# EIGHTY YEARS OF UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY EDUCATION ON COLLEGE HILL

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# PREFACE

In this study, an effort has been made to present a broad overview of the history of the Oklahoma educational institution known today as Rogers State College. The school has, from its inception, survived opposition and controversy regarding both its purpose and existence. From its humble beginning as Eastern University Preparatory School through its glory days as Oklahoma Military Academy to its tumultuous changeover to a comprehensive community college, its mission has always been to educate and serve its students and the community which has been its home.

The author will first examine the conditions of education at statehood, the effects of politics upon the life of Eastern University Preparatory School, and the concern of the community for the development of higher education. As will be seen, all of this political activity and community involvement preceded and culminated in the establishment of Eastern University Preparatory School and ultimately brought about its demise.

The author will focus on the rise and fall of the institution's most patriotic and perhaps significant era when it was known as Oklahoma Military Academy. There were sweeping changes in the attitudes of both our nation and the local community between the time Oklahoma Military Academy

was established (shortly after World War I) and the time of its demise (which occurred toward the end of the controversial and unpopular Vietnam Conflict). It is the author's intent to create within these pages a setting for the drama which unfolded at this institution among the young cadets who so skillfully played their parts in the drama and in the larger drama of warfare which often followed their training. Additionally, the common experiences in the life of the cadet at OMA will be discussed, since history does not solely consist of major events but also the recording of daily life.

Finally, the author will discuss the demise of Oklahoma Military Academy, focusing especially on the political and societal pressures involved in the state legislature's decision to close the doors on the glory days of Oklahoma Military Academy forever and to open them to a broader community base . . . the community which for so long had been home, controversies notwithstanding, to the college on the hill. Even after the sweeping changes that gave birth to Claremore Junior College, the institution continued to change and grow in scope to bring ever broadening educational opportunities to area residents.

The author will briefly explore this expansion and examine what the future might hold for the institution now known as Rogers State College. It seems an irony that the institution has come full circle in its original mission since its days of Eastern University Preparatory School.

Today, Rogers State College offers not only college preparatory courses, but military training as well and a full two-year college program. This ironic cycle be discussed in the historical perspective this paper attempts to address.

Regarding the methodology used in this paper, the author generally followed traditional research methods in gathering information for this paper. The author chose to emphasize the human side of the institution's history rather than just the bare facts and events of history. Consequently, personal interviews with those who have worked and attended the school as well as documents containing personal recollections were both heavily used. In addition, the author's twelve years of employment at what is now Rogers State College provided a general knowledge of and appreciation for the school's history.

Before proceeding with the body of the dissertation, I believe it is appropriate at this point to personally thank those who have helped bring this dissertation to a culmination. There are many individuals who made this project possible, and I could not possibly mention everyone; however, I will attempt to identify a few individuals and organizations that I feel went beyond the call of duty. First, I appreciate the support, guidance, patience and mentorship that was given to me during this project by the members of the Oklahoma State University Educational Administration and Higher Education Department. I would

especially like to thank Dr. Thomas A. Karman, my committee chair, and the members of my committee, Dr. John Gardiner, Dr. James Key and Dr. Robert Kamm. They all were very tolerant, helpful and unfailing in providing their guidance to the very end.

I am also indebted to the faculty, staff and administration of Rogers State College and the Rogers State College Foundation for usage of their historical records from the Oklahoma Military Academy era.

I wish to express thanks for research assistance to the staff at the Will Rogers Memorial, the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Rogers State College Library, particularly Mr. Allen Lawless. Thanks must also go to Gay Stack, Teresa Slate, Jane Duff, and Julie Luscomb for all their technical and editing assistance.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Overview and Purpose

Oklahoma history is filled with rich and colorful characters who staged a drama in the wild frontiers known prior to statehood as Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory. The story of merging these two polarized territories into the great State of Oklahoma sets the stage for many personal struggles and political battles over the establishment of state institutions and the leaders who would govern them. Oklahoma history is essentially the story of these characters, their disappointing failures, and their glorious achievements.

One scene in this drama is the creation of excellent and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of both territories,[1] primarily the Indians of The Five Civilized Tribes who resided in Indian Territory and the white settlers who were attempting to tame the western frontier of Oklahoma Territory. This drama unfolded amid controversy and political gamesmanship during the territorial phases prior to statehood and particularly after statehood in 1907. What is interesting and perhaps ironic, considering the contemporary educational issues in the forefront of Oklahoma

politics today, is the condition of the educational system as it stood at statehood in 1907.

When statehood arrived after much dissention between the two territories, educational systems had been developed and implemented which were far superior to any other new state being admitted to the Union (Davison, 1950-51). Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory had been populated rather quickly by settlers from other states which already had educational systems in place. This included The Five Civilized Tribes' national systems of education which gave Oklahoma a distinct advantage over most new, developing states (Davison, 1950-51).

With this advantage, it is no wonder that excellent schools would emerge in the new state. It is the intent here to focus on the development and growth of one such Oklahoma educational institution, known today as Rogers State College (RSC) in Claremore, Oklahoma.

Rogers State College has a proud history beginning in 1909 - just two years after statehood - as Eastern University Preparatory School. After some political controversy culminating in the elimination of appropriations, the original preparatory school closed its doors in the spring of 1917. It was resurrected just two years later as Oklahoma Military Academy (OMA) and remained as such until 1971. At that time it gave way to the state legislature's mandates, the intense anti-military sentiment during the Vietnam Crisis, and the community's changing

needs to become Claremore Junior College (CJC). The school was renamed Rogers State College on July 1, 1982, to reflect more adequately the institution's commitment to providing educational services to a broader based community which includes not only the main campus but outreach centers and telecourses offered by KXON TV-35, the college's own television station (Mosier, 1991).[2]

Although it is the author's intent to provide a history of the college from its beginning in 1909 to the establishment of Claremore Junior College, the primary focus will be on that glorious time in the college's history known as "The Golden Years," the years in which Oklahoma Military Academy graced College Hill as one of the finest military academies in the nation.

OMA has a proud heritage and an extensive register of graduates who have gone on to become great leaders, both military and civilian. This study would be incomplete without paying honorable tribute to those Oklahoma Military Academy graduates who served bravely, risking life and limb, and in particular those who sacrificed their very lives for this country during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. It is the author's intent to present a study, or human drama, if you will, of the ordinary and extraordinary people who made this institution great. Eastern University Preparatory School, Oklahoma Military Academy, Claremore Junior College and Rogers State College are the stories of the characters who lived the drama.

Toward the end of its days, Oklahoma Military Academy was perceived by some to be little more than a boarding school designed to discipline troubled boys or borderline juvenile delinquents. That seems to have been an image problem with military academies in general, but particularly at Oklahoma Military Academy toward its final days (Mosier, 1991). Even though this was the truth in some instances, it was certainly not correct for its entire history. OMA had a proud record of instilling in young boys the values of tradition, dedication and duty. Oklahoma Military Academy produced many heroes, both on the battlefield and in the civilian world.

One OMA graduate, Edwin Price Ramsey, co-author of Lieutenant Ramsey's War, described the atmosphere he found at OMA.

> Oklahoma Military Academy, near Claremore, was a bastion of the old army. It worshiped the values of nineteenth-century warfare and informed them only slightly with the lessons of the twentieth. It was a West Point of the prairie with a righteous love for American military tradition embodied in the horse (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 12).

Apparently OMA had a positive and lasting influence on Ramsey, as it did for so many others who remain to tell their stories and for those who have gone on to become immortalized as great American heroes who laid down the supreme sacrifice with honor and courage.

For more than eighty years, the hill above Claremore has symbolized quality education and service to the residents of Claremore and surrounding communities. During

those eighty years, many dramatic events in the political arena have had a significant impact in shaping and changing the direction of the educational structure and objectives of College Hill. This study will show that although many sweeping changes have occurred, particularly the demise of a great military institution, one thing always remained constant . . . dedication to meeting northeastern Oklahoma's need for quality education. The institution has, in fact, come full circle in its primary objective as a preparatory school; it remains loyal to its proud military roots, as well as providing a two-year college curriculum and continuing education for the vastly differing needs of the community.

This study will also note the history of the tumultuous relationship between Claremore, the governing bodies of state education, and the ever changing college. It is precisely this tumultuous relationship between the college and the city of Claremore and surrounding communities that provides the backdrop for the magnificent drama that has taken place on College Hill for more than eighty years.

Let's start at the beginning, a great drama itself known as Oklahoma Statehood.

## End Notes

[1]The attempt to provide equal educational opportunities at state funded schools for residents of both territories is illustrated by the following table:

TABLE I

A LIST OF OKLAHOMA INSTITUTIONS INCLUDING TIME AND PLACE OF ESTABLISHMENT

| Oklahoma Territory | Indian Territory |
|---|---|
| University of Oklahoma at Norman (1890)<br>Oklahoma A. & M. College at Stillwater (1890) | Oklahoma School of Mines and Metalurgy at Wilburton (1908)<br>Industrial Institute and College for Girls at Chickasha (1908) |
| Three Normal Schools:<br>Central at Edmond (1890)<br>Northwestern at Alva (1897)<br>Southwestern at Weatherford (1901) | Three Normal Schools:<br>East Central at Ada (1909)<br>Southeastern at Durant (1909)<br>Northeastern at Tahlequah (1909) |
| Three Agricultural Schools:<br>Helena (1908)<br>Lawton (1908)<br>Goodwell (1908) | Three Agricultural Schools:<br>Broken Arrow (1908)<br>Tishomingo (1908)<br>Warner (1908) |
| One University Preparatory:<br>School at Tonkawa (1901) | One University Preparatory:<br>School at Claremore (1909) |
| Colored A. & M. University at Langston (1897) | Miami School of Mines at Miami (1919) |

It is interesting to note that Eastern State University Preparatory school was the state's provision for a preparatory school in Indian Territory (Robards, 1947).

[2]The following table listing the school's presidents throughout its history is provided at this point for reference:

TABLE II

THE PRESIDENTS OF COLLEGE HILL

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Edmund Dandridge Murdaugh | 1909-1911 |
| Dr. J. H. Bayes | 1911-1913 |
| Mr. S. M. Barrett | 1913-1917 |
| Col. S. M. Barrett | 1919-1925 |
| Col. Walter E. Downs | 1925-1941 |
| Capt. John C. Hamilton | 1941-1945 |
| Col. Kenneth S. Perkins | 1945-1949 |
| Col. Homer W. Ledbetter | 1949-1965 |
| Gen. John F. Smoller | 1965-1969 |
| Col. John E. Horne | 1969-1972 |
| Dr. Richard H. Mosier | 1972- |

(Hamilton, 1990)

# CHAPTER II

## EASTERN UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL: THE BIRTH OF AN INSTITUTION

Prior to statehood in 1907, what would later become the State of Oklahoma was divided into two separate territories, Oklahoma Territory to the west including the panhandle and Indian Territory to the east. Oklahoma Territory was under the jurisdiction of the federal government. On the other hand, Indian Territory was protected by treaty, and the federal government had no jurisdiction to interfere in the management of those lands. The Dawes Commission set the stage for the passage of the Enabling Act which provided for the joining of the two territories to form the State of Oklahoma. The Enabling Act, passed in June 16, 1906, specified that delegates from the two territories and the Osage Reservation be elected to write a state constitution. All of this set the stage for President Theodore Roosevelt to sign a proclamation declaring Oklahoma a State of the Union on November 16, 1907 (Debo, 1949).

### Need for a Preparatory School

Shortly after statehood, amid controversies between what had been the two territorial lands and their political

advocates, the Second Legislative session convened in Guthrie in 1909. The establishment of an additional institution of higher education in the old Indian Territory was a foregone conclusion (Ledbetter, 1950), for prior to the establishment of a preparatory school at Claremore, the residents of the northeastern section of the state were provided with very meager means of education for the young people of that area. There were no preparatory or high schools in Claremore or Rogers County and probably not more than three in all of northeastern Oklahoma (Ledbetter, 1950).

As initially written, House Bill 362 called for the school to be established at Holdenville, but Representative C. S. Wortman of Rogers County was successful in amending the bill so that when it was finally passed and signed by Governor Howell on March 25, 1909, the Eastern University Preparatory School was securely located at Claremore. House Bill 362, which made this provision, stated that:

> The object of the school shall be to educate boys and girls in all branches up to and necessary for admission to the freshman class in the State University or other institutions of higher education.

In addition:

> The schools shall be under the control and management of a board of regents composed of the University Preparatory Board. The board of regents shall have power to do all things necessary to build, equip and maintain said school, except to expend money not appropriated (Oklahoma Session Laws, 1909).

This last exception would prove fatal for Eastern University

Preparatory School just eight years after its triumphant beginning.

## Political Struggle to Establish EUPS at Claremore

The location of the new school in old Indian Territory was a hotly debated issue in the legislature. One legislator in particular, Representative Humphreys from Atoka, attempted another amendment to the bill to locate the school in his home district, but his attempt was obviously unsuccessful (House Journal, Regular Session, Second Legislature, 1909). Those in Claremore, including the Claremore Commercial Club, which so strongly supported the creation of a preparatory school could finally celebrate (The Claremore Progress, July 7, 1909).

The granddaughter of Representative Wortman reported in a conversation with the current Rogers State College President, Dr. Richard Mosier, that Wortman loved to tell the story of his return to Claremore by train shortly after disclosure of the location of the new school had been made to the local citizenry. According to his account, he was met by a cheering throng of supporters who by torchlight bore him upon their shoulders to the lobby of the main hotel in Claremore where the celebration lasted into the wee hours of the morning. Whether this was actual fact or embellished family folklore, it certainly is indicative of the spirit of enthusiasm with which this new school was anticipated by Claremore residents and the political maneuvering

surrounding the establishment of this institution.

In spite of this early jubilation, there was one immediate problem. Educational institutions need land to develop and grow. Oklahoma's early territorial officials took steps to acquire generous endowments for state school lands. In Oklahoma Territory from two to four sections of land in each township had been set aside for public education (Davison, 1950-51). At statehood, Oklahoma Territory received in excess of three million acres from the Federal Government to be set aside for school use or school benefit. As a result of this extra allocation of state land for educational purposes, Oklahoma's school endowment is one of the largest in the nation (Davison, 1950-51). The problem with locating Eastern University Preparatory School in Claremore, which was at that time in the middle of Indian Territory, arose because Congress had no authority to set aside public land in Indian Territory for public school use, due to the fact that by treaty this land belonged to the Indians. In lieu of land allocations in Indian Territory, Congress did appropriate over five million dollars for the use and benefit of Oklahoma's schools (Davison, 1950-51).

## Land Requirements and Adequate Funding

However a problem still remained. Even though the Second Legislature approved the establishment of Eastern University Preparatory School at Claremore, there was no appropriated land on which to build. Nevertheless, the

citizens of Claremore, eager as they were to claim this school in their city, rallied to donate funds to purchase the needed lands and, in fact, acquired enough land to exceed the land requirements established for such an institution (Claremore Daily Progress, 1910).

To meet the legislature's land requirement, the editor of The Claremore Progress and his brothers provided the leadership which led to the purchase of 40 acres of the headright of Minnie Talbert, a Cherokee woman, as the site for the new school from George W. and Abbie E. Talbert, husband and wife, on January 27, 1910, for presentation to the State of Oklahoma. The purchase price was $3,000. In response, the legislature appropriated $85,000 for the building and maintenance of the school, and construction of the first building on the hill was begun. The building was aptly named Preparatory Hall and has become a majestic landmark and symbol of history, tradition and education for the citizens of Claremore. Today, the building houses administrative offices.

Undaunted by the delay in acquiring land and appropriations for construction of facilities, the first students at Eastern University Preparatory School attended classes in the old Claremont building in downtown Claremore while Preparatory Hall was under construction (Robards, 1947).

Edmond Dandridge Murdaugh, a colorful and somewhat controversial educator of early Oklahoma, was appointed as

the first president of the school even though he had at best a sketchy educational background. Though his tenure was controversial, he managed to remain president of the school until 1911 at which time he departed to assume the presidency of Southeastern State Normal School at Durant, Oklahoma (Thompson, 1954).

During the time Murdaugh served as president, Eastern University Preparatory School passed many of the milestones involved in the creation of a new institute of higher education. Adequate funding, of course, was of major concern, and during 1911 President Murdaugh was informed by the legislature of $40,000 in appropriations for two new dorms and $25,000 for a central heating plant. These funds alone made Eastern University Preparatory School one of the best equipped schools in the state (The Claremore Progress, February 17, 1911). However, immediately after these funds were secured, Representatives Chambers and Jeffords and Senator Graham of Claremore obtained an additional $90,000 appropriation for the school (The Claremore Progress, February 24, 1911).

The primary mission of the Eastern University Preparatory School was aptly identified by its title, "preparatory school." Its assigned role was to prepare the sons and daughters of the Native Americans and the farmers and ranchers of rural Northeastern Oklahoma for entry as members of the freshman class to the state universities or other public and private institutions of higher education.

## Classes, Societies and Extra-curricular Activities

Eastern University Preparatory School was organized to provide a wide range of educational opportunities. The curriculum included twelve courses of study in addition to providing basic leveling courses for those whose academic background was deficient. The leveling courses, or sub-freshman curriculum, consisted of classes in English, mathematics, history and natural science. The twelve college preparatory courses of study included modern languages, manual training, scientific, classical, agriculture, domestic science, telegraphy, commercial, stenography, homemaking, industrial and the teacher's certificate course. Within each area of study, the student was required to take basic classes from various departments as well as classes pertaining specifically to his/her selected emphasis. Although established as a preparatory school, the curriculum was also designed to provide adequate occupational training for those not able to continue their studies at a university or college (The Claremore Progress, September 2, 1910).

Extra-curricular activities were equally varied. By 1916, the football team was the state's best in its class. Both a Y.M.C.A. and a Y.W.C.A. were established and affiliated with the organization on a state and national level (Wilson, 1916). A German Club was organized by students taking German, and the Spanish club was in great demand (The Claremore Progress, February 16, 1912). Perhaps

as a precursor to the school's later function as a military academy, the school even had a military department (The Claremore Progress, October 6, 1911). Also, literary societies such as "Hayne" and "Webster" were established (The Claremore Progress, November 24, 1911). Many extra-curricular activities at the school were centered upon these two primary societies which competed scholastically and athletically, but the competition in debate was the most fierce.

By 1916, both attendance and growth at Eastern University Preparatory School was impressive. Faculty numbered twenty, with ten male and ten female instructors. Growth rate per annum hovered around the forty percent mark. The following table summarizes this growth rate over a three year period:

TABLE III

EUPS ENROLLMENT FOR YEARS 1914 TO 1916

| | |
|---|---|
| **1914-1915** | |
| Regular Term | 254 |
| Summer Term | 112 |
| Total | 314 |
| Increase Over Previous Year | 40% |
| **1915-1916** | |
| Regular Term | 300 |
| Summer Term | 199 |
| Total | 449 |
| Increase Over Previous Year | 43% |
| **1916 to Date** | |
| Regular Term | 253 |
| Expected Increase Over Previous Year | 40% |

At the time the above figures were calculated, statistics for the 1916-1917 school year were not complete. However, attendance was expected to continue at the past growth rate (Wilson, 1916).

## Community Support and Academic Recognition

Students first moved into Preparatory Hall in 1910 even though final construction would not be completed until 1912 (Robards, 1947). Since all students either lived in town or boarded with a family in Claremore, some transportation problems were a detrimental factor, especially during heavy rains which made access to the hill impossible. The heavy

rains would cause Cat Creek to rise and would isolate the school from the town of Claremore. Classes were either canceled or postponed until the weather cleared up (Ledbetter, 1950). In 1914, continuing local support prompted the city, township, county and state to join efforts to build a good road to the school from Claremore (The Claremore Progress, October 22, 1914).

This community support was prevalent throughout the short history of Eastern University Preparatory School. Local press coverage often urged citizens to support and promote the school as a state school rather than just another high school (The Claremore Progress, January 16, 1914; February 13, 1914; March 16, 1914; March 20, 1914; January 7, 1915). The local Commercial Club printed a resolution supporting the school in The Claremore Progress which read in part:

> . . . we, as a Commercial club, pledge to the president, Prof. Murdaugh, our undivided support and active aid in a way that we can to further the best interests of Claremore; and that the Commercial club be at his call and command (The Claremore Progress, July 7, 1909).

The football, baseball and basketball teams also enjoyed enthusiastic and positive press coverage throughout the year (The Claremore Progress, May 10, 1912; February 2, 1914; May 8, 1914; October 8, 1914; November 11, 1914; December 2, 1915). The school experienced continuing support from the Oklahoma legislators from Rogers County who worked to secure appropriations for ongoing operations and development. Toward this end, the legislators, faculty, staff and school

president all worked together (The Claremore Progress, April 1, 1915). By 1914, even the alumni, although small in numbers, were actively supporting the school (The Claremore Progress, May 29, 1914; June 4, 1914).

The school also continued to grow academically. In 1914, a library was established with a collection of some 1200 books (The Claremore Progress, April 10, 1914). In the same year, the State Board of Education made Eastern University Preparatory School a four year normal school (The Claremore Progress, April 14, 1914). President J. H. Bayes was successful in soliciting approval for the establishment and operation of a summer normal school for teachers (The Claremore Progress, June 25, 1914).

Additional academic milestones were passed by 1916. Eastern University Preparatory School gained recognition as a secondary school accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. As a result of this accreditation, students from the school could enter major colleges and universities such as Harvard, Yale and Oxford (The Claremore Progress, March 30, 1916). The North Central Association also granted Eastern State Preparatory School the highest ranking of any secondary school in the state or any bordering state, thereby achieving one of President's Barrett's goals of obtaining recognition for students attempting admission to major universities and colleges both in the United States and abroad (The Claremore Progress, May 11, 1916; Wilson, 1916).

During its eight year history, the Eastern University Preparatory School did not attract the great numbers of students hoped for, but it did serve the citizens of Rogers County well as the predecessor of the public schools that were to be built later throughout the country. The school's first commencement exercises were held at the Windsor Opera House on Saturday, June 18, 1910. There were five graduates (The Claremore Progress, June 17, 1910). By the spring of 1912, enrollment had grown, and fourteen students graduated from Eastern University Preparatory School. The last class to graduate from Eastern Preparatory School in the spring of 1917 had increased to twenty-two students (The Claremore Progress, 1917). With few exceptions, the nearly 100 graduates during the eight years of the school's existence were the sons and daughters of old Indian families, some of whom were still living in Rogers County as late as 1990.

## Personal Experiences of an EUPS Student

In a special feature story published on November 15, 1990, in the Will Rogers Country News, ninety year-old Mamie Vincent Lafferty remembered vividly her school days at Eastern University Preparatory School. Writer Shannon Cavanaugh wrote that "these fond memories come from the school days of 1916."

Cavanaugh reported that Lafferty moved from Foyil to live with a girlfriend when she was only fifteen so that she could take advantage of getting an education since no such

opportunities existed in Foyil at that time. The year was 1916, one year before the school closed due to lack of appropriations. She finished up her high school education during the two years Claremore High School occupied the facility.

One of her favorite memories was of a classmate with whom she often appeared in plays. "Lynn Riggs and I sang together in the old opera house downtown. I sure enjoyed those days," Lafferty recalled. Lynn Riggs was famous for his play "Green Grow the Lilacs" which was the inspiration for Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical, "Oklahoma!" Riggs was a 1917 graduate of Eastern University Preparatory School.

Lafferty also remembered the discipline at "The Prep", which was what the students affectionately called the school. Corporal punishment was an accepted practice in those days, and Lafferty remembered the "dreaded switch" used to correct students who were inattentive or who misbehaved. She was quick to add that she personally never experienced this humiliation. Lafferty remembered football games, picnics and "Smokey Hollow," a sanctuary where daring boys used to sneak off to smoke.

Looking through her treasured yearbook, she discovered a joke those same adventurous boys preserved through the years. She read a poem which someone wrote and credited to her name in the 1916 "Sequoyian" yearbook: "Kiss is a mouthful of nothing, tastes like heaven, sounds like a cow

pulling her foot out of the mud." As she finished, her petite body shook with laughter.

"I look back on those days and the tears just roll," Lafferty said. "I wouldn't take anything for these yearbooks."

Most importantly, Lafferty remembered how well her education prepared her for college. After leaving Claremore High School, she attended Central State University at Edmond where she earned her teaching certificate.

Ms. Lafferty's story was just one among many whose lives were influenced and shaped by Eastern University Preparatory School. Many stories are lost forever, but Ms. Lafferty's story gives a glimpse of what life at "The Prep" was like for one typical student so many years ago.

## Political Attack Upon EUPS

Ms. Lafferty would be a part of Eastern University Preparatory School for one year only, however, before it closed its doors and Claremore High School used the facilities temporarily. The last president to serve Eastern State University Preparatory School, Stephen M. Barrett, was caught up in a political controversy over the long-term need for Eastern University Preparatory School and other selected state-supported schools which arose almost immediately after the school's opening in 1909. Understandably, in a state with a population of only seventy thousand at the opening of the school, the need for nineteen state supported schools

was constantly questioned (Robards, 1947; see also Table I). Thus, from its beginning, Eastern University Preparatory School was under constant attack from its opponents, and in 1913 it was accused of being little more than a "city high school" for Claremore. While to a considerable measure the charge was true, it was quickly refuted publicly by the press and by influential community leaders (The Claremore Progress, 1913).

In 1915, Oklahoma Governor Lee Cruce took a strong position in favor of cutting back the number of state institutions of education by abolishing 13 schools, which included all of the state's preparatory schools. Although this action was proposed to save state money and to improve the quality of those remaining schools, the entire community rallied together, and Governor Cruce's proposal faced strong opposition from most groups including the Oklahoma farmer. Success of this particular plan, which ultimately failed, would have deprived many rural Oklahoma citizens of educational opportunities even at the high school level as would have been the case at Claremore (Robards, 1947; The Claremore Progress, December 1, 1911; March 4, 1915).

Eastern University Preparatory School only temporarily avoided the danger of closing. In the spring of 1917, politics and political pressure succeeded in shutting down one of the few secondary educational facilities in northeastern Oklahoma. Governor R. L. Williams first attempted to change the name of the school from Eastern

State Preparatory School to Eastern State Vocational School (The Claremore Progress, February 1, 1917; February 15, 1917). Later, Governor Williams vetoed the legislative appropriation for Eastern University Preparatory School, closing the doors on that institution forever (Oklahoma Session Laws, 1917; The Claremore Progress, April 5, 1917). The school yearbook, "The Sequoyian," of 1917 added a cryptic footnote to the history of Eastern University Preparatory School when it reported, "April 2, Flag Day. Senior Pins arrive. School Died Marched (sic) 31, through the Governor refusing to sign appropriation for its maintenance."

The school building itself was turned over to the city of Claremore to be used temporarily as the city high school (Claremore Messenger, August 10, 1917). However, a new institution would soon succeed where the old one had failed, and what a grand institution it was to be.

# CHAPTER III

## THE GOLDEN YEARS OF OKLAHOMA MILITARY ACADEMY

### Political Actions Initiating the Establishment of OMA

Just two short years after the controversial closing of the Eastern University Preparatory School, during which time it served as Claremore High School, political activities and patriotic sympathies combined to clear the way for the passage of a legislative bill to create and establish the Oklahoma Military Academy as the state institution to succeed the Eastern University Preparatory School at the Claremore campus. By this action, a new era of tradition and honor, remembered fondly today as the "golden years," was begun which would last fifty-two years until, once again, political and societal pressures would bring about the demise of this proud institution.[1]

It is an interesting side note that the two years between the closing of Eastern University Preparatory School in 1917 and the establishment of Oklahoma Military Academy in 1919 are cited in the history of Claremore High School athletics as the beginning of the strong competitive sports program that has been a source of pride in the Claremore public school system for more than 70 years (The Claremore Progress, 1919).

Although Eastern University Preparatory School was officially closed as a state institution, The Claremore Progress began an editorial campaign almost immediately to push for the school to reopen as an institution of state-wide influence. As the commencement speaker at Eastern University Preparatory School in the spring of 1917, the Speaker of the House of Representatives asserted that the school was not closing, but that its operation was only being suspended for a time because of lack of funding (The Claremore Progress, 1917). Even at this early date, there was talk of re-opening the school as a military school (The Claremore Progress, April 5, 1917).

In 1918, William Durant campaigned for the governorship with one of the planks of his platform being the re-opening of Eastern University Preparatory School as a state-supported military school. Most historians agree that H. Tom Kight, state representative from Claremore, played no small part in establishing Mr. Durant's platform. While serving in the legislature, Mr. Kight had a great vision for the benefit of Claremore and our country. He worked tirelessly to get Oklahoma Military Academy located in Claremore. While Mr. Durant was unsuccessful in his bid for the governor's office, Mr. Kight was successful in his quest. Building upon the mood of the country immediately following World War I that "America should never be found unprepared again," on January 16, 1919, he introduced and later successfully sponsored a bill through the legislative

process to found the Oklahoma Military Academy on the former Eastern University Preparatory School's campus in Claremore. For his successful efforts, Mr. Kight is considered to be the father of Oklahoma Military Academy (Claremore Daily Progress, 1953).

## Objectives of OMA

When OMA was first established in 1919 by an act of the state legislature, it had two objectives: academic achievement and leadership training. The real purpose behind Oklahoma Military Academy's training was to take a boy and build a man for leadership in both military and civilian America.

As with all other developments regarding the institution on the hill, the establishment of Oklahoma Military Academy was met with both great enthusiasm and skepticism by the community of Claremore. Although approved and financially supported by an act of the state legislature, Oklahoma Military Academy had a meager beginning in 1919. Under the leadership of Colonel S. M. Barrett, its first president, forty high-school-aged cadets were enrolled in military and academic training. They lived in tents and learned to rough it on a high ridge overlooking Claremore and in the valley below (Burke, 1991). A year later in 1920, the cadets were allowed to move into the newly completed Meyer Barracks named in honor of Sergeant Maurice Meyers, a member of Company A, Three Hundred and

Fifty-seventh Regiment, who was mortally wounded by German shrapnel in the St. Mihiel campaign on the 23rd day of September, 1918. He died the following day (Benedict, 1922).

The first rules and regulations of OMA were drafted by Colonel Barrett and President William Taft on February 21, 1920. President Taft visited the campus and spoke to the cadets. In 1921, Colonel Barrett allowed young men from the local community who were residing at home to attend the academy during the day. These students were affectionately labeled "day dogs."

During the Barrett era, the OMA band was very active nationally. In 1922 they performed for members of Congress and President Harding. Football was also a highlight during the early 1920s. The 1920-21 team, which lost only two games, was called the "miracle team," and all of the players were Native Oklahomans.

In June of 1925, Colonel Walter E. Downs was appointed president of the academy. It was during his reign that the academy experienced its greatest growth. After Colonel Down's arrival, the cadet uniform was altered as was the merit system. The academy also began a capital building program that would span over two decades.

The capital building program during this era included the construction of the Pershing Rifle Range in 1937 and the construction of a new barracks building in 1926. The new barracks building was named after General Baird H. Markham,

a member of the OMA Board of Regents. In that same year, General Markham donated a cannon to the academy. The cannon was fired daily at 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. until the citizens of Claremore expressed the belief that the community could get along without this OMA alarm clock. The cannon was silenced.

Four years after Oklahoma Military Academy's opening, a junior college curriculum was added. The following year, in 1924, a junior ROTC unit was activated under the leadership of one officer and two sergeants. Six years later, in 1930, sixty horses were supplied by the Department of the Army for a Senior ROTC Cavalry Unit. This cavalry unit was a point of particular pride for OMA, and the cavalry unit was considered the elite of the elite (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990). Ramsey said of his days training in the cavalry unit at OMA:

> . . . I absorbed into my brain and blood and bones the spirit of the cavalry. The cavalry was elite, the crown of the service. Its history was the schema of the nation. The cavalry had been born in the Revolution, opened the Frontier, fused the Union, and conquered the West. America was made on horseback, carved by mounted soldiers; our identity as a people was dictated from the saddle.

He continued:

> . . . There were no equals, only followers, for the cavalry was always first, the cutting edge of steel and spirit. Youngbloods sought the same spirit in airplanes; the more sluggish in armor. But all of them envied the horsemen, and we were they (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 16).

Ramsey had a natural gift for riding and an almost spiritual understanding and love for the animal. It was at OMA that Ramsey learned to ride and was recruited to play

polo. In his book, Ramsey told the story of his introduction into the world of polo. There was one instructor in particular whom Ramsey admired.

> Colonel Finley was a strict, paternal teacher, shaping our characters as much with regulations as with a carefully guarded concern. . . . Colonel Finley was a fixture at OMA, and he brought not only pride to his cadets, he brought polo (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 17).

When approached to join the team, Ramsey thought, "What kind of game was this, to chase a ball with hammers and a horse? And how to take seriously a sport measured out in 'chukkers'? It was a pastime for snobs, the plaything of the idle rich."

However, Colonel Finley was successful in recruiting Ramsey, and before long Ramsey came to love the sport passionately and later wrote:

> For me polo was the perfect blend of my native recklessness and the discipline I was acquiring. It meant teamwork, control, and a careful regard for the rules, but it also entailed risk, danger, and a headlong disregard for consequences. Hearing about the broken bones and the fact that two cadets had been killed in matches fueled my interest. . . . I loved polo as surely as I loved horses, and because I loved horses. . . . Polo became my passion, and when I graduated from OMA. . . . I enrolled in the law school of Oklahoma University. The law was largely incidental; OU had a polo team (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 18).

Polo was an important part of OMA athletics after the arrival of the horses and, as Ramsey illustrated, generated much passion. Even Will Rogers was a devoted fan. Rogers wrote about flying into Tulsa, ". . . but I told 'em to go on over to Claremore. . . . You see we got a fine military

school there, Oklahoma Military Academy. . . . We already got a fine polo team there at the school, the best one in the middle west. . . . Claremore is booming" (Smallwood, 1979).

Polo and the cavalry unit went hand in hand at OMA. At the same time the cavalry unit was being established, eleven regular army enlisted men were assigned to duty at OMA. Then in 1932, OMA received its highly coveted ROTC Honor School rating, a very rare and prestigious recognition, which was never surrendered while OMA was in existence (Burke, 1991).

In 1931, OMA joined forces with Spartan School of Aeronautics to create an aviation department. This addition made OMA the first junior college in the nation to have flight instruction included in the curriculum.

The decade of the 1930s brought continued capital expansion to the OMA campus. In 1935, the Will Rogers Auditorium was constructed. The facility seated 800 people and included a recreation center, post exchange and barbershop. Another facility, the Jesse Bushyhead Fieldhouse, was constructed throughout most of the 1936 year and was officially opened on October 29, 1936.

By this time, OMA had become a nationally recognized and respected military academy and drew students from neighboring states. Figure I illustrates the steady increase in enrollment over a thirty-three year period. Temporary declines in the enrollment generally coincide with

the years for WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam Conflict (McClurg, 1991). Although many factors may have fostered the growth, one aspect that attracted many was that the OMA cadets were taught a strict commitment to the ideals of "Courage, Loyalty, and Honor" above all else (Burke, 1991).

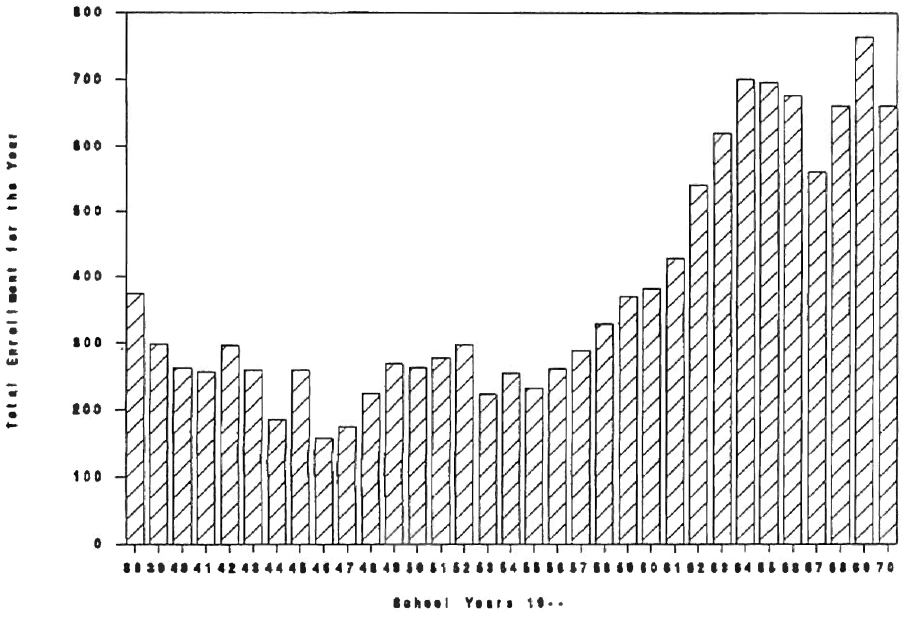


Figure 1. OMA Enrollment for Years 1938-1970

## OMA - 52 Years of Leadership Development

In 1943, OMA was in its twenty-third year and graduated its first war class. Captain John C. Hamilton was president at that time and told the cadets:

> To you young Oklahomans I speak with the most sincere pride and respect. In my two years here, I have never seen you fail, nor have I seen a fence too high for you to take. Although a graduate of our oldest military school, I have

never experienced nostalgia, for the best in it, is what I find in you.

According to Burke, "It was still a young school, with history and tradition in the making." There were twenty-two graduates that year, and many of them graduated directly into the United States Armed Forces and joined the ranks of fighting soldiers. Many, with the ideals of "Courage, Loyalty, and Honor" so recently instilled in their hearts and minds at Oklahoma Military Academy, suffered physical injury and even gave the ultimate sacrifice of their own life. By 1971, when OMA finally closed its doors, over 2,500 graduates had served in the United States Armed Forces during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. More than 100 died in the service of their country (OMA Bulletin, 70-71). Additionally, OMA had produced six generals who provided excellent leadership for the U.S. military (Rogers County Observer, April 29, 1971).

The leadership, lives and sacrifices of those young men will be remembered for generations to come for all who visit the Oklahoma Military Academy Memorial, which is located in historic Meyer Hall on the campus at Claremore. The Memorial contains not only artifacts from the cadets' lives at OMA but also tributes to their courageous military service to our country. In 1946, OMA became one of only three junior colleges in the United States to receive a post war ROTC unit. The following year Oklahoma Military Academy became an armored cavalry unit.

For fifty-two years, Oklahoma Military Academy trained

young men to serve as leaders of their communities in time of peace and as officers in the Armed Forces of our Country during time of war (Burke, 1991). Colonel Burke had his own personal memories of life at OMA.

> It was something special to see young soldiers, many soon to become second lieutenants on active duty, cry like little boys. It was impossible to hold the tears back. . . . [W]e tried at first, but emotion took control as we said goodbye to each other, and to our home for the past four or five years. We had 'Esprit de Corps'--a deep rooted loyalty and enthusiasm for the place.

But what fostered that 'Esprit de Corps'? When did it begin, and how was it bred into the very souls of the young men who ventured to come to Oklahoma Military Academy? How does one begin to learn and internalize the highly prized values sought by the leaders of OMA and the cadets who trained there? The following two chapters will focus on the life of a cadet by describing the discipline instilled in the students' lives and the training of a rookie cadet.

# CHAPTER IV

## DUTY AND DISCIPLINE: WORDS TO LIVE BY

Many young boys came to Oklahoma Military Academy not knowing what to expect. Some came because of military tradition in the family, some came out of their own desire to follow a military career, and some were sent to learn discipline and self-respect as well as respect for their country, their superiors and their peers. The young boys who came to the Academy left as young men, built by the hard discipline of practicing daily the values of duty, honor, courage, and respect for tradition.

### The Cadet's Way of Life

In the 1970-71 High School Bulletin, the cadet's way of life was spelled out quite clearly.

> The cadet must maintain a rigid daily schedule, conform to strict discipline, and develop qualities of leadership. In addition to his regular class work, the cadet is continually being trained for his future as a leader. He develops character through the cadet Code of Honor, religious services, and applications of self-discipline. He practices leadership through the Cadet Corps organization, the military instruction of new cadets, and participation in competitive athletics.

The same booklet described a typical cadet day.

> The cadet's day begins at 6:00 a.m. with reveille. Cadets live in a cadet dormitory,

> usually two to a room. Each cadet prepares his portion of the room for morning inspection and then has breakfast in the cadet dining hall. Cadets attend classes from 8:00 to 11:55. At 12:00 the Cadet Corps forms in front of the dining hall and marches into the dining hall for lunch. Cadets have classes from 1:00 to 3:00, with additional academic instruction from 3:00 to 3:55 for those desiring the extra instruction and for those deficient in individual subjects.
>
> Unless the cadet is participating in varsity athletics, he plays on an intramural team two afternoons a week after classes. The other three afternoons during the week he spends in extracurricular activities or study.
>
> Evening meal is from 6:00 to 6:45. At 7:15 all cadets must be in a supervised study period until 9:15 on week nights. Cadets on the President's or Superintendent's Honor Roll are not required to maintain a strict evening study schedule.
>
> Military training and inspections are held on Saturday mornings. Following the noon meal on Saturday, the cadet is free from duty. On Saturday afternoons and evenings and on Sunday afternoons, he may entertain guests in the visitor's center or leave the Academy with a local pass in Claremore if entitled to do so. All cadets are required to attend the Academy non-denominational chapel services on Sunday mornings and are permitted to go later to the church of their choice in Claremore if entitled to leave the campus.

The most important character traits instilled in an OMA student were strict self-discipline and development of leadership potential. Even the guidance services available to a cadet in need of support existed to help the student "make the most of his strengths" and to "correct or compensate for his limitations" (OMA Bulletin, 1970-71). Extracurricular activities served to help cadets develop their "leadership potential." These activities included: OMA Marching Band; OMA Drill Team; OMA Polo Team; OMA

Chorus; OMA Rifle Team; OMA Color Guard; OMA Judo Club; Cadet Capers; and Cadet Chapel (OMA Bulletin, 1970-71).

## The Official Code of Conduct

The official Code of Conduct was as restrictive as the daily schedule. Students were subject to this code at all times, on or off campus, and they were given very little time to conform once they arrived on campus as a cadet. The 1970-71 Bulletin stated that if a "student's presence is unwholesome, his influence degrading, or his conduct unbecoming a gentleman, he may be asked to withdraw from the Academy. In the event of failure to withdraw upon request, formal dismissal proceedings as filed with the Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma will be initiated."

Cadets were required to be neat in dress and appearance at all times. They were furnished military issue clothing and equipment, all of which were included in the basic cost of attending the Academy. Also included in the basic fees were two haircuts per month, laundry and clothing maintenance. A weekly spending allowance of $5.00 per week was provided for by the basic fees. "This will make certain that the boy will receive his allowance at the proper time, and he will not be embarrassed should a parent forget to send his money on time." Parents were advised to increase the personal allowance if the boy was expected to purchase his toilet articles, soap, shoe polish, and repairs instead of charging them at the Post Exchange. If a student was

allowed to charge, parents were billed each month. The Academy felt the $5.00 weekly allowance would be "sufficient for a cadet to go to a movie and have change in his pocket during the week" (OMA Bulletin, 1970-71).

Concerning tuition fees, John B. Benedict wrote:

> . . . no tuition is charged a cadet. A boy may receive his academic training which gives him sixteen units of credit for admittance to the state university at Norman, at no greater expense than if he lived at home. Only the actual cost of the buying and preparation of the food is charged each month for the board, the bills seldom going higher than $25 per month. Room rent in the barracks amounts to only $1.50 per month including bedding, light and heat (Benedict, 1922).

According to Benedict, hikes and summer camps were fitting diversions from the rigorous schedule mandated at the Academy. He also claimed that civic pride was instilled early in the cadets, and that at the time of the Peggs cyclone, Col. Barrett took ten cadets and two trucks loaded with supplies and established a relief camp for the victims of this natural disaster (Benedict, 1922).

For graduation from the high school program, eighteen units were required. Thirteen and one-half had to be earned in grades 10-12. Only four and one-half freshman credit hours could count toward graduation even though all grades were recorded on the permanent record. Required subjects were four units of English, two units of mathematics, two units of science, and one-half unit of Oklahoma history. One unit of American history was required unless it was taken in the freshman year, to which a one-half unit of civics was added (OMA Bulletin, 1970-71).

## Discipline and Leadership Training

Over and over again in personal interviews with OMA graduates, the word "discipline" keeps surfacing. It was a major part of the academy. In an interview with General Clifford A. Druitt, who attended OMA from 1952-54, he was asked what he did with his free time. He answered:

> Well, I didn't have much free time because I came from a fairly poor background, so I worked during my free time. . . . I played varsity athletics and that took up my time and then with studying, I really didn't have a lot of free time and it taught me to discipline my time--and it was a good teaching vehicle for preparation for a military career.

When asked if he credits his OMA education for any of his success, Druitt answered:

> It gave me a lot of self-confidence, it taught me about camaraderie, and the importance of camaraderie, because the ultimate issue of a military person is going up that hill when you don't have much chance of making it to that hill. Why do you go? And it's obviously not for the paycheck. It's for those people who depend on you and for those who are on your right and your left, and it taught me about that. There's no question it was very influential in my life and in my career (Druitt, 1991).

Conditioned to learn from all experiences and to always prepare for leadership, Druitt replied when asked his most humorous memory,

> . . . the most humorous incident I remember is associated with Colonel Darrow who was with PMS&P who was a very kind man but a very emotional man. And one day when a military event was not being performed properly he pulled off his hat and he jumped up and down on it. I always remembered that--that was his way of releasing frustration, but I think that prepared me well for some of my bosses later on.

Loyal Kamm, a 1969 graduate of OMA, was also interviewed. He, too, made reference to the discipline. When asked if his two years at OMA helped him in later life, his response was, "Definitely, I wouldn't be anything if it wasn't for OMA and the discipline they showed me." When asked to describe his student life on campus, he said, " . . . it was real strict, you had a lot of discipline, you learned to be disciplined by people younger than you (sic). It really set you up for later in life." Describing a typical day, he recalled:

> You'd get up around 6:00, you'd have formation for the flag ceremonies, you went to classes. At night you had study hall, mandatory study hall, then you went back to the barracks and you had time to clean up and shower and go to bed and get ready for the next day (Kamm, 1991).

Although he was not interviewed, Ramsey had plenty to say in his book about his war experiences and his life at OMA. Speaking of life on campus, he stated, "Discipline was strict, and adherence to the honor system was obligatory. This system was meant to teach loyalty to the institution above all, imposing on the cadet a responsibility to report dishonesty and rule violations." Burke, speaking of outstanding graduates, mentioned Ramsey:

> In 1941, Edwin Price Ramsey, a 24 year-old graduate of OMA, was a 2nd Lieutenant in the U. S. Army Cavalry Corps in the Philippines. When the Japanese invaded the Philippine islands, Ramsey found himself cut off from his own forces.
>
> When first Bataan and then Corregidor fell, he decided to join the resistance fighters rather than surrender. Ramsey spent most of World War II behind Japanese lines, and led the last mounted charge in U. S. military history. He spent four

> years organizing and directing a 40,000 member band of irregulars from mountain hide-outs while waiting for General MacArthur's return. When the U. S. Army reclaimed the islands, Ramsey was suffering from dysentery, malaria, weighed less than 100 pounds and was not strong enough to support the weight of a pistol around his waist. He was told by General MacArthur, 'I am here by the grace of God, and your good work.' After the liberation, Ramsey was promoted to Major and then to Lt. Col. and was decorated with a Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Silver Star with Cluster, and a Distinguished Service Cross, as well as a number of Philippine awards.

Burke went on to ask, "Was OMA training important to Lt. Ramsey? I think so."

In an interview with Colonel John Horn, who was a 1939 graduate of OMA and who returned in 1968 as the last president of OMA, he talked about his experience at OMA and about the structure it gave his life. Colonel Horn came to OMA as a high school freshman and remained through the two years of junior college. He came to OMA because of family troubles. His father was very ill, and his mother had a difficult time handling everything. She wanted the best for her son--she especially wanted him to be "a little gentleman." She had him taking tap dancing, and his father disapproved. He wanted his son to be a man, so right after tap lessons, Horn says he went straight to boxing lessons. When things became too difficult at home and when OMA was discovered to be an affordable option, Horn was sent to the Academy to become an officer and a gentleman. Horn said:

> I was kind of leading two lives at home, really, I mean my parents were happily married, I wasn't torn as a child or anything. But I found a structure up here (OMA) where there was a pecking order, and there were rules and everybody was

> treated the same and I liked that. I liked the military life. . . . [I]t gave me some goals and a sense of meaning and I never did gripe when it was time to come back in the fall.

Horn also liked the small classes and personal attention.

Discipline and leadership training was generally valued among all graduates of Oklahoma Military Academy. In 1949 a questionnaire was sent to 1,296 of the 2,926 OMA alumni, and 325 of those mailed were returned (Robards, 1947). Although not all alumni both received and completed the questionnaire, the results are nevertheless sufficient in number to be indicative of the alumni's opinions regarding OMA. One question dealt specifically with what the cadet considered the most valuable training he received at OMA. The following table illustrates the responses to this question. (Obviously, the respondents were allowed to check more than one response):

TABLE IV

CADET'S EVALUATION OF MOST VALUABLE TRAINING AT OMA

| Number of Responses | Most Valuable Training While at OMA |
|---|---|
| 155 | Military Training |
| 132 | The Discipline |
| 79 | Good Habit Formation |
| 72 | Leadership Training |
| 71 | Barracks Life |
| 65 | The Academic Program |
| 47 | Opportunities for Friendship |
| 30 | The Social Program |
| 29 | The Study Program |
| 23 | Close Supervision |
| 21 | The Sports Program |
| 10 | Inspiration |

As illustrated in this table, the choice of discipline was second only to military training. Also, the closely related choice of good habit formation followed in third place. The fourth most popular selection was leadership training. Clearly, the cadet's valued their military training at OMA for its emphasis on both discipline and leadership training (Robards, 1947).

Life as an OMA cadet was one of strict discipline and rigid structure. Young boys came from all over Oklahoma and surrounding states, not quite knowing what to expect and

generally without much sense of direction. Life at the academy left a lasting impression on all who graduated, most of them grateful for the experiences which had both shaped their lives and made them proud and distinctive men of honor and courage. Yet before one could become a cadet one had to survive the life of a Rabbit or the rookie cadet.

# CHAPTER V

# RABBIT TRAINING: TOUGH ENOUGH TO TAKE IT

## Objectives of Rabbit Training

What every rookie cadet came to know soon after his arrival at OMA was that life was not going to be easy, at least not for a while. The upperclassmen who had paid their dues and survived this military school tradition (which was part discipline in the strictest sense, part boot camp, and part rite of passage) took it upon themselves to make the new cadets aware of their plebeian status, their duty to endure the training, and the honor awarded to those who survived with grace. This tradition was an official training program called "Rabbit Training." It was not hazing by the upperclassmen; it was part of OMA policy, and new cadets were provided with a Rabbit Training Manual. This was not a unique tradition, since other military academies had such training programs as well, including the West Point Plebes and the Virginia Military Institute Rats (Horn, 1991).

In its introduction the Rabbit Training Manual stated:

> It is only through the proper motivation and indoctrination of its cadets that OMA will produce citizens with the devotion, integrity, leadership ability, and self discipline that will enable them to cope with the problems which they will face in

the years to come.
The objectives of the Rabbit Training Program were:

1. Imparting Fundamental Disciplines
2. Conditioning to Operate Efficiently Under Pressure
3. Infusion of Values, and Attitudes Which Contribute to a Highly Developed Sense of Loyalty, Integrity and Duty
4. A Sense of Responsibility for Others
5. Pride and Morale

The handbook stated:

> Rabbit training is only one facet of the total Academy environment. It influences, and is influenced by, all Academy programs. It has a major impact on the development of qualities of character and leadership desired in good officers or citizens. The objectives of the Rabbit training program do not terminate after fifteen weeks but apply in modified form in successive years to each cadet.

Rabbit training was conducted by the Cadet Corps under the supervision of the OMA staff. Rabbits were given humble status and subjected to rigorous discipline, physical and mental challenge. They were "forced" to budget their time, to think under pressure and to control their emotions. They developed a high degree of physical fitness and also were exposed to situations in which they felt danger, privation and hardship. The purpose was for the Rabbit--through surmounting these situations--to find hidden resources of strength. In learning to depend on each other to develop strong loyalties and in meeting all these challenges, the Rabbit gained a sense of confidence that was to serve him well into later years (OMA Rabbit Training Manual).

The Rabbit training program had a primary aim of teaching self-control, discipline, obedience and respect for authority. This training lasted fifteen weeks during which time the rabbit was challenged to learn to complete tasks to a high standard in minimum time while overcoming the distractions of fatigue and conflicting demands on his time. The primary goal of this training was to learn experientially how to function successfully under pressure. Rabbit training also tested and revealed character traits to the cadet and to the Academy authorities. It was important for the cadet to understand his own character in order to modify his attitudes and values and consequently be successful later in life. This was achieved not by a direct appeal to logic, for that was not always considered successful. Instead the Rabbit learned to modify his attitudes and beliefs through his environment and living experience, good or bad. Rabbit training was to provide living experiences which helped to generate strongly held values of loyalty, duty and integrity.

The Rabbit Training Manual listed several specific programs. Among these was basic military training. The manual stated:

> a. Immediately upon entering OMA, the rabbit undergoes a rigorous military fundamental program and physical conditioning. He is placed in a military organization where he gains a basic understanding of the military junior/senior relationship with clearly defined responsibilities. He is oriented toward pride in his unit, and he gains an understanding of academy ethics, rules of behavior and customs essential to his functioning as a cadet.

The handbook also described the method by which the Cadet Corps instructed and trained the Rabbit during off duty hours in the history of the military and other general military knowledge. This was done through formal off duty discussion groups, tests and individual instruction. The handbook said that the Cadet Corps imposed customs and restrictions peculiar to the Rabbit which served similar functions to rituals prescribed in some schools or fraternal orders.

> These customs are not intended to become ends in themselves. Rather, they are means toward achieving a greater objective. Rabbit rituals are often mistaken for the sum total of the training program; actually, these form but a small part of the program. It is in the attitudes of the cadets and in the environment produced that the value of customs and restrictions is found.

## Cadets' Remembrances of Training

Some former cadets who remember their training at OMA specifically remember their Rabbit training. Ramsey talked about the Cadet Honor Code which bound the cadet to report dishonesty and rule violations. He went on to say that there was another "unwritten honor code that mandated loyalty to fellow cadets." This second code was a shadow over the first which protected the upperclassmen who prey on the plebes, using unreasonable methods of discipline and instruction (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990).

Ramsey told his own story of Rabbit training under the supervision of an unreasonable upperclassman and his inner conflict with the double honor code. He said:

> I was not used to such treatment, but the renegade in me determined not to break. It was a will reinforced by my loneliness. I had never been away from home before, I knew no one at OMA, and I made friends with difficulty. . . . If I was to survive I would have to adjust quickly, and I accepted the new system as a challenge to prove that I could take it a well as anyone. That challenge soon took on human form.
>
> He was a senior, a huge Osage Indian named Victor Whitelaw. His size and fearlessness had earned him a position of authority among the cadets, and he exploited it regularly. . . . "You're mine, Ramsey," he said one day, apropos of nothing.
>
> Conflicts meant demerits, which I was determined to avoid. . . . But at last the inevitable confrontation came. . . . "I understand your sister's a flier." . . . I could hear the malicious leer in his voice. "How about it, Ramsey. . . . [Y]ou think she'd take me up for a ride?" . . . "No, sir." . . . "Oh, and why not?" "Because you're a goddamn son of a bitch, sir."
>
> Whitelaw smiled faintly. "I told you that you were mine" (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 13).

Whitelaw then took Ramsey before the upperclassmen discipline committee which met in the basement boiler room. "Whitelaw then took the board and beat my backside until it bled. . . . Word of the beating. . . . or rather severity. . . . reached the commandant, and he summoned me to his office." Ramsey was asked to identify the cadet who broke the rules, but Ramsey refused to do so. "It was my first encounter with the conflicting demands of regulations and revenge, the competing obligations of the office and the injured self."

The commandant let Ramsey go without a direct order to give the name of the offender, but he encouraged him to

think about it for the good of the corps.

> I brooded over it all the next day. To do nothing was unthinkable. . . . Yet an open conflict with Victor Whitelaw was out of the question. . . . That evening I reached a decision. After mess I went alone to the prairie behind the stables. There, on maneuvers the day before, I had seen a dead rattlesnake. I searched in the moonlight until I found it. . . . Then, while the upperclassmen preened at the sinks, I sneaked into their barracks, slipped the snake into Victor Whitelaw's bunk and withdrew.
>
> The explosion could be heard in our dorm across the parade ground. I was later solemnly assured by his bunkmates that Victor nearly died of a heart attack. He, too, was summoned before the commandant and, in his turn, declined to name his tormentor. But everyone knew that I had done it, and from that moment my reputation among the cadets was secure. I had bested an upperclassman without breaking the code: I had balanced honor and revenge. . . . Victor Whitelaw never interfered with me again (Ramsey and Rivele, 1990, p. 15).

This author conducted several personal interviews in preparation for this study. A few of the former OMA cadets spoke about their experiences during Rabbit training. Clifford A. Druitt said in response to what it was like to be a Rabbit:

> The purpose of that I think is to divest you of a lot of the customs and traditions that you come (to the military) with, wipe those out and give you a new set of customs, traditions, and values. We do that today in the military. . . . [O]ne of the things we do is to cut their hair very short. . . . There's something about you're hair that's very important, and when that goes away it makes a very great impression on you that you are starting something new. And, I think that's what being a Rabbit did for us.

Speaking from the perspective of a Rabbit platoon leader, Col. Burke remembered one day in particular:

> The first semester was almost over and it was

> time to "recognize" the rabbits. As one last gesture of authoritative leadership, I decide to have the platoon double time from the barracks to the pond and back again--several times. Being a good leader, I set an example and ran with them, failing to take into consideration that my platoon was made up mostly of college football players. The run nearly killed me, but was nothing to them (Burke, 1991).

From the perspective of both an OMA graduate and the last OMA president, Colonel John Horn spoke of Rabbit training and how it changed over the years.

> When I came here none of these roads were concrete, they were all gravel, and Rabbits weren't allowed to walk any place. We had to jog, run, every place we went. And the old men, we called them--the upperclassmen, they were always looking out the window in both barracks, and if you go behind a tree or wall of trees, some cedars out here, and tried to loaf or walk they'd catch you.

When asked how he came to be a Rabbit, Col. Horn said:

> Oh, when you got here the first year. And, it wasn't early recognition. None of that went on in those days. When I came back as president they had instituted--you were a Rabbit for 8 or 9 weeks or something, and then you had recognition if you had earned it and learned your pacings and your military movements and knew the cadet prayer. There were certain tests you had to pass and if you could run the obstacle course, if you could run a mile in less than ten minutes, all that business, then you could get early recognition. And very few people didn't earn it. Oh, we had a few fat boys that couldn't lose enough weight and do their calisthenics and stuff.

But Col. Horn made it clear that, in his day, you could not earn your way out of being a Rabbit; you were a Rabbit all year long. Col. Horn came to OMA in 1934 as a high school freshman. Even the very youngest boys did not escape the rigorous Rabbit training. It did not matter if you were 15 or 22, you still had to pay your dues (Horn, 1991).

Rabbit training was a very important military tradition at the academy. It was one which was designed to quickly instill important military discipline and values and which left a lasting impression on many OMA cadets.

## Events in the History of OMA

During its fifty-two years of existence, many events shaped OMA and the lives of those who attended the institution. The following table adapted from the Claremore Progress summarizes these events (The Claremore Progress, May 30, 1971).

TABLE V

EVENTS IN OMA'S HISTORY

1907 - First Oklahoma Legislature authorizes a system of college preparatory schools.

1909 - Eastern University Preparatory School opens at Claremore and operates until 1917.

1917 - City of Claremore operates high school in the EUPS building for two years.

1919 - Oklahoma Military Academy created by the legislature, established at Claremore, and begins classes.

1920 - Meyer Barracks completed, honoring Oklahoma's first Gold Star of World War I.

1923 - OMA curriculum expanded to include junior college work. Assets estimated at a half million dollars.

1924 - Junior ROTC Army unit activated, with one officer, two non-commissioned officers.

1930 - Senior ROTC Army cavalry unit established, with 11 enlisted men and 60 horses supplied by the War Department.

1932 - OMA wins coveted Army ROTC Honor School rating for the first time.

1933 - Famous humorist, Will Rogers, comes to OMA and plays polo with cadets.

1938 - Cadets are national champions in polo.

1946 - OMA is one of three junior colleges in nation to receive post-World War II ROTC unit.

1947 - OMA becomes ROTC armored cavalry unit.

1950 - North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges accredits OMA.

1955 - Tanks leave military hill as OMA becomes Branch General Unit under reorganized Army ROTC program.

1956 - Day student program authorized by OMA regents for Rogers County college men.

1957 - Evening college division opens to serve Claremore and area.

1959 - To meet the challenge of the exceptional student the Seminar-Tutorial system is installed.

1960 - Walter E. Downs, Jr., Barracks completed, honoring OMA hero of World War II.

1962 - Thunderbird Student Lounge and Study, plus addition to Library-Science Building are completed.

1964 - Dr. Homer M. Ledbetter Barracks completed and addition to Administration Building is constructed.

1965 - Addition to Mess Hall doubles its capacity.

1967 - Loshbaugh Hall opened as Junior College Academic Building. Junior college day student program expanded.

1968 - OMA instructors don street clothes for work. OMA opens its doors to women day students.

1969 - OMA hires its first woman teacher.

1971 - Assets on campus valued at $10 million. Regents for Higher Education change the function of OMA to a comprehensive coeducational junior college, retain military science program on voluntary basis only, discontinue operation of high school effective in spring of 1971. House and Senate pass bill changing OMA name to Claremore Junior College. Governor Hall

> signs the bill into law. On May 29, following graduation exercises for the last 74 OMA junior college graduates and 49 high school seniors, the OMA colors are retired to annals of history.

Regardless of the special memories, the great heroes, the corporate leaders, and the outstanding citizens OMA produced in its fifty-two year history, the winds of change were destined to blow through that scenic spot in northeastern Oklahoma--and indeed the entire nation.

## The Closing of OMA

Several factors resulted in the closing of OMA. First, with the arrival and subsequent social revolution of the 1960s, the continued and increased U. S. involvement in Southeast Asia, and the growing discontent and even contempt with which that "conflict" was met, OMA saw its glory days fade into a shadow of what had been and was never to be again for a long time to come. Throughout the U. S., military training had become less popular, and other campuses such as the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University were forced to drop their ROTC requirement in the late 1960's in order to attract students. Both staff and professors at OMA during this time believed that the Vietnam Conflict played a significant part in closing the doors of this military college (McClurg, 1991; Isaacs, 1991). At the closing of OMA, a Claremore attorney, John R. Carle, commended the efforts made by the leadership of OMA, but stated that OMA had been fighting a powerful, national

trend away from the military (Rogers County Observer, March 25, 1971). Realistically, OMA could not have hoped to escape the effects of this nationwide anti-war sentiment.

Another factor leading to the demise of OMA was the rapid decline in the caliber of students attending the institution. In a recent interview with Shirley McClurg, who was employed as the high school registrar of OMA and now continues as the registrar of Rogers State College, McClurg indicated that during the early 1960's the students who were accepted into OMA needed good recommendations to gain admittance and in general could be described as gentlemen. However, by 1971 the students could better be described as "ruffians, [who] were kids that their parents sent [there] because they didn't know what else to do with them" (McClurg, 1991). McClurg also recalls frequent phone calls which typified the downward spiral in student quality:

> I was always angry because I would get a phone call, and the first thing they would start out with was--they "couldn't do anything with (their) son. Can you take him and keep him?" I always wanted to say, "We don't have walls around this place." [The school had the] reputation that we were babysitters to take care of kids that nobody else wanted to mess with (McClurg, 1991).

A third factor in the closing of OMA was a dip in enrollment. Although Figure 1 seems to indicate a moderately stable enrollment, information from a personal interview with Dr. E. T. Dunlap, who was Chancellor of Education during the last years of OMA, sheds some light on the situation. Dr. Dunlap indicated that during the first half of the 1960's, all "of Oklahoma's higher education

institutions with the exception of two, experienced approximately 40% increase in enrollment" (Dunlap, 1992). Even though Figure 1 shows an increase in enrollment from 1960 to 1965, there is also a marked decline in enrollment when one considers the years from 1963 to 1967. As will be noted later, plans to change the function of OMA began as early as 1965. During the latter years, the institution increasingly opened its doors to part-time and full-time day and night students. Contract students (military students who had signed a contract to become an officer upon graduation) significantly declined in number so that by 1970 they numbered under ten (Isaacs, 1991). Also, Elwin Isaacs, who was a professor at OMA, stated that the transition from a military academy to a junior college was actually a slow process which began in the latter years of OMA. Additionally, the high school enrollment during the 1960's was truly declining, although the junior college enrollment had increased (McClung, 1991).

Finally, and perhaps as a result of the first three causes, OMA faced financial difficulties which made its future uncertain. The bond indebtedness on dormitories built to house military students amounted to $65,000 per annum. Colonel Horn, president of OMA during that period, indicated that the school would need 300 students living on campus to generate sufficient funds to cover the bonds. Although OMA's enrollment was about 700, resident students were far below the number needed to provide the income to

cover the cost of the dormitories (Rogers County Observer, March 23, 1971).

For most of the institution's years, OMA graduated students in a time when the military in all its glory could still be romantic and honorable. When the popularity of the military and all associated with it fell in a time of political controversy and societal condemnation, OMA fell with it. Although it struggled to survive, the Oklahoma Legislature had other plans, and on July 1, 1971, OMA ceased to exist. Claremore Junior College was the new baby on the hill. Even though this new institution was to grow and develop into one of the finest junior colleges in Oklahoma, the proud heritage as one of the nation's two military high school/junior college schools would never be forgotten (Rogers County Observer, 1971). Rather, the tradition would carry on and is visible today at Rogers State College. Colonel Glen D. Burke, an OMA graduate and keynote speaker at the 1991 OMA Reunion, expressed a common hope for the future of Claremore Junior College (later named Rogers State College):

> Just as the superior academic standards of Eastern Oklahoma Preparatory School were preserved in what became Oklahoma Military Academy, it is fervently hoped that the best of what was Oklahoma Military Academy will be preserved in Claremore Junior College (Rogers State College), (Burke, 1991).

# CHAPTER VI

# THE FUTURE ARRIVES WITH A NEW INSTITUTION: CLAREMORE JUNIOR COLLEGE

## Early Struggle of CJC to Exist

The change from OMA to CJC was not easy or uneventful, for it invoked colorful reactions, controversies, and political intervention. In fact, the tenure of the new namesake looked very bleak (Summerlin, 1991). The decision to close OMA was not a political one, but the name change was very much political. Senator Clem McSpadden and Representative Bill Briscoe authored the bill in 1971 to change the name and mission of the institution (Oklahoma Session Law, 1971).

These two lawmakers knew that some of their colleagues in the legislature were considering a "prison site," which got the attention of the local citizenry (Summerlin, 1991). As early as 1965, OMA President Col. Horne had heard of the decision by the State Regents to gradually close OMA (Horne, 1991). Since Tulsa Junior College was in the planning stages of its development and since the Regents did not envision the need for preparatory or junior college education in Claremore; it was believed, according to the current president, Dr. Mosier, that Tulsa Junior College

would expand and create extension centers at communities surrounding the Tulsa Area (Mosier, 1991).

The Regents believed OMA would die a slow natural death. The buildings were in terrible condition, the cost per pupil was higher than other educational institutions, and the quality of the enrolled students was dramatically declining. The institution was in danger of defaulting on its dormitory bonds, and the threat of losing its North Central Accreditation was a very real possibility, especially since no library existed at the institution (Summerlin, 1991).

Former Regent, James Summerlin, who appointed in 1971 by Governor David Hall, remembered his first Claremore Junior College board meeting vividly. "The faculty were all lined up on the right side of the room and the Regents on the left. The faculty were there to express the previous unanimous vote of no confidence for President Horn." Summerlin recalled after his first board meeting, President Horne resigned and Bill Crutcher, the business officer for CJC, was appointed interim president. Dr. Richard Mosier of Colby, Kansas, was hired as a consultant to advise and oversee the OMA/CJC transition. A faculty search team for a new president was initiated, and Dr. Mosier was included as one of five finalists for the presidency.

Oklahoma Military Academy ceased to exist, and its name was officially changed to Claremore Junior College on July 1, 1971, even though CJC had been holding classes since the

preceding fall semester. However, the first graduates of Claremore Junior College in May of 1971 were presented with diplomas imprinted with the name of Oklahoma Military Academy (McClurg, 1991).

Mosier was offered the CJC presidency in March, 1972. He came to Claremore two or three days a week at that time to conclude his responsibilities as consultant during the conversion. The remaining days during the week, he finished his obligations to the college at Colby, Kansas. He officially took office on July 1, 1972, as the first, and to date, only president to serve Claremore Junior College, now named Rogers State College (Mosier, 1991).

The State Regents never really funded the conversion (Summerlin, 1991). They expected CJC to wither away gradually due mainly to budget problems and a deteriorated physical plant. Tulsa Junior College, which was designed to become another Dallas County Community College system of multiple campuses, was considered a threat to anything CJC could have to offer (Mosier, 1991). The CJC regents, local citizens, and elected officials were very concerned over the survival of CJC (Summerlin, 1991). In 1973, Regent Summerlin and newly elected State Senator Bob Wadley of Claremore went to see Dunlap, Chancellor for the Oklahoma State Department for Higher Education, for financial assistance. Dunlap agreed to help, but the college would have to sell most of its land (Summerlin). Summerlin objected because the land was too valuable for the future

security of CJC and Claremore to sell. The Chancellor would not budge from his condition.

Senator Bob Wadley and Summerlin, on the long trips to and from the Chancellor's office in Oklahoma City, would brainstorm and plot how to alleviate some of CJC's financial problems. CJC was close to becoming the first state agency to default on a bond indebtedness, bonds issued to build OMA dormitories. Senator Wadley and Summerlin decided to sell some of the land to a Public Trust Fund created for this purpose with Claremore Junior College as the beneficiary. A trust was out of question since the legislature and the governor would have to approve it, and the Chancellor could kill that idea rather easily. Wadley approached the city fathers for help with a city trust but was refused.

So the only alternative was a County Trust, which was set up to benefit Claremore Junior College. Summerlin and Wadley asked Chancellor Dunlap how much money he thought Claremore Junior College should raise through the sale of land. The $200,000 figure was decided upon, so they went to a local bank and borrowed $201,000 for the trust. They then purchased 200 acres so a public golf course could be built on CJC's property which they believed would provide future funding for the school's operations and scholarships. The $201,000 was delivered to Chancellor Dunlap--probably the first time in history a local trust gave money to a state agency (Summerlin, 1991).

The Chancellor kept his word. Approximately $1 million

was appropriated for Claremore Junior College for a capital fund renovation program. The Thunderbird Lounge and Recreation Center built out of OMA Auxiliary Funds (non-state appropriated) was sold to the state for $435,000 and was paid for with appropriated funds. These funds were used to keep CJC from defaulting on dormitory bonds, and the state funded a library to be located in the Thunderbird Lounge so an additional building would not have to be built. The library was a necessity to avoid loss of North Central Accreditation (Summerlin, 1991).

CJC now had a chance of survival--if the enrollment would justify its existence. Mosier was a young and energetic president who had started a Junior College in Colby, Kansas. He knew it would be difficult but possible for CJC to survive.

## RSC - Providing for the Educational Needs of Northeastern Oklahoma

Claremore Junior College did survive and under its present name of Rogers State College, continues to meet the needs of Claremore and the surrounding community to this day. This institution has adapted to changing times to provide quality education for its students. RSC exists today despite all the past attempts to close its doors and despite its close proximity to Tulsa. Although a comprehensive history of RSC (Rogers State College) is perhaps best left for later historians since its history is

so recent, a few brief notes on the school and its present function within the community are in order.

Rogers State has looked at the unique needs of the community and survived by meeting those needs. It has been innovative with the full-power television station, KXON TV-35, which provides not only classes for students and very practical training for broadcasting students, but also general educational programming for a large area of northeastern Oklahoma. Like many other schools, RSC has a radio station; but unlike most schools, it also has a horse and ranch management program and a golf course management program. RSC offers classes at two outreach centers as well as classes for the military in Pryor and in Tulsa at the Air National Guard Base. Students are provided a wide choice of methods for education (Multiple Learning Opportunities) in addition to the traditional classroom. Telecourses, instruction by video and independent study are all offered as a vital educational alternative to the school's many employed and older returning students. Also, high school students may take classes in the FasTrack program so that they will have a head start on a college education. Rogers State College has developed into a viable, necessary academic element in northeastern Oklahoma.

RSC has faced opposition from its very beginning and survived. Many people did not want a community college established so close to Tulsa and thus to Tulsa Junior College. But, it worked. It is alive and well today, and

it provides educational guidance and educational opportunities for both the traditional high school graduate as well as those non-traditional students who have come back to college for a variety of reasons.

Rogers State College has expanded from its years as Eastern University Preparatory School and has grown to come full circle in its mission. Established initially as a preparatory school, the school now again provides classes to prepare individuals for college. Today, RSC prepares individuals by contracting with the Department of Human Services for GED programs, by giving high school students a head start on college through the FasTrack program, and also by doing a tremendous amount of preparatory schooling for high school graduates who are deficient in one of the areas the State Regents now require for attendance at a regional or comprehensive university. Under the title of Oklahoma Military Academy, the institution had a very strong history of service to the military. Once again, RSC is meeting this need through its outreach center in Pryor, Oklahoma where the school provides classes to the Oklahoma National Guard. Finally, RSC continues to serve as a junior college by offering both courses designed for transfer to other colleges as well as courses of study which provide adequate training for those not able to go on for further studies. Rogers State College has, in fact, come full circle and still offers the educational opportunities which the community desires despite all opposition. A recent

statement by college president, Dr. Mosier, summarizes the spirit of Rogers State College and the institution's survival throughout its history: "This is a hardscrabble institution. We have to do more with less" (Tulsa Tribune, 16 April 1992).

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