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Interview with Michael Watson – August 15th or 16th, 2000

Dr. Anthony: How did you get initially involved with the college?

I knew David McCall III—actually thru articles in newspapers and thru private discussions – I found out groups were gathering to form or possibility of forming a college and I ran into David at a reception for a candidate for Governor at (?? Polo Hunt Club). A few year ago _____ that I told him of my interest in working for a Junior College in a leadership roll and when a core of people were put together I would be interested. David McCall III and Carey Cox were co-chairs. That was the way it originally came together. It started with 6 different groups – with 4 categories. I worked on the Mission Statement, the Physical Plant – others on Curriculum – others on --- . It was broken down in about 4 groups. I was looking for a list of the original 14 people before our meeting and I can't find my notes. That's how I became involved initially.

Dr. Anthony: Did you chair the Mission Statement?

I co-chaired with Richard Abernathy and I think Joy Anderson was vice-chair so there were 4 of us that were responsible for this.

Dr. Anthony: So you were active and Richard Abernathy active with foundation and board member of the college - Richard Abernathy attorney for the college and still is I think. Did you have any inkling in that direction at all?

No, I wanted to do everything possible to get started. I did not have any long-term aspirations regarding serving on the board or teaching capacity. I felt it would be a tremendous benefit to Collin County, particularly to North Dallas. Richland College had a significant presence and the growth of Plano had accelerated since I moved here in 1971. I had seen rapid changes in Plano and felt this would be a tremendous asset. I guess Jerry Hoagland was the principle behind it in terms that he was the person from the Commissioners Court who seemed to be sponsoring it - - or at least the principal liaison for that. I talked with Jerry Hoagland and friends and we talked about the benefits that it

would bring to Collin County and the kinds of things that we could see for the future by having an institution of that type which is fact (170).

Dr. Anthony: Did you have any experiences with community colleges? (177)

No not really. I'd taken some courses at Richland College. I'm originally from Arkansas and went _____.

Dr. Anthony: We won't hold that against you.

Not my choice – not my choice but in the 1950's it was a great place to grow up. They were called junior colleges and at that point there were no 2-year colleges there. I went to school in Tennessee/in Georgia and worked in Florida but there was no junior college that I was aware of in Florida but until I got to Texas the concept of a junior college or 2 year college was relatively new.

Dr. Anthony: I've learned a lot from talking with Judge Roberts and of course David McCall, Sr. There was two things that got it started - one of course was Grayson County College and the second thing – Howard Thornton got tired of paying out-of-district tuition for his daughter to go to Dallas. He said, "Why can't we have a college in Collin County" and Jerry said, "Hey, that's a good idea".

Watson: We were working with TI at that time and there was a great influx of people in technology with TI and people from (another company 213) as well so there were quite a few white-collar people locating in Plano.

Dr. Anthony: As you reflect back on the committee's – how did they stick you with philosophy?

David and Carey made the choices. We weren't asked what we wanted to do or at least I wasn't. I wanted to make a difference.

Dr. Anthony: Can you reflect back on what some of those deliberations were with the committee regarding the philosophy?

We had gotten some guidance for a consultant that was hired – Ed Simonson.

Dr. Anthony: I'm going to meet with him next week.

Watson: Great great!! I think we had a group meeting – all the committee chairs and group chairs and he indicated that he had been instrumental in creating community colleges in various parts of the country and shared with us some ideas. He brought some samples of Mission Statements in particular that we would be interested in and also talked about the philosophy behind what we were trying to do. _____ - your audience and find out what your constituents are going to be and try to read their minds about what kinds of programs are going on and what kind of future they want the community college to have so there was a long list of people who had also expressed their interest in working for this. Again, how those were sub-divided among the various committees, I don't know but we were 25 or 30 people working on Mission Statements and we were divided into 2 groups and I took one group and Joy Anderson took the other group. We worked independently and the final product was a copulation of those two and one of those sub-groups met and put together what they thought was a Mission Statement and also their validation of the wording and why it was stated the way it was and etc. Richard, Joy and I got together and came up with 1 document. We had quite a wide cross-section of the county because of people serving on their sub-committees. Also we encouraged all to talk with friends, family, church members and etc about the prospects of a junior college and what they would like to see – what a junior college would mean to them, their city, their children and grand children.

Dr. Anthony: Did you get a good feedback?

Yes, each of us had 3 or 4 meetings with our group and we had lots of brainstorming sessions comparing with samples of other community colleges in Texas and outside of Texas. Looking of content to see what their Mission Statements looked like. There was quite a bit of variety – depending on geography – depending on where their community college was located. I assume they were all addressing the needs of that community in their Mission Statement – different parts of the country had different needs.

Dr. Anthony: As you look back is there anything in particular that you want to make sure that I include in the history of the college? I've asked other people – who do you want to play your role in the movie?

I guess I would want the emphasis to be – selfishly – I'd want the emphasis on all the benefits that it has brought to the community – by the number of people that have gone thru and by the impact that it has had on peoples lives – and offering opportunities of education for self help and for fun courses – things that could be used recreationally. That's what the college is put together for or what I thought it had been put together for. And based on the (297) and I know that there's been a long list of people that have taught ____ it's been a great success.

Dr. Anthony: Any disappointments over the years in reflecting back?

No, I can say that we picked the best President for the job (there were more positive comments but I couldn't get them all.)

Dr. Anthony: Thanks. It's been a great job and I've enjoyed working with the board. The board has been great.

Dr. Anthony: Reflecting back on philosophy and mission – were there any hurdles that you had to jump over? In talking with Judge Roberts on legislative issues there

were some really tough battles that you had to do in legislature and talking with people in program, difficulties in curriculum. Did you have any of those problems?

We probably had the easiest job of all. Ours could be more general. It wasn't implemented in terms of something that was going to cost money. It didn't immediately turn into classes for infrastructure (??) or that we were going to hire people (? To buy books) or have legislative hurdles or issues on voting. That was one of the issues to be voted in bond election was the Mission Statement. My thought would be as people are looking at the dollars on items and context of what a community college was going to be or do – they would look at cost and how much tax rate would be affected. The Mission Statement would be on the bottom of their concerns. ?? It was thoughts of the foundation.

Dr. Anthony: The committee did an excellent job.

Thank you. We never looked upon it as something that we were going to have to do a hard sell on. There were others that would talk about classrooms and etc. The dollars of the college were contained there and that was where people felt like they were getting their money's worth. It was talked about the thrust that the community college was going to have.

Dr. Anthony: Did you get active in the process politically regarding the election?

Yes, I was. I guess there was 1,000, even more that made a contribution of bringing this college forward. I know that firstly, everyone got involved in collecting signatures. There were a certain number of signatures needed to get it on the ballot. Then the politicking afterward – after it was determined that it would be on the ballot to make sure that it passed. To ferret out all the questions and concerns that people had then to get those answers out and publicize those answers so that the general public would

benefit and know what the questions were and to know how those questions could be resolved. So it was with a great sigh of relief to everyone when the ballots were cast. It showed overwhelmingly that the voters of Collin County wanted a community college.

Dr. Anthony: Is there anyone that you feel I should interview regarding the history of the college?

I would not provide you a name not already on your list.

Dr. Anthony: O.K.

There was one person that worked very hard for the creation of the college. That was Bill Crawford and he was part of the original Board of Directors.

Dr. Anthony: Bill was a good friend

Bill's position was filled by someone equally competent after Bill's passing a few years ago.

Dr. Anthony: Bill was very refreshing because you always knew where you stood with him.

That's right! You know we named the road around Spring Creek after him.

Dr. Anthony: Bill was one of our favorite people. In fact I asked (390).

(Balance of tape is blank)

Dr. Anthony and Mr. Watson discussed some of the outstanding contributions that Bill Crawford had made.

Dr. Anthony had some funny stories regarding Bill that he and Mr. Watson discussed.