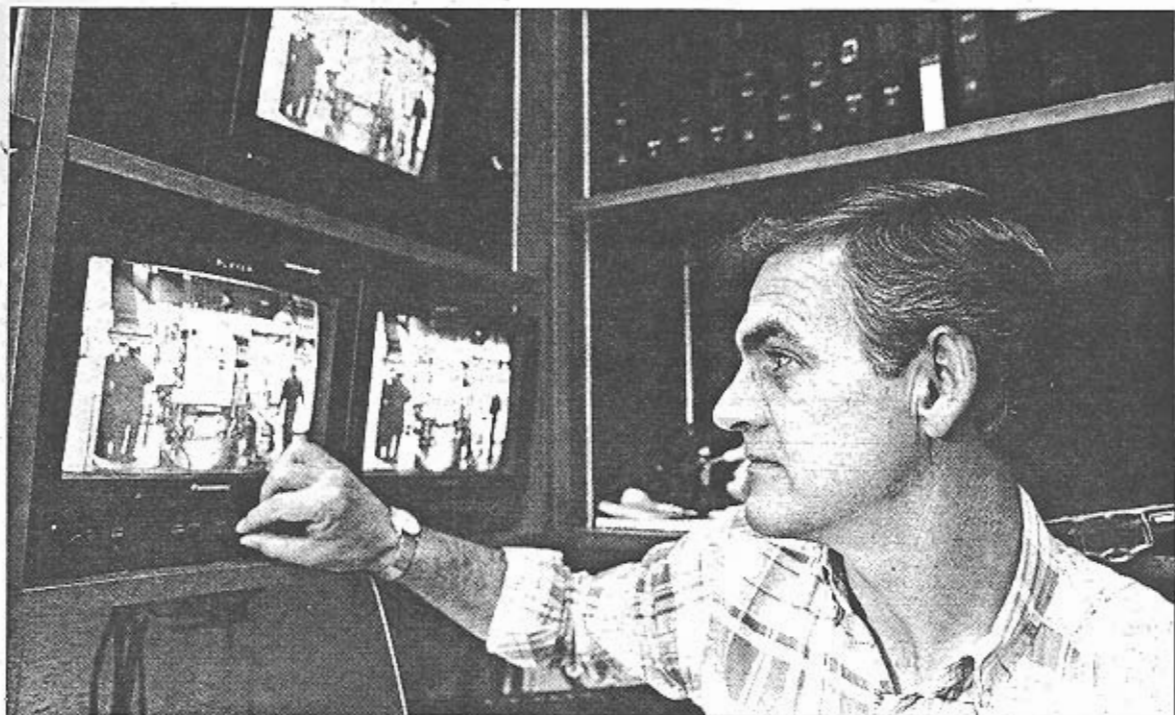




JEFF WILLIAMS/STAFF

Buddy Noles looks at a video shot in Italy of a glass-making process. Below, the video shows an Italian worker examining machinery.

College Goes Distance To Teach Students

By JOSEPH GALARNEAU

Staff Writer

MORGANTON — Buddy Noles went to Italy last month, but it was no vacation.

Noles went to the northern Italian town of Piombino. The attraction wasn't the majestic Alps or nearby Adriatic Sea — it was a KV-66 vial tooling machine.

From 7 in the morning to 7 at night for four days, Noles filmed the high-tech machine as it was being assembled, used and repaired. He returned home to Morganton with more than seven hours of videotape shot at the machine's manufacturing plant.

Not exactly the stuff of home movies, but it was more than adequate for Noles' needs.

His employer, Western Piedmont Community College, has been designing a training course for the machine, which will be used at a new Burke County glass plant.

Kimble Glass Inc., a subsidiary of the Ohio-based Owens Illinois, will employ more than 60 people at the plant making vials that will be used for pharmaceuticals. The plant, whose location is still being negotiated, is expected to begin operations in the fall, company officials said.

Following the lead of its parent corporation, which makes most of its \$3.7 billion a year from glass products, Kimble Glass is one of the nation's largest manufacturers of laboratory glassware and phar-



maceutical packaging.

"This is a good example of the type of industry that we want to bring to Burke County," said Val-desse town manager Jeff Morse, who chairs the Economic Development Commission that lured Kimble Glass. "It's clean industry that's low laborwise and high in capital investment."

When the company began looking at Burke, it wanted to know how local workers would be trained to operate the complicated machinery involved in vial manufacturing. About 25 workers were needed to work on the KV-66's for three shifts nearly seven days a week.

That's where Western Piedmont stepped in.

"We can help the workers develop the skills necessary for them to go to the production line

and immediately go to work," said Richard Greene, the college's vice president for academic affairs. "That's what we're here for."

With money from the N.C. Department of Community Colleges, a team led by David Puckett, the associate dean of business and industry, began to draw up a training program.

"These machines are highly technical, and involve a lot of physics and mathematics," Greene said. "We have to do a lot of in-class training to prepare them to use the machines."

One problem was that the machines were a new way to manufacture vials and were not commonly found in American factories. So Puckett, Noles and several

Kimble Glass engineers decided to go to Italy where the machines were made.

Out of the 149 training projects funded last year by the community college system to help new and expanding industry, only a few required overseas trips, said department spokesman Mark Van Sciver.

Two weeks after getting the go-ahead, the team was on a plane bound for Europe.

"It might sound fun, but this was definitely a business trip," Noles said.

In the hectic days leading up to the trip, Puckett and Noles had to secure passports and visas. Noles also had to rent video equipment — the professional cameras he used at the college required too much paperwork to take abroad.

Once back in North Carolina, Noles edited the tape down to 4½ hours and added narration.

Kimble Glass has now set up a training facility in an old Burke Lumber building, where Noles will film some more before producing a final training film within the next two months.

Free of cost to both the company and employees, the college will also train 40-50 inspectors and packers for Kimble glass.

This time, Greene added, no trips.