When the West Texas State College Amarillo Center opened in 1942, it quickly became the adult education hub of the Panhandle. People from hundreds of miles away traveled to the Center every week to further their education. In fact, approximately 35 percent of the students enrolled at the Amarillo Center did not live in Amarillo.

Professors loved the enthusiasm for learning that was not diluted by the next dance, football game or student politics. Most of the teaching faculty at the Center also taught on campus and were not given extra compensation for the 30-plus extra miles. They didn’t seem to mind however, finding the chance to interact with adult minds fun, challenging and refreshing.

A teacher and his wife drove 350 miles round trip each week in order for him to earn his master’s degree and she her bachelor’s. After the substantial pay increase they each received, they decided the $100 per trip that it cost them was worth it. Another woman traveled 100 miles to Amarillo every week by bus to study creative writing. Each trip she would stay the night and write features for the Amarillo newspapers, giving her the chance to practice what she was learning and more than pay for her expenses.

The Amarillo Air Force Base also brought many students, encouraging military personnel to enroll in classes by running buses between the Base and the Center.

More than 25 percent of the students at the Amarillo Center were not there seeking degrees, but increased knowledge along specific lines. Teachers found it to be a “gold mine” as Texas teachers at the time were paid according to the amount of college credits they had earned. It also sharpened their scholarship and teaching skills, and helped make area teachers among the best in the state.

From housewives that had “never darkened a college door” to learned scholars, the Amarillo Center hosted a variety of students that always kept the 21-room facility full. So full in fact that in 1960, after overwhelming enrollment numbers coupled with the building of an expressway between Amarillo and Canyon, administrators decided to move the adult education project back to the WT campus, and the Amarillo Center closed.