

CCCC CELEBRATES A DECADE

THE OLD AND THE NEW



CLARK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN 1971

Clark County Community College is now celebrating a decade of learning and community service. Some of the college staff who toiled together to get the college started ten years ago still work together harmoniously. But these people share the memories of that summer in 1971 when Clark County Community College first opened its doors in a small delapidated building formerly used by the Review Journal at 737 North Main in downtown Las Vegas.

Barbara Agonia, Dave Hoggard, Thomas Brown, and Fran Montes are among those who started work on July 1, 1971, preparing classes and cleaning up the ink-stained premises.

Montes as secretary to George Nichols, Dean of Administration, soon learned her job would be most diversified. "I was receptionist, shipping clerk, bookkeeper, typist, registration clerk and counselor," said Fran Montes. In her spare time she ran the tiny book store and also swept floors and washed windows.

"It was not like any college I had seen or imaged," said Montes. "The place was dirty with printer's ink still on the floors. Men were knocking down walls to make classrooms and we all joined in to clean up behind them since we didn't have any maintenance people."

Barbara Agonia, who taught English, as she still does at Community College, found the Main Street campus a rugged place. "There was such a heap of debris at the entrance that we had to jump over it to get inside," she said. "The electrical system broke down so often that we would have to grope through the rubble inside and hope we would



**AND
TODAY**

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end up in the right place," she added.

During those early days many a trip was made to the Salvation Army and thrift stores to acquire chairs and desks. Said Agonia, "We became experts at bartering and making trade offs. We had to for our bookcases were rotting and the furniture was threadbare."

Tom Brown, who had arrived at the college in July to work as History Instructor and Counselor, had previously taught at a Community College in Mississippi. He found the facilities in Las Vegas quite unusual.

"If we had any air conditioning at all, it was uncertain," he said. "The classrooms were put up with dropped down partitions so that the air would circulate. This meant the sounds from the rooms also circulated. It was so cold in the winter that we brought in portable heaters," Brown added.

"Most of our students worked so they needed to take classes either early in the morning or at night. So we worked long hours. But none of us minded because we shared the work load and helped each other out as much as we could. We

would eat together at the Mom and Pop restaurant across the street — "Chubby's" — or ride down together for the 99 cent dinner at the Joker Club, reminisced Brown.

"The college did lack a few facilities in 1971," said Dave Hoggard wryly. Hoggard, now Associate Dean of Applied Science and Technology, was one of the first staff members at CCCC, since he had been Director of Manpower, the precursor of CETA, and had worked out of Walker's Furniture on Highland Drive since

Hoggard.

Students who came to the college that first year were clearly surprised by the appearance of the place. "They would exclaim with astonishment, 'This is a College?' and positively gape," said Montes. "However they were soon impressed by our high standards. While the place on Main never looked like a college, in spirit it truly was," added Montes.

By the time Clark County Community College was officially dedicated by Governor

changing careers in mid-life were able to enter programs especially designed for them.

The three main classrooms of the college, called the Blue, Orange and Green rooms for the color of the chairs inside them, were soon bursting at the partitions. The Learning Resource Center was little more than "a hole in the wall" and the Language Lab occupied a puny corner of the building.

Local schools, Sears, the YMCA, the Army Reserve Building, local

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1969. Manpower moved to the college.

"We had to beg, borrow or steal whatever we needed," said Hoggard. "The occupational programs operated out of a building on Industrial Road and the Food Service Program from a place on Wall St., since we had no room at the college. Space was at a premium and we shared every bit of it, as we indeed shared the chores. We all got along very well and morale was extremely high," added

Mike O'Callaghan on October 11, 1971, the first semester was flying along. The college was immediately popular because of its innovative features.

Registration was taken at local shopping centers, as it is today, and the college was geared to vocational and career services with the "open college" concept. Older students had an opportunity to return to school and learn at their own pace.

Veterans, foreign students and those fire stations provided classroom space and classes were even held in city parks. The Child Development Lab began in a crowded housing development complex.

For the first time in Southern Nevada, a college reached out to serve and become part of the community. The Nursing program, Adult and Community Education and programs at Nellis Base all began early.

The offer of 80 acres on Cheyenne Avenue as a new campus for CCCC was accepted from the City of North Las Vegas early in 1973. Governor Mike O'Callaghan yielded the shovel at groundbreaking ceremonies at the site on August 28, 1973. That same evening the first graduates of CCCC — 32 of them — held commencement exercises at the Convention Center.

Since the move was by necessity very gradual, duplicate programs were offered at both sites and representatives of each course section stayed at Main Street until the new building was finally completed in 1976. As coordinator of languages, Barbara Agonia stayed at the old building until it closed down. "They were reluctant to move me at all since I had collected so many books, papers and junk," she said.

The final phase of the college provided many more student facilities, and to everyone's great relief, a coffee shop at last. Outside, the trees, shrubs and flowers began to grow and bloom providing an outdoor setting for students.

It has taken a decade for Clark County Community College to grow from a few hundred students and a handful of faculty in the crowded dingy building on N. Main to an exciting huge modern facility.

Today more than 12,000 students of all ages and ethnic backgrounds mingle together in the process of learning and growing.

By the end of this year 100,000 people from the community will visit the campus for seminars, meetings, workshops, art shows and theatre presentations. The college has fulfilled its promise of a decade ago to serve the community.

The college will continue to grow. There are some at the college today who remember and are nostalgic about the camaraderie of the first little facility on North Main, even as they rejoice in the growth of Clark County Community College.