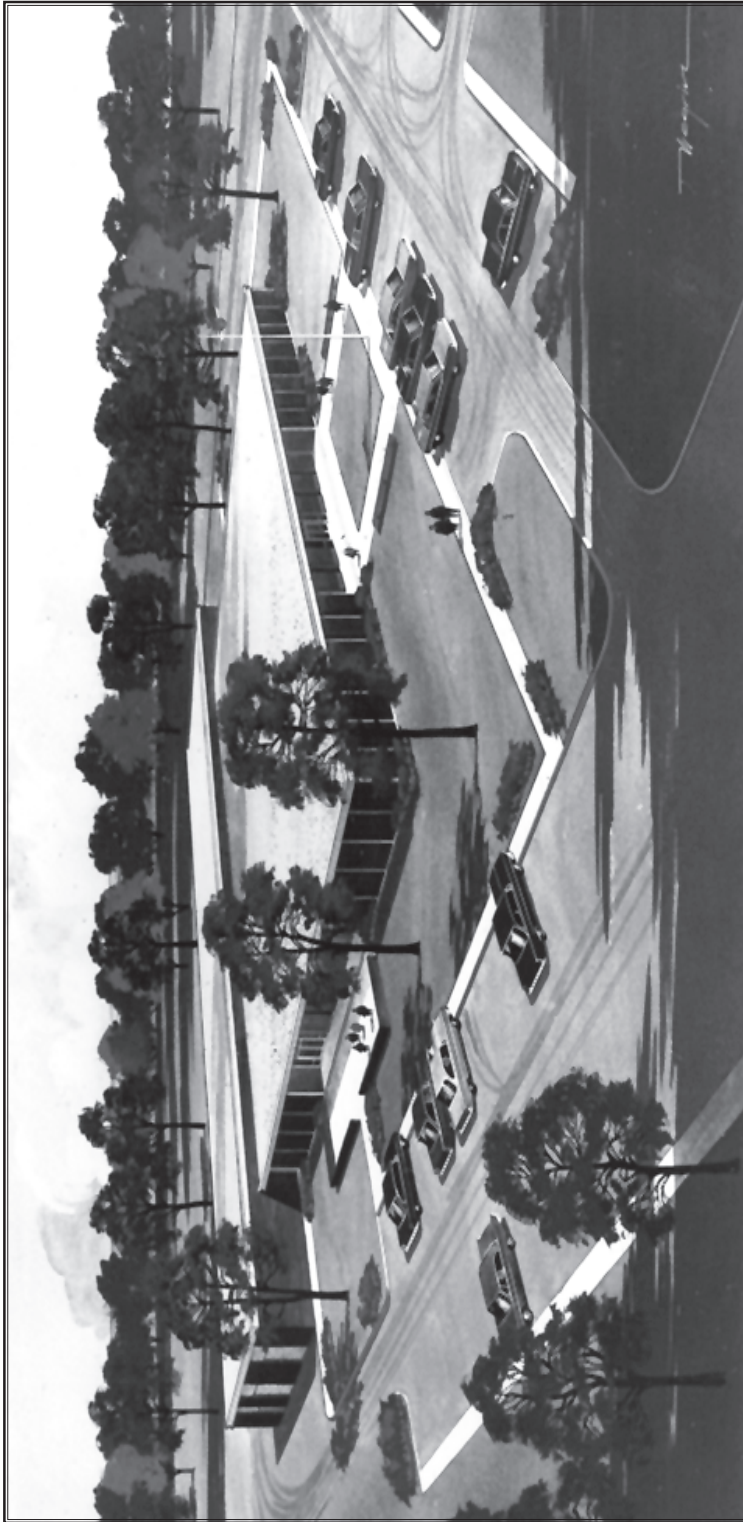
Since the Technical College had used most of its first revenue for operation rather than facilities, building plans had to be changed and accomplished by phases.

The first phase of the Vocational Technical buildings (located on the 55 acres of land valued at \$200,000 donated by Victor Halligan) was the front half of the total building. Initially, it housed the following departments: administrative offices, data processing, dental assisting, drafting, electronics, building construction, refrigeration and air conditioning, machine shop, welding, and related instructional areas. This left auto and diesel mechanics at the Cohagen Building at Front and Poplar and reused the old City Library building across from the Lincoln County Court House for the new programs of practical nursing and nurse's aides. When the second phase of the new building was completed, programs in welding, machine shop, refrigeration and air conditioning and building construction would be incorporated into much larger shop spaces along with the auto and diesel mechanics. The programs to be shifted would allow for space to provide for practical nursing and later optometric assisting. The first phase of the new building was 120 feet by 260 feet providing 31,200

square feet at a total cost of approximately \$305,000 not including instruction equipment and furnishing. Because of a few change orders, the break down on cost is very close but approximately as follows: site work (fill, etc.) \$11,000 by Beal Enterprises of Ogallala; general construction \$79,000 by Dowhower Construction of North Platte; mechanical (heating and air conditioning) \$69,000 by North Platte Plumbing and Heating of North Platte; plumbing \$32,000 by Reinhart Plumbing of North Platte; electrical \$67,000 by Snell Electric of North Platte; concrete and paving \$24,000 by Western Builders of North Platte; cabinets and shelving \$6,000 by Winkler Cabinet Shop of Brady, Architectural \$17,000 by Hahn, Dunn and Gardner. All building contracts were bid and awarded to the lowest bidders.

The second phase of the new Vocational Technical building was north of the first phase. Building started immediately after finishing the first phase, which took only one year to build. The second phase allowed more appropriate space for the technical area that needed large shops as well as classrooms. However with limited funding and space available, there would eventually be a need for more large shop space which would be built to the east of the main buildings. This would provide room for a full-time auto body program and expand the mechanics areas. The second phase of building also allowed more appropriate space for Electronics and room for Practical Nursing and eventually programs in Associate Degree Nursing and Optometric Assisting. To accomplish this, programs in Building Construction, Welding, Machine Shop, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning had to be moved into the second phase of the building. This phase was 84 feet by 280 feet providing an additional 23,520 square feet at a cost of approximately \$391,000, which did not include equipment and furnishings. The break down on the second phase building costs are approximately as follows: general construction \$150,000 by Musgrove Construction of North Platte; mechanical and plumbing (heating and air conditioning, exhaust systems and plumbing) \$123,000 by North Platte Plumbing and Heating of North Platte; electrical \$78,000 by Fred's Electric of North Platte; concrete and paving \$18,000 Jim Simon Construction of North Platte; Architectural \$22,000 by Hahn, Dunn and Gardner.

*Architectural Rendering of First & Second Phase of New Mid Plains Voc-Tech College*



**PROPOSED MID-PLAINS AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL**

<b>BOARD OF GOVERNORS</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>MID PLAINS</b>	<b>AREA</b>
SON MCINLEY	CHARLES F. HEDER JR.	ARTHUR COUNTY	LOGAN COUNTY
ROY G. CURTIS	CARRELL PETERS	THOMAS COUNTY	KEITH COUNTY
EDD WILKENS	CATYMOND GEEERT	PENNING COUNTY	DONNY COUNTY
MENSEL HERSCHFIELD		LUSHER COUNTY	RED WILLOW
<b>NAAM DUMM &amp; GARDNER</b>	<b>KENNETH L. AYER ARCHITECTS</b>	<b>SUPERINTENDENT</b>	<b>HORTH PLATTS, NEBRASKA</b>

The first phase of the buildings on a permanent site to replace the temporary buildings for Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College was completed in January of 1971 on the 55 acres of land just North of I-80 and one-half mile to one mile east of highway 83. The second phase was completed in August of 1972 at the same location. At the time the building was completed, the College was debt free and had equipped the entire building. By that time, Mid-Plains Area Vocational Technical College had dropped one program, Dental Technician, for lack of interest.

When the first building phase was completed and students were moved into the new building, the old library building was refurbished to house the new Practical Nursing program with thirty-five Licensed Practical Nursing students enrolled. The Practical Nursing program enrolled students every six months for a twelve month program.

In the fall of 1971, 240 day students and approximately 500 night students were enrolled in the College. New full-time programs offered were Electrical, Plumbing and Data Processing Electronics. New part-time night vocational courses included Photography, Nurse's Aides, Upholstery, Offset Printing, Sheet Metal, Building Wiring, Pilot Ground School, Firefighting Technology, Emergency Medical Technician, Small Engines, Livestock Production, Women's Auto Mechanics, and Real Estate as well as part-time classes from most of the full-time programs. Since there were now at least two instructors in each department to cover the second year of the programs, it was more practical for all supporting courses to be taught by the students' own department.

By August 1972, Mid-Plains was finally housed entirely on the site donated by Vic Halligan in a million dollar building with nearly a million dollars worth of equipment available. Two new full time programs were offered including Secretarial Technology and Optometric Assisting. Additional night classes were offered as needed.

### *Student Activities*

Since the majority of voc-tech students worked at part-time jobs in addition to their on-campus coursework, lab time, and shop, there was not much time for a wide array of social activities. Additionally, a large number of students were older adults who had to maintain jobs and families. Still, a variety of college get-togethers and dances were provided throughout the year. Intermural sports instead of competitive athletics were popular. Team members were usually made up of students from each department or a combination of departments. Some departments had a variety of clubs or organizations associated with similar industrial organizations in the student's career fields such as North Platte Home Builders, the American Welding Society, the Practical Nurse's Association, and the Electrical Union.

In ensuing years, most departments would become heavily involved with the post-secondary VICA (Vocational Industrial Club of America) organization. Most departments competed in the VICA state and national contests. Prior to VICA, the auto mechanics department had competed in the statewide Plymouth Troubleshooting Contest. Trophy winners in 1971 were Wayne Hood from Ogallala and William Eshleman from McCook. In 1972, winners were Gary Cross from Arthur and Dana MacKay from McCook. At that time, the instructor was Don Winkler.





Wayne Hood  
Donald Winkler  
William Eshleman



Gary Gross  
Dana Mackey





### *Constant Update of Programs and Curriculum*

From the beginning, there would be constant change in the programs offered at Mid-Plains. Programs of instruction required additions and deletions, constant updates in content and durations with changes in technology, needs of industry and student interests. For example the Drafting and Design Program was extremely popular during the first years of the college. Large enrollments made possible a two year program with mechanical, architectural and civil options in the second year. As drafting became more computerized the drawing board became outdated and interest seemed to wane in the program. It became a twelve month architectural program with no options and some of the supporting classes were combined with Building Construction. Eventually after thirty years the program was discontinued.

During the years that the drafting program was growing and many changes required equipment, supplies, etc. the department came up with unique ideas to raise money. One year a drafting student (who was a talented artist), Paul Sutton from McCook, drew 20" x 30" caricatures of the administration and several of the faculty which were sold at auction at the college open house. Each picture sold for \$25 to \$50 which provided needed money for the department and much enjoyment for the crowd as they enjoyed his interpretations of the people he drew (especially the picture of the college president as a leprechaun despite his Scottish heritage.)



Kenneth L. Aten  
President



James L. Boyle  
Dean of Instruction



Al Kiegan  
Comptroller



Glenn Yant  
Director of Personnel



Donald MacLellan  
Bratting



Paul Donald Winkler  
Auto Mechanics



Leonard Van Ert  
Refrigeration



Charles Suiter  
Building Construction



Ron Vorderstosse  
Electronics



Willis Luxhorn  
welding



John McBride  
Related Welding



Rex Cross  
Machine Shop



Maurie Rayne  
Diesel



Mickey Gordon  
Data Processing



Lois J. Hidrikson  
Dental Assisting



Iona Hawley  
Business



Richard Hawley  
Science



Arnold Beverdorf  
Math

## *Promotion of Vocational – Technical Programs to Students and Industry*

Starting a new vocational technical college required numerous kinds of promotions and recruitment strategies including the conventional methods such as newspapers, radio, and television as well as contact with each of the public schools and county fairs. Contact with industry was established and each area of instruction developed an advisory committee which actively met several times each year to provide support for that area of instruction in program and placement of graduates.

In 1971 the Technical Contest and Vocational Fair was developed to offer interaction between Mid-Plains and the area high schools. Each spring a contest was held to test the knowledge of area school students and at the same time projects from those schools were judged. Prizes were given to the participants and the participating schools. After three years the contest and fair were split so that even though the contest was held in early spring the fair was held when it was more convenient for the high schools to complete their projects. The Technical Contest was intended as much as possible to relate to the secondary school curriculum. It included woodworking and building construction, power mechanics and refrigeration, drafting and design, electricity and electronics, general metals and machine shop, welding and metals, auto and diesel mechanics, shorthand and secretarial, bookkeeping and data processing, health occupations, and technical mathematics. The fair was a project display and competition in the areas of woodworking and building construction, power mechanics and metal working, drafting and design, electricity and electronics, general metals and machine shop, and welding and metals. Schools competed by their size in one of three divisions. At this point the Vocational Fair was held in conjunction with a college open house with all departments on display and the auction of a house to be moved from the college site. The house was built for instructional purposes by the Building Construction, Electrical and Heating and Air Conditioning departments.

## *Student Awards, Graduations and Completions*

The goals of Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College were two-fold. The first was to provide for the vocational-technical educational needs of students in varying degrees and amounts. The second was to work with business and industry to provide a qualified work force to meet their needs. To meet these goals awards were designed at a variety of levels for the most programs. An Associates of Applied Science Degree was offered for students who completed the two year technical program as well as academic supporting classes in math/science, communications, business, and human relations. A Technical Diploma was awarded for the completion of a two-year program without the academic supporting classes; instead vocationally applied math, science, and business



classes were taught by each technical department. The Vocational Diploma was awarded for nine and twelve month programs and for completing the first year of two-year programs. Certificates were awarded for taking a block of courses specifically needed in an occupation and usually acquired part-time at night. Graduation programs were held once a year in the middle of May until several programs became twelve months in length and a second graduation was held the last part of August.

### *Student Placement and Follow up*

Mid-Plains provided placement services for all students which included finding part-time employment while attending college and assisting graduates in obtaining jobs in their technical areas upon completion. It was also essential to assist industry to obtain personnel with the technical training appropriate to the positions available. Student placement and follow-up was recorded annually for Mid-Plains' use as well as for state and federal requirements. Although there were some variations by department of instruction and year by year, the average percentage of student completing vocational-technical programs who were available for employment was more than 90% employed in their field or related fields. Graduates strongly preferred, when possible, to take jobs in Nebraska. Approximately 95% of student program completers stayed in Nebraska and 65% stayed in the Mid-Plains area. There are no figures to indicate the percentage of local business and industry jobs filled with Mid-Plains graduates, but there were usually more jobs than graduates.

### *Acquisition and Cost of Instructional Equipment*

The building of facilities and equipping them was a large strain on the budget for several years, but creative instructors and administrators found ways to keep the college going. During the first years a large amount of equipment and supplies were obtained at very little cost from federal excess property and state surplus. Often inventive instructors remodeled and rebuilt pieces of equipment to make it fit a certain situation. A set of casters on an old piece of equipment might bring real excitement. Public auctions were another source of good, cheap equipment and finding something for nothing was a definite plus. With that in mind the building construction department used borrowed equipment for several years. Since the School Superintendent (College President) was not currently using his contracting equipment, he loaned it to the school. The school didn't have any vehicles so his old green '54 Chevy pick-up was loaned to the school. Slowly the school's financial status improved.

Equipment for vocational programs of instruction necessitated more dollars than the furnishing of classrooms and offices, making capital outlay costs a considerable amount. Because of the costs and limited funds available, it took approximately seven years for the vocational programs to become appropriately

equipped. Keeping equipment well maintained and updated was a continual expense. The approximate expenditures by departmental areas of instruction (including additional associated part-time programs in the department) are listed by year for the first several years on page 89.

### *The Initial Merger of McCook and North Platte Junior Colleges with Mid-Plains Technical College into the Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area*

On July 1, 1973 the Mid-Plains Technical College Area and Governing Board was reorganized from a ten county to an eighteen county area that now included the additional eight counties of Blaine, Cherry, Frontier, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Loup and McPherson. The expansion from ten to eighteen counties almost doubled the size of the area, but the valuation for taxing and population to serve was less than half again that of the original ten counties. However, the area now had three colleges to support instead of one, and even with the addition of some state aid it limited the budget necessary for operation. The College Area now extended over 200 miles north to south from the South Dakota border to the Kansas border and varied east to west from 75 to 150 miles with a population of a little over 100,000 people and an average density of under five people per square mile. McCook Junior College, North Platte Junior College, and Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College were now governed and supported by the expanded Mid-Plains Area. The Governing Board was:

- Darrel Peters, Chairman, Arnold
- Donald McGinley, Vice-Chairman, Ogallala
- Max Hanson, Secretary-Treasurer, Elsie
- Mendel Hirschfield, North Platte
- Gwendolyn McKenzie, McCook
- Kent Miller, North Platte
- Herbert Morton, North Platte
- Harry Peck, North Platte
- Keith Sheldon, McCook
- Richard Thompson, North Platte

The two former Junior Colleges had been city colleges supported by their respective local school districts with local governing boards.



The First Seven Years of Operation Equipment Cost Table

DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMS	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	Dept Total
Building Construction	\$ 9,500	\$ 2,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 33,000
Furn Repair & Upholstery								
Refrigeration & Air Condit.	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 26,000
Sheet Metal & Plumbing								
Drafting & Design	\$ 8,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 7,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 27,000
Printing & Photography								
Electronics Technology	\$ 19,500	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 92,000
Electrical Wiring & Power								
Machine Shop	\$ 30,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 68,000
Welding & Metals	\$ 10,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 31,000
Auto Mechanics	\$ 16,500	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 13,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 91,000
Small Engines & Auto Body								
Diesel Mechanics	\$ 500	\$ 25,000	\$ 23,000	\$ 500	\$ 3,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 97,000
Ethanol Fuels								
Data Processing	\$ 30,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 92,000
Programming Languages								
Secretarial	N/A	\$ 1,500	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 27,500
Real Estate								
Dental Assisting	\$ 6,000	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 4,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 20,000
Dental Technology								
Practical Nursing	N/A	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 12,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 29,000
Nurse Aide & Emerg. Med Tech								
Optometric Assisting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$ 5,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 23,000
General Office & Audio Visual	\$ 6,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 13,500	\$ 28,500	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 106,000
<b>Each Year Total</b>	<b>\$139,500</b>	<b>\$69,000</b>	<b>\$86,000</b>	<b>\$93,000</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$165,000</b>	<b>\$762,500</b>

From July 1, 1973, to January 1, 1974, the Mid-Plains Area operated as three independent colleges under the Area Board. Each college maintained its own identity and President with the Presidents reporting directly to the Board. In January 1974 the Board adopted a different area concept. Dr. William

Hasemeyer, President of North Platte Community College, was named Area President. Kenneth Aten, President of Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College, was named President of Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College and made responsible for all vocational programs in the Area. John Harms, President of McCook College, was named President of McCook and North Platte Community Colleges and made responsible for all academic programs in the Area. This governance configuration lasted only a short time.

Just prior to the merger of Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College and North Platte Junior College in July 1974, the vocational personnel for full-time programs had to be increased to take care of additional programs and the extension of existing and new programs to provide for additional federally sponsored students funded under Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA). Total professional personnel included:

### Administrative Personnel

Kenneth Aten, President  
 James Doyle, Dean of Instruction  
 Donald Rockafellow, Dean of Students  
 Al Wiegand, Director of Business Management  
 Glenn Yont, Direct of Student Recruitment and Placement  
 William Powers, Director of Federal Programs  
 Ron Axtell, Director of Maintenance and Custodial  
 Virginia Snodgrass, Office Manager

### Instructional Personnel for Full-time Programs

Clarence Bell, Building Construction (Department Head)  
 Ilon Egger, Building Construction  
 Robert Reed, MDTA Building Construction  
 Harvey Valentine, MDTA Building Construction  
 Leonard Van Ert, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (Department Head)  
 Nels Clang, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration  
 Joseph Szekely, Drafting and Design (Department Head)  
 Hanford Lynn, Drafting and Design  
 Ronald Vonderstrosse, Electronics (Department Head)  
 Vern Peterson, Electronics  
 Ivan Nickerson, MDTA Electrical  
 Robert O'Donnell, Data Processing  
 Emanuel Templien, Welding and Machine Shop (Department Head)  
 Rex Cross, Machine Shop  
 Larry Coomer, Welding and Machine Shop  
 Gerald Schroeder, MDTA Welding  
 Wayne Hiatt, MDTA Welding

Donald Winkler, Auto Mechanics (Department Head)  
Lowell Fenster, Auto Mechanics  
Donald Wilson, Auto Body Repair  
Maurice Bayne, Diesel Mechanics (Department Head)  
Russell Berggren, Diesel Mechanics  
Judith Bodmer, Business and Secretarial (Department Head)  
Joan Nelkin, MDTA Secretarial  
Marilyn McGahan, MDTA Secretarial  
Catherine Leach, Dental Assisting  
Dr. John Dorwart, Optometric Assisting  
Pauline Shahan, Director of Practical Nursing  
Bridgetta Anderson, Practical Nursing  
Charlene Berges, Practical Nursing  
Theresa Crook, Practical Nursing  
Constance Homan, Practical Nursing  
Charlene Hoyer, Practical Nursing  
Elaine Kockrow, Practical Nursing  
Jaralyn Martin, Practical Nursing  
Elaine Maseberg, Practical Nursing  
Iva Mueller, Practical Nursing

Department Heads of Instruction were full-time instructors who were paid a small additional salary for administrative duties in their departments in relation to curriculum updating, selection of instructional material and equipment, assisting with departmental budgets and coordinating full and part-time personnel. Most departments had several part-time instructors who are not listed here to cover extensive part-time classes (usually night classes). Having two or more instructors in each department made it possible for each department to provide for more realistic supporting classes to be taught by the department in applied math, science, business, human relations and communications.

After eight years of operation, enrollment in the fall of the 1973 year had increased to 276 full-time students and 768 part-time students for a total head count of 1,044. Approximately one-third (93) of the full-time student body of 276 were women.

On July 1, 1974, North Platte Community College and Mid-Plains Vocational College were merged to form Mid-Plains Community College with Kenneth Aten as President. John Harms became President of McCook Community College.

At the time of the merger, Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College offered full-time programs in auto mechanics, diesel mechanics, welding, machine shop, refrigeration-air conditioning, electronics, electrical, building construction, drafting, data processing, secretarial, dental assisting, practical nursing and

optometric assisting. Federally funded programs in MDTA were taught in Welding, Building Construction, Electrical, and Secretarial. Following the merger Auto Body repair was added. Approved by the Board and State Department of Vocational Education in 1967, this program had been offered as a part-time program prior to the merger. Electrical had been added because it is fully funded by the Federal Government in the MDTA program. This was a program that had also been approved in 1967. Mid-Plains had offered a large variety of part-time credit classes in the vocational areas since 1968 and continued to do so following the merger.

North Platte Community College offered transfer and community service non-credit classes. Transfer classes included mathematics, behavioral science, history, criminal justice, physics, chemistry, biology, English, Spanish, speech, drama, art, music, secretarial science, business administration, health and physical education. These classes continued to be offered following the merger. Prior to the merger music and art were part-time programs taught by half-time instructors. Following the merger the instructors became full-time and the college offered a complete two-year program in music. Art increased from a part-time to a full-time instructor. A Medical Laboratory program as well as an Agriculture Transfer program were started and a coach for women's athletics was added. All of the secretarial programs were moved to the academic campus, although two of the instructors in this area taught a vocational secretarial program for MDTA only. An extensive program in Community Services was consistently provided.

### *Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College Sources Consulted*

Linscott, Cathy. "Educational Opportunities Boosted with Establishment of Area Voc-Tech School." North Platte *Telegraph-Bulletin*. 1 March 1967.

Questions and Answer Concerning the Mid-Plains Area Vocational Technical School pamphlet.

Mid-Plains Area Vocational School #2 Facts Concerning Mid-Plains Area Vocational School #2.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical School Catalog 1968-1969, 1969-1970.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Commencement Program 2 June 1969.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Catalog 1970-1971, 1971-1972.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Commencement Program 1 June 1970.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Commencement Program 7 June 1971.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Building Dedication Program 16 May 1971.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Commencement Program 7 May 1972.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Commencement Program 13 May 1973.

Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College Catalog 1971-1972, 1972-1973.

Mid-Plains Technical Community Area Response to Interrogatories to Nebraska Court of Industrial Relations 16 March 1978.

Blackledge, Keith. "Trade School Long Overdue." North Platte *Telegraph*; Millennium Edition, 2000 pp 22, 24, 26.

Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College Agreement with:

Dowhower Construction	25 March 1970
North Platte Plumbing and Heating	25 March 1970
Reinhart's Plumbing and Heating	25 March 1970
Snell Electronic Service	25 March 1970
Western Builders Co	25 March 1970
Hahn, Dunn and Gardner Architects	

Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College Agreement with:

Musgrove Construction Co	19 Nov 1971
North Platte Plumbing Heating	19 Nov 1971
Fred's Electric	19 Nov 1971
James E Simon Co	3 Jan 1973

---

## Chapter 5

### Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area

July 1, 1973-1974

#### *The Initial Legislative Beginnings of the Area*

In May 1971, the state legislature passed LB 759. “Under LB759 all of Nebraska would, by 1973, be part of eight districts, each of which would be offered junior college education and vocational schooling.” (North Platte *Telegraph*, May 11, 1971, p.1) This bill created what is now the Mid Plains Community College Area, including what is now North Platte Community College – South Campus (the earlier name was North Platte Junior College), McCook Community College, and North Platte Community College – North Campus (in an earlier period known as Voc-Tech).

#### *Local Implementation of the Law To Create an Area: North Platte*

On October 5, 1972, Donald W. Pederson, President of the North Platte Junior College Board, reported on the progress of the joint committee regarding the merger of the North Platte Junior College and Mid Plains Vocational Technical College.

A news release by the North Platte Board dated June 29, 1973 (See Appendix B) described the process of creating the Mid Plains Community College Area. This merger was to be effective July 1, 1973.

In July of 1973, the Community College Board agreed to turn over the main control of the operating budget to the state Board of Community Colleges and especially to the state legislature. A primary reason for this was that the Board of Community Colleges had had the authority to approve the budgets submitted, but now it would also be responsible for providing much of the money for the budget although the Area would still levy a one mill tax. A reason given was that both campuses had major construction projects (completion of



the McDonald-Belton building for the South Campus and an addition to the present building to house auto mechanic and auto body repair on the North campus). Another need was to provide instructional offerings on an area-wide basis rather than to the limits of the city. Both President William Hasemeyer in North Platte and President John Harms in McCook referred to the relatively high percentage of people in the 18-county area who had no more than an 11th grade education. Their source they said was the 1970 census which reported that the 18-county Mid-Plains Area had a total population of 97,007. Of that total 24,142 persons 25 years or older had only an 11th grade education or less. Both presidents requested the additional funds to set up attendance centers or satellite learning centers in counties surrounding the colleges' home cities. (North Platte Telegraph, July 21, 1973)

At the September 1973 Board meeting, the Board discussed the current Community College's budget report. The total was more than the previous year but less than requested; apparently the numbers on the budget were arrived at by percentage increase rather than using the proposed budget as a guideline taking into account specific proposed requests. President Hasemeyer was given permission to make a special request to the state Community College Board for approval of North Platte Community College proposed medical technology program which had thus far been delayed because of a lack of funding.

### *Local Implementation of the Law to Merge: McCook*

Challenges were many for the pending merger as a result of the 1971 legislation to create eight areas. President Hap Potter joined President Hasemeyer and President Aten in visiting counties that were uncommitted to the state plan. At the same time, they were waiting the outcome of a suit filed by eight panhandle counties which challenged the constitutionality of the law. President Potter also challenged the North Platte community to consider building only one campus and Dr. Hasemeyer, in a news story reported March 13, 1972, in the McCook *Daily Gazette*, stated that it was time that the boards must come together in North Platte to discuss joint facilities. The eventual merger failed by a vote of 6 to 5.

There was concern in the McCook community as expressed in a March 28, 1972 McCook *Daily Gazette*, page 2, editorial that "Unless organized action is taken, McCook and part of southwest Nebraska could lose one of the most important elections yet—and lose by default." Only one person had filed for the eleven person board from southwest Nebraska.

A budget of \$527,055 was prepared in May of 1972 that the McCook College Board of Governors endorsed as a share of the first budget for the Mid-Plains Technical Community College District. Board member, J.T. Harris, expressed

his concern, "I hope we don't get caught in our own honesty." *McCook Daily Gazette*. (5/9/72, p. 1)

Gwen McKenzie filed for a seat on the Board and became quite vocal in her concerns for the high cost and lack of academic emphasis at the vocational technical schools. She did win her seat on the Board, along with former State Senator Lester Harsh.

### *Developments and Changes at McCook College in the Midst of the Merger*

**I**n January of 1973, Adult Basic Education was started, and new Police Science Program was added. Board member, Walt Sehnert, asked the College President to prepare a curriculum for a full, two-year program in home economics. In February, President Potter informed the board that the college was placing rule violators at the dorm on social probation after their first infraction, and the student was to be suspended with a second infraction. He also encouraged the establishment of a community use policy for use of rooms at the college. Senator Richard Proud, a graduate of McCook College, and Speaker of the Legislature was invited to be the 1973 commencement speaker.

Discounts for senior citizens were addressed in April, and official names selected for the science building, library, and the music building. Summer school was dropped for the coming year with many reasons cited. However, youth basketball camps, delivered by the college were scheduled in Culbertson, Benkelman and Cambridge for the summer.

The completion of the science and library buildings continued to provide challenges as defects surfaced and had to be addressed. In March 05, 1973, the Board requested that administration and faculty prepare a building priority list before any decision could be made concerning use of a bequest from the Wrightstone estate. The will specifically stated that the money be used either for an addition to a building or a separate new building at the college and that it be named in memory of Mrs. Wrightstone and her husband. At the April 10th Board meeting, attorney Carson Russell told the McCook College Board of Governors that the college must get busy because Mrs. Wrightstone left one-half of her estate to McCook College and the district would cease to be a legal entity after July 1. He urged advertising for bids. By June, the preliminary sketches for Wrightstone were approved, paving the way for drawing more detailed designs and for the estate distribution.

Another issue that needed to be addressed before the merger was ownership of Weiland Field. Both the public school and the college claimed ownership. District 17 claimed ownership of all property except Brooks Hall, while the College claimed that Weiland Field was given to the junior college district. The

new law claimed that “majority use” should decide ownership, but the Board disagreed. (McCook *Daily Gazette*, December 12, 1973, p.10). Dr. Potter provided reasons that the College should maintain title and lease it to the high school for football games. Gwen McKenzie supported his proposal.

At the May meeting, the Board approved a deed which gave McCook College the parcel of land on the northwest corner of the intersection of East Third and East L Street, the site of the future college student Union. However, there was no mention of Weiland Field. At an earlier meeting the Board had given the college the land which contained McMillen Hall, True Hall, the science building, library, and Tipton Hall. Brooks’s Hall was not mentioned because it appeared that the college had clear title to the land. According to the McCook *Daily Gazette*, 3/9/73, page 5, the District 017 Board, using an attorney’s opinion as its guide, assumed that it held title to all property occupied by the college, except Brooks Hall and could give away whatever part of the land they wished. By not mentioning Weiland Field, the Board had decided that they would retain the property. The District 017 Board also retained administration and control of all of the facilities used jointly by the college and the public schools.

### *Negotiations*

Faculty negotiations were also at issue. The McCook College Board had offered to let the Mid Plains Technical Community College Board handle the negotiations, but changed their decision after learning that the North Platte Junior College Board was negotiating with their faculty.

### *Operating Structure*

Local control was a concern to McCook residents, and the Area board decided to allow the three colleges to remain much as they were at the time of the merger, including individual control over budgets, purchasing, and dispersal of funds. The colleges were allowed to retain their own president, and have their own assigned time to meet with the Board each month. The Board also announced plans for each college to have an advisory board composed of four laymen, two faculty members, two students and two board members.

In the midst of the transitions, College President Hap Potter resigned effective the end of July. John Harms was selected to take over the reins although he was not able to secure a desired two-year contract because North Platte administrators were on a one year contract. A new era had begun.

The name change was made at the August Board meeting for McCook College to become McCook Community College. President Harms challenged the community in a McCook *Daily Gazette* interview: (August 30, 1973, page 1) “We are going to have to realize that McCook Community College no longer

is just a city school, but an area school.” A new administrative structure was developed with a Dean of Instruction and four division chairs. By August, Dean of Students, Lamoine Carmichael had announced that the college was facing a housing shortage and made a call to the community to list available apartments and rooms. By November, the college had established a speaker’s bureau and designated rooms available for community organization use.

The Area Board requested that procedures and rules should be developed for each institution, that a salary committee should be appointed to work on a common wage scale, and provide rules for athletic participation and scholarship. They also wished to address having the same insurance policy and guidance in correlating salary schedules.

A decision was made at the November Board meeting to delay seeking North Central Accreditation for another year as President Harms cited that more work needed to be done locally on the consolidation of part and full-time employees and on the library.

### *First MPCC (Area) Student Enrollment Numbers*

At the October Board meeting, the enrollment figures of the fall semester were provided. The three institutions had a combined enrollment of more than 2,500 students. These numbers included full-time students, part-time students, non-credit students, ABE courses and special programs and seminars. (North Platte *Telegraph*, October 25, 1973)

### *Beginning to Organize Area Administration*

The topic of an Area administrator was also discussed at the October meeting. The Board indicated there was no dissatisfaction with the current administrative structure, but that it appeared the state Community College Board wanted a single administrator for the area and that he who controls the purse usually gets what he wants. The Board asked that the three presidents prepare their ideas on an area administrator for the next meeting. There wasn’t unanimous approval or disapproval of the concept by either the presidents or the Board, but the Board did agree to apply to the state for a supplementary appropriation should that choice be made.

The legislature’s appropriation committee began the process of forcing a merger between North Platte Community College and Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical-College by providing funding for only one institution. The state Technical Community College Board passed a resolution disagreeing with the legislature and recommending that the legislature leave policy setting to the Board. (North Platte *Telegraph*, February 23, 1974)

Evidently 1974 began poorly in the relationship between the community colleges and the appropriations committee. The adequacy of the funding for the colleges had been called into question by the community colleges, and the legitimacy of the complaints by the community colleges was called into question by the appropriations committee. The central issue seemed to be a constant—Who is best able to make a decision? Local control or central authority? If central authority has control of the funding, central authority wins. (North Platte *Telegraph*, March 1, 1974)

Another issue that had been tentatively addressed earlier was the merging of administrations. When this change was first made, Dr. Hasemeyer, president of North Platte Community College, was, on January 23, 1974, named President over all three campuses in the area. John Harms, president of McCook Community College, became president of North Platte Community College as well. Kenneth Aten remained president of Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College with increased input into the vocational-technical education throughout the three colleges. (North Platte *Telegraph*, January 25, 1974) The strong recommendation of the budget committee was to combine, administratively, the two North Platte campuses. This recommended merger was given further emphasis by Dr. Charles Barnes, North Platte Community College's consultant on North Central Accreditation since North Platte Community College was in the process of becoming accredited. (North Platte *Telegraph*, April 25, 1974.)

At the May meeting, the area Board modified the original merger plan and elected to leave McCook Community College separate and merge the two North Platte institutions. This decision left unanswered two basic questions: when will it happen? And who will be the new president? (North Platte *Telegraph*, May 23, 1974)

In 1972 when North Platte Community College was beginning the process of building a campus, there were federal funds available to aid in the construction costs. However, before these funds were released, they were impounded by President Nixon. Between the time the funds were initially impounded and then finally released, these funds had diminished by 80%. But even if all the money had been restored, because North Platte Community College had begun construction with the available money (tax receipts and the Janet McDonald bequest), it was no longer eligible for federal funding. (North Platte *Telegraph*, May 30, 1974)

Because of funding limitations North Platte Community College and McCook Community College had their athletic programs reduced or eliminated. One effect of the elimination of the track and cross-country programs was the

introduction of women's volleyball as an interscholastic sport. (*North Platte Telegraph*, May 23, 1974)

### *Early Name Branding*

At the June board meeting, the name of the institution formed by the merger of North Platte Community College and Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College would become Mid-Plains Technical Community College on July 1, 1974. Kenneth Aten, president of Mid-Plains Vocational-Technical College, would become president of both North Platte institutions. McCook, which had since January been administratively connected with North Platte Community College, would return to being a separate institution with John Harms as president. (NP T 6/27/74)

#### *References Consulted*

*NP T-B= North Platte Telegraph Bulletin*

*NP T= North Platte Telegraph*



## Post-script

This book, Volume 1 of 2, was written for alumni, friends, and readers with a particular interest in the early, free-standing colleges that from 1973 forward came to comprise Mid-Plains Community College (Area).

A reader might pause to wonder if two-year colleges had been around as long as – say – universities two of which date back to medieval France and Italy. The answer is “no.” Two-year post secondary colleges were a uniquely American innovation of the 20th century. The very first one was Joliet Junior College founded in 1901 at Joliet, Illinois.

Jerda Garey, assisted by Walt Sehnert, chronicled the early history of McCook Junior College in this volume. Opened in 1926, MJC was the first two-year post secondary institution in Nebraska. It is a tribute to the people of McCook to have accomplished founding and sustaining a place of higher learning over many challenging years. Jerda traced the growth and development of MJC through the major periods of early to mid-twentieth century America: the Great Depression, World War II, the years after the war when the soldiers returned home and used their benefits to secure higher education, and the turbulent 1960’s. McCook Junior College was there through all of it, and helped and facilitated education for many students during those times.

The first thirty years after World War II were years that witnessed the creation and development of many two-year colleges, primarily community colleges. Like other communities during this time period, the people of North Platte took note of the emerging importance of higher education and the opportunities it afforded. Facilitated by enabling legislation from the State, the wheels began to turn in North Platte.

In this volume, Ken Aten tells the story of creating and developing a vocational-technical institution in North Platte beginning in 1966. For the many years I have known him, Ken was and is a “collector and saver” kind of person. Fortunately for purposes of this book, Ken had not pitched or destroyed many papers, documents, and memoranda which traced and detailed the early beginnings and growth of what would become the Voc-Tech College. Through the efforts of Ken and many others, the foundational building blocks were put in place – one block at a time.

Bill Hasemeyer and Ivan Koch teamed up to describe and detail the very early beginnings of North Platte Junior College. Discussion about establishing such a college, ranged back to 1961 and moved forward from that time. Finally, the critical decision to create NPJC was made in 1964. Sometimes called “Post Office University,” the old federal building, a former post-office, became NPJC,

and its doors opened to some 200 students in the fall of 1965. Through at least the first year of existence, it was called North Platte College. It met the needs of students that first year and has continued to meet the needs of students in all of the years since.

All of the writers noted above contributed to the final chapter of this (Book 1) volume which traces the creation of the community college Area through the years 1973 and 1974. It was a time of challenges and changes. Book 2, then, traces how the colleges gradually merged into a system.

*Ford M. Craig, Editor/writer – December 2007*

*Source Consulted*

*The History of Higher Education. Eds. Lester F. Goodchild and Harold Wechsler, Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press, 1989.*

## NOTES ON THE WRITERS

### *Editor and Principal Writers*



*Kenneth Aten*

**(Principal Writer) Kenneth Aten**, and his wife Carol live in North Platte, Nebraska. They have five grown daughters Kathryn, Laurie, Leslie, Erin and Seanna and one son Colin, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, located throughout the mid-part of the United States. Ken and Carol have been very active in the Girl Scouts over the last forty years as leaders, board members, council officers, and council presidents. They also collect and restore antiques and contribute to the Nebraska Prairie Museum. They work on family genealogy and enjoy history, especially British and Scottish history. Ken enjoys building construction and has an extensive, well equipped shop.

### *Academic Background*

Ken has a Commercial Arts Diploma, a BA in Education from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with majors in Mathematics, Industrial Education and Social Studies and Physical Science. Ken also has an MS in Vocational Education from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with additional graduate classes in Vocational-Technical curriculum and administration from the University of Kentucky and Penn State University.

### *Work Experience*

From 1950 to 1966, Ken worked as a carpenter and building contractor on a part-time basis while attending college or teaching in Nebraska public schools. For the years 1954-1966 Ken taught mathematics, vocational shop, and was a high school principal in Nebraska public schools. 1966-1967 found Ken as Director of one and two year trade, technical and health occupation programs and three year engineering technology programs at the Engineering College of Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. Then, from 1967-1975 Ken was First Superintendent/Director/President of Area Technical School #2/ Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College which offered one and two year occupational programs at North Platte, Nebraska. From 1975-1990, Ken was Campus President of Mid-Plains Community College at North Platte and was responsible for Academic, Vocational & Continuing Education programs on both campuses. Then from 1990-1999, he served as Vice President/Dean in charge of Voc-Tech Campus on and off campus, full and part time programs in trade and technical, and health occupations.

**(Editor-Writer) Ford Craig** lives in North Platte, Nebraska and is married to Doris, a full time legal assistant, and they have two grown daughters, Jody and Jill. Ford is a semi-retired community college faculty member and administrator. He does some consulting work with community colleges; serves on NCATE accreditation teams (teacher education programs in four-year colleges); teaches online graduate education for the University of Phoenix; guides occasional adult book studies at a local church; fixes cars (Ford and Doris have five clunkers); cooks during the week, cleans house, hunts pheasants, wild turkeys, and deer; takes a nap over the lunch hour most days, and does some writing. Ford has been in the business of education, at one level or another, for 38 years.



*Ford Craig*

### *Academic Background*

Ford holds a Bachelor's degree in English, Master's in English, Educational Specialist Degree in Administration, and an Educational Doctorate in Higher Education. The first three degrees come from institutions within the state of Nebraska; the last one was awarded in Ft. Lauderdale at Nova University.

### *Work Experience*

In the years between 1970 and 1978, Ford taught high school English and speech at several Nebraska locations. From 1978 through 2004, he was employed at Mid-Plains Community College as an English faculty member and then in the final ten years, as a Director of Institutional Research. Since retirement he has served as a part-time consultant, NCATE Evaluator, and Education Faculty Member at North Platte Community College. Most recently, he has accepted some online teaching responsibilities with the University of Phoenix. He also has taught online doctoral courses for the University of Phoenix since 2006.

**(Principal Writer) Jerda Thompson Garey** Jerda Thompson Garey is a third generation Red Willow County native, and a long standing supporter of McCook Community College. Following her early retirement in 2002, she returned to McCook and has been assisting daughter Pamela with a family landscaping business, serving as a nutritionist for the WIC program several days a month, and facilitated the Business of Administration of Technical Studies Program for Bellevue University in 2005-2006.



*Jerda Thompson Garey*

Upon her return to McCook, she was appointed to a vacancy on the McCook City Council, was later elected to the position, and was selected Mayor of McCook. Rotary, church, community theater, and serving as Heritage Days chair has kept her involved. Golfing, fishing, gardening, and art activities fill her days. However, her main interest is staying abreast of her grandchildren in sports, 4-H, scouting, and school activities.

Grandson Brian Gaston continued the family tradition of attending McCook Community College, played basketball, participated in Student Senate, and was the third generation Phi Theta Kappa member. Other grandsons include Cory, Kyle, and Greg Gaston and Mack Alspaugh. Her only granddaughter is Olivia Garey who lives in Omaha, Nebraska.

### *Academic Background*

Jerda attended rural District 8 K-8 school, graduated from McCook High School, McCook Junior College, and received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in home economics and vocational education with a minor in social studies from the University of Nebraska. She earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Nova University, attending the cluster site in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

### *Work Experience*

Jerda enjoyed her roles in ranching and living on the family farm following her short tenure as a home economics teacher at Crete, Nebraska and rearing three children, Denise, Pamela, and Scott. All three are also graduates of McCook Community College.

When her children were preschoolers, she managed a preschool, then she taught at Bartley High School in Bartley, Nebraska, for three years, and then began a twenty-year career at McCook Community College. She also served as the Vocational Arts Division Chair and Dean of Community Services. In 1992, she was named the Director of the Iowa State Vocational Education Advisory Council, and in 2002, completed her Iowa tenure as the State Director of Career and Technical Education.

*(Principal Writer)* William Hasemeyer and his wife Beth have lived in North Platte since 1967. They have three grown children: Bill, Jr., Amy, and Pam Thompson - all of whom live in North Platte. The Hasemeyer's have one granddaughter, Kaylee Thompson.



*Dr. William Hasemeyer*

Bill is a member of Rotary and has been president of the North Platte Rotary Club and was chosen to serve as the District Governor of Rotary District 563 in 1980. He is a Mason and has served as President of the North Platte Shrine Club. He also is a very active member of the North Platte United Methodist Church and has chaired and served on almost all committees within the local church. He has served as chair of three United Methodist Conference Boards and also served as the Conference Lay Leader for eight years. For the past three years, he has kept busy traveling the state of Nebraska as the Director of Stewardship for the Conference United Methodist Church.

### *Academic Background*

Bill was born and raised in Superior, Nebraska, where he graduated from high school. After high school graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and spent eighteen months on the island of Guam with the 103rd Seabees. After his discharge, he attended Kearney State Teachers College and completed his Bachelor's Degree in 1952. He completed a Master of Education Degree with a major in Educational Administration at the University of Wyoming in 1957. Bill returned to the University of Wyoming in 1964 and began working on a Doctor of Education degree (emphasis on higher education). He earned this degree, graduating in the summer of 1967 after a year of residency.

### *Work Experience*

Dr. Hasemeyer retired in 1994, after having completed forty-two years in education. He began his career in January of 1952 as a history teacher and coach at Sutherland, Nebraska. In 1954, he was appointed Principal of Sutherland high school and remained in that capacity until moving in 1958 to become Superintendent of Lewellen Elementary and Lewellen Rural High School. In 1960, Bill became Superintendent of Schools for the Chappell Elementary and Deuel County High School in 1960.

After completing his doctoral studies, Bill and his family moved to North Platte where he was the Dean of Instruction for the North Platte Junior College. He became President of North Platte Junior College in 1971. In 1973 the Nebraska Legislature passed legislation forming the Nebraska Community College Areas, by combining the Junior Colleges with the Vocational Technical Colleges. He



was subsequently elected President of the Mid-Plains Technical Community College Area. Later, his title was changed to Chancellor of the Area.



*Ivan Koch*

*(Principal Writer) Ivan Koch* lives in North Platte where the Great River Road to the West divides into the South Platte River which runs through Denver and the North Platte River which was the route of the Mormon Trail and the Oregon Trail. Ivan is full-time retired from teaching and semi-retired from assignments which are given to him to keep him from lapsing into total indolence.

### *Academic Background*

Ivan has a BA degree in English from Huron College (SD), 1954, an MA in English from the University of Wyoming, 1962, and advanced study in English at the University of Iowa, 1965-1967.

### *Work Experience*

Ivan taught high school English in South Dakota, 1957-1960; in Alaska, 1960-1965; and part time at Kenai Community College (Alaska), 1963-1965. In 1967, he became a member of the faculty of North Platte Junior College and remained on the staff until he retired in 1996.

Appendix A  
A Legislative Act

**Senate File No. 1**

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR P. W. SCOTT OF RED WILLOW AND  
REPRESENTATIVE W. H. MEYERS OF RED WILLOW.

AN ACT to provide for the establishment of junior college districts, and maintenance and support of junior colleges therein; for calling special elections for the establishment of junior college districts; to declare the result of such elections; to provide for boards of education to take and have control of the affairs of junior colleges; to authorize such board of education to employ teachers and other employees, and to make estimates of the amount of funds required for the support of such junior colleges, and to certify the same to the county boards; to define the duties of such boards of education and the individual members thereof and fixing their compensation, and fixing the amount of and liability upon the bond of the treasurer; to authorize such boards of education to issue certificates and diplomas; to provide for the erection and equipment of junior college buildings; to authorize the issuing of bonds to provide for the erection and equipment of junior college buildings, and for the levying of taxes to pay the same; and defining the qualifications of the electors in junior college districts.

*Be it Enacted by the People of the State of Nebraska:*

Section 1. The term "County Board" as used in this act includes both county commissioners and county supervisors as the case may be.

Sec. 2. Junior colleges may be established as a part of the secondary school system of this state and junior college districts may be formed and organized in accordance with the provisions of this act. When any junior college district is so formed and organized, the governing body thereof shall establish and maintain a junior college therein.

Sec. 3. The district junior colleges shall be organized in and be co-terminous with any school district having a total average daily attendance of two hundred or more pupils in the high school or high schools of such district as shown by the superintendent's report of the preceding year, and having an assessed valuation of not less than five million dollars, as shown by the last preceding equalization assessment roll. A district maintaining a junior college of this type shall be known as a junior college district. Such district shall bear the name of the school district in which it is organized.

Sec. 4. A petition for the formation of a junior college district shall be as follows:

Whenever five hundred or more qualified electors residing in any proposed district or any district now operating a Junior college shall unite in a petition to the superintendent of schools of the county asking for the formation of a junior college district, and whenever such petition shall be accompanied by a separate petition signed by a majority of the board of education of such school district, such county superintendent of schools, after verifying the signatures of said petitions and satisfying himself that the signatures to said petitions are sufficient shall transmit the same to the state superintendent of public instruction for approval. If the state superintendent of public instruction shall approve the petition, the question shall be submitted for determination at an election to be called by the county superintendent of schools having authority over the territory to be included in such junior college district; said election to be held at such central place or places as he may designate and shall give at least twenty days' notice thereof as required by law for holding school district election. The voting shall be by printed ballots provided by the board of education of the local school district and the proposition shall be placed upon the ballots in substantially the following form:

For the establishment of Junior College District No. ——— to be maintained in part by taxation and in part by tuition.

Against the establishment of Junior College District No. ——— to be maintained in part by taxation and in part by tuition.

Ballots shall be cast in ballot boxes and the voting shall be under the direction and in charge of the board of education of the local school district within which such election is being held. If any member of the board of education refuses to serve at said election as a member of the election board, or fails to appear at the place designated as the polling place for said election at the time designated, a vacancy shall be declared by and filled by the members of the election board present in the same manner as provided for filling vacancies in election boards at general election. The expenses of said election shall be paid by the board of education out of the general funds of said school district. Said board of education shall make a list of all persons

voting at said election, shall count the ballots and certify the return within twenty-four hours to the county clerk who shall canvass the same as provided for canvassing returns in general elections and shall report the results to the county superintendent.

If sixty per cent of the votes cast in such a proposed junior college district shall be in favor of the establishment thereof, the county superintendent shall declare the same duly established.

Sec. 5. In every junior college district the board of education of the school district in which the same is located shall constitute the junior college board and after organizing a junior college said board shall have the management and the control of the junior college in said district.

Sec. 6. When the average daily attendance of the students in any junior college district during the whole of any school year after the second school year shall be less than forty, the state superintendent of public instruction shall suspend such junior college in said junior college district and shall report the fact to the county board of the county in which said junior college district is located. Upon receiving such report, the county board of the county shall declare the said junior college district dissolved and shall cause the property thereof to be sold. All moneys received from the sale of the property of the junior college district, and all moneys in the treasury of said district shall be paid to and belong to the school district in which said junior college district is located.

Sec. 7. The board of education of any junior college district shall meet and enter upon the duties of their office on the first Tuesday succeeding their election. The regular meetings of the board of education of any junior college district shall be held upon the first Monday of each month, provided that special meetings may be held from time to time, as circumstances may demand, and all meetings of the board shall be open to all the public unless otherwise specially ordered. A majority of all members of the board shall constitute a quorum, but a less number in attendance at any regular meeting shall have, and a quorum at any special meetings may have, power to compel the

attendance of absent members, in such manner and under such penalties as such board shall see fit to prescribe.

Sec. 8. Except as otherwise provided in this act, the powers and duties of the junior college board shall be such as are now or may hereafter be assigned by law to boards of education of public school districts organized under Articles XXV, XXVI and XXVII, Chapter 79, Compiled Statutes of Nebraska, 1929.

Sec. 9. The junior college board may prescribe junior college courses of study, including not more than two years of work in advance of that offered by any accredited four-year high school. The junior college board shall admit thereto the graduates of any accredited high school of Nebraska, the graduates of other high schools and such other candidates as may be recommended for admission by the president of the junior college. Junior colleges may provide courses of instruction designed to prepare for higher institutions of learning; courses of instruction designed to prepare for agricultural and industrial, commercial, home-making and other vocations; and such courses of instruction as may be deemed necessary to provide for the civic and liberal education of the citizens of the community. The junior college board shall adopt regulations governing the organization of such courses of study and shall prescribe requirements for graduation from such junior college courses; provided that the minimum requirements for graduation from such junior college courses of study shall be at least sixty credit hours of work. A credit hour shall be defined as approximately three hours of recitation, study and laboratory work per week carried throughout one semester. The state superintendent of public instruction shall prepare and publish from time to time standards and other regulations for the accreditation of such junior colleges, provide adequate inspection for junior colleges and recommend for accrediting all such courses of study offered by junior colleges as may meet the standards and regulations as determined.

Sec. 10. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Board of each junior college to make under oath an annual report to the state superintendent of public instruction. All blanks for making such annual reports shall be furnished by the state superintendent of public instruction.



Sec. 11. The junior college board of a junior college district shall annually, during the month of June, report to the county board an estimate of the amount of funds required for the support of the said school during the fiscal year next ensuing, such estimate to include all such items as enumerated in the statutes governing schools now organized under Article XXV, of Chapter 79, Compiled Statutes of Nebraska, 1929, and the County Board is hereby authorized and required to levy the necessary amounts the same as other taxes.

In event that a county board fails to make such a levy it shall be the duty of the county superintendent of the proper county to make and deliver to the county clerk of said county not later than the first Monday of August following the annual meeting an itemized estimate of the amount necessary to be expended during the ensuing year for school purposes in such district. It shall be the duty of the county clerk to levy such taxes on the taxable property of the district, to be collected by the county treasurer at the same time and in the same manner as the state and county taxes are collected, and shall pay the same to the treasurer of the junior college board. The tax thus collected shall be known as the "Junior College Fund".

Sec. 12. The aggregate school tax for junior college purposes shall in no year exceed such sum or rate as shall be necessary to raise the sum provided for by the estimate returned in accordance with Section 15 of this act, provided such levy shall in no event exceed two mills for any public school district that may be included. Junior colleges organized under the provisions of this act shall never apply for or receive any appropriation of State Funds or financial aid for their organization, maintenance or support.

Sec. 13. The junior college board may prescribe uniform tuition fees to be paid by all students enrolled in the junior college established under the provisions of the law governing such establishment not to exceed one hundred and eight dollars per year per pupil. All tuition moneys shall be payable to the treasurer of the junior college board and shall be used only for the purpose specified in this article.

Sec. 14. In all junior college districts, the superintendent of such public school district shall be designated as president of

the junior college. The salary of the president of the junior college shall be proportionately determined and paid from the funds of the junior college district and the public school district in which the junior college is located.

Sec. 15. The board of education of any junior college district may borrow money upon the bonds of said district and they are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds for the purpose of purchasing sites and erecting suitable junior college buildings and furnishing and equipping the same, such bonds to bear interest at a rate not exceeding six per centum per annum, payable annually or semi-annually at such places as may be designated in said bonds. Said loan shall be paid and reimbursed in a period not exceeding thirty years from date of the bonds. Said bonds may be made optional at any time after five years from their date: Provided that no bonds shall be issued until a petition signed by at least one-third of the qualified voters as defined in this act of the junior college district shall be presented to the board of education of said district, asking that the question of issuing such bonds be submitted to the district, which petition shall set forth the amount of bonds to be voted, which amount shall not exceed five per cent of the last completed assessment, the time the bonds are to run, rate of interest and purpose of issue. Upon the filing of such petition, the board of education shall call the election of the district, notice of which election shall be given by at least twenty days publication of the same in at least one newspaper, published in the junior college district and posting of copies of said notice in at least three public places in said district. The notice shall set forth the purpose in full and the time and place for holding such election. The vote shall be by ballot and if sixty per cent of all the ballots cast at such election shall be in favor of the proposition, the board shall be, and hereby is empowered to issue and negotiate the bonds. At least ten days prior to said election the board of education of such junior college district shall select judges and clerks of election in each district embraced within such junior college district and shall notify said judges and clerks by registered mail at least five days before said election. The returns of such election shall be made to the board of education and the board shall canvass and declare the results of such election. Said bonds shall be signed by the president and secretary of the board of education of said junior college dis-

trict and when issued the same shall be sold in the open market to the highest bidder for not less than par value.

Sec. 16. Every citizen of the United States, male or female, who has resided in the state six months, and in the district forty days and is twenty-one years old and who owns real property or personal property that was assessed in the district in his or her name at the last annual assessment, or whose spouse owns real or personal property that was assessed in the name of said spouse in the district at the last annual assessment, or who has children of school age, residing in the district, shall be entitled to vote on the question of establishing a junior college district and voting bonds for the same and all questions relative to the junior college.

Approved March 26, 1931.



Appendix B  
A Report on College Location

*Report to North Platte Junior College Board from Donald W. Pederson, President.*

On the same evening that the North Platte Junior College Board was recognized this year, I appointed a committee from our Board to help effectuate the merger of North Platte Junior College into the new area Community College District. Appointed to this committee, in addition to myself, was Bob Brown. I also requested Dr. Gordon Sawyers, a former College Board member and unopposed candidate for the new area board, to serve on this same committee feeling that it would be beneficial to not only the merger but Dr. Sawyer's future effectiveness on the board of the area district.

I thereafter contacted Mr. Darrell Peters, President of the Mid-Plains Vocational Technical College Board, and requested a meeting with him to discuss the merger. At the same time I expressed to him our board's desire to cooperate with his board in this transition. Mr. Peters responded immediately to this request and met to discuss the situation.

Out of the first meeting, we jointly determined that one of the first decisions that would have to be made is the location of the Junior College campus, at my request Mr. Peters appointed a local committee from his board to aid us in our consideration of campus location. It was recognized that whatever decision the Junior College Board made in regard to location of the facilities would, by legislative enactment, need to be completed by the new area board. Appointed to serve on this committee from Mid-Plains Board in addition to Mr. Peters were Mendel Hirschfeld, Dr. Charles F. Heider, Jr. and Wendell W. Wood. Also asked to help this committee were the administrators of Mid-Plains and the North Platte Junior College.

Basically the first question to be considered by the committee was whether the Junior College buildings should be placed on the land now owed by the college or whether they should be put on the present vocational technical site.

The committee met on numerous occasions to consider and discuss the factors involved in such a decision.

At an early meeting, the following basic questions were posed:

1. Is it advantageous to have Mid-Plains Vocational College and North Platte Junior College on one campus, and it is vital to the effectiveness of the programs of the schools that they be on one campus?
2. At the present time is there enough land on the Mid-Plains site to accommodate the new Junior College, as well as to provide future expansion for the programs of both schools?



3. If there is not presently enough land for this program, is there additional suitable land available and adjacent to the present Mid-Plains site for this purpose and is this land readily available?

4. If additional land is found to be needed and is also readily available, are there any other factors that should be considered, such as access to the campus site; land filling that may be necessary; location of such land in relationship to making an attractive college site; whether this land has any problems that may be a deterrent to present or future construction plans; and a consideration of the intention of Miss Janet McDonald's Will.

Before any conclusion was reached by this committee, it was decided that a thorough investigation should be made of the questions posed, recognizing that a decision in this respect must be made at the earliest possible time, preferably by October 1st. Following this meeting, the members of this committee and others set about contacting land owners, discussing interstate highway access routes with the highway commissioners and other state officials, discussion with city officials regarding matters of access, city services and other matters of concern, contact with the United States Corp of Engineers and a discussion with representatives of the Higher Education Facilities Commission for the State of Nebraska.

After making this investigation, the committee again met to discuss their findings. The committee was of the unanimous belief that it would be generally beneficial if the schools could be placed on one campus. It was generally concluded that although there may well be benefits to a single campus, distance involved between the present site of Mid-Plains and the land owner by the college would not be a great handicap to effective administration. This was also the conclusion of the administrators involved. Dr. Charles F. Heider Jr. expressed his belief that it would not be in keeping with community college concept to put the schools on separate campuses; however, the other members of the committee and the administrators felt that these intangible benefits should be weighed against the other factors under consideration.

It was generally agreed that there was not presently adequate land for future expansion of the Mid-Plains site and that more land would be needed to properly layout and adequate campus. Discussing this matter with land owners in the area, we found that the only land that might be available would be on the back side or the North of the vocational technical buildings.

The immediate availability or price of this land could not be presently established. It did not appear that this land was as desirable as the college land and was sufficiently low in elevation to require a considerable amount of expensive fill.

Access to the present vocational technical site was thoroughly studied. Committee members made observations of the congestion at the entrance to the access road particularly at school hours. There was great concern expressed at the thought of what this congestion would be if Junior College students were added to this already congested condition. It was found that although another interstate access route in to soon be built, it was felt that this route would be too far East of the present Mid-Plains site to be of any real benefit to reduce the access problems, particularly in view of where most of the affected student body would come from.

A report was received that some funds are available for construction from the Higher Education Facilities Commission. North Platte Junior College has a high priority to receive these funds if we have a site plan and a proposed construction program to be evaluated by the commission. To have an opportunity for these funds, it is necessary that all preliminary architectural work be done and that a site plan be submitted in December of this year. Thus, we felt that we must immediately make our plans. These funds basically will match up to forty per cent with our funds in a building project. Our information is that there is \$385,000.00 now available for this purpose. Our investigation indicates that we will receive no less than \$1,000,000.00 for the North Platte Junior College by the Will of Miss Janet McDonald for the purpose of a building. This, together with available Federal funds and our anticipated sinking fund of \$350,000.00, will allow us to construct a fine college campus, but we will need to proceed as soon as possible in order to have an opportunity for these matching funds since we never know the availability of such funds in future years. Our preliminary investigation has indicated that our application for these funds for construction purposes. We were informed however, that there may be a question about our receiving any of these higher education funds if we would propose construction in a "flood plain area" (which the U.S. Corp of Engineers so considers the vocational land area). There is a considerable elevation difference between the vocational land area and the land presently owned by the college. This question has never previously been raised as far as the vocational technical college site, in view of that fact that no application for federal funds has ever been considered on that site. We found that if construction in a "flood plain area" was to be approved, it would only be after considerable diking and other protective measures, which would be extremely expensive.

Our investigation of the intention of Miss Janet McDonald in her Will, left us without question, that she intended that the building be built upon the land now owned by the college for this purpose.

After all facts were considered, all of the members of the committee agreed that they wished the clock could be turned back about seven years and the campuses be built side by side as several members of this committee had urged

at the time. However, with the previously noted exception, it was felt by this joint committee and it is the recommendation of the College Board Committee that the college campus be placed upon the land owned by the college for this purpose and that plans be started immediately for construction.

In making this recommendation, we are not unmindful of the several well meaning persons who have expressed the desire that the campuses be placed side by side; however, after considering all of the factors involved in such a decision, we believe that it is in the best interests of the entire higher education program that we commence construction as recommended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donald W. Pederson". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Donald W. Pederson  
President  
North Platte Junior College Board

Appendix C  
Preparing for the Merger

*News Release – June 29, 1973 by North Platte Junior College Board*

On November 14, 1961 an election was held by the voters of North Platte School District #1 for the purpose of creating a North Platte College District. By a large majority, 67% of the voters, approval was given to create a college district in North Platte, Nebraska. On October 6, 1964 a bond election in the amount of \$197,000.00 was passed for the remodeling of the old post office building to supply classes officially started in September of that year. With the completion of the 1972-1973 school year, our college has operated successfully for the benefit of North Platte and area residents for eight years.

Our North Platte College during the 1972-1973 school year served over 2200 people in our area in community services as follows: Evening credit classes- 430 students, evening, non-credit classes-1117 students, special classes, programs and seminars-677 students. In addition to this there were 400 full time daytime college students served with college credit hour courses. This is a total of 2600 individuals who were served by North Platte's college during the past year.

From its birth in 1961 to the present day the North Platte College has been guided by dedicated people of this community whose sole purpose was to provide a means of higher education for North Platte and area residents at a minimum cost. College Board members in the past include: Charles McCarthy, Carson C. Young, Frank McKain, Dr. C. C. Pinkerton, Harold Kay, Harry D. Peck, E. H. Shoemaker, Jr., Bruce E. Allen, C. E. Swanson, Samuel Snell and Dr. Gordon Sawyers. The present board members are Donald W. Pederson, Joseph M. Dye, Robert M. Brown, Marlyn Engdahl, Jack McDermand, and Dallas Darland. The administration serving in the past as college presidents or deans were Otto Oakes, Dr. William Ptacek, and Gene Hunt. The present college president, Dr. William Hasemeyer has served our college the past six years.

This is all history, but it is good at times to review what has passed, when a major change is taking place. In eight short years our college has established a pattern and tradition that all North Platte residents have shared in and are proud of for their participation. North Platte tax dollars have supported our college.

On July 1, 1973, our North Platte College will become a part of the Mid-plains Technical Community College area involving eighteen counties around Lincoln County. This technical community college area is charged with the responsibility of offering vocational technical education, two year academic programs, and comprehensive community service programs. This program in our area involves three institutions, our North Platte Junior College, the McCook Junior College and Mid-Plains Vocational College. An eleven man board elected from the area

in November of 1972 is charged with the administration of these three institutions in this 18 county area. Operation of the three institutions will commence on July 1, 1973 for the newly elected area board. This new technical community college area shall succeed to all the property and property rights of every kind, contracts, obligations, and chose in action of every kind held by or belonging to the three colleges in our area. The new board, by law, shall be liable for and recognize, assume and carry out all valid contracts and obligations of the three colleges in our area.

IN 1968, 100 acres of land were purchased by the North Platte College District for its future campus site directly across north from the University of Nebraska Experiment station. This land is owned by the North Platte College District as well as all furniture, fixtures and equipment in the present college building. As of May 31, 1973, the North Platte College District has \$336,279.95 in a building fund to be used for construction purposes only. In addition, the college district is the beneficiary of the bulk of the estate of Miss Janet McDonald which is estimated conservatively to be one million dollars. By Miss McDonald's will, the college district was directed to use this money for the construction, furnishing and equipment of a building located upon its campus site to be used for educational purpose. These are all assets of the North Platte College District which will pass on to new area as of July 1, 1973.

The passing of an era is sometimes painful, but always indicates progress. As members of our present college board, the changing of our institution from a local level to bigger and better educational processes, gives us pleasure. Many dedicated North Platte people and North Platte tax dollars have given us an institution that we are all proud of and an institution that has served our community well.

As members of the North Platte College Board, we would charge the Mid Plains Nebraska Community College board to carry on to completion the programs set in motion by past and present North Platte College boards. In so doing, our excellent 2 year academic college will continue to serve an 18 county area in the same fine manner that it has served our local population. With dedication to purpose, three fine educational institutions of learning will continue to grow and to serve the reason for their existence.













