



The Bluebird

A Publication for the Alumni of Goessel High School

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Goessel Celebrates 50 (+1) The Building of a Gym

By 1969 enrollment at USD 411 had reached 421 students. 137 students were enrolled at the high school and 284 students were enrolled at the grade school. January 20, 1969, more than 175 patrons met at the Goessel High School gym to obtain information concerning the needs of the school.

Vickers and Everson of Hutchinson presented schematic drawings for the proposed building program. Plans for the grade school included the addition of classrooms at each end of the two wings. This would eliminate the mobile units. Shower and dressing rooms would be added to each side of the music room.

A new gymnasium was proposed for the high school which would seat approximately 1,000 people. Additional space would be available for classrooms, rest rooms, music, library, and cafeteria. The agricultural department would be remodeled and receive the additional space of the old music room and kitchen area. And the science department would be moved to the study hall area.

Eventually, administration, school board, and patrons came together to hold and pass a bond election for school building funds. The bond election passed by a considerable margin.

Melvin Stucky was given the contract for the Vo-Ag department area for \$22,866.00. Koehn and Wells were given the contract the would include an addition to the grade school for \$105,519.00, remodel the high school for \$36,166.00, and add a gymnasium to the high school for \$347,999.00. All of these were significant improvements.

Building did not begin until late summer of 1969. The floor for the new gym was finally laid on October 6, 1970. The gym was officially finished on the 5th of November and the first basketball game was held on December 1 of 1970. The project was not totally completed until the spring of 1970-1971.

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Celebrating a New Gym

On December 1, 1970 the Goessel Bluebirds opened the 1970-1971 season. This was the first game of the season and the first game in the new gym. Goessel hosted the Burrton Chargers. The final score was Burrton 69, Goessel 51.

During the 1970-1971 basketball season the team's name changed from the Goessel Bluebirds to the Goessel Fighting Bluebirds. They ended the season with a 17-7 record. During the year, a new record was set when they scored 103 points in two consecutive games at the district tournament. Six senior guys, Marlo Brandt, Delbert Peters, DeWane Schmidt, James Schroeder, Rodney Schmidt, and Lynel Unrau alternated for the starting position, averaging between 9.5 and 14.2 points per game. They placed second in the League Tournament, first in the League, first in the District and won eleven games in a row before being defeated in the regionals.

The season would also include two new coaches. Chester Roberts was hired as head basketball coach and physical education instructor. Dave Smith was hired as assistant basketball coach, and as the math and science teacher.

COVID did not allow a 50th celebration during the 2020-2021 year, but on January 7, 2022, the Bluebirds finally were able to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the construction of the gym. Individuals were able to view a copy of the scorebook from the official first game with Burrton, purchase popcorn in a commemorative cup, sign up for the chance to win a quilt designed with the Fighting Bluebird, and make a donation to take home outdated sports' uniforms. Bluebird fans filled the seats and cheered the Goessel girls team to a 48-45 win. The boys closed the evening with a 63-24 win over Rural Vista. All games were played in the junior high gym.

The first game played in the new 1935 brick building was on December 19, 1935. Prior to 1935, teams went to Bethel College twice a week to practice. Games were played at Tabor College.

Men and women of the 1970-1971 team and coaches were invited back to help celebrate this anniversary. Brian Lightner, athletic director at Goessel High School, presented the team with the original district trophy. Those present from the 1970-1971 team included Lynel Unrau, Delbert Peters, Rod Schmidt, Darwin Funk, Marlo Klassen, and James Schroeder. Present from the girls team was Carol Duerksen. Also present were coaches Chet Roberts and Dave Smith.



Looking Back

The seniors in the class of 1971 ended their high school career with a new gymnasium. This same group began their education twelve years earlier as first graders in the brand new Goessel Elementary School in 1959.

The new gym had no stage and players would sit with their coach on the front row of bleachers. In the old gym, both teams sat on the stage and players would jump down onto the court in order to substitute for a teammate.

Spectators in the new gym could sit on bleachers from the playing floor on up and could see all the action from end to end. In the old gym there was a ten foot wall on three sides with seating above the wall looking down onto the gym floor. When action would be close to the wall, many spectators were unable to see the players.

The new gym had square fiberglass backboards. The old gym had fiberglass backboards but were the smaller fan shape.

The new gym had a digital scoreboard which could record three digits scores. The old gym had a mechanical scoreboard with rotating hands for minutes and seconds. The scores were recorded with moving numbers on fabric rolls.

In the new gym the players could step out of bounds for inbounding the basketball. In the old gym, a restraining line had to be used on inbounding plays.

The new gym was wide enough, that when the bleachers were rolled back, two practice courts could be used across the main gym. The old gym had no options for multiple teams practicing at the same time.

The new gym had locker rooms on the same level as the playing floor. The locker rooms for the old gym were in a vacated classroom on an upper level.

The new gym had a wooden floor. The old gym had a floor of concrete with tiles.

The above article was written by Delbert Peters, '71. It was originally used in the January 7, 2022 basketball program.

Traditions and memories help tell the story. Both are important in our school history. Equally important is the commitment to work hard, the perseverance to do well, and the integrity to do the right thing. These qualities help develop successful individuals who not only represent the Goessel School system but also the Goessel community.



Whether the year was 1970 or 2022 the catwalk has always been a great place to view the game. The original building plan called for a catwalk along the west side, but funding ran out.

Alumni Games

Beginning at 4:00 pm women and men alumni games were played before the regular scheduled games with Rural Vista. Eleven men and eleven ladies returned to run the ball around the court. Some were more tired than others, but all seemed to have an enjoyable time.



Caiden Duerksen with the tipoff to start the game, 2022.



Rod Schmidt with the tipoff to start the game, 1970.