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**Dr Ed Simonson**

John Anthony Dr.

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#### Recommended Citation

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Dr. Ed Simonson

August 21-22, 2000

Dr. Anthony: Dr. Simonson was the original consultant for CCCCD. charts/maps/population growth. I've never seen a plan more accurate for projecting 10-20 years into the future.

The interesting thing was, I don't know where I want to start on this. This study was for the presentation to the coordinating board. Bill & I talked this over the whole idea and to keep it simple. And if you'll notice this is probably, this could have been expanded to 150 pages but we kept it brief because we knew what our audience was. Our audience was the members of the board and so we hit 2 or 3 main points but this was just results of about a 1 ½ years work and of course if you want to review this...

Dr. A: I'd like to borrow that if I can and I'll get it back to you.

Sure, one of the deals that you've already talked to Bill about, one of the meetings that we had with Jerry Hoagland & Judge Roberts, and I believe the superintendent of the school district (Dr. A. Wayne Hendrick), an older, tall fellow. He was in the background early and he was very helpful. The thing is this tell a little bit about what you know already about the (970) I think Bill recommended me.

Dr. A.: How did that get, I interviewed Bill a couple of weeks ago and he....

Yeah, they actually wanted him to do it but I think that he felt that it would be a conflict of interest, especially since the proximity of Dallas, that there may be some criticism and they said well, what do you suggest and he said well, I know a guy in California that has done quite a bit of this and may be interested...I met with Jerry.

Dr. A.: So you actually met with – did you fly out from California and did you meet with Bill Priest. So you and Bill met with Jerry with Bill Roberts.

Yeah, Bill Priest was there and I believe the superintendent might have been there. There were about 5 of us. We just sort of mapped the thing out. I forget the details of the contract but it was all, this would be an interesting project to do But the idea was that I would be the lead person but Bill would be in there, which he was. Bill and I worked together on a lot of things over the years and going back to graduate days at Berkley. So it was a comfortable deal. In fact Bill and I had worked together in Parkersburg, W. VA on several other assignments Bill had. He would pull me in, and I had assignments and I pulled him in. I had Bill as a member of a search committee. So anyway, I got my marching orders from those guys in the initial meeting. One of the things we found out, which I'm sure you're aware of, back some 20 years before this, there was an attempt, in fact McCall's father, but they for some reason struck out and I think they even went as far as trial voters and were turned down. They voted for the college and the money was turned down. Our idea was that winner take all. Remember the eventual suggestion was an election that would form the district that would do this and do that?

Dr. A: Was your first assignment about doing the feasibility study?

Yes, that's all that it was. We weren't necessarily going to go beyond determining whether it's feasible and then of course the next thing to do – what really speeded it up, it may have seemed like a laborious thing to a lot of people there. It went pretty fast cause as we went along to determine the feasibility, we found out that under Texas law, the biennial business, so if we were going to do it instead of going along at our convenience, we ended up with a deadline which was the one where the proposal was presented to the governing board of the higher education – State Coordinating Board. We switched from feasibility to getting the dam thing done.

Dr. A: You actually went with Judge Roberts to testify before the coordinating board – did you have a feasibility study done by that time?

Yes, this was the talking document. I went prepared to defend the application but Judge Roberts was designated, Jerry and Judge and I were there and we more or less said hey Judge why don't you lead off? Well, he led off but he hit a home run and the game was over. There was very little criticism, the only thing they was, that they were to the point where they weren't going to approve any more community colleges but the indication was that this was the 49<sup>th</sup> and 49 is enough. Everybody was warned, if this doesn't go through fine, but let's not have anymore. It was a pretty happy situation to get the approval. The report – they had read the report and as I said we were kind of proud of the fact that we kept it brief cause it's a fairly fast read and I think the board members, in fact a couple board members, had come up to visit with us and so we had a little bit of an advance. There was a gentleman, and I know he was a pretty impressive guy, he was sent by the coordinating board to look into what Collin County's all about. He came up and we wine and dined him, talked it over and he had all of his questions answered. I think that was very helpful because he was the kind of guy that he could kill the thing. He was a handsome fellow, probably in his early 40's and he was very articulate. It was a good meeting. And by the way I can't say enough about the Judge and Jerry, course Carey was involved too, but whenever we said hey, we have a visiting dignitary come, we arranged a dinner mostly at the Harvey Hotel. And we had other bureaucrats come. This guy was a board member but the people from the community college section were very helpful and I think we do, in the report, thank several of those people. These are the people, hired hands, more or less. If I remember correctly the report from that group was approved "a go". After this was approved you're only 50% there. The next thing is getting the electorate approved. One of the things that was impressive for the coordinating board was the extent of support as shown by the petition. We were at the point where all we had to do was get the people to sign the petition. I wish we could have taped the Judge's dissertation – it was masterful and I don't think he had a not but note long – just right to the point. But anyhow the indication was that we had a percentage of the voters of Collin County say, let's go.

Dr. A: Going back to the feasibility study – you spent your first couple months just putting that together.

This is a copulation of what. Initially we used, what the criteria are for forming a community college district. You had to have so many people, so many dollars, so many – it's right down the line. Let's say that the assessed valuation would have to be something like \$10M so we were able to say, the requirement is \$10M, this area already has, whatever the number was, several hundred million and then it comes to this: the requirements are here and we had an exact. Every criteria was met, and then some. There wasn't a single thing that wasn't there. One of the things was we had the support of the community and the fact that the support was there was borne out by the election. Had to be 50% where it turned out to be 70-80% and in addition when they're saying let's approve it, they were approving the formation. They were establishing financial tax rate which would be required to operate this thing. There was a bond issue of X number of dollars and then there was a board election, but it was an all inclusive election and the whole thing was approved by a substantial majority.

Dr. A: Ed, once the feasibility study was done, then you went to the legislature, went to the coordinating with Judge Roberts, got that approved, then did they have to indicate that they wanted you on further to do other kinds of things?

Oh yeah, I kept getting new contracts. Feasibility was over, and then we went to another deal. I think what they did, they just sort of extended the contracting and then after the successful election they asked Bill and me to come back. We were still working out of the Commissioners court and got ourselves a fearless leader. In other words we were commissioned to do a search for a president. Then the next thing you know we were also given the commission to find, and I don't know if we consulted you on that John, the idea was we'd get a couple of assistants. We ran searches for instruction and student services and then Walter was asked to stay on.

Dr. A: How did Walter come on board initially. Was that something that Bill and you decided?

Yea, we found out that , Bill & I as chancellors, dabbled in these things, but certainly weren't experts and old Bill said, I have just the man in Walter Pike. So he became a member of the team, you know him, you know what kind of a person he was but he was recommended to us and became a part of the group and a lot of our presentations to the committee, we had these hearings where financing of the district was pretty high on everybody's agenda. Walter was the one who had provided the figures. In hindsight, even though at the time what he was proposing was pretty dam extreme. He didn't go far enough apparently from what I gathered.

Dr. A: The ratio – what we had was a .20¢ limit .12¢ for debt services and .8¢ for operation. With \$40M assessed value there's no way you could ever use .12¢ for debt service. Our debt is practically nill right now. But we're at the .8¢ ceiling because of the growth. So it probably should have been .12¢ operation and .8¢ debt service. But at the time it probably went good.

At the time I think Walter had studied what the assessed valuation would be, but getting back to your question, Walter was very much a part of this deal. He worked in his very quiet way and was very helpful to me.

Dr. A: Once the thing was approved by the coordinating board then the committee structure... did that begin to take place, with Carey and David McCall?

The way these committees were formed, remember the feasibility study, this is the one that went to the state. These committees had all been working.

Dr. A: Ok so they had been contributing to these as well?

Yea and there were a lot of little battles, on the deal of the organization it was proposed by some since we already have a campus of or an extension of the University of Texas, maybe this could just be a lower division institution, part of that system. Why duplicate it? In other words there was UTD, they don't have a lower division – we could be the lower division and there were a whole lot of ideas on organization and each one of those committees they spent a lot of time coming up with those ideas. One of the things that you'll remember, as a former member of the League for Innovation, I was sent to a conference up in Napa put on by the League and it had to do with what the goals of a community college could be and I believe the recommendation was the Mission Growth Committee said we should adopt Mission Goals as stipulated by the League for Innovation.... and furthermore, we should apply immediately for membership to the League of Innovation.

Dr. A: I had an interview with Michael Watson and Richard Abernathy, the college attorney incidentally were the Mission & Goals Committee and he did not mention that League but it was an interesting process. The other one Colin Chopin, he had the alternative approach and he had a couple battles on his hands with UTD possibility or joining Dallas or something else. It became pretty clear the County Commissioners wanted their own and he had 2 people on there who were kinda opposed by they all came around at the end.

Your old colleague Ron Burke contributed and it was really funny. I learned a lesson from Ron and that is that if you're from Illinois, Texas doesn't give a dam. Bill and I were always very careful working with our group there. We never threw California at them but Ron didn't remember that (CottonBowl). I never had any problem with them. Anyhow, poor old Rnt got laughed out of the place. They more or less said, who the hell

are you to try to tell us that. Because he came on a little strong. The funny part about it, he was being supportive. It was interesting, they wanted to do it their way, and I think that's true of the board members. Carey had some definite ideas and so did some others. Tino went along with things. Guys like Carey, some of the more forceful guys, assertive, I don't think I found anybody who's motivation could be questioned at all. The steel organization would be independent and would be part of it. The one guy who I think was helpful keeping it independent was somebody who had an ulterior motive for being very cooperative who I guess you didn't find to be too helpful was Ernest Horany. He was very supportive. I think he had hoped he'd be part of the college and frankly, I had an ulterior motive. Here I was an outsider, so I wanted help from wherever and Ernie was there. The Superintendent was very helpful.

Dr. A: Did you ever meet with the Grayson County, who by the way was a pretty good tennis player, Truman Wester.

No, there are a couple other districts mentioned in the report in fact the application with this feasibility study, the actual organization of it issues, subjects were not my or Bill's doing. I give credit right in the begging, we were indebted to what actually became the 48<sup>th</sup> community college in the state. I also talked to the guy who had been the consultant, he was an old-timer in Texas, done a lot of studies. But anyhow, we spent a lot of time trying to learn about Texas Law, the prior attempts obviously, trying to find out what people wanted to know. A lot of times, being a consultant and an out-of-stater, it started with greed. I don't think we ever said, Ed don't get out in front too much. I always was there to support Carey and Jerry and I didn't make any excuses, it was a little bit by design, cause frankly I could sense that if I were to start telling them how to do it they'd be immediately turned off. So it was a lot better working by letting these other jokers be the front man. And we went to a lot of meetings. Probably 3 or 4 months before this thing was accomplished went to a meeting in McKinney and there was a reception at the home of one of the bankers. Jerry and I went, the speaker was Ross Peroit. I have a picture of Jerry and Ross, you might like to have that.



Dr. A: Yes, put it in the book.

Yea, I remembered Peroit's comments on that. When he found out that I was there and was connected with the committee and from California he made a statement about the community college which was interesting, not from the podium, but in the group, he said one of the reasons for the success, and he was a community college graduate from Texarkana. He was proud of his connection and that was before he went to the academy, anyway, he said one of the reasons the community colleges are so important and one of the reasons the community colleges are so successful is that the students who go to the community colleges are ready and there's no substitute for readiness.

Dr. A: I think he had difficulty as a youth.

I don't think he would have gotten into Annapolis if he hadn't had that. The reception was at a very prominent guy Boyd Law firm. I was at Boyd's house, wonderful, old-fashion-time home, but the event where Ross was speaker was attended by 300 or 400 people at some vocational school out there. Ross has sort of lost it since then. I never heard a guy more effective at least better received than he was. At that time he was the Chair of the committee studying K-12. He was bemoaning the fact that too many of our students were worried about baton twirling and playing football and showing their animals at the fair. In fact, I think he made up half these stories, but he told a story about a littler high school student got this little turkey or chicken and they were going all over the state showing the animal – never went to class but went to a hell of a lot of .....He took a terrible advantage over that incident, but this is what happened.

Dr. A: When those committees met your attended most of them?

Yea, always stayed at the Harvey Hotel but never stayed more than 3 or 4 days at a time, but then toward the end when we started getting into the search for the president Bill said you can't keep traipsing off so he convinced me to stay for a few weeks while we wrapped this thing up.

Dr. A: Tell me a little bit about the search process. Did you have some specific criteria that they were looking for?

Starting from scratch there's not a thing here except these were community college classes being taught at Grayson and high schools, other than that outfit would be starting from scratch and of course would be absorbing whatever was here already. So the person should be a builder, a judge of talent and it was kept a little bit open-ended. Bill and I talked, we were looking for the person the skills have to be there. We ended up, you might not want to include it in the report, we had a pretty good response. There were a few people that got cut out earlier that turned out to have been, could have maybe nudged, we ended up with five but there were a few who were late bloomers in this game that were pretty darn good. One, I don't think he would have been a builder but he would have done all the other aspects of the job, Jack Scott, a native of Plano. He is now big in the Assembly in California. I think he's a candidate for Senator. His last job, retired as superintendent of Pasadena, good person, but his real forte was his speaking and he's a good writer too. I think he had been trained to be a minister. The five finalists were all good people but in this present company, I'd have to say they chose the right guy.

Dr. A: Dick Greenfield, Terry Albanion, the guy from Texas, and then Dick Jones works for you. What's Dick doing these days?

Well he's working for us right now, PPL. He was sort of done in by an unhappy guy who came in second in the search to be Chancellor at San Bernadino – Peter Selo – what happened was, they ran a search, we didn't have anything to do with running the search, but they came up with two names, one was Richard Jones and the other was Peter Selo. The board chose Richard by a close vote. The one person who really wanted Peter was an old board member, a woman, somehow she didn't take that too kindly that she didn't get her boy in there. So Richard got started in there, he was doing a great job, then they had an opening for Business Manager and so this board member was able, got him in to be the Business Manager. He had been in Paroto District and apparently washed out up there

but he started having dinners and breakfasts with one of the board members, little by little Dick was doomed and Greenfield went on and did some work with the foundation. All these guys including the friend, the guy from Texas, went to Lamar. Joe Rushing had nothing but good things to say about him but he really fit the bill better than you did because he was Baptist.

Dr. A: Not one of them turned off... a couple of board members said some bad words or swore or something – could that have been him. He was always a jokester.

No, I don't think anybody used profanity but there were a couple things that happened. I remember the interview. I'll never forget this guy. I got acquainted with him. I knew all 5 candidates, spent time with all of them and this guy, who's name I can't remember right now, he and I got together and had a good chat and I was impressed with him, with the recommendations, he was a pretty good candidate. **EDITED PART.**

They saw what you'd done there. Remember we really got into the deal, we centered on the way you started people's business. Then of course you had a lot of good recommendation from people who had previously been with you. I'm sure, I don't know first hand but... Bill and I saw, it wasn't very long before we realized who they should have and apparently we were right.

Dr. A: Good spot for me... I owe you a debt of gratitude for giving me a call. It's the best job I've had.

Bill felt all the way along that it was probably a top potential community college in the country and which means that it was also the top job that was around. He felt that all the way along. He was never disloyal to Dallas.

Dr. A: No, because he talked to me on several occasions about applying for that job.

The thing is, as I pointed out, I didn't realize – did you see the name we listed? The community people. We'd hold community meetings and we had a couple hundred people

there. I remember one of the meetings when Walter told them about the financial thing. Again, Walter is not a great public speaker, but he's pretty dam convincing. I think the fact that he had the job he had in Dallas, the fact that he had the answers did well.

Dr. A: All of these people are on our mailing list so we've always invited them to anything that the college is putting on. We have a Founders Hall, your name is on these too with the list of all the contributors, they're like little books and each person's name is like the title of the book. These are the people who are the original contributors to the college and we had a dedication of that building out on our new campus. I see Bill Crawford...

Yea, bill was on the first board, he was kind of a rough and ready guy who was different than the others. He worked for MCI, but you know he was a little bit out of step with the rest of the group, but actually his heart was in the right place.

Dr. A: Even after he got defeated on the board he was still a very strong supporter. We dedicated a street around the campus after his name "Bill Crawford Circle".

If you haven't looked at the report lately in terms of putting it together – of course this only takes you up to the approval of the governing Board, or Coordinating council, I guess.

Dr. A: Did you get involved in the political process, the petitions and so on?

the petitions, that's all in there. But then the business of getting out the vote, they pretty much handled that. I wasn't too much involved, although I was informed. As I remember, I was at a meeting in Santa Barbara. I called Jerry the night of the election about 10pm your time. I call, Jerry, how'd it go? He said, well it was approved by a rule of 2 to 1, something like 66%. Then they pulled me back. So we started meeting and even though I didn't have the title, I was the administrator, didn't have a staff, it was a matter of getting it going.

Dr. A: Did you meet with the Board?

Yea, we set up the meetings. That's when I really worked with Carey and we moved around and met at a variety of places. There were certain things that were required by law. Here we are a district and didn't have any staff. So that first thing was getting that search going. So you were named and you had show up. I think you were assigned and a month or two elapsed. During the interim period Carey and I would set up the agendas and have the meetings, didn't have much real business to take care of, a few nuts and bolts things.

Dr. A: Did Dr. Pike participate in those too?

By that time I don't think Bill was too much involved yet, now particularly Walter and me, cause we were the only two people still on the board.

Dr. A: Then you stayed on till September that year? Cause you helped us with the search for the two VPs.

That's right. We didn't go for the two VPs until after you got here, so I stayed on. You said ok, why don't you do it and remember we actually moved our office to another office building in Plano.

Dr. A: did you also work with Tony Allen, remember the little girl we hired to do clerical work?

I helped find some of the people. That's right, I forgot about that.

Dr. A: she's now an executive VP, worked all the way through her masters and doctorate, same person...sharp lady.

If there's other things we've missed don't be bashful to give me a call.

Dr. A: As you reflect back Ed, anything you want to make sure I include in this book?

In think the thing – one of the reasons the district has been so successful was there was an obvious need, the community needed it and they put their money where their mouth was and were willing to... you know that bond issue they approved was astronomical at that time and they didn't flinch but when you have guys... it wasn't just Carey, by the way, there were some people from the legal profession. I don't remember too many medical doctors involved but there may have been a few around. The biggest deal was there were business people, people from the law and there may have been real estate people. The thing was, there was grass-roots support. It went all the way from the very, the people whose kids were wanting, needing higher education and weren't in a position to send them to Dallas or all the way to Denton and so that was a big deal. And then we had people who could send their kids anywhere. In fact some of them did. There were some of the committee members who had kids at Yale and Princeton – they still wanted it here for the rest of the people. A perfect example of a committee wanting something and having the guts to do what it took to get it. Again, I don't think people can forget the contribution of Bill and Jerry because they worked hard. Other commissioners that weren't all that hot.

Dr. A: Bill told me the first problem he had was with his own commissioner. And then with the coordinating board and then the state legislature and then the governor and then they came back and got the vote. On the surface he said it looked like everything was going well, but he said we had a lot of poles to jump over.

And this document was sort of a necessary evil in a way. You can't go in without this, you've got to prove that you qualify and that you have the support. The financial support, the community support, all those things were there.

Dr. A: Any characters you ran into out there? You mention Ross Periot.

Well I met, like Mr. McCall's father, I don't know if he's a character, but he didn't participate too much in this deal but he was very proud of the fact that they made an effort many years ago. And but you know, one of the things a little different there was a state legislator who was related to Susan Calter, no, Sam Johnson. But he was related to one of the locals here and that was helpful. It all sort of fell in place. I don't know if it could happen today. I started to say here in this community with the participation and all, some of the simplest things can't get through. I don't know what they'd do if you came to them and say, he, let's form a community college. What they did form one here and Grace Mitchell ended up or Merlin Eisinbach was the first. It had pretty good community support but from what I gather, nothing like here.