

**CHARLES BANKS WILSON TRIBUTE REMARKS
AUGUST 9, 2013**

By Andy Lester

First let me say how thrilled the members of the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical Colleges are to help host this Tribute to the life of Charles Banks Wilson. As you know, Wilson would have celebrated his 95th birthday this week. He was – no, he is – an Oklahoma and American treasure.

This great artist produced many wonderful works of art, and Oklahomans are blessed to be able to see much of Wilson's work on display right here at home. But Charles Banks Wilson was not merely a producer of art. He was – and for me as a Regent, this is especially important – he was a teacher of art. And he

taught art right here in Miami, at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College.

It's hard to think of NEO without also thinking of Charles Banks Wilson. In fact, Wilson and NEO were approximately the same age. Wilson, being just a few months older, actually moved to Miami about the time NEO was founded.

But the ties go much deeper than the mere coincidence of time. Wilson established the art program at NEO. Listen to what he says, in his own words, about teaching at NEO:

I started teaching in night school. I was so successful that people at night school would say, "Well Charles, why don't you start teaching classes during the day?" The Superintendent agreed to that, so I started

**teaching day classes at Northeastern
Oklahoma A&M College.**

**Now these aren't simply the words of a hometown
boy teaching at his local community college. This great
man understood the mission of a junior college. He
knew what a school like NEO means. Speaking of the
great influence he had on countless young people,
Wilson said:**

**I really believe that most students should go to
junior college first. I think they should go to a
junior college first and get oriented.**

**You know, NEO is an unusual place. It is not, and
never has been, a typical two-year college. I mean,
consider this. How many two-year schools – or four-
year schools, for that matter – have an art department**

that was founded by an artist of the stature of Charles Banks Wilson?

Those of us who care deeply for higher education know the difference that NEO makes in the lives of its students. Charles Banks Wilson, who is so closely identified with this institution, understood what NEO does for its students.

Those who love NEO proudly say, “Once a Norseman, always a Norseman.” Charles Banks Wilson understood what that meant. How do I know? Look at the NEO logo. Charles Banks Wilson, that great artist, the founder of the NEO art department, created the logo that NEO still uses today.

Charles Banks Wilson and NEO – they are virtually synonymous. On behalf of the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical

Colleges, thank you for being here to help dedicate this room to and celebrate the life of Charles Banks Wilson.