

Collin College

DigitalCommons@Collin

John Anthony Collection Interviews

John Anthony Collection

11-21-2019

Dr John Anthony Recollections

Sue Olivier

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/anthony_interviews

Recommended Citation

Olivier, Sue, "Dr John Anthony Recollections" (2019). *John Anthony Collection Interviews*. 11.
https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/anthony_interviews/11

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the John Anthony Collection at DigitalCommons@Collin. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Anthony Collection Interviews by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Collin. For more information, please contact mtomlin@collin.edu.

DR. JOHN ANTHONY, RECOLLECTIONS

Sue Willard Olivier, Trustee-CCCCD 1984-1998

From late Spring 1984 until 1999, the facilities, programs, and staff of Collin County Community College bear witness to Dr. John Anthony's vision and leadership in creating and maintaining a new and unique College District. The existing College is testimony and evidence of his leadership. His greatest personal traits incorporated an openness and honesty in dealing with others, attracting and retaining outstanding staff at every level, and empowering that staff to use their creative and innovative powers to establish, in a very short period, a College admired and emulated across the United States. His devotion to the community college movement and its excellence is reflected in every program and achievement at CCCCCD from the creative arts, medical training, to technology and business classes. The district provides excellent and caring advanced training to its students of all ages, and has done so within the confines of a well managed financial plan. One man was charged by a nine member Board with the task of creating such a College and one man bore the responsibility for success or failure. His achievements should be understood in relation to the time he served and those with whom he worked. Simply put, he was the right man, in the right place, at the right time, with the right Board of Trustees. From this beginning a grand College was achieved.

The 1984 April election created the College District, provided it's funding, and created a nine member Board from the several groups seeking to become Trustees. (The original plan called for a seven member Board, with a seven member slate asked to run. The then mayor of Wylie, John Akins, said if Dr. Dick Sewell was not on that slate the southeast portion of Collin County would not support the College. Commissioner Jerry

Hoagland went to Austin and found a nine member Board to be possible, thus opening two positions on that slate and allowing for several groups of nine to run if they met the signature requirement of 2,500 registered voters.) Fortunately, all the candidates were outstanding individuals that represented the entire County and attracted positive votes to the creation of a College. Those nine receiving the highest number of votes became the first Board of Trustees. Some had been with the college movement from its inception, others from the election. From varied civic and business backgrounds they came together in April 1984 with proven track records in community service and with a single minded determination to create a college and begin operations by fall of 1985! After these many years their confidence and leadership is amazing. The Board determined its initial task was to locate an outstanding District President, and locate facilities to begin instruction. In retrospect they were so successful because the College and its potential students came first and each issue was resolved without the ego driven agendas that so often mar public and private board deliberations.

The Commissioners Court had provided the Founding Committee with an education consultant, Ed Simonton. He did the initial search and narrowed the applicant field to five individuals from across the United States. Each was a prominent and recognized leader in the community college movement. Dr. Simonton reported that he called Dr. John Anthony in Portland Oregon to get his recommendations, and Dr. Anthony indicated he would like to be a candidate. Like others, he saw the magnificent opportunity of creating a College District. At that time he was at the very pinnacle of his college career, having served as an outstanding college administrator in New York, Pennsylvania, California and Oregon. (While in Los Angeles he had later Governor Jerry Brown, better

known as “moonbeam”, as a Trustee!) It is testimony to John Anthony’s leadership capabilities that he was ready to tackle creating a new college that while the job offered great opportunity if all went well, it also could inject failure into a distinguished career.

The newly elected Board chose capable and congenial leadership in electing as Board President Cary^e Cox. He determined each candidate would meet at a series of Board-candidate interviews and dinners at the Harvey Hotel in Plano. Following the initial selections he and vice-president Dr. Jim Dickson would make on site visits. Each individual's credentials were outstanding, but at a lovely meal of salmon steak John Anthony emerged as a clear favorite for CCCC District President. (My recollections include meeting him in the hall immediately following the interview and saying, “Its nice to have met you. I’ll see you again”, sensing that with this bright articulate man we had our leader. Board President Cary^e Cox was an outstanding presiding officer, always asking for each Trustee’s input, he lighten^{ed} Board deliberations with his humor. He whole heartedly supported Dr. Anthony, but said he would have to get rid of the plaid sport coat worn to his interview, it just some how didn’t say Collin County!)

My choice was based on Dr. Anthony’s experience as a higher education administrator; his background in math; and his presence. He had led several Districts of varying backgrounds from the multi-cultured sophisticated Los Angeles District to the technology driven area of Portland. He had a math background and the public budget and financial experience to keep the developing college on a firm financial foundation. In 1985 Collin County was in transition from a semi-rural bedroom community adjacent to Dallas to the home of high tech and multimillion-dollar business corporations it is today. The new College would need to serve and communicate with both these worlds, and be

ready to make the transition as students and community demanded and needed an ever-changing curriculum. Dr. Anthony's background made it possible for him to be at home with existing conditions while adapting rapidly to the high tech and business driven new Collin County, and at the same time communicating with and representing the needs of earlier County interests. The staff that he put together reflected his openness and diversity of background. The best and most advanced programs were being created and approved concurrent with building facilities being located, altered, and planned. Chosen site selections included all areas of the County thus allaying fears that CCCCD would become a "Plano College". All this was done while he met with local and state leaders and established a reputation as an open and forthright individual. Within three years one would hear comments from county residents and from around the state that here was a great man doing a great job, and providing our students and population with the very best Community College possible. Within five years other colleges and universities were studying and emulating CCCCD programs.

Dr. Anthony had the training, temperament, and vigorous tenacity to build a great institution. His diverse background made it possible for him to fit into Collin County as it experienced rapid transition. He worked with a congenial and supportive Board, and had an outstanding Board President in Cary^e Cox, who stood behind every accomplishment and led the board with wisdom and professionalism. Dr. Anthony's legacy includes an outstanding staff, respected and excellent education programs, attractive and accessible facilities and most important hundreds of individual lives that have been enriched and benefited from an exemplary College in Collin County. It was an

honor to witness and support his accomplishments. Today, Collin County Community College is evidence of his success.