

FRANCIS TUTTLE, THE SCHOOL

A PERSONAL HISTORY

SUZETTE NORTHCUTT RHODES

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Suzette Northcutt Rhodes

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About the Author

Suzette Northcutt Rhodes is a founding member of the Francis Tuttle Technology Center Board of Education. She served the district for a collective 35 years before retiring in 2021. After Francis Tuttle Technology Center was officially founded in 1979 as Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, Rhodes was chosen to serve on the first Board of Education and was elected the first board president.

At its founding, Francis Tuttle Technology Center had one campus site and one building. Today, it has multiple instructional campuses.

Author's Note

This is a history book. The history of Francis Tuttle, the school. Some of it is written in the first person. I lived it. I was there. As I write, I make note of the fact that I have spent virtually one-half of my 82 years on the Board of Education at Francis Tuttle.

The history of Francis Tuttle, the school, can't be told without looking into the history of Francis Tuttle, the man. I met Dr. Francis Tuttle in the late 1970s, when the talks started about a vocational-technical education district needed and requested by Putnam City, Deer Creek, Edmond and Western Heights common school districts. As I became more involved and eventually elected to a seat on the new district's board, I learned what Dr. Tuttle had done to create the Oklahoma vocational education delivery system. He was the architect of that system. A system that is like no other in the world. Even today, Dr. Francis Tuttle is a man I admire and respect.

The creation of this manuscript has been a long process. I have let life interfere too much. But then again, I believe that things happen as they are supposed to and maybe this wasn't really needed until now.

Dr. Kay Martin was the Superintendent and CEO of Francis Tuttle Technology Center on February 16, 2001 at the celebration of my retirement after 21 years of service. Her words resonate with me as I recall the events that shaped this piece of history that I'm about to share with you:

"You were here. Like a mother, you birthed us and provided us with many labors of love.

"When our campus was opened for our first classes, Suzette, you were here. When we graduated our first class, you were here. You helped us shape our culture. You and the Board created a place where we felt we could safely take risks. You helped us identify what it would be like to be on the staff or to be a student at Francis Tuttle.

"When we drafted our first strategic plan and our quality principles, you were here. In addition, when we began to win awards and recognition, you were like a proud mother. You were here, giving us the limelight but sharing in our success. As each new facility was dreamed, designed and completed, you were with us. As our identity and special qualities emerged, you were here. As we have grown in numbers and quality, you were with us. You were here as we celebrated the life and mourned the loss of our former Superintendent, Bruce Gray.

"Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your dedication and thank you for your vision for our excellence. Thank you for your contributions to our district. Your legacy, your vision and your standards of excellence are a great gift. Suzette, you have done so much for Francis Tuttle. We are forever indebted to you."

George Nigh, who was Oklahoma's Governor in 1979 when Francis Tuttle, the school, was created, was also a guest speaker at that celebration and he gave me insight that I have used in writing this book. "Suzette, many times we don't get to see the fruits of our labor," he said. "You planted the seed and got to be here when the crop was harvested. Many people rest under the shade of the trees you planted on this prairie. We honor you today for the service you have given to so many causes, for the passion you have for Francis Tuttle, the school. You done good!"

The style of this book may be a bit unorthodox, but what else would you expect from me? I am a bit unorthodox and always have been. I hope you enjoy the story.

As you can see from these wonderful remarks, people give me more credit for the outcomes than I probably deserve. I am proud they think I have the ability to motivate groups of people to be better than they might have been without my presence in their lives. What more can a person gain from life?

Little did I know, when I wrote those words above, that there would be another Francis Tuttle chapter in my life. After my 2001 retirement and the passage of almost seven years, I was reappointed to take a seat back on the Board of Education after my good friend and longtime colleague, Dave Brown, resigned from the Board. Dr. Kay Martin was still the Superintendent and CEO and Dr. Tom Friedemann was the Deputy Superintendent.

My first official meeting of the board on November 11, 2007 brought me together with people I had served with and a couple of members new to me. The board meeting

was familiar and I was excited and thrilled to be back in the middle of my Francis Tuttle family.

I had the opportunity to share my concerns with Dr. Martin and Dr. Friedemann about the culture. I had been an adjunct college professor for over 10 years and each of those years, I taught several sections of Organizational Behavior to adults studying for their Bachelors of Science degrees in Organizational Leadership. I knew cultures could be fragile and altered by many organizational changes. Seven years had passed since I had been really active in the Francis Tuttle life. I asked Dr. Martin and Dr. Friedemann if they would make sure I could attend faculty and student events that would give me the opportunity to experience the culture. My first big concern was, did the faculty and staff still feel "safe" taking risks to satisfy their internal and external customers' needs and wants? I also wanted to see if the communication from Board and Administration still flowed up and down to the staff and faculty and students along the public avenues and the grapevine? Was the "family" still intact?

When we began in 1979 with dreams and good ideas, our joint philosophy included our desire to build a staff and faculty that would reflect the ideals of Dr. Francis Tuttle. The culture began to grow from that foundation. None of the board members came with personal agendas. We learned to work together and to trust our administration to build an education center that would serve our student and our community. The board I rejoined in 2007 was committed and still working to maintain our culture, a culture that was famous in Oklahoma and in national vocational education circles.

What I found in the next 14 years was our culture was strong and even more important than it had ever been. Our Dennison scores in 2019, the last year of Dr. Friedemann's administration, were "off the chart." The Dennison survey is a nationally normed measurement of the health of an organization's culture. Our ways of welcoming new employees into our culture became better and better. Each class of new employees was able to experience the rich history of vocational education now career and technology education—in Oklahoma and each new employee was introduced to our founders, Dr. Tuttle and Bruce Gray, the innovative superintendent who laid the foundation for the excellence that is the Francis Tuttle Technology Center. The new employees were introduced to Dr. Tuttle and Bruce through videos and presentations by Dr. Friedemann and myself.

We happily told the Francis Tuttle story to each new member of our staff and faulty. We had new programs for students and Academies that fulfilled the need of the over-achievers. The results were more and more student and faculty recognitions for accomplishments and outstanding achievements. The culture was strong and my Francis Tuttle family was content, happy and hard working.

My second retirement was a much quieter one. I am in my early eighties and my time of service, while a labor of love, needed to be handed off. I still serve on the Francis Tuttle Foundation Board of Trustees and will as long as I am able. I have enjoyed every minute of being "The Mother of Francis Tuttle, the School." I still have that parent's love, lots of pride in and concern for my Francis Tuttle family.

Introduction

The history of Francis Tuttle, the school, cannot be told without looking into the history of Francis Tuttle, the man. In addition, you must look at certain events in the history of vocational education in the United States and in Oklahoma that preceded the formation of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, known today as Francis Tuttle Technology Center.

Francis Tuttle, the school, much like its namesake Dr. Francis Tuttle, is recognized statewide, nationally and even internationally for its outstanding accomplishments. The school has been visited by delegations from every state and from more than 35 countries.

Francis Tuttle Technology Center has a far-reaching reputation for education excellence and innovative leadership. Visitors come to observe the technology, to benchmark the methods, and to better understand what makes the model work and why the results, in terms of student success and customer satisfaction, are so extraordinary. Most delegations leave knowing they have shared a unique experience. It is not only the memory of a beautiful campus they take away, but the knowledge that the personal interaction and communication within the modern facade of steel and concrete and glass are unique as well. The success that Francis Tuttle Technol-

ogy Center has achieved happens because of the empowering culture and the climate sustained by that culture.

Francis Tuttle, the school, could not have flourished without several political decisions made at the state and national levels. Leadership was also a factor. If Francis Tuttle, the man, had not been chosen as state director, if the first board election had produced different results, if the Oklahoma oil boom hadn't enticed away the first superintendent, who can say what might have happened at Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21? There are more "what ifs" in the history of Francis Tuttle, the school. Those will become apparent as its story unfolds

—Suzette Northcutt Rhodes

FRANCIS TUTTLE, THE MAN: EARLY CAREER MILESTONES

Francis Tuttle grew up in Wellston, Oklahoma. Wellston is a complete of the co ston is a small farming community in Lincoln County. He graduated from Wellston High School in 1938. Vocational agriculture was one of the subjects he enjoyed and his teachers Ed Boles and J.L. Edson became role models, influencing his decision to become a vocational agriculture teacher. He was active in FFA and his leadership abilities became evident. He was elected president of his local chapter and was elected state secretary in 1938. Family finances did not allow for college tuition, but he was able to get an athletic scholarship to Connor Junior College at Warner, Oklahoma in Sequoyah County. While there, Tuttle played basketball and baseball and served as a member of the livestock judging team. His team won a judging contest at the Southwest Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth, Texas. All of the members of that team were offered partial scholarships to attend Oklahoma A&M College in Stillwater.

While attending Oklahoma A&M, now Oklahoma State University, Tuttle lived and worked in the beef barn, delivered milk, and became the head custodian at the Industrial Building on the campus. He graduated with a bachelor's of science degree and a certificate to

teach vocational agriculture. His first teaching job was at Gotebo in western Oklahoma. The Second World War interrupted his teaching and Lieutenant Francis Tuttle served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific and in the Philippines. He served as education officer and was promoted to the rank of Captain prior to his discharge in 1946. After the war, Tuttle returned to Gotebo and taught for three more years before going to Snyder to teach agriculture.

While he was teaching at Snyder, members of the Gotebo Board of Education asked him to return to Gotebo as the superintendent. Tuttle hesitated to take the job because he didn't have experience or course work in school administration. The members of the Gotebo school board persisted and promised that, if he would take the job, they would help him over any rough spots.

In 1946, there were no educational requirements for school superintendents. However, the State Board of Education initiated certain criteria for school administration a year later and Francis Tuttle began work on a master's degree at Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater to comply with the requirements. In 1948, Tuttle was granted his master's degree in school administration from the University of Oklahoma.

At his first board meeting as superintendent in Gotebo, Tuttle was asked about the possibility of building a new school. He calmly replied, "I don't know, but I'll find out." He got on the telephone and found out how to begin the process. A community meeting led to passage of a bond issue. The very next year, Gotebo students moved into a new building.

Tuttle's success at Gotebo got the attention of the Holdenville Board of Education in Hughes County. In 1955, he was offered the position of superintendent of Holdenville Schools. Holdenville was a much larger school district, so the move meant career advancement. Francis Tuttle distinguished himself during his tenure at Holdenville. He also became comfortable with leadership.

In 1962, Muskogee was a real "plum" among the career opportunities for school superintendents, and Francis Tuttle made another move. As was the case at Gotebo, a highlight of Tuttle's tenure in Muskogee was the building of a new school.

When the United States
Congress passed Public Law 88210—the Vocational Education
Act of 1963—the states became
eligible for federal funds to build
and operate area vocational
schools. Dr. Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma's state superintendent of
public instruction, recruited Dr.
Tuttle for the Department of

Hodge had the foresight to realize that it would take someone with a proven record as a planner and a builder to oversee this new educational endeavor. He also knew that to lay the groundwork for the future of vocational education, the coordinator of area vocationaltechnical schools had to have a good rapport with public school superintendents.

Vocational Education in 1964. Hodge had the foresight to realize that it would take someone with a proven record as a planner and a builder to oversee this new educational endeavor. He also knew that to lay the groundwork for the future of vocational education, the coordinator of area vocational-technical schools had to have a good rapport with public school superintendents. J.B. Perky, the director of vocational education in the state, could benefit from working with somebody having

the skills of Francis Tuttle. Tuttle later had this to say about Perky:

"Jim Perky was like a lot of other administrators back in those times. There were many strong administrators. They ran a tight ship. If that required being autocratic, they didn't hesitate to use that. I think at the time if he hadn't been that kind of fellow, he would have been run over. Many superintendents of schools out there only wanted the money that would come to their school from the federal funds that were available. In his day and time, it was good that Oklahoma vocational education had a big, tough administrator, and he was that. (J.B. Perky was 6 feet 8 inches tall and had a booming voice.) Mr. Perky thought an administrator ought to act along the line of, 'Tm in charge'."

When they met, Hodge asked Tuttle, "What about salary?" Tuttle responded, "Well, I always felt like, when you leave a good job, you ought to leave for one that is better. So, I think this one will be better in most respects, but I'd like to feel like I'm going to get a little more money than I'm drawing now."

Tuttle's salary in Muskogee was \$15,000. That was the exact amount Hodge and Perky were paid. Hodge said, "I'm going to talk to Jim and recommend that we pay you \$16,500."

Tuttle and Perky met and agreed on Tuttle's starting date, his salary and responsibilities. On March 20, 1964, the State Board for Vocational Education voted to employ Francis Tuttle effective May 1, 1964, contingent upon his release from his position as superintendent in Muskogee. The new job was nothing less than to build

an Oklahoma system of area vocational schools as authorized by the Vocational Education Act of 1963. Oklahoma could receive a considerable amount of money and one-third of it had to be spent to build and equip such schools.

"After I moved to Stillwater," Tuttle later said, "and about the time I was to get my first paycheck, he [Perky] called me one day and said, 'Oh, by the way, Tuttle, your salary's going to be \$15,000, not \$16,500.' I just swallowed my pride because I knew a new day was coming."

It was too late for Francis Tuttle to move backward. Instead, he forged ahead and began the next phase of his distinguished career as coordinator of area vocational schools in the state Department of Vocational Education.

The rest of the history of Francis Tuttle, the man, as it relates to Francis Tuttle, the school, will be woven into events as they unfolded.



Photo courtesy Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education



The Vocational Education Act of 1963 provided the monetary incentive for states to develop the area school concept for the delivery of vocational education. The area school concept is just one of the things that allowed vocational education to flourish in Oklahoma. Of the money appropriated, one-third had to be spent building and operating area schools. Oklahoma was the first state to receive monies appropriated under the Act.

J.B Perky, the state director of vocational education, served as a member of an advisory task force for the U.S. Office of Education. That task force advocated for the area school provisions and other innovative ideas.

The Declaration of Purpose of Public Law 88-210, the Vocational Education Act of 1963, reads as follows:

Section 1. It is the purpose of this part to authorize Federal grants to States to assist them to maintain, extend and improve existing programs of vocational education, to develop new programs of vocational education, and to provide part-time employment for youths who need the earnings from such employment to continue their vocational training on a full-time basis, so that persons of all ages in all communities of

the State—those in high school, those who have completed or discontinued their formal education and are preparing to enter the labor market, those who have already entered the labor market but need to upgrade their skills or learn new ones, and those with special educational handicaps—will have ready access to vocational training or retraining which is of high quality, which is realistic in the light of actual or anticipated opportunities for gainful employment, and which is suited to their needs, interests, and ability to benefit from such training.

The law allowed for funds to be used for "Vocational education for persons who have completed or left high school and who are available for full-time study in preparation for the labor market." In addition, funds were allowed for "Construction of area vocational education school facilities."

In 1964, Francis Tuttle's task as area school coordinator was to interpret the federal legislation and come up with a plan for area vocational education schools in Oklahoma and to implement that plan. On May 15, 1964, J.B. Perky recommended to the State Board for Vocational Education that an ad hoc committee be appointed for the purpose of advising on the development of the Oklahoma State Plan under the Vocational Education Act of 1963. Members of this ad hoc committee approved by the state board were:

- Dale Hughey, Superintendent of Schools, Woodward
- Earl Hamon, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Bartlesville
- N.W. Baldwin, Superintendent of Schools, Broken Arrow

- Clyde Boyd, Superintendent of Schools, Sand Springs
- · Oren Terrill, Superintendent of Schools, Pawhuska
- Robert T. Atterbury, Superintendent of Schools, Ringling
- · Wilson McDonald, Superintendent of Schools, Atoka
- Arch B. Alexander, Superintendent of Schools, Sayre
- Marvin C. Liest, Superintendent of Schools, Lookeba-Sickles
- · John K. Hubbard, Superintendent of Schools, Noble
- · A.B. Thurman, Superintendent of Schools, Walters
- · O.T. Autry, Superintendent of Schools, Enid
- Herman Bottom, Superintendent of Schools, Mangum
- Russell Pursell, Superintendent of Schools, Kingfisher
- D.D. Creech, Superintendent of Schools, Pryor
- Rector Johnson, Superintendent of Schools, Broken Bow
- J.B. Fox, Superintendent of Schools, Perry
- Dr. Jack Parker, Superintendent of Schools, Oklahoma City
- Dr. Hiram Alexander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Tulsa
- Elbert Costner, Superintendent of Schools, Wister
- B. Roy Daniels, High School Principal, Norman
- Hugh Bish, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Lawton
- · Homer Anderson, High School Principal, Ponca City

Dr. Jack Parker remembers that the committee had many heated discussions about how to fund vocational education at the state level. Parker said, "I favored a state funded system. That way they [area schools] would be located where they were needed. Perky and I had lots of arguments about this issue."

Tuttle and his staff, along with Perky and members of the ad hoc committee and state board members, studied the law and the area school concept. Different groups traveled to Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Georgia, and North and South Carolina to visit area schools and examine how those states set up their vocational education systems.

The State Board approved the proposed State Plan under the provisions of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 on September 25, 1964. The plan included the designation of five existing districts as area schools eligible to receive federal funds. The strings attached to the federal money in the Oklahoma plan were that each district had to construct a new building to house the vocational programs. These area schools were in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Enid, Duncan and Ardmore. Even though these schools were designated area schools, they remained under the administration and control of the boards of education in these five cities. (Each went on to become true area schools in time, but that's another story.)

The rest of the plan for Oklahoma required a change in the state Constitution. Perky's and Tuttle's ideas prevailed and most of the superintendents on the ad hoc committee supported the property tax funding method. This method allowed local common school districts to band together to form a new political subdivision called

an area school district. These area school districts would be able to levy local taxes for support.

The First Political Battle

Political stories abound in the history of Francis Tuttle, the school and Dr. Francis Tuttle, the man. This one was told by Roy P. Stewart in his book, *Programs for People*, published in 1982 by the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education and endorsed by the Oklahoma State Advisory Council on Vocational Education. It's a great story about what happened next on the journey that eventually led to the creation of the area vocational-technical school district known today as Francis Tuttle:

After much consultation and work by the state staff, along with Tuttle's efforts, a bill [to call for a state-wide vote on an amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution that would allow area schools to be created as political sub-divisions] was prepared and submitted to legislative leaders. The author in the Oklahoma House of Representatives was Lonnie Abbott of Ada, a school man. After committee assignment, and with Abbott's sponsorship, the bill easily passed the House.

However, passage in the Oklahoma Senate was not so easy. The bill was assigned to a committee on constitutional matters chaired by Senator Bryce Baggett of Oklahoma City; he first inserted a number of amendments to the House version of the bill, then sat on it by refusing to report it out of committee. Tuttle, new at the legislative game, felt rather impotent at this point because he could not get action in the Senate. When he discussed the matter with Perky, the state director said he would attempt to move it by calling a prominent senator, Don Baldwin of Anadarko, and ask for his influential intervention. This did not imply that a "due bill" was owed Perky – although such is the way of Oklahoma politics...Baldwin responded to the telephone call by telling Perky to have Tuttle come see him. When Tuttle went to Baldwin's office, the "old guard" senator said, "I will get your bill out, and we'll restore the important things that you want, but don't bug me about it. Just let me do it my way.

Clem McSpadden, soon to be President Pro Tempore of the Senate, also interceded, and some action was obtained. Dr. Oliver Hodge [State Superintendent] likewise sought aid from two of his old friends, veteran senators Clem Hamilton of Poteau and LeRoy McClendon of Idabel. Their influence, combined with that of other senators, was helpful. Baldwin, with help from McSpadden in getting the bill out of Baggett's committee, then brought it to the floor. One by one Baldwin there restored previously desired language by using items as amendments to the doctored bill. He was successful, and the legislation passed. Subsequently an election was held and a favorable statewide vote secured. The state's area school system thus was born.

Among the senators who became interested in the bill, and also supported it heartily, were Robert Murphy of Stillwater, a Democrat, and Dewey F. Bartlett, a Republican from Tulsa. This may have been the spark that fired Bartlett's flame of support for vocational training as one means of inspiring industrial development within the state, which he later pursued avidly as governor.

The "bill" Roy P. Stewart was writing about was House Joint Resolution 520, or HJR 520. It allowed the establishment of area school districts by the State Board for Vocational Education and a one-time vote for the annual collection of a tax levy not to exceed five mills on the property valuation of an area school district for support of that district. It had 10 House authors: Abbott from Ada, Sandlin from Holdenville, Breckinridge from Tulsa, Burnett from Pauls Valley, Clemons from Midwest City, Goodfellow from Anadarko, McCune from Tulsa, McGraw from Tulsa, Mordy from Ardmore, and Reed from Seminole. Joining them from the Senate as authors were Hamilton from Heavener, Nichols from Wewoka, McClendon from Idabel, and Bartlett from Tulsa. Establishing the area school districts was a non-partisan issue; the authors were both Democrats and Republicans, urban and rural.

HJR 520 was sent to the Senate and on April 29, 1965, and was assigned to the Committee on Constitutional Amendments. Initiatives and Referendum and Code Revision chaired by Senator Bryce Baggett from northwest Oklahoma City. Some 24 legislative days and 42 calendar days later, on Thursday, June 10, it was reported out of the committee as amended. And it was amended, hardly recognizable as the same legislation passed by the House in April. It allowed area school districts to be established by the State Board for Vocational Education, but they could only be established in a designated county or a group of contiguous counties and provided that no county could be divided by an area school district. The Senate amendments added some language that proved to be important and needed. The Senate Committee Substitute for HJR 520 provided that administrative control and direction of an area school district would be vested in a school board constituted ed and empowered by the same laws that constituted and empowered school boards of independent school districts. It also authorized an area school to become indebted up to another 10 percent of the property valuation for building, constructing and improving real property. Three Senate authors had been added, including Senator Baggett.

Many common education supporters were not enamored with the area school concept. They saw the new taxing district as a threat to their ability to pass their own operating millage and bond issues to build and maintain their schools. There was also the rural versus urban issue. The state Supreme Court had reapportioned the legislature in 1964, partially because of the issue. The Senate membership was increased from 44 to 48 and the districts had been drawn to allow for better urban representation. Baggett, one of the "new kids on the block," was bright and willing to burn the midnight oil to get the issues right. Hamilton, Nichols, and Mc-Clendon were experienced and patient. They also had the assistance of Senator Baldwin, a former President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Senator Baldwin had a long and distinguished political career and was admired as a "statesman." Although he was not an author of the resolution, he had promised Perky and Tuttle he would get the bill out of the Senate committee and restore the language.

HJR 520 was first called up for discussion on Wednesday, June 30, 1965. Nine more senators asked to be made co-authors: Dacus, Miller, Bradley, Murphy from Stillwater, Massad, Stipe from McAlester, Grantham

from Weatherford, and Massey from Durant. An amendment was offered and then an amendment to the amendment. More political maneuvering took place. More amendments were offered and a tabling motion or two. The legislative phrase for this is "loving" a bill to death. Senator Hamilton knew the rules of the Senate better than anybody and he was experienced in how to use the rules for legislative advantage. At this juncture, he made a motion to defer further consideration of HJR 520 for this legislative day. Its proponents had some work to do.

On Tuesday, July 6, HJR 520 was called up for more discussion. Senator Pope requested to be added as a co-author, which brought the total of Senate authors and co-authors to 19. No other amendments were offered. Senator Hamilton again asked that consideration be deferred for the day; they still did not have the votes necessary to restore the language and pass the bill. On Wednesday, July 7, HJR 520 was considered further. Senator Baldwin offered a lengthy amendment. Then, before a vote could occur, asked that consideration be temporarily deferred.

The rumor was that Baldwin wanted more time to convince a few other senators to give the proposal a chance. Early in the session on Wednesday, July 14, Senator Hamilton moved that consideration of HJR 520 be set for Special Order at 2:15 p.m. on this legislative day. The motion prevailed. (This special motion was rarely used; Senate and House members could not identify, years later, when it had been used since that fateful day.)

At 2:15 p.m., HJR 520 was called up for consideration. Three more Senators, Bradley, Howard from Tulsa and

Field from western Oklahoma, asked to be made co-authors. The final bill identified 21 House and 18 Senate co-authors. Senators Baldwin and Hamilton offered the same amendments that had been offered each time the

History smiles kindly on Senator Baggett; he restored the language he originally added in committee that vested the administrative control and direction of an area school in a separate vocational school board. Senator Baldwin supported this amendment to the amendment.

measure had been considered, adding the same language that had been in the bill when it passed the house in April and replacing the language that Senator Baggett had added. Senators Nichols, Dacus, Payne, Pope, Boecher, Bradley, Stipe and Field asked to be made co-authors of the Baldwin-Hamilton amendment.

History smiles kindly on Senator Baggett; he restored the language he originally added in committee that vested the

administrative control and direction of an area school in a separate vocational school board. Senator Baldwin supported this amendment to the amendment. A vote on the Baldwin, Hamilton, Nichols, Bradley, Stipe, and Field amendment as amended was successful.

Senator Baldwin then offered a further amendment. His amendment restored the language Senator Baggett had put in the bill that allowed for a levy for purchasing, constructing, improving and equipping real property and buildings and added transportation vehicles and maintenance, but limited it to five percent instead of the 10 percent Senator Baggett had added in committee. Senator Baggett moved to amend this amendment by taking out the words "transportation vehicles" and

"maintenance" and Senator Hamilton asked to co-author the Baggett amendment to the Baldwin amendment. The Senate then voted on the second Baldwin amendment that had been amended by Baggett and Hamilton and it also passed. Baldwin proposed his last amendment giving the State Board for Vocational Education the power to prescribe the criteria for establishing area schools. This amendment passed, too. Senator Rhoades from Tulsa offered one last amendment that allowed the legislature to alter, amend, delete or add to this section of the Constitution by law. This amendment was adopted.

HJR 520 passed July 14, 1965, on a 37 to 6 vote with five senators not voting. The second and crucial vote was on the provision that called for this issue to be placed before the voters at a Special Election on May 24, 1966. A vote to call a Special Election required two-thirds majority vote. This provision passed with 42 yes and only three no votes, with three not voting.

The process had been a struggle, but the best minds had tackled the problem and the result proved to be the best area school legislation in the nation. Francis Tuttle had much to celebrate. He had his constitutional amendment ready to go to the voters—and he received his Doctorate in Education Administration from the University of Oklahoma.

The Voters Speak

The first barriers to the creation and funding of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma had been faced and overcome. The voters of Oklahoma posed the next challenge. Would they support the concept? The

issue was placed on the primary election run-off ballot for May 24, 1966, as State Question 434.

Although Tuttle and Perky had supported and worked to get the legislation passed, they did not have funds to organize a statewide effort to encourage the voters to pass the State Question. Dr. Tuttle "got up his nerve" and asked for a meeting with E.K. Gaylord, the publisher of *The Daily Oklahoman* and *The Oklahoma City Times*. The meeting lasted almost an hour. Gaylord agreed to support State Question 434 and to editorialize in favor of it. Dr. Tuttle was also invited to address the Oklahoma Press Association at its annual meeting. Most newspapers in the state supported the passage of State Question 434.

Opponents of the State Question were better organized than the proponents. Staff members from the Oklahoma State Technical School at Okmulgee printed and distributed flyers at parades and picnics. Common

The area school concept represented a new way of thinking about vocational education. Change is often hard and sometimes not welcomed. If passed, State Question 434 would change the way vocational education was funded, administered and governed.

school administrators started word-of-mouth campaigns. Even though HJR 520 had the support of a majority of the legislature when it passed, it was hard to find political leaders who would speak out in favor of the State Question. Some vocational agriculture educators talked about mounting a campaign against the State Question, but J.B. Perky tempered their public opposition.

The area school concept represented a new way of thinking

about vocational education. Change is often hard and sometimes not welcomed. If passed, State Question 434 would change the way vocational education was funded, administered and governed. Power brokers in the various disciplines were happy with their roles and their control; they saw no need to change.

The only organized effort to pass the legislation came from business and industry, which needed more trained workers. Business leaders saw State Question 434 as a way to bring training into their local communities.

Voting trends are usually on the side of the opponents. Of the 16 state questions put to the voters in 1964 and 1965, only four passed. Not many people expected State Question 434 to pass. State Question 435 was also on the ballot; it provided for an annual legislative session with a limit of ninety legislative days for each session.

Fate had a surprise in store. State Question 434 had 214,698 "yes" votes and 204,438 "no" votes. The margin of victory was 10,260 votes. This represented a margin of fewer than five votes per pre-

cinct.

The foundation for the formation and growth of Francis Tuttle, the school, was beginning to be laid. This foundation also supported the personal and professional growth of Francis Tuttle, the man. Tuttle would become nationally known and respected as the architect of the Oklahoma institution of vocational educa-

The foundation for the formation and growth of Francis Tuttle, the school, was beginning to be laid. This foundation also supported the personal and professional growth of Francis Tuttle, the man. tion that included a network of area vocational-technical schools.

The passage of State Question 434 put into place two of the three major factors that enabled Oklahoma to become a national model for the delivery of vocational-technical education: (1) An area school district for vocational-technical education could be formed as an independent, tax-supported political sub-division and, (2) an area school district could elect its own governing board of education.

Back to the Drawing Board

Dr. Tuttle and his staff had a plan for vocational education in Oklahoma. Their plan included dividing the state into seventeen area vocational school districts. They based their plan on the South Carolina model, which included a network of thirteen "special schools" that provided industrial training. However, Tuttle envisioned something more for Oklahoma: a network of vocational schools that afforded high school vocational programs, industry training and adult education in the same physical facility, built and operated with the help of federal dollars made available to states.

The seventeen proposed districts would blanket the state with vocational education. If Dr. Tuttle had been successful in getting this first plan adopted and sanctioned by the State Board for Vocational Education, Francis Tuttle, the school, would never have been created. Fate intervened in the person of Senator Clem Hamilton.

Senator Hamilton, a key player in the passage of HJR 520, had other ideas about Tuttle's plan. Hamilton was a school superintendent in southeast Oklahoma when

he wasn't legislating in Oklahoma City. He didn't want his district to be forced into an arbitrary area vocational school district.

Hamilton had another edge when he came to the State Board for Vocational Education, whose members were also members of the State Board of Education. Hamilton was chairman of the Education Appropriations Committee. This committee decided the annual monetary fate of the Department of Education. The Board listened to Hamilton.

Tuttle was instructed to draft another plan.

A New State Board

Governor Dewey Bartlett put into place the third important factor that allowed vocational education to flourish in Oklahoma. When former state Senator Dewey Bartlett, who was helpful in the passage of HJR 520, was inaugurated as governor in January 1967, one of his priorities was to bring new industries into Oklahoma. In July of the same

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General McNickle, the commanding general at Tinker Air Force Base in the 1960s, was another key player in producing the nation's best vocational education delivery system. General McNickle was distressed over the lack of trained technicians that Tinker needed to handle

its workload. Tuttle and his staff were aware of what South Carolina was doing for industrial development, and General McNickle happened to have a twin brother who was an Air Force general in South Carolina. A trip to tour the South Carolina special schools was arranged. Governor Bartlett and General McNickle hosted the trip and made out the guest list. Community and state leaders in business and industry, the media, legislative leaders and others were invited. The story of the trip expands with each new person who claims to have been on that plane as it flew to South Carolina.

The visitors from Oklahoma liked what they saw in South Carolina and Governor Bartlett authorized a study of vocational education. The study showed that there was neither a negative nor a positive image of vocational education in Oklahoma among business and industry and the public. The majority simply did not know much about vocational education.

Despite the study, Governor Bartlett saw vocational education, represented by Dr. Francis Tuttle, as an important partner in his industrial and economic development endeavors. Bartlett wanted business and industry to have a seat at the vocational education table. He wanted education and training issues to be decided by men and women who understood the needs of business and industry. In his 1968 State of the State address, Bartlett made his intentions clear:

I propose that you change the composition of the membership of the State Board for Vocational Education. This board would be composed of educators designated by law and businessmen and industrialists appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate. The purpose of the new board would be to direct the training of persons interested in vocational-technical study towards the needs of industry. The composition of this Board would add tremendously to the industrial development of the State of Oklahoma. A full explanation of the purposes and needs of this Board is contained in the...report, copies of which have been furnished to each of you, and its functions would be patterned after the system inaugurated in South Carolina with which many of you are already familiar.

Prior to 1968, the members of the State Board of Education were designated as the State Board for Vocational and Technical Education, as well. All functions of vocational education in Oklahoma were governed ultimately by this board and the State Department of Education. The Department of Vocational Education was merely one of the many divisions in this large state agency. Prior to 1963, there wasn't much money coming to the Department of Vocational Education, so there weren't any real issues to be decided. J.B. Perky was such a strong personality that he maintained control of vocational education, but a change in the State Superintendent of Public Instruction or the State Director of Vocational Education could have changed the status of vocational education in Oklahoma and disrupted the "truce" between the different philosophies.

Governor Bartlett's recommendation to create an autonomous State Board of Vocational and Technical Education separated the governance of vocational education from the State Department of Education. This placed the decision-making about vocational education with board members who were committed to vocational education and were advised by vocational educators and administrators. Vocational issues could not be diluted and confused with the issues of common education.

As with all legislative issues, the make-up of the new State Board of Vocational and Technical Education ended up being a compromise. It began with an 11-member board mostly appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The final composition of the board included the six members of the State Board of Education, the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction who was also designated as President of the Board, and an additional six members appointed by the Governor. Five of the new members are appointed with advice and consent of the Senate and one may be appointed without being confirmed by the Senate. These additional six members must represent each of the Congressional Districts.

The legislation gave the newly constituted board supervision of vocational education and vocational-technical schools and colleges of Oklahoma except OSU Technical Training at Okmulgee and the OSU Technical Institutes in Oklahoma City and Stillwater. Although business and industry leaders have been appointed to the board from time to time, it is a different board than the one Governor Bartlett had imagined.

The most important result of the new board structure was to give vocational and technical education in Oklahoma a separate identity from the State Department of Education. Few states have this unique structure for vocational education. In most states, vocational education occupies a mid-level role within common education or higher education.

Dr. Tuttle provided the energy and the vision behind the creation of the area school concept. With the change in the governance structure of vocational education, the stage was set for the development of an area school district in Oklahoma County.

Below are the steps set out by rules and regulations adopted by the State Board and implemented by the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, in line with the state ConstiDr. Tuttle provided the energy and the vision behind the creation of the area school concept. With the change in the governance structure of vocational education, the stage was set for the development of an area school district in Oklahoma County.

tution and the Oklahoma Statutes, for establishing and funding an area vocational-technical school district:

ESTABLISHING AN AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- 1. Resolutions by boards of education desiring to become a part of an area school district.
- 2. State Board sets date of election with advice and counsel of the local boards.
- 3. If district formation is approved, the State Board zones the district into four zones with advice and counsel of the local boards.
- 4. School board is elected—one member from each zone and one member at large. All voters of the district vote on all five members.
- 5. Newly elected school board schedules date for voting an operating mill levy up to five mills (\$5 per \$1,000 valuation).

- 6. Local board may employ an administrator and professional help in planning a facility, etc.
- 7. If a bond issue is determined necessary, it must be approved by the patrons of the district.

FUNDING AN AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- 1. A maximum five-mill operating levy is authorized. It need be voted on only once, but if less than five mills is voted, an election must be held to approve the increase.
- 2. A maximum five-mill building fund levy is authorized, but any building fund levy must be approved by the patrons each year.
- 3. Bonds may be voted on in an amount up to five per cent of the valuation.
- 4. The State Board of Vocational and Technical Education participates in the construction, equipping and operation of an area school. Usually the participation is 50-50.

Vocational Education in Oklahoma County

The first area school in Oklahoma County was es-**■** tablished in 1965, even before State Question 434 passed. It was designated an area school by the State Board for Vocational Education, but it was controlled by the Oklahoma City Public School District and its board of education. In compliance with the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the building and operations of this vocational facility were funded 50 percent by state and federal funds and 50 percent by local funds provided by the Oklahoma City School District. The board of education for Oklahoma City schools had administrative control and direction over the vocational programs. The intention was that this facility would serve the vocational education needs of secondary students from the other 11 districts in the county. Each district paid tuition to Oklahoma City for its students to attend. Students had to make travel arrangements to attend classes outside the boundaries of their districts. Because of these limitations, many students chose not to enroll in vocational education. Most of the larger districts offered some basic vocational programs, but these were neither well-funded nor well-attended. The Midwest City-Del City School District built a vocational center in 1965. They did not

ask for area school status nor state or federal funding, but chose to build and fund their center exclusively for Mid-Del students.

The Junior College Connection

In 1967, legislation was passed that allowed communities to vote to form junior colleges. That same law was amended the following year to allow junior colleges to be designated as area vocational-technical schools. Two junior colleges were formed in Oklahoma County and both became designated area vocational-technical school districts. Oscar Rose Junior College, now known as Rose State College, was established by a vote on June 18, 1968. It was designated an area school district and successfully passed a two-mill operational levy for postsecondary vocational and technical education on February 7, 1969. An additional three-mill levy passed in 1970, bringing the college to the maximum five mills allowed by State Question 434 and the laws passed in 1968.

South Oklahoma City Junior College, now known as Oklahoma City Community College, was formed by a vote of the people in 1969 and was designated an area vocational-technical school district. Voters also passed an operational levy to fund its postsecondary vocational and technical education programs.

Risk-Takers and an Important Step Closer

The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education periodically attempted to broaden vocational education in Oklahoma County, but with little success. Not only was the issue of vocational education political, there were turf issues, jealousy, fear of not being adequately served, and simple apathy.

In November 1976, the state agency studied possibilities for forming an area school to serve greater Oklahoma County. In December, Representative Carl Twidwell initiated a meeting of public school officials and junior college officials to discuss an Oklahoma County area vocational-technical school district. The proposal from the state agency resembled the 1973 legislative solution to funding an area vocational school district and a junior college in Tulsa County. Tulsa voters had passed a five-mill county levy. Tulsa Junior College received two mills and the Tulsa Area Vocational-Technical Center received three mills.

The plan for Oklahoma County called for a county-wide election to establish one vocational education district. The vote would authorize the five-mill levy as well as a seven-member governing board. Portions of two mills would fund Oscar Rose Junior College and South Oklahoma City Junior College at their present levels. The remainder of the two mills would fund Oklahoma State University Technical Institute in Oklahoma City. Three mills would fund the Oklahoma City Schools Foster Estes Vocational-Technical Center, the Mid-Del Vocational Center and another school site to be created on the north side of Oklahoma City. Those three mills would provide a funding increase for programs of adult education, especially for the skilled trade areas. Another meeting was held early in 1977, and no one in the Oklahoma County education community seemed interested in pursuing the plan.

Dr. Tuttle and his staff tried again. In a memorandum dated April 10, 1978, he proposed the development

of an area school district in Oklahoma County. He had the memo hand-delivered to all of the superintendents of schools in Oklahoma County, the presidents of post-secondary institutions and members of the state legislature from Oklahoma County. He and his area school staff, now headed by Larry Hansen, offered three plans. Each plan was detailed and backed up with financial data. The six-page memo also included background, needs, a statement about "The Problem" and three plans. Plan A was the same plan from 1976, but Plans B and C had been added.

Background and Need The Problem Plans A, B, and C

If two or three large school districts decide to form an area vo-tech school district as provided in the constitution, it might be difficult for the smaller school to eventually do the same or to annex because of valuation, distance or space.

We feel an obligation to update area school funding possibilities as we see them and to disseminate the information to all concerned in the event there is a desire to initiate efforts toward creation of a vo-tech district by two or more interested public school districts.

While we believe Plan A is the best solution for all concerned and for the best unified effort toward vocational and technical education, we realize the ramification involved.

The State Vocational and Technical Education Department is ready to assist in every way possible toward the creation of a new district. In addition, we want to be sure all schools and legislators are informed of any activity.

Below is the outline of each plan from the memo, without the financial and statistical data that was also included:

Plan A

Ask the State Legislature to form an Oklahoma County Area Vo-Tech district, which would include all the school districts in Oklahoma County and would include Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior College Vocational Technical area school.

Assess the five-mill operational levy over the county district. (This would have to be by a vote of the people in the same manner the Legislature created the Tulsa County District).

- a. Use two mills of the total county valuation for postsecondary technical education.
- b. Use three mills of the total county valuation for the area vo-tech school.

Plan B

Form an Area Vo-Tech district to include all of the eligible territory in Oklahoma County and any other eligible districts outside Oklahoma County. Ineligible territory consists of that area already being taxed by the five-mill operating levy for Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior Colleges.

Plan C

Two or more school districts may form a Vo-Tech district in the northwest or northeast area of Oklahoma County.

Tuttle's memo precipitated more meetings, the first on August 3, 1978. Its purpose was to discuss the status of vocational education in Oklahoma County and,

It was after this meeting that Putnam City, Western Heights, Edmond and Deer Creek began serious efforts to jointly promote an area school to serve their needs. This district eventually became Francis Tuttle, the school.

specifically, how to form an area school or schools that might offer a wider variety of vocational education to all county residents. This meeting was attended by superintendents and/or administrative staff from eight of the school districts in Oklahoma County and one of the junior colleges; board members from at least four of the districts; several media representatives; two staff members from the Oklahoma

City Chamber of Commerce; one senator and one representative; and five staff members from the state vocational education department.

This particular audience produced discussion from very different perspectives. Widely divergent views and distinct opinions were expressed. It was after this meeting that Putnam City, Western Heights, Edmond and Deer Creek began serious efforts to jointly promote an area school to serve their needs. This district eventually became Francis Tuttle, the school.

The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education began to work with the four school districts. There were meetings with administrator groups; school patrons were added to the mix. There were also presentations to civic groups explaining how an area school district could be created and funded.

In November, a meeting was held in Choctaw. The attendees were from the school districts in the *northeast* part of the county and from the Oklahoma City School District. The northeast schools wanted "their own" area school district.

The process hit another political snag in January 1979 when a Senate Concurrent Resolution was filed by two powerful Oklahoma County Senators, Marvin York and Don Kilpatrick. Senator York said he introduced the resolution in an effort to encourage all the parties to look more closely at a county system. He felt a county system with central administration and satellite campuses would be a more efficient way to use the tax money.

Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) No. 4 addressed the critical need, the efficient use of tax dollars, the economical system of the county, the concern of the small districts being left out if the large districts formed an area school, the purpose of vocational education, the local funding necessary, the need for coordination to eliminate duplication of programs, and the duty and responsibility of the Oklahoma Legislature.

The "NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED" language said that the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education shall not call any election to form an area school district in Oklahoma County. It also required the State Department of Vocational and Technical

nical Education to complete a comprehensive study of the economic feasibility of an area school district in Oklahoma County and to present that study to the state legislature prior to March 15, 1979.

Although a concurrent resolution does not have the force of law behind it, it does have the effect of law in that the message it sends is important, especially if you are a department that relies upon the state legislature for funding. Therefore, SCR No.4 sent a strong message to the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education. That message was to cease and desist with plans to form an area school district in northwest Oklahoma County and to do more investigation.

Dr. Tuttle and his staff got busy. They enhanced their already voluminous information about vocational education in Oklahoma County and put it together in a comprehensive study related to forming an area school district for greater Oklahoma County. The study was presented to the state legislature on March 12, 1979. The 86-page report included historical developments related to the problem, socio-political constraints, demographic and labor force data, county valuation available as a tax base for funding an area school, and other pertinent information.

Tuttle's study also presented six options, including a rationale and financial data supporting each option:

Option A: Legislate an Oklahoma County Area Vocational-Technical School district, which would include all the independent school districts in the county.

Option B: Proceed with the formation of an area school district in northwest Oklahoma County that in-

cludes Putnam City, Edmond, Deer Creek, and Western Heights. Option B mentioned that other districts, as they become ready and willing, could ask to be annexed. They felt annexation would not likely happen all at once.

Option C: Legislate an Oklahoma County Area Vocational-Technical School district, which would include all the school districts in the county and would also include the Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior College vocational-technical area school districts.

Option D: Form an area school district to include all of the eligible territory in Oklahoma County. All the districts which were already being taxed for vocational education by Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior College would not be included in an area school district, specifically Mid-Del and Crooked Oak. The formation of this district would not take care of the operational needs of the Foster Estes campus, which was the Oklahoma City Public Schools vocational education delivery site.

Option E: Required the Legislature to create three area school districts: the Northwest District, the Northeast District and the Oklahoma City District.

Option F: Suggested an additional fourth district to the plan in Option E. The fourth district would require legislative action to transfer part of the five-mill operating levy from Oscar Rose Junior College to the Mid-Del Area Vo-Tech Center and also transfer part of the five-mill operating levy from South Oklahoma City Junior College to the Oklahoma City Area School District and to the northwest district to compensate for the Western Heights students residing in the junior college district but attending the northwest area school.

The report concluded with six attachments that contained more statistical and financial data and other pertinent information. The summary from the report appears below:

Summary

- 1. There are definitely socio-political factors that must be considered when area vocational and technical school districts are formed in Oklahoma County.
- 2. The greatest difficulty in forming a county-wide district would be the passage of an operating mill levy. While the legislature could create the district and provide for the election or appointment of a board of education, the citizens would have to validate the district by voting an operating mill levy. It appears it would be quite difficult to pass an operating mill levy because of (1) loyalty to the various colleges and (2) almost unanimous opposition on the part of the smaller districts to a county-wide district.
- 3. Mid-Del and Foster Estes Area Vo-Tech Schools will have a problem with financing their operation if an area vo-tech district is formed outside of the existing junior college tax bases.
- 4. The area south of the North Canadian River which is a part of the Oklahoma City Public School District may have to pay tuition for their students residing in

- the South Oklahoma City Junior College tax base to attend an area vo-tech school north of the river.
- 5. Demographic data reveals that population in Oklahoma County will continue to increase and that the mean age of persons to be served will also continue to rise.
- 6. Scholastic data indicates that there has been a decline in secondary school enrollment and that the percent of the student population receiving vocational training before completing high school is considerably lower than the goal adopted by the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education.
- 7. Labor force and demand data clearly presents the fact that training opportunities for Oklahoma County and the Oklahoma City SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) need to be greatly expanded.
- 8. The current interest in forming area vocational and technical schools in Oklahoma County is evident by the resolutions being submitted to the State Board to form districts and the interest by the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce and the businesses and industries in the area.
- 9. Considering the socio-political, geographic and economic factors, it appears that three additional sites will be needed to adequately serve the population and manpower needs for Oklahoma County.
- 10. The tax bases created for Oscar Rose Junior College and South Oklahoma City Junior College could be revoked by the legislature because these institutions are fully state-funded institutions. This would allow a county taxing unit to be available for formation of

- a county area vocational and technical school district.
- 11. The tax bases for Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma
 City Junior College could be legislated to share the
 income with Mid-Del and Foster-Estes Area Vo-Tech
 Schools. This would provide a tax base to operate
 these schools if they are designated as area vo-tech
 districts.
- 12. The legislature could designate a county-wide area vo-tech district and legislate the funding procedures considering all schools involved.
- 13. The legislature could choose to take no action and let the districts progress according to the wishes of the citizenry.
- 14. The valuation existing in Oklahoma County is sufficient to support the operations of area schools in Oklahoma County estimated to cost \$4.3 million annually in Fiscal Year 1982. This estimated cost is for operating three sites with 80 programs serving an estimated 9,100 persons annually.
- 15. All secondary schools that are a part of the Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior Colleges will have problems now and in the future if the tax base remains with the two junior colleges. Secondary students residing in these tax bases cannot legally attend an area vo-tech school without tuition being provided for their training.

Dr. Tuttle's study concluded with the following recommendations:

It is the consensus of the State Vo-Tech staff that if all the biases that currently exist could be removed from the minds of persons involved with formation of area vocational and technical school districts in Oklahoma County, then a county district would be the most economical and appropriate method of providing vocational training to the constituents of Oklahoma County.

In order to provide this option, legislation should be enacted to rescind the taxing authority of Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior Colleges. Legislation should be enacted to form a county vocational and technical district and provide that the vocational and technical school district board transfer a portion of the tax revenue in an amount not less than each of the two junior colleges are currently receiving from local ad valorem taxes so that no hardship will prevail on the two institutions. Legislation should provide that the general obligations bonds issued by the junior college districts should be paid off by a sinking fund levy on the new county district. Should the electors choose not to vote an operating millage for the newly created area vo-tech district, the two junior colleges should continue to assess the millage until such time that the constituents of Oklahoma County voted an operation millage levy or the legislature rescinded the creation of the county district.

A county vo-tech district would be advantageous because: (1) it would provide for an equitable distribution of wealth for all schools and persons in Oklahoma County; (2) it would allow highly specialized training programs to be developed in areas such as diesel mechanics, word processing, machine shop training, etc.; (3) it would allow a more diverse comprehensive program of vocational training for persons throughout the county; (4) it would reduce duplication of training programs because of independently created districts having to provide training to persons within its tax base; (5) it would provide training opportunities on an equal basis for all persons in the county; (6) it would provide a basis for support of the Mid-Del and Foster Estes Area Vo-Tech Centers that do not currently have a tax base; (7) it would offer the opportunity for Midwest City, Choctaw, Crutcho, Western Heights and Oklahoma City school districts to have a tax base to provide vocational training to the secondary and adult population residing in their school districts; (8) it would reduce the amount of funds currently provided through the State Department of Education in the form of flat grants for vocational programs currently being offered through the Mid-Del and Foster Estes Area Vocational-Technical Centers; (9) it would provide the opportunity to establish training for industry and business regardless of their location; and (10) it would continue to provide funds for Oscar Rose and South Oklahoma City Junior Colleges.

Consideration should be given to the fact that this option would necessitate the legislature provide matching capital outlay funds for the necessary site and facilities. The legislature would need to recognize their responsibility for providing matching funds to support the logical and controlled development of the area school program to serve the county.

The State Vo-Tech staff also concurs that biases do currently exist in the minds of those who are considering formation of area vocational and technical school districts. Based on this knowledge the most appropriate and economical method may not be practical. Considering these biases the following approach may be the most feasible:

Four school districts are ready to proceed with the formation of a district. At the time of this study it appears that the citizens of these districts would vote in favor of forming an area school district. Also, it appears that a county-wide school operational levy might fail, principally because the majority of districts do not wish to have a county-wide area school for a variety of reasons.

Other school districts, as they become ready and willing, could annex to the existing area vo-tech school districts or submit resolutions to form new districts. Annexation would not likely happen all at once. As the territory expanded, a second site might be necessary. If most of the schools in the county would eventually participate, a third site may be necessary.

This option provides a more orderly procedure for local patrons and the State Board to make a decision about when to form an area district and spreads the need for the capital funds necessary to build over a longer period of time. In other words, it is easier to sell an eight- or ten-million dollar project to a few who seem ready, than to sell a twenty-two to twenty-five million dollar program to a large segment of the population who may not be ready for it or may have their thinking affected by

socio-political constraints that have been pointed out.

One approach to transferring some of the junior college millage would be to adjust one-half to one mill per year until an equitable arrangement consistent with the State Statutes or State Board policies and procedures has been affected.

In reality, the Concurrent Senate Resolution had little bearing on the outcome. The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education took its research and

Despite the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution No.4, the boards of education of the Putnam City. Edmond, Western Heights, and Deer Creek districts took a risk. At their February meetings, each board passed identical resolutions requesting that the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education conduct a study as to the feasibility of an area school district within the boundaries of the four districts.

put it in a bigger report. By the time the report was in the hands of the Legislature, they chose to remain silent. There were more important legislative issues on the table and they were reluctant to add another plan that required legislative action.

Despite the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution No.4, the boards of education of the Putnam City, Edmond, Western Heights, and Deer Creek districts took a risk. At their February meetings, each board passed identical resolutions requesting that the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education conduct a study as to the feasibility of an area school district within the boundaries of

the four districts. The resolutions also stated that if the study proved that an area school district is feasible, the State Board might call and conduct an election in those districts that submit resolutions. These resolutions were made part of the official minutes of each board. The resolutions were forwarded to the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education for consideration according to the rules and regulations.

The State Board of Vocational and Technical Education adopted a request for election to create a Northwest Area Vocational-Technical School District. Their minutes reflect a request for the Oklahoma County Election Board to conduct an election on May 1, 1979. Although only five percent of eligible voters turned out to vote, the proposed vocational-technical school district—Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, eventually to be known as Francis Tuttle Technology Center—was one step closer to becoming a reality. Among the four districts, 1,815 votes were cast for formation of the new district and 312 votes were cast against the proposed district.

The "Somewhat Rocky" Beginning of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21

Things began to move fast. Another election was scheduled for June 5, 1979. My involvement up to this point had been to attend several meetings in the Putnam City District and some discussions about the school with my political friends. I was the Legislative Chairman for Oklahoma Parent Teachers Association and in that capacity was a registered lobbyist.

Once the first proposal was passed for the district, we began to speculate whom we should support for the Board of Education. I had aspired to run for a seat on the Putnam City Board, but had missed a chance in 1977. Deep in my heart, I still wanted to be a part of the Putnam City Board. Running for another board seemed to me like settling for less. Representative Jim Fried, Chairman of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Education Committee, encouraged me to think about running for the new area school board. He was joined by Sizemore Bolen, Director of Oklahoma City Vocational Education. I discussed it with my family, my friends and my political adviser, former State Senator Phil Lambert. All offered encouragement and support. What really made the final decision easy was remembering Jim Dennis.

Jim Dennis was a longtime member of the Putnam City Board of Education and a friend and mentor of mine. He had long desired a vocational school to serve Putnam City students, but his had been a lone voice in this endeavor. Jim died of a heart attack on Christmas Eve 1977. Remembering the encouragement Jim had given me to become involved in school issues at a higher level, and being a woman who loved a challenge, I decided to take a chance and run for this new board.

To ensure equal representation, the district had been divided into four zones. Candidates had to live in those zones within the district. There was one at-large seat; candidates for this seat could live anywhere in the district. The zones zigged and zagged through the district and were based on the population living in each zone:

- Zone 1 covered Deer Creek, included the territory north of NW 63rd in the Putnam City District, and had east and west boundaries that were contiguous with the Deer Creek and Putnam City Districts.
- Zone 2 lay primarily within the Edmond School District boundaries.
- Zone 3 was in the Putnam City School District between NW 63rd and a jagged southern edge that wandered from NW 32nd to NW 23rd.
- Zone 4 picked up the southern boundary of Zone 3 which included more of the Putnam City District and all of the Western Heights School District.

The candidate-filing period was set for May 21-23, 1979. More than a dozen news articles appeared in the Oklahoma City daily and weekly newspapers about the election. At 5 p.m. on May 23, there were 25 candidates

seeking the five offices. They represented varied backgrounds and experiences and included a physician, a nurse, a college professor and a homemaker. I filed for the Zone 3 seat along with three other candidates. It surprised me to see that there was so much interest.

I enlisted the help of the political resources assembled several years earlier to elect a member of the Putnam City Board and we went to work. David Brown, an architect and longtime Putnam City Schools patron, became my campaign adviser. He took pictures for my brochure and proofed my ad copy. The only thing Dave and I disagreed on was my choice of a campaign slogan. I wanted to put a toolbox on my campaign literature with the slogan, "She has the tools to do the job." After he stopped laughing, he vetoed that idea and we came up with the slogan, "Select Suzette."

I knew several of the candidates from the other zones. Don Resler, Zone 5 candidate, was a surgeon and another Putnam City Schools patron. I had worked with him when I was an operating room nurse. We also worked together on the junior high PTA and on another Putnam City School Board election. We were supporting each other. Dr. Resler hosted a meeting to introduce me to candidates he was supporting, Bob Turner and Bill Chitwood, who were at the meeting. We had a nice discussion about vocational education and Don's wife Karen served coffee and cookies.

During the informal chitchat, I found myself talking with Bill Chitwood, a no-nonsense guy who had served on the Edmond Board of Education for more than 20 years. They had encouraged him to run for the Vocational School Board so he could monitor the creation of the

new school. He owned a dairy farm northeast of Edmond and had not campaigned for any of his elections.

As we sipped our coffee, Bill turned to me and asked, "Are you running for Governor or School Board?" I must have looked perplexed at the question, because he continued by stating, "You have sent me more mail than I usually get when the Governor is running. I just put my name on the ballot and trust the voters to pick the best man."

I smiled and nodded as I moved toward another conversation group, wondering if he was for me or against me. History proved my first impression of Bill was wrong.

Although election day, June 5, 1979, dawned bright and clear, clouds of controversy were on the horizon. The polls opened at 7 a.m. and by 8:30 a.m., it was discovered that most of the voting machines had been programmed wrong. *The Oklahoma City Times* noted that, "the election's outcome probably will have to be decided by a court suit. This unfortunate error generated more than 25 more newspaper articles, at least three editorials and one political cartoon."

State law called for county election boards to certify elections after a three-day protest period had passed. The protest period for this election ended at 5 p.m. on Friday, June, 8. The Oklahoma County Election Board had a meeting scheduled at 5:30 p.m. There were protests in the Zone 1 and Zone 4 elections. As *The Oklahoma Journal* reported on Saturday, June 9:

The election board refused to validate the election despite the arguments of state Sen. Phil Lambert, who

demanded the election be certified in the three unchallenged zones.

Lambert, representing Suzette Northcutt, who was declared the unofficial winner in Zone 3, told the board it had "no legal right" to invalidate the entire election.

"We're talking about five separate and distinct elections," Lambert said. "Protests have been filed only in Zone 1 and Zone 4 and we have three uncontested elections.

"I suggest it is not within your legal prerogative to refuse to certify the entire election...What I'm advocating is that you have no choice but to certify the uncontested elections."

In spite of Lambert's skillful representation, the Election Board refused to certify my election and the elections of the winners in Zones 2 and 5. We had to go to court. A hearing before Judge Stewart Hunter was held in district court on Monday, June 11, 1979. Judge Hunter sustained the protests in Zones 1 and 4 and ordered a new election. He also ordered the Oklahoma County Election Board to certify the winning candidates in Zone 2 (Bill Chitwood), Zone 3 (Suzette Northcutt), and Zone 5 (Dr. Donald Resler). Governor George Nigh called the new election for Tuesday, June 26, 1979.

Many stories have been told about the importance of one vote. The new election for the Zone 4 seat on the Board of Education for Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 has its own "one vote story." Doug Low had lost the original election by 36 votes. He filed his protest at 4:55 p.m. on the final day of the protest period. On June 26, the day of the new election at 3:30

p.m., Low was in Bartlesville, which is 161 miles east and north of Oklahoma City. The polls officially closed at 7 p.m. Low drove to Oklahoma City and arrived at the polling place just in time to vote. He won the election by one vote.

The Board of Education for Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 now had five elected and certified members. The board members' terms of office were staggered based on the zone they represented:

- · Zone 1, Bob Turner, one-year term
- Zone 2, Bill Chitwood, two-year term
- · Zone 3, Suzette Northcutt, three-year term
- · Zone 4, Douglas Low, four-year term
- · Zone 5, Donald Resler, five-year term

The State Board for Vocational and Technical Education always put election results on its agenda. The final outcome for Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 was on the Board agenda for July. Bill Harrison, the Director of the Oklahoma Vocational Association and the Oklahoma Vocational-Technical Education Council, was in the audience at the meeting.

I love to tell this story.

The Legislature was still in session and I ran into Bill at the Capitol while pursuing my lobbying duties as Legislative Chairman of Oklahoma PTA. Bill and I were frequently at the same education meetings and we were official delegates in a coalition that met regularly at the Capitol. Bill was from the J.B. Perky school of administration and I was never sure if he recognized PTA as a legitimate education entity.

"I was at the State Board meeting," Bill said after stopping me in the hall, "and they announced the names of new board members. I see you got yourself elected to that new northwest Oklahoma City board, you and Bob Turner and three other guys whose names I can't recall."

"Yes, four guys, and me," I responded.

"I guess that's about even," Bill said, as he turned in at a legislative office.

Now That We're Elected, What Do We Do?

The elections and the ordeal and confusion they created were set aside as we, the newly elected Board of Education of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, called our first official meeting. The procedures were new for us, but the Area Schools staff of the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education had been through this 20 times before. Larry Hansen, coordinator of the Area Schools division and his staff, Garvin Isaacs, Ray Merritt, and Carole Ebert, as well as Bill Phillips, Regional Director for Oklahoma County and his administrative assistant, Marge Wilson, sprang into action. They found a meeting place, talked to each of us to find a date that fit everyone's busy schedule, and the first official meeting agenda was posted according to state law.

First Board Meeting

The first meeting was to be held June 29, 1979, at Putnam City Central Junior High School, to convene at 8 p.m. This was later than a majority of boards start their meetings. However, it was the first compromise of many that we would agree to. We were willing to meet at this later time because Bill Chitwood was a dairy farmer and 8 p.m. gave him time to finish his milking before coming to a meeting.

Larry Hansen, in his official capacity, called the meeting to order and the first item of business was to administer the official Oath of Office to the newly elected and certified board members. Each member signed the Loyalty Oath required by law. We were at last and officially members of the Board of Education of Area Vocational-Technical School District No.21. Although several interested parties were present at this public meeting, the gathering was still small.

Reviewing the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Education would give any reader the factual history of the development of the district. Its more complete history lies in knowing the personalities and their interpersonal relationships, what their lives were all about away from their roles as board members, and what their motivations were for standing for public office. This office paid no salary and took time away from professional duties as well as time away from families.

Below are sketches of the Board members:

• Bob Turner, Zone 1, Edmond and Deer Creek Schools. At the time of his election, Turner was president of Turner and Company, a real estate and development company in Edmond. He had three children who were students at Deer Creek Schools. He was active in his support of the Deer Creek Schools and was prominent in the Edmond business community. His professional career before the real estate business began in the Employment Security Commission. In this capacity he worked closely with the State Department of Vocational and Technical

Education, especially with the Rural Development division that later became the Manpower Development and Training division. Turner got acquainted with Dr. Francis Tuttle and with Larry Hansen. In 1979, when the state agency began to work with the communities considering a vocational-technical school district in northwest Oklahoma County, Hansen called Turner and solicited his assistance in the Deer Creek and Edmond communities. Turner attended several meetings, talked with school patrons, and was later encouraged to seek a seat on the Board of Education.

- Bill Chitwood, Zone 2, Edmond School District. Chitwood was a member of the Edmond School Board and had served on that board for more than 20 years. He owned a dairy farm and was well respected in the Edmond community. He resigned his position on the Edmond board to run for the newly formed Board of Education for Area Vocational-Technical School District No.21. He was encouraged by Edmond officials and board of education members to seek election so Edmond could be assured the new board would have the benefit of his years of experience. He could also keep an eye on the development of the new district.
- Suzette Northcutt, Zone 3, Putnam City Schools. I was the Legislative Chairman for Oklahoma PTA, a registered lobbyist and politically connected when I ran for the new Board of Education. My children were students in the Putnam City District and I had been active in school activities, PTA, and in the community. I was also very involved in several

- campaigns for Putnam City Board of Education. As a Registered Nurse, I worked at Baptist Hospital in the operating room for 10 years. In 1976, Senator Phil Lambert nominated me to operate a tag agency in the area of NW Expressway and 63rd Street. After attending a meeting hosted by Putnam City, I became interested in the proposed school.
- Douglas R. Low, Zone 4, Putnam City and Western Heights Schools. Low was an industrial engineer and his business took him into manufacturing plants. Through his affiliation with manufacturing, he became aware that there were jobs available but not enough workers being trained to perform these jobs. He saw the creation of this vocational-technical school district as an opportunity to train workers for the jobs he knew were available. Low's children attended Western Heights Schools. In 1977, he had run for the Western Heights board of education and previously had been a candidate for the state legislature.
- Dr. Donald R Resler, Zone 5, At-Large Zone. Don Resler was a busy physician specializing in otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat). Resler had rural roots. He grew up in Cherokee, in western Oklahoma. He was a product of the Future Farmers of America and of agricultural education, but also excelled in physics, chemistry and advanced math. As an adult, he continued his association with his rural heritage by working with the Oklahoma City Chamber as a sponsor of the Spring Livestock Show. FFA and 4H had honored him for his commitment to their programs. Resler had three children who

were students at Putnam City North High School and Hefner Junior High. He had served as president of the North Booster Club and had been active in PTA and other school and community activities. His neighbor was a member of the Putnam City Board of Education who encouraged Resler to file for a seat on the new board.

The first item of business after the swearing in was to elect officers. I was really surprised when Bill Chitwood nominated me for president. That was something I didn't expect. Bob Turner moved the nominations cease and that I be elected by acclamation. Doug Low seconded. The vote was unanimous and I became the first President of the Board of Education of Area Vocational-Technical School District No.21.

Resler remembers this about that first meeting: "We each had a pad of paper, a disposable ballpoint pen and the State Department's pledge to loan us up to \$10,000 to conduct our business until we could call an election for operating funds."

Other items of business were the election of Don Resler as Vice President, and Bill Chitwood as Clerk of the Board. The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education agreed to provide clerical assistance. The agency had prepared an estimate of needs for the district, to be filed with the County Excise Board, and they presented a resolution asking the State Board for Vocational and Technical Education to call an election on August 7, 1979, asking the voters to approve a five-mill operational levy. The next meeting was set for Tuesday, July 10, 1979 at the Edmond administration building. Larry Hansen presented the members with a

The meeting had not been dramatic, but it was momentous.

map of the district and initiated a discussion of the Open Meeting Act, which prohibited board members from discussing dis-

trict business outside an official meeting.

The first official meeting of the Board of Education of Area Vocational-Technical School District No 21 adjourned at about 10:15 p.m. The meeting had not been dramatic, but it was momentous. The disputed election and the court hearing and the newspaper articles and editorials were history. We could only imagine the possibilities of what we might create together. First, we had to learn to work together and to build a school, a school that was to become an institution.

We went back to our jobs and our businesses. There were calls of congratulations and inquiries about the school. Where will we build it? Who were we considering for superintendent? Architects called and wanted to show us the schools they had built. The Oklahoma State School Boards Association was congratulatory and was anticipating a new member school.

GETTING DOWN TO REAL WORK

The second official board meeting was held in Edmond at the School Administration Building. The guest list was growing. Present at this meeting were Superintendents Ralph Downs of Putnam City, Pete Rhames of Deer Creek, and George Rowley of Edmond. Several state agency staff members had driven from Stillwater and Larry Hansen and his staff were there to help. The big item of discussion was the promotion of the August 7, 1979 millage election. Each school district within the area school district's boundaries pledged to inform their patrons. The Oklahoma City Chamber was offering to help, suggestions to contact civic groups and churches were made and there was even an appointment to develop a poster to be distributed throughout the district. Without funding approved by the voters, Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 would cease to exist. Dr. Jimmy Thrash, Central State University (now University of Central Oklahoma) faculty member, accepted an appointment as coordinator of the promotion efforts to assure passage of the August 7 millage election.

The Board asked that the state agency send each board member a list of architects who had been involved

in the design and construction of other area schools. A draft of the "Philosophy of the Board" was distributed, to be read by the board members and to be an item for discussion at the next meeting. There was also action by the board to advertise for application for the position of Superintendent. The meeting ended with a general discussion of the kinds of programs that might be needed, the pros and cons of school advisory committees, and a survey of student needs. We were encouraged to take a good look at the needs of adult education and what could be offered in that area.

The great and the near-great started to dream about becoming the superintendent of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21. Architects made contact with us. The "new kids" on the vocational education block were drawing a crowd.

Bill Phillips and his secretary, Marge Wilson, became the support staff for the new district. They posted the meeting notices, published the estimate of needs and did other administrative duties that kept the district moving ahead. Larry Hansen, Garvin Isaacs and other members of the Area Schools staff at the state agency were available when answers were needed.

Let the Fun(ding) Begin!

Patrons in each school district were sent information about the millage election scheduled for August 7, 1979. The new school was still a media focus and seven articles and one editorial in the daily newspapers favored passage of the millage.

Election Board Secretary, Carl Perkins, assured the board his staff would be ready, and they were. The polls opened at 7 a.m. and by closing at 7 p.m., Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 was funded and could proceed to the next step. A light turnout saw 601 votes in favor and 289 opposed to the levy. The new levy was expected to generate \$1.5 million a year for constructing a school and funding the programs.

The Oklahoma City Times quoted me as follows:

"Several other vo-tech schools have appealed to the community to help them with land acquisition and have been very successful. Land acquisition is a major step. You've got to have the right amount, in the right area with the right price. We're encouraging the public to submit names for the school. We've also considered having a contest and let the children come up with a name. We're committed to build and operate a school on the property tax levy the voters have approved for us. We will probably have to build the building in stages, but we hope to open the doors in 1981 with phase 1 completed and 10 or 12 programs. As the money comes in from the ad valorem taxes, then we will continue to add and build to the school and programs."

The third board meeting was held on Tuesday, August 14, 1979, in the Deer Creek School cafeteria. A special guest was Dr. Francis Tuttle, State Director of the Department of Vocational and Technical Education. Dr. Tuttle was acknowledged and thanked by the board for his support and for the support and assistance of his staff.

In my capacity as president, I offered sincere "thanks" to all those who worked for the passage of the recent millage election. Special recognition was extended to Dr. Jimmy Thrash, committee chairman, to Jim Roblyer, media, and to Dr. Dwayne Colvin. The press was starting to cover the board meetings. Anna Brown, a reporter from *The Edmond Sun*, was taking notes.

The board was already looking for ideas and directions to set the focus for the district. It adopted the following:

PHILOSOPHY

These Things We Believe:

That in a democratic society, the individual is a primary concern. Man is viewed as a rational being, capable of understanding, reasoning, and decision making. Every individual is considered unique and important and the ultimate worth of each person should be recognized.

That in a technological society, every person must obtain occupational preparation during his educational career and continue to upgrade his vocational competencies while in the labor force.

That Vocational-Technical Education should equip every individual insofar as capacity permits, with the competence to attain economic, social, intellectual, and spiritual goals in a democratic society.

That a partnership must exist between the Vocational-Technical School and business and industry which will provide specific on-the-job training in skill areas related to the educational and career goals planned by the student. The individual's right to engage in a lifestyle according to personal choice, abili-

ty, and resources is preserved, and this right must be respected by others.

That adequate buildings and physical facilities are essential to quality education and should be available for effective utilization.

That Vocational-Technical Education should provide a variety of learning experiences for all its students and yet meet the special needs of the disadvantaged and the handicapped as well.

Adopted 7/79

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Enlarge the potential of the individual through education in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will be useful to the student, and thus to his employer.
- 2. Provide ways for the students to participate in real "hands-on manipulation" in the world of work.
- 3. Provide students responsibility as well as freedom.
- 4. Provide an educational system to allow youth to move from adolescence to adulthood, including the transition from school to work for those vast numbers who do not graduate from an institution of higher learning.
- 5. Instill within each individual a concern for career planning and a desire for finding a meaningful role in society.
- 6. Provide a partnership atmosphere between the Vocational-Technical School and other societal institutions

- 7. Involve high school and adult students in planned learning experiences which will satisfy their individual interests and talents.
- 8. Build in a system of control and accountability based on success of students to find a meaningful career.
- 9. Provide an educational system based on a firm financial foundation, recognizing our responsibility to the taxpayer.

Adopted 7/79

Even though this philosophy was written decades ago, its words remain the basic philosophy of every Board of Education and of the administration, staff, and faculty of Francis Tuttle, the school.

The board discussed criteria for superintendent candidates and it was reported that an advertisement had been placed in the *Oklahoma State School Boards Journal*. Placement services at the University of Oklahoma and at Oklahoma State University had also been notified. The Oklahoma City media had also been disseminating the information.

For the minutes, I reported that nine architectural firms interested in plans for the new school had contacted me. Dr. Tuttle and Larry Hansen advised that hiring an architect prior to site selection was an advantage. "They shouldn't select the site but should be there to advise," was Dr. Tuttle's advice. "Having an architect early is good," Hansen said, "because planning the cost of utilities to various sites can sometimes be a very expensive item."

A decision was made to send an architectural questionnaire and cover letter to the nine firms with the amendment that any other firm interested in providing information could pick up a questionnaire and submit it. Bill Phillips distributed copies of a report of the methods used by various operating area schools to acquire land. Dr. Tuttle took the opportunity to tell the board that the State Board for Vocational and Technical Education reserves the right to approve a building site. He also told the board the Department would make a survey, locating the center of the district. The survey would address the lowest number of miles students would have to travel from their schools to a site within a certain radius from the located center of the district. The survey would be made available to the board of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21. The State Board would approve a site within that certain radius. The board members asked for time to assimilate the information.

The discussion of a school name had been placed on the agenda and that discussion took place with no definitive decision. It was a dialogue about how other schools came to be called what they are and several possibilities for deciding what to call Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 when the time was right. There was also discussion of a contest with a committee of patrons making the final decision.

The board officially voted to make the first Tuesday of every month its official board meeting night. The meetings would begin at 7:30 p.m. (Bill Chitwood was willing to compromise.) I brought to the attention of the board the various organizations the board might want to consider joining. These organizations included the Oklahoma State School Boards Association, the Oklaho-

ma Commission on Educational Administration, and the Oklahoma Vocational-Technical Council. After some discussion, the board decided to take no action at the time; the board was moving forward but its members were taking time to get familiar with their new positions and trying to understand their responsibilities. Discussion of the retention of a school attorney took place and again the board made no decision.

The Open Meeting Act had been passed by the state legislature in 1977. Its provisions required posted agendas and public notification and listed the reason boards could convene in private "executive session." The board voted to hold its first executive session to discuss personnel issues related to hiring the first superintendent of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21.

The fourth official meeting of the board took place in the Western Heights High School Cafeteria at 8 p.m. on September 4, 1979. This meeting would be the last regular meeting of the Board of Education without a superintendent.

The meeting was called to order and the routine business of approving the minutes was accomplished. The next action the board took was to join the Oklahoma

Board members seemed to be beginning to understand their roles. They were getting comfortable with stepping out and joining ranks with other active school board members. State School Boards Association. Bill Harrison, Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma Vocational Association, was invited to address the board members and to share with them the aim and purpose of the Oklahoma Vocational-Technical Education Council, or OVTEC. After Harrison's remarks, the board voted

to join OVTEC. The board also voted to join the Oklahoma Commission on Educational Administration. Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 was now an official member of several education associations. Board members seemed to be beginning to understand their roles. They were getting comfortable with stepping out and joining ranks with other active school board members.

Bill Phillips explained the laws about the board designating a treasurer for the school district. The board voted to adopt the Oklahoma County Treasurer as the first official treasurer of the new district. The board then voted to convene in executive session to discuss interviewing superintendent candidates. After the executive session. I announced that the board would meet in special session on September 11, 1979, at 7:30 p.m. at Putnam City North High School for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the position of superintendent. That meeting would be recessed after four candidates were interviewed and would reconvene at 6 p.m. on September 12, in the same location, to interview four additional candidates. The board would also discuss the method it intended to use to select an architect at the September 12 meeting.

The day after the board meeting, I began to call the potential superintendent candidates and schedule them for interviews. The September 11 interviews were scheduled with: Dr. Dwayne Colvin, an administrator from Putnam City; Dr. Orbra Hulsey, Superintendent of the Caddo-Kiowa Vocational-Technical School District; Pete Rhames, Superintendent at Deer Creek Schools; and Dick Wilkerson, Director of the Poteau campus of the Kiamichi Vocational-Technical School District.

The candidates scheduled for September 12 were: Clovis Weatherford, Superintendent at Moore-Norman Vocational-Technical School District; Bill Phillips, Regional Director in the Area Schools Division of the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education; Dr. Weldon Perrin, Superintendent of the Ardmore School District; and Bruce Gray, Superintendent of the Great Plains Vocational-Technical School District in Lawton. Candidate Bruce Gray declined the interview and requested his application be withdrawn when I called him to schedule an interview.

The special meeting began as scheduled and the board went immediately into executive session to begin the interview process. The candidates were interviewed and the board recessed.

On September 12, the board interviewed the three remaining candidates for superintendent and reconvened in open session to discuss the method of selecting an architect for the district. The board voted to interview eight architects at a special meeting on October 2. Each architect would be allowed to make a 20-minute presentation followed by 10 minutes for questions. The architectural firms to be interviewed were Reid and Cunningham, HTB, JHBR, Meyer Brown, Fritzer Knoblock, Mason, HSPS, and Locke, Wright and Foster.

The board then returned to executive session to discuss the candidates for superintendent. After returning to the open meeting, Dr. Don Resler made a motion to hire Clovis Weatherford at a salary of \$36,000 plus the fringe benefits he received at his present superintendent's post. Resler's motion was seconded by Bill Chitwood. Resler then asked to amend his motion by raising the salary to \$37,000. That amendment was seconded by

Bob Turner. The vote on the amendment to Resler's motion was, Resler, yes; Low, yes; Chitwood, yes; Turner, yes; and Northcutt, no. The vote on the original motion to hire Clovis Weatherford was Low, no; Chitwood, yes; Resler, yes; Turner, yes; Northcutt, no.

The rest of the story goes like this. Most boards will publicly report a unanimous vote and we did have lots of discussion about doing just that. You can only imagine who strongly refused to acquiesce to this expected routine and Doug Low agreed with me. I have to admit that my fellow board members weren't angry or even distressed. We just had different opinions about who should be our first superintendent. So we agreed to disagree agreeably. The question on the minds of the board members as they left the meeting was, would Weatherford accept the job with two board members voting against his hiring?

Several days later, I ran into Weatherford at an education conference and he asked me to sit down with

him for a chat. I was upfront with him when I said, "If you decide to accept the job, I will work with you to build the best school possible, but I really hope you will stay in Norman and not become our superintendent."

In the long run, his choice to become the first superintendent was the best thing that could have happened to the district.

I had my own idea about who would make the best superintendent and I was willing to be open and honest. Weatherford tried to tell me why my candidate wasn't the right man for the job. I listened politely and repeated again that I hoped he would not accept the position. He took the job and became the first

superintendent of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21.

In the long run, his choice to become the first superintendent was the best thing that could have happened to the district.

A NEW SUPERINTENDENT GETS THINGS MOVING

Clovis Weatherford, superintendent of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, began to move things into high gear. Our first official meeting after voting to hire Weatherford was at 6:30 p.m. on October 2, 1979, at Hefner Junior High School. He was there to direct things even though he officially wasn't the superintendent until November 1. The consequences of Weatherford being chosen as our first superintendent turned out to have an extremely positive impact on the future of the school.

The first order of business was to interview the architectural firms interested in designing the new school and then to choose one. Each of the firms was given 30 minutes in an open meeting. The architect I favored was David A. Brown, a partner in an Oklahoma City firm, Meyer Brown, Inc. He had a lot of expertise when it came to designing vocational-technical schools.

The first preliminary discussion before the public vote showed two members were leaning toward one firm and two leaning toward another. Brown's firm was not one of those with two potential votes. More discussion didn't change anyone's mind, so the board adjourned its executive session and voted unanimously to enter into

a contract with HTB, Inc., another Oklahoma City firm with a long history. This decision brought Domby Zinn, a partner in HTB and the firm's vocational school specialist, into the family circle. He was assigned to head the team that would design and oversee the construction

Five-hour meetings would become the norm for us. There was much to study and to decide before the school could become a reality. of the first building. (That relationship continued until Zinn retired in 1992.) Even though Brown didn't get the opportunity to become the school's architect, he was destined to become an important decision maker in shaping the school.

Other important votes authorized Weatherford to hire a secretary and two assistants, to take bids for a midsized car to be purchased for school use, and to approve his contract (this last vote was unanimous). The meeting adjourned at 11:40 p.m. Five-hour meetings would become the norm as the board had much to study and to decide before the school could become a physical reality.

State Question 539

A political threat loomed on the horizon for Francis Tuttle, the school, in the form of State Question 539. A statewide initiative petition drive was conducted by a Republican group that called itself the Tax Reform Committee. The committee chairman was Senator Jerry Pierce from Bartlesville. Representative Neal McCaleb, of Edmond, a city within the new vocational school district, was a spokesperson for the group. The purpose of State Question 539 was to create a statutory change in the tax laws of Oklahoma.

McCaleb was also the Republican Minority Leader of the state House of Representatives. Speaker of the House, Democrat Dan Draper, was not pleased with Representative McCaleb or with State Question 539. If passed by the voters, State Question 539 had the potential to reduce the state general fund by several million dollars. In 1979, schools received over 70 percent of every dollar that went into the general fund. The usual legislative procedure with a new vocational-technical school was to provide one-time capital dollars for the school's first building and equipment. This precedent for funding new vocational education buildings had been started by the Vocational Education Act of 1963. Draper was a strong proponent of vocational and technical education. The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education was located in his district.

Speaker Draper and his Appropriations Vice-Chairman, Representative Cleta Deatherage—who also had a vocational-technical school in her district—vowed to omit any capital funds from the 1980 budget for Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 if State Question 539 passed. Representative Jim Fried, Chairman of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives, made me aware of the Speaker's intentions.

I met with Speaker Draper and assured him I would do everything in my power to get the board to pass a resolution opposing State Question 539. Our new superintendent refused to get involved in this political fight, but he scheduled a special meeting of the board at my request.

I drafted a resolution in opposition to State Question 539 and polled the board. The poll revealed two solid

votes besides my own in favor of the resolution. A special meeting was called for October 29, 1979.

One day prior to the meeting, one of the board members favoring the resolution had a business emergency and had to be out of town on the night of the meeting. Before he left town, he gave me his proxy vote in writing. I was so busy trying to round up another vote that I neglected to do my homework. I knew I was in trouble when, just minutes before the meeting, Superintendent Weatherford informed me that school law did not allow for proxy votes.

After I presented the resolution, board member Chitwood moved to table the resolution. The vote was Chitwood and Low, "no"; Resler and Northcutt, "yes." The tabling motion failed for lack of a majority. Knowing that Chitwood was a solid "no" vote but unsure about Low, I decided I had nothing to lose and moved the vote on the resolution. The same stalemate occurred and the resolution failed for lack of a majority. The fate of the district's capital funds appeared to remain hanging in the balance.

"We can just pass another bond issue if we don't get the capital money," said Chitwood. This remark was, of course, heard by Representative Fried—who attended the special meeting—and was relayed to Draper and Deatherage.

Much to my pleasure and relief, State Question 539 was narrowly defeated on November 6, 1979. The capital funds for the district should be available after all. Little did I know that the fight was not quite over.

New Hires for a New School

Superintendent Weatherford wasted no time in finding office space for the school district and hiring a secretary. Carmen Vaughn worked in the Putnam City Schools district as an administrative secretary. I had met Carmen several times at Putnam City PTA Council meetings and she was a past PTA Council President. Weatherford also placed employment advertisements in local papers and in vocational education publications for an assistant superintendent and a director (principal).

One of the applicants was Dr. Gene Callahan from Alabama. How he came to be an applicant is an interesting story. Callahan had spent several years as the Georgia DECA Adviser. His counterpart in Oklahoma was Bruce Gray. They spent several summers attending DECA camps and meetings and had developed a friend-ship—and a professional esteem.

"Bruce called me in October to tell me they were building a new vocational-technical school on Oklahoma City," Callahan later told me. "Bruce said Clovis Weatherford had been hired as superintendent and he was looking for an assistant. I didn't know Clovis but was well acquainted with his brother, J.W., through DECA. I called Clovis and told him I was interested in the job. We agreed to meet at the American Vocational Association meeting in Anaheim, California, the first week in December. Just after that call, I was informed that all out-of-state travel had been canceled by the Governor of Alabama due to budget shortfalls. I called back and Clovis asked me to fly to Oklahoma City the second week in December."

On December 7, 1979, which also happened to be Gene Callahan's birthday, Weatherford called Callahan (Callahan told me). "I'm calling to offer you the job as assistant superintendent."

"Can I have a few days to think it over?" asked Callahan.

"No," replied Weatherford, "I have a board agenda to post and I need an answer now."

Callahan told me he didn't hesitate when he replied, "You got it, and I'll take the job."

The board approved Callahan's hiring at its December 11 board meeting.

Tom DeSpain was the principal of Emerson Alternative School in the Oklahoma City School District. At a meeting at the district office, he ran into Dr. Wayne Earnest, Director of the Foster Estes Vocational Center, part of the Oklahoma City School District. Dr. Earnest asked DeSpain if he was applying for the director's position at the new vocational-technical school being organized in northwest Oklahoma City.

DeSpain told Earnest he wasn't aware they were advertising and he asked for more information. He called the office and spoke with Carmen Vaughn, who filled him in on the job. The problem for DeSpain was that the application deadline was at the close of business that very day, November 30, 1979. DeSpain had not been searching for a job opportunity, so his resume was not up-to-date. He spent the next three hours updating it. Arriving at the district offices at 5:15 p.m., he found the door was locked.

"I was just scared to death," Tom said later. "I was sure I had missed the deadline, but I slipped my application under the door just in case and drove home.

Clovis called a few days later and asked me to come in for an interview."

Weatherford was looking for a director with knowledge and experience in open-entry, open-exit self-paced programs for students. Emerson Alternative School was a school for pregnant teen girls, so students were entering and leaving the school throughout the year. A self-paced approach to education worked for the Emerson students. Another advantage for DeSpain was his responsibility for managing the district's basic adult education programs in 19 locations, as well as the homebound programs. He thought those career experiences tipped the scales in his favor. Weatherford offered him the job and he happily accepted.

The board approved DeSpain's employment at a special board meeting on December 20, 1979.

The Work Goes On

The board was not idle while waiting for the staff to multiply. After HTB, Inc., was hired as the school's architects, Zinn got busy looking for land and working with his staff on concepts for the building. Many decisions had to be made before the actual plans were developed, and lots of planning needed to be done in the interim. The theory of individual self-paced programs for students was one we had embraced even before we hired Superintendent Weatherford. His knowledge and experience had been instrumental in putting this theory into practice in two schools he had helped to build and develop. Weatherford was also a patient teacher and adviser to all of the board members.

At the November 6, 1979, board meeting, we continued to prepare the district to become fully functioning. We began the meeting by talking about where the school might be built. We were fortunate to have Bob Turner on the board. Turner, a real estate developer, was familiar with land acquisition. In the next two or three months, he would take time away from his business to personally walk each piece of land that might have potential as a school site.

The board took bids on a school car and voted to purchase a 1980 Chevrolet Impala, four-door sedan for the bargain price of \$6,693. The board also accepted the fiscal year 1980 budget, chose a carrier for employee hospitalization insurance, authorized the superintendent to find someone to serve as district treasurer, and approved the dates for the official meetings of the board of education through November of 1980. The board also officially changed the location of its December 1979 board meeting to the district offices at 6600 North Meridian, Suite 250.

The members of the board were getting better insight into one another's distinct personalities and were establishing trust among one another. We were making good decisions with minimum effort but were far from being a rubber stamp. We asked many questions and probed each answer until we were satisfied we were making the right decisions.

The second special board meeting took place on November 29, 1979. Its focus was to discuss building sites. Zinn and Turner had identified at least 11 potential sites near the center of the district. Each site might be suitable for building the school. After meeting for a little over three hours, the board decided to offer \$500,000

for 80 acres at 127th and Rockwell, with certain stipulations about easements that might be on the property. Board member Low was the lone "no" vote.

The American Vocational Association

The school district had become a member of several associations. Two board members and the superintendent attended the American Vocational Association's 1979 annual convention in Anaheim, California. We were introduced to vocational-technical educators and

administrators and to national leaders from every state. It thrilled me to learn the high level of esteem everyone had for "Oklahoma Vo-Tech." Oklahoma had developed the area school concept into a vocational education delivery system that was outstanding, so I guessed every state had done likewise after 1963. That was not the case.

It became clear to me at this first AVA convention that Oklahoma's system of vocational and technical education was truly outstanding. The heart of that system was Dr. Francis Tuttle.

Educators and leaders from other states told stories of systems lost in the bureaucracy of secondary or higher education. Some state directors of vocational education did not even have a seat at the decision-making table. It became clear to me at this first AVA convention that Oklahoma's system of vocational and technical education was truly outstanding. The heart of that system was Dr. Francis Tuttle. He had fought and won the battles. The victors were the students and the citizens of Oklahoma who had access to education and training, as well as the businesses and industries that sought a well-trained workforce.

At that first AVA convention, I made myself a promise to convince my fellow board members to name the school in honor of Dr. Tuttle. This same person (me) had not been able to convince a majority to vote for my candidate for superintendent or pass a simple resolution to oppose State Question 539 or hire a certain architect. Nevertheless, I would find a way. It simply seemed the right thing to do.

Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 was going to finish out the 1970s with more decisions that would establish the structure for the institution it would become. We had more discussion about building sites. We were negotiating for the 127th and Rockwell property and at the same time were looking at other sites in case we couldn't reach a deal. We scheduled special meetings only to cancel them and reschedule.

The board appointed Gene Davis, president of Wilshire Bank, as treasurer for the district and designated his bank as the official depository for the school district's funds. Davis would attend each board meeting and report on district finances. We submitted names for our first School Advisory Council. We set up our unemployment compensation system, set up an employees' annuity deduction program, voted to pay mileage for use of a personal vehicle on school business, and voted to pay for registration to attend the National School Board Convention in April 1980. Each of these votes was preceded with explanations and questions. At times, it seemed there was too much to learn about setting up a functioning organization. We put 1979 behind us on December 20, 1979, at our last official special board meeting. Though we didn't have a firm commitment on land for the school, we were getting closer and closer.

A New Decade

The year 1980 would prove to be a most eventful year in the life of Francis Tuttle, the school. Many decisions would have far-reaching ramifications. The members of the board likely did not fully understand how vital these decisions were and how their effects would shape the future.

The district was bursting with potential. It had an excellent tax base. The four common school districts within the vocational-technical school district represented a large number of prospective secondary students. Adult students would come from throughout the metropolitan area. There were countless businesses whose workers needed training and skills enhancements. The time and the climate seemed right for success.

The first official board meeting of the new decade was called to order at 7:40 p.m. on January 7, 1980. Routine agenda items included approving a school insurance package that insured the contents of the rented offices, provided workers' compensation and general school liability, and provided for school board liability insurance. Serving on a school board is a job that pays no salary, involves a significant commitment of time, and can get you sued.

Dr. Resler, the board vice-president and a medical doctor, arrived after a medical emergency. The board

This represented a savings of more than \$45,000 over the original motion, if the balance of the 80 acres was eventually purchased.

then took up the issue of purchasing land for the school. Three landowners came to make a sales pitch for their land. In late November 1979, the board had voted to make an offer for the 80 acres of land at 127th and Rockwell. The title-holders of that tract were among the folks making a presentation.

After discussing the matter at length, board member Low made a motion to enter into a contract for 63 acres of land at 127th and Rockwell at the price of \$540,940 with an option to buy the balance of the 80 acres at \$8,500 per acre. Nobody seconded the motion. The board discussed options some more and Chitwood made a motion to purchase 80 acres at 127th and Rockwell for \$640,000. This represented a savings of more than \$45,000 over the original motion, if the balance of the 80 acres was eventually purchased. Contingencies included removing an abandoned tank battery and salt water lines and bringing water and sewer to the southeast corner of the property. The closing date was set for March 14, 1980. The board voted four to one in favor of Chitwood's motion. We moved closer to owning 80 acres of land to build Francis Tuttle, the school.

I had been trying to get the board to hire Phil Lambert as the school attorney since the second or third board meeting. Lambert had argued my case in front of the Oklahoma County Election Board in June 1979. I would feel better if he was in an official capacity to keep us out of trouble. Most boards had attorneys present at

all of their meetings to advise them as they went about their business. I had been the lone board member who advocated to have an attorney. Now we needed an attorney to complete the contract for the land purchase. In the next item of business, the board heard a motion to hire Lambert as the board's attorney and voted four-to-one in favor with one abstention. From a list of names submitted for the school's first Advisory Council, the board selected fifteen community leaders and directed that they be contacted and asked to serve.

Superintendent Weatherford presented a timeline for events that would have to be completed prior to opening the school for classes. The timeline included identifying potential programs to offer, voting on a bond issue, obtaining funding from the state legislature, designing the building, seeking bids for construction and selecting a contractor, and filling teacher and staff positions. Each potential accomplishment had to begin with decisions made by the five board members, one decision at a time. Weatherford's first duty was to see to it we were educated and informed so we could make the best decisions.

The final action for the board that night began when Weatherford announced that I had been asked to become a member of the National School Boards Federal Relations Network and to attend a conference in Washington, D.C. I remained a member of the NSBA-FRN for nine years. Just ten minutes shy of four hours had been filled with discussion and decision-making as we adjourned at 11:30 p.m. The new decade was starting out like the last one had ended.

Two news stories emerged over the next week. The first was a report about the land purchase. The second

was an account of a Senate bill introduced in an attempt to solidify the school's capital funds.

State Question 539 and a Recurring Issue

As you recall, the state's voters did not approve State Question 539 and the new law it suggested. The political squabble would continue to vex us. The disagreement of October 1979 would return as a theme during the first half of 1980.

In the fall of 1979, Governor George Nigh had requested budget figures from state agencies, boards and commissions. The Governor's office put its spin on the figures and sent a budget to the state legislature. The legislature accepted some figures and rejected others. The total amount of all appropriations is based on the amount of money certified for appropriation by the Tax Commission and the State Budget Office.

The legislature then creates appropriation bills for state agencies, boards and commissions. Half of the appropriation bills originate in the House of Representatives and half are filed in the Senate. These rotate from year to year. For example; the budget for the Department of Vocational and Technical Education originated in the House in 1979 and in the Senate in 1980. The first version of Senate Bill 402 was introduced in early January 1980. It included \$2 million in capital funds for area school districts in Oklahoma County. A few months after the formation of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21, Oklahoma City Schools had formed District 22 and several schools in the eastern Oklahoma County were preparing to initiate the procedure to form

a third district. That meant that the \$2 million would be shared among the three districts in the county.

On January 16, 1980, Senator Mike Combs introduced Senate Bill 429. It was a simple one-page bill that stated, "There is hereby appropriated to the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education...the sum of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00)...for the construction of new facilities with classrooms and shops for vocational-technical education programs at Area School District No. 21...".

Senator Combs' bill was a pleasant surprise to all of us on the board and we were excited about the possibility of having enough capital funds to build a building to accommodate training programs for all of our potential students. Oklahoma County was severely lacking the skilled labor force for a highly populated and industrialized county.

When asked why he filed the bill, Combs replied, "I introduced this bill because Governor Nigh's budget requested only \$2 million for two and possibly three Vo-Tech Districts in Oklahoma County. That figure is not adequate to fulfill the commitment made to my district. We need a minimum of \$2 million for Vo-Tech District 21 to provide our community the Vo-Tech programs we promised."

Combs said further, "Without question, this proposal faces tough sledding down the line, but getting this appropriation for Area Vo-Tech District 21 is a very high priority of mine for this legislative session...".

Late in the legislative session, final negotiations and decision-making take place for dividing the available money and funding the state agencies, boards and commissions. None of us on the board knew how tough the fight would get before we had the capital funds we sought.

Planning Continues

On January 20, 1980, the staff of Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 doubled. Assistant Superintendent Dr. Gene Callahan and Director Tom DeSpain reported for duty, joining Weatherford and Vaughn in the school offices. A headline in *The Oklahoma City Times* noted, "Northside Vo-Tech Hires Key Pair." Sympathetic news coverage was not lacking in the school's introductory year. The first task that Superintendent Weatherford assigned to Callahan and DeSpain was to contact business and community leaders and potential students to identify the programs that should be offered at the new school.

The board meeting on February 11 introduced the new District Treasurer, Gene Davis, who attended his first meeting and gave a detailed report of the district's financial situation. The board's new attorney, Phil Lambert, was also scheduled to attend. The posted agenda had 17 items of business, including another milestone in the history of Francis Tuttle, the school. This milestone was naming the school. We wanted a name that would reflect the distinction we felt was the school's potential. It is a decision we had discussed informally, but now it was on the agenda. Weatherford thought it was time to quit calling the school "AVTS #21."

I officially called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and the board heard its first treasurer's report. Earlier in the day, Gene Davis had invested \$573,000 in a 60-day certificate of deposit at a rate of 13 percent. That would

return \$10,000 in added income to the school on the date of maturity. Prior to the board appointing a school treasurer, the school funds were held by the Oklahoma County treasurer in trust for the school with the interest kept by the county. The board approved a resolution to keep only \$11,000 for operational expenses and to declare all other monies over that amount as surplus for investment. The board was establishing a policy of being fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars.

By law, Boards of Education must reorganize in February. Bill Chitwood again nominated me for president and the other officers were likewise re-elected to their former posts: Resler as vice-president and Chitwood as clerk of the board.

The discussion and negotiations for the purchase of land were lengthy and detailed. In the end, Resler moved to purchase the land at 127th and Rockwell for \$660,000, an increase of \$20,000 over the original price. The sellers were to relocate a natural gas line at their own expense not later than October 1, 1980. Board member Low amended the motion to remove the deadline date for moving the gas line and suggested this language: "prior to closing the sellers will put in escrow the cost of moving the gas line." His amendment got a second and passed with five "yes" votes. The amended motion also passed, as did the vote to approve the contract.

At this meeting, the board also appointed its first School Advisory Council. Fourteen individuals had agreed to advise the new school. They represented community, government, business, and industry leaders. They were aware of the happenings in the community, what new businesses were moving into the area and what their needs for skilled employees would be. Those first Council members were as follows:

- Christine Anthony, C.R. Anthony Company, a regional retailer
- Frank Burns, Community Service representative, AFL-CIO
- Connie Butler, Program Analyst for Oklahoma Employment Training Council
- W.O. "Bill" Coleman, VP and Western Division Manager, OG&E
- Richard Gaskins, Personnel Manager at Magnetic Peripherals, Inc, a high tech manufacturer
- Rich Glasser, Comptroller, Western Electric Company (the manufacturing arm of AT&T)
- Jay Henry, President of Baptist Medical Center
- Bill Hulsey, President of Macklanburg-Duncan Company
- Ed Livermore, Publisher of the Edmond Evening Sun newspaper
- V.L "Mac" McKenzie, VP-Operations of Fred Jones Manufacturing Company
- Donald D. Paulson, President of Fife Corporation
- Orel Peak, Principal of Carver Center (resigned in April, then replaced with Cary Bartlow of Oklahoma Vocational Rehabilitation)
- C.J. Slivinsky, President of Rockwell International
- Fred Suhre, Jr., VP of CMI Corporation

The next item on the board agenda was naming the school. As with other monumental decisions, there was much discussion that still had a way of seeming too brief. I held my breath as Turner made a motion

that Area Vocational-Technical School District No. 21 be named the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center. Resler seconded the motion and I exhaled. The vote was unanimous in favor of the new name.

When the board meeting adjourned at 11:04 p.m., we had approved school policies for affirmative action, grievance proce-

The next item on the board agenda was naming the school. As with other monumental decisions, there was much discussion that still had a way of seeming too brief. I held my breath...

dure, dismissal, suspension and non-reemployment, sick leave, emergency leave, jury duty, personal leave and military leave. We re-hired Clovis Weatherford for fiscal year 1981 with a salary increase of \$3,500. Superintendent Weatherford told the board of the site work that would be necessary prior to construction and the probable cost of that site work. He encouraged the board to attend its first OVTEC "Day at the Capitol" and to begin to get acquainted with our legislators.

After the meeting adjourned and even though it was late, we decided to telephone Dr. Tuttle and let him know of our decision to name the school in his honor. Weatherford offered me the honor but I declined and told him to make the call (though I did listen with great pleasure). When Dr. Tuttle answered the phone, Weatherford got right to the point. "The board just voted unanimously to name the school Francis Tuttle Vocational-Technical Center," he said.

A long pause followed on the other end of the line. Finally, Dr. Tuttle, who later told me he was a bit overwhelmed at the news, replied, "But I'm not even dead yet."

Weatherford hung up shortly afterward and reported Dr. Tuttle's response. We all laughed. I was very pleased that I had positively influenced my fellow board members in a most important choice.

Some people suggested that naming the school in honor of Dr. Tuttle was about getting more favors or money for the district. That was the farthest thing from my mind. I had learned first-hand about the great esteem in which vocational educators across the nation and around the world held Dr. Francis Tuttle. I felt that naming the new school in honor of the man was a way to ensure that we would always strive to realize our potential for our students and for our industry supporters. Moreover, by naming the school at this time, Dr. Tuttle could enjoy the tribute. I heard him say jokingly on many occasions, "I'm Francis Tuttle, I'm named after a school."

The choice of a new school name also provided a new round of publicity. In a story about "Tuttle Vo-Tech" on Wednesday, February 13, 1980, *The Daily Oklahoman* newspaper reported:

"Tuttle said he was completely shocked and honored by the decision. "Right now I'm almost speechless," he said Tuesday. "I've never had any honor higher than that."

In a letter to Superintendent Weatherford dated February 20, 1980, Dr. Tuttle wrote, "I have never received any honor in my life that has meant more to me than this."

To so honor a man whose professional life was filled with much acknowledgment and many tributes was one of the greatest pleasures of my tenure on the board of education of Francis Tuttle, the school.

Still More Decisions

We had land, a great name, the germ of a plan and staff. The preparation and strategy became the focus for us all. Weatherford, Callahan and DeSpain interviewed the members of the Advisory Council and the sending school superintendents to determine the training programs of greatest value. We had to have the programs in mind before the architects could design the building.

On March 4, 1980, the board convened at 7:30 p.m. and completed nine posted agenda items before adjourning at 9:07 p.m. That was a sort of a record for us up to that time. In under two hours, the board approved setting aside over \$671,000 from the ad valorem income to pay for the land. The board also discussed hiring a school auditor; each school district by law must have a yearly audit.

The board heard Weatherford's report of the Advisory Council's meeting and his contact with the sending school superintendents. He felt confident they would support calling for a vote of the people to pass a "no tax increase" building bond issue. In fact, at their March 3 meeting, the Putnam City board of education passed a resolution in favor of a building bond issue for construction of the Vo-Tech Center. We decided to put the decision of a bond issue on the agenda for our April meeting. The last item of discussion was OVTEC "Day at the Capitol," scheduled for March 26, 1980.

As we were deciding on concepts that would shape the school when it became operational, the issue of its funding was still up in the air.

The Funding Issue Takes Center Stage

March was a busy month. The original vocational education funding bill, SB 402, passed the Senate early that month with the \$2 million for area schools in Oklahoma County intact. Senator Combs's bill, SB 429, passed on March 11, giving Francis Tuttle, the school, its own \$2 million in funding. Just eight days later, the state House of Representatives buried SB 429 by assigning it to both the Education Committee and the Education Appropriations Subcommittee. My good friend and political ally, Representative Jim Fried, happened to be the chairman of both committees. I held onto a kernel of hope for the money.

Fried informed me that the leadership was set against the separate \$2 million for the school. Several days later, he delivered more bad news when he told me that, not only were we not going to get the \$2 million, we were being totally eliminated from legislative funding. His consolation was to arrange a meeting for me with Representative Cleta Deatherage, vice-chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and a real power broker in the House leadership. It seemed the price for Representative McCaleb's State Question 539 had not yet been fully paid.

The Edmond Sun in an article of March 25, 1980, reported that Representative Ross Duckett was successful in re-inserting \$1.6 million in the funding proposal, but also reported that Representative Deatherage was a member of the General Conference Committee that would ultimately handle the final version of the bill. The article pointed out that Deatherage opposed Duckett's amendment. It was also noted in the article that Bill

Chitwood, one of our school board members, had visited with Speaker of the House Dan Draper to try and convince him to support the project. It had been Chitwood's off-hand remark at our first special board meeting that had angered Draper and Deatherage. So, Chitwood's visit to Draper was another effort to mend our political fences.

Representative Deatherage had a piece of legislation that was important to her. She had introduced House Bill 1881 that would create an Oklahoma Blood Exchange Council. Health entities in her district were experiencing some difficulties getting much-needed blood transferred from areas that had surplus amounts. Her solution was to create the Council.

As it turned out, the Senate author of HB 1881 was Senator Phil Watson. Senator Watson, a prominent Republican, was elected from a large district that covered all of the city of Edmond and the Edmond school district, which was part of the Francis Tuttle school district. McCaleb's House district also happened to lie within Watson's Senate district. It wouldn't become clear how HB 1881 figured in the story of our capital funding until the final hour, but it proved to be the leverage needed to secure the one-time capital money to build our first building.

Senator Watson was the Senate author of the Deatherage bill, but he had also been a co-author of Senator Combs's SB 429—the bill passed by the Senate in February and then buried in red tape. SB 429 was a simple, one-page bill that stated, "There is hereby appropriated to the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education...the sum of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00)... for the construction of new facilities with classrooms

and shops for vocational-technical education programs at Area School District No. 21...".

Senator Watson was also aware of Chitwood's visit to Speaker Draper and the less-than-positive outcome of that visit. Chitwood was a constituent and a supporter of Watson's.

Approval of the First Programs

Despite the political struggle surrounding the capital funding, the board proceeded with plans for building a building. At the April 8 board meeting, the board passed a resolution calling for a district bond election. We would ask the voters to approve a \$5 million, no tax increase bond issue. If they supported and passed the bond issue, and if we ultimately received no capital funding from the state legislature, we could still build a building to house vocational-technical education programs. The board hired R.J. Edwards, Inc., to act as financial advisers throughout this process.

The meeting agenda also included presentations from five firms that had experience in auditing schools. School districts in Oklahoma are required by law to have an independent audit each year. The results of each audit become a public record. After the presentations, the board voted to hire the firm of Slaten & Sanders. I think the presenter, Steve Sanders, CPA, captured the board's attention with his friendly enthusiasm for our business and with his experience. Our choice would have some interesting twists in the years to come.

Remaining optimistic in the midst of funding challenges, the board approved a list of proposed programs to be offered at the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center. This list had passed through many hands and was the product of many hours of discussion among several stakeholder groups, including Oklahoma City industry leaders. The list was not set in concrete, but it was a foundation for the plan to build a building. The initial programs list was as follows:

Clerical & Secretarial
Accounting & Bookkeeping

Cashier-Checker
Banking & Finance

Electronics

Heating & Air Conditioning Horticulture & Floriculture

Operating Room Technician

Carpentry

Auto Mechanics Graphic Arts

Institutional & Home Service

Food Service Practical Nursing

Building Maintenance

Computer Operator

Data Entry Welding Electricity Machinist Drafting Plumbing

Instrumentation Electro-Mechanical

Sheet Metal Masonry

Aircraft Mechanics

Auto Body Child Care

The board generally agreed that programs offered at the Francis Tuttle Center would be self-paced and individualized. To get a better idea of what that kind of curriculum required in terms of floor space, I traveled to Minnesota with Weatherford, Callahan, DeSpain and our architect, Domby Zinn. That brief trip helped identify an important piece of the puzzle. We visited two outstanding schools that were successful in their delivery of self-paced, individualized vocational-technical education programs. What we saw convinced us that this method for

delivering education and training was the right choice for the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center.

While we were visiting the Minnesota schools, HB 1881 was placed before the Senate for debate and passage. When the dust cleared, the bill had been amended and the Oklahoma Blood Exchange Council had been removed from the legislation. When legislation is altered by one deliberative body of the legislature, it is sent back to the body of origin for approval of the changes. When HB 1881 arrived back on Deatherage's desk, she moved to reject the Senate amendments, as is the prerogatives of the original author. When that happens in either the House or the Senate, a Conference Committee is requested. This committee consists of equal members from both the House and the Senate. The House conferees were Deatherage, Speaker Draper, and a political ally, Representative George Vaughn. The Senate conferees were Senator Watson, as well as Democratic Senator Al Terrill and Senator Ernest Martin. The stage for political deal making was set. However, that deal-making was stalled by other legislative business and the outcome was still two months away. We could still make plans for our building, but we were not yet assured the money would be there to complete it.

The board meeting on May 5 lasted just one hour and 10 minutes. We were getting more efficient with our time and more comfortable and experienced with our board of education roles. Within that hour, the board heard reports from the district treasurer, from the architect about the building design and construction schedule, and from the superintendent about adopting an open enrollment, individualized competency-based curriculum delivery system, among other issues.

The architects planned to have the preliminary design completed by early June 1980. They would plan a building large enough to house the 29 programs the board had approved in April. If the state legislature failed to approve the funding, we would reduce the scope and size of the building. The plan called for construction to begin in October 1980 with completion by April 1, 1982.

The board voted unanimously on a recommendation by Superintendent Weatherford to increase the staff and he received approval to advertise for the school's first public information officer. The bond election would be held on Tuesday, May 13. We voted to recess this meeting until Thursday, May 15, so that the sale of the bonds could be voted. If the election results were less than favorable, that meeting would be the shortest yet.

A Pivotal Day and a Philosophy

The board realized that authorizing the system of open enrollment, individualized, self-paced, competency-based curriculum delivery meant a commitment of extra dollars to develop and staff this method. But the potential rewards were also great. A student who needed training could enroll in a program anytime during the year. He or she would not have to wait until a semester break to begin a program. Adult students who were out of work and in need of training to become re-employed could not wait weeks or months for a class to start. The board was willing to commit the extra dollars to provide the best delivery system available.

May 13, 1980, became a pivotal day in the life of Francis Tuttle, the school. In spite of the unresolved issue of capital funding, the board was fearless when it May 13, 1980, became a pivotal day in the life of Francis Tuttle, the school. directed Superintendent Weatherford to draft a school policy regarding the open enrollment, individualized, competency-based curriculum delivery system for the

agenda of the June 1980 board meeting.

While the board was deciding the direction for the school, political wrangling continued behind the scenes. Other aspects of the state budget were the focus of negotiations, beyond the issue of our capital money. Moreover, nobody was telling any of us what outcomes to expect.

In Oklahoma, a bond issue for school construction takes a 60 percent majority of the voters voting. On Tuesday, May 13, 1980, the voters gave their seal of approval. Eighty-seven percent of the voters favored the \$5 million bond issue. For the third time, voters in the school district had sent a clear message that they supported vocational-technical education. The voting result also meant we would have at least that amount of funding with which to construct our first building.

The board reconvened the recessed board meeting from May 5 on May 15 and passed a resolution, which fixed the amount of the bonds to mature each year and the time and place the bonds would be sold. The board also authorized the board clerk to give public notice of the sale in accordance with Oklahoma law. Finally, the board voted to offer these bonds for sale at a special meeting on June 2, 1980.

The June meeting attracted a larger than usual number of guests, including representatives of banks interested in buying our bonds, the bond advisers, reporters and our architect. We accepted the bid for the

building bonds, passed an official resolution providing for the issuance of the bonds and adjourned. We had enough money to build our building but the question still loomed whether we could build it big enough for 29 programs. Time was running out. The legislature was expected to end the 1980 session in less than 10 days.

At the regular board meeting on Tuesday, June 10, the board methodically proceeded through the business on its agenda. Once more, we delayed final approval of the design of the building. The capital money was still embroiled in the legislative process. However, the single most important item of business at that meeting was adopting the new school philosophy. This philosophy would reflect the decision taken on May 5 to offer an open enrollment, individualized, competency-based curriculum delivery system:

BASIC PHILOSOPHY FRANCIS TUTTLE AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL CENTER, DISTRICT NO. 21

The Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, is a new and unique institution in the network of vocational education. Our commitment to the population demands that we meet changing and growing needs. This commitment means the development of new approaches and designs for learning. Applied research is a part of our administrative team activities as we probe the long-range concerns and needs of our community (industry, business, labor and consumer) to enable us to design instructional prac-

tices that will provide competent citizens and workers, now and in the measurable future.

The Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, is committed to an open-ended individualized competency-based instructional program. This allows an individual to begin at various entry points, progress through the course at his/ her own pace and ability while mastering a detailed breakdown of skills known as competencies.

The Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, realizes that all skills, regardless of their complexity, can be translated to other people when the student has an understanding of the career field for which he or she is preparing, and when the student is motivated to be—come a part of that field. We also realize that job skills go far beyond the development of technical skill expertise and each student will receive help to develop the interpersonal skills that contribute to a successful work life.

The commitments of the staff, administration and board members of the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, may best be emphasized by the following statements:

WE ARE COMMITTED TO THESE GOALS:

...To the decisions that are centered around the needs of the students. Their welfare in the learning process comes before any other consideration.

...To the basic responsibilities assigned us by the Oklahoma Constitution to make quality vocational and technical education available to all the citizens in our district.

- ...To the continual evaluation of the effectiveness of our instructional program and to the skill level of our students in the world of work.
- ...To the use of research and its related procedures to determine areas of instructional need.
- ...To the use of advisory committees from business, industry, the professions and labor in developing the courses of study that will make up our school's programs.
- ...To assist all students enrolled at the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, to develop skills of citizenship and leadership.
- ...To create a changing curricula as changes in our work society demand new skills and knowledge.
- ...To the personal growth of the patrons of our school district through basic vocational education and upgrading the knowledge that a changing technology demands of our citizens.
- ...To cooperate with all other branches of Oklahoma education. Where we may save the taxpayers' funds by cooperation, or by exchange of facilities or instructional resources, we stand committed.
- ...To the attitude that the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center, District No. 21, is, in reality, a tool for the production of active, effective citizens. A citizen who has marketable job skills is a more fulfilled citizen, more willing to take an active part in the life of the community.

The board adopted this Philosophy before the school had students, a building, or teachers. Reading it today, I am reminded that the board made many decisions in 1980 that continue to impact students, staff, customers,

and the citizens of Oklahoma County today. The board meeting adjourned and we still did not know what the legislature was going to do about the capital money. The grapevine said some \$1.5 million would be included in HB 1807 for our building.

The Budget Process and our Capital Money Saga

You may recall that the budget process in Oklahoma has several steps. There is (1) the Governor's budget, then (2) the legislature's initial budget process, and finally (3) the General Conference Committee on Appropriations.

Another appropriations bill that would play a large role in the fight for our capital funding was HB 1807. Originally, it was a bill that made appropriations to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. It was introduced and moved quickly through the legislative process. It then halted back in the House until the appointment of the General Conference on Appropriations.

Very few appropriations bills are passed during the initial legislative budget process. Most are sent to the General Conference Committee on Appropriations, or GCCA. The GCCA has equal numbers of House and Senate members. These members are appointed late in the legislative session. The GCCA is divided into subcommittees which negotiate, debate, and then present decisions back to the entire committee. The GCCA decides how the bulk of the state budget will be divided.

Prior to the appointment of the GCCA, most appropriations bills are just "shell bills." These "shell bills" have extensive conference committee reports written late in the legislative session. These reports are drafted

and redrafted during negotiations and are completed as agreements are reached among the House, the Senate, the Governor's office, and each state agency, board or commission seeking funding from the legislature.

The original State Department of Vocational and Technical Education appropriations bill, Senate Bill 402, was drafted and filed in January 1980. House Bill 1807 was passed by the House on March 11 and was amended and passed by the Senate on April 8. On May 6, the House rejected the Senate amendments and assigned the bill to the GCCA.

On January 16, Senator Mike Combs introduced Senate Bill 429. It was a one-page bill that stated, "There is hereby appropriated to the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education...the sum of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00)...for the construction of new facilities with classrooms and shops for vocational-technical education programs at Area School District No. 21...."

On May 21 the Conference Committee report on the Deatherage "blood bill," as HB 1881 was called, was approved, passed the House and was sent to the Senate. It was not clear to us at the time that this event was significant in the decision to put capital money back into the budget for Francis Tuttle, the school.

We had heard the rumor of the proposed amount of our capital dollars on June 10, the day the Conference Committee Report on HB 1881 reached the House and was sent to the Governor for signature. We would not know for sure until June 16, when HB 1807 passed the House and the Senate. HB 1807 was one of the last bills passed by the 1980 Oklahoma Legislature before it adjourned sine die at 9:48 p.m. (the final adjournment without a date being set for reconvening).

More Arrivals and a Departure

Now we knew exactly how much capital money we had. The board had passed the bond issue to provide \$5 million. The staff and the architects got busy and finalized plans for a \$7.5-million building. At a special board meeting on June 26, the board approved the preliminary plan for the first building. The motion also instructed the staff and the architect to prepare documents to solicit construction bids in September, according to the projected schedule.

The school staff was growing again. In July, Weatherford recommended that the board advertise the position of Assistant Superintendent for Adult Education and begin plans for part-time adult education classes. In August, Millie Majors was recommended to fill the assistant superintendent position. If she accepted the position, her start date would be October 1.

Zinn reported that the construction bid documents would be ready by the middle of September. He also brought a concept drawing of the proposed building. The drawing was featured in most of the daily and weekly newspapers. As fall approached, it seemed everything was smoothing out for the Francis Tuttle Vocational-Technical Center. We were all about to receive a bolt from the blue.

In spite of our rocky beginning, Superintendent Weatherford and I had arrived at an amiable professional relationship. We both were focused on getting our mission accomplished. That mission was to build a much-needed new vocational-technical center in Oklahoma County. He was rather traditional in his approach,

but I recognized his experience as a builder of vocational centers.

About a week after the August Board meeting, Weatherford called me at my office and asked if he could come by. It was the first time he had come to my office to discuss business and I was perplexed. He arrived shortly after his call and handed me his letter of resignation. He took a few minutes to explain to me that he was going into the commercial real estate business with his son in Norman.

After Superintendent Weatherford left my office, I was speechless for a short time, then began to make many phone calls. First, I called the other board members and then Larry Hansen to find out how we would go about replacing Weatherford. It seemed to me his resignation came at a very inopportune time. We were ready to negotiate a \$7.5-million contract for construction of a 153,000-square-foot building and now we would not have a superintendent who had experience in building such a facility.

We scheduled a special board meeting for Monday, August 25 to receive Weatherford's resignation. By then, we knew we could advertise again for a new superintendent. However, it was the wrong time of the year to get responsible candidates to apply. Leaders with the kind of credentials we needed had just started their school year and would be reluctant to resign to take our job.

After the meeting started, Weatherford submitted his resignation. He told the board he would like to make his termination date coincide with the granting of the construction contract, which should be by the end of October. After an executive session lasting 32 minutes, the board emerged resolved to move forward toward

the completion of its plan. The board moved to accept Weatherford's resignation, for him to announce the vacancy with a deadline of September 15 for applications, and set a special board meeting to consider the applications.

We were a cohesive board with a mission. We had land. We had money. We had plans for a building that was more than adequate. We had an enthusiastic staff. At the time, the superintendent's sudden resignation seemed like a setback, but the outlook proved to be bright for Francis Tuttle, the school.

THE INTERIM

As the resumes of candidates anxious to become the next superintendent of Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center began to come in, I spoke with each board member many times. Once more, I came to rely on Larry Hansen's experience and advice. Hansen was Area School Coordinator at the Oklahoma State Department of Vocational and Technical Education. He had administered the Oklahoma Oath of Office to our newly elected and certified board members. He was an important member of our family, involved in each step of forming the district and officially calling the first board meeting to order. Hansen even took minutes for that meeting and several subsequent meetings until we had a superintendent and a staff.

The agenda for the September board meeting included the usual items. During the construction report, Domby Zinn of HTB, Inc., reported the construction documents were complete. He also presented a concept drawing of what the building would look like when completed. That drawing was published in most of the daily and weekly newspapers in Oklahoma County. The prospect of adult education classes in the fall was covered in addition to the building news.

The bid on the building would be advertised and the date of October 16 was set for receiving the bids. The bidding process for Oklahoma school buildings is not complicated. The bids are advertised in local designated newspapers and companies interested in bidding may pick up copies of bid documents at the location advertised. There may be a pre-bid conference where contractors have the opportunity to ask questions about the bid documents. Companies interested in bidding know in advance when and where the bids will be opened and reviewed and what is required. Oklahoma schools are by law obliged to accept the lowest and best bid. Our bid included the basic plans for the building and two alternates to the plan, alternate #1, the automotive mechanic shop, and alternate #2, air conditioning for several of the shops. Architects estimate the cost of their plans but can hedge their estimates by including alternates that can be built if the money is available.

On September 15, we had received seventeen applications for superintendent. None of the applicants had the experience we sought. Although one of the applicants was Gene Callahan, our own deputy superintendent, the board was happy with Callahan in his current position and wanted him to gain more experience there. The board reviewed and discussed the applications, then agreed there was no one we wanted to interview. We had questions about what our next step might be and decided to recess the meeting until September 18. We all felt the need for more information.

The first call I made on the morning of September 16 was to Larry Hansen. My first question was, "Do we have to interview anyone just because we advertised the job?" Hansen told me we could vote to not interview any-

one and re-advertise the job. However, if we did that, we probably would not get applications from persons who had the experience we needed in a leader.

In the two days until our next meeting, I tried to get answers to the board members' combined questions and concerns. Sometimes, I made telephone contact with Larry Hansen several times per day to make sure we were obeying all of the rules and regulations. I also wanted to tap into his reservoir of experience; after all, we were the 21st district, so surely the state agency had dealt with this kind of situation before.

When the meeting on September 18 was called to order, the board had a good idea of the questions to be asked and the kind of plan that would see the board through the situation. Larry Hansen attended this meeting, in addition to the outgoing superintendent, Weatherford. After the executive session, the board had some answers to its questions but was still not ready to schedule interviews. The board again voted to recess the meeting and agenda until September 30.

An alternative plan for hiring Weatherford's successor was beginning to take shape. We were getting more comfortable with the possibility of appointing an interim superintendent. Hansen had been first to suggest the idea. We discussed the possibilities and agreed an interim would give us time to find the right person.

There had been mention that perhaps we could appoint Callahan as interim superintendent. I cannot remember who suggested it first. It was probably a good solution, but I was concerned about having to explain that although he could serve as interim superintendent, the board felt he needed more experience before being ready to be a superintendent. Callahan later told me he

realized he was not ready to be a superintendent. He assured me that we did not traumatize him when we offered him the interim position.

On September 30, the board continued the recessed meetings of the 15th and the 18th and the only business conducted was a motion, after the executive session, that the board postpone the action of filling the vacancy of superintendent. This issue of the next superintendent had taken on a life of its own. It was separate and yet a vital part of the work the board was doing. We needed someone to fill in until we could secure a contract with an experienced leader. We would have a plan and make the final decision at our next regular board meeting.

In spite of the fact that after November 1 we would not have a superintendent, we had business to conduct. At the October 7 board meeting, two new staff members came on board. Millie Magers accepted the position of assistant superintendent for adult education and Leatha Purser would succeed Carmen Vaughn as executive assistant.

Zinn reported that five reputable contractors had picked up bid documents. He was pretty sure they all would submit bids October 16. Weatherford reported he had advertised for the position of plant manager. This staff member would be on site during construction and then manage the maintenance and daily physical plant operation once the facilities were fully operational. The board also adopted purchasing authority and bidding requirements. As policy makers, the board set the parameters for operations and then employed a superintendent to serve as CEO. The CEO was then responsible for the staff required to maintain the school according to the

policies and procedures. Ground breaking ceremonies were tentatively planned for November 13.

After finishing the agenda, the board voted to hold an executive session to discuss personnel matters. Boards of education have the authority to invite other persons to attend executive sessions. We asked Weatherford and Callahan to join us. Executive sessions are commenced by a formal public motion and

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ended by a motion with the vote taken in public at the conclusion of the executive session. This night set into motion the next phase of the growth and development of Francis Tuttle, the school. It would be a milestone that would determine the path the school would take within vocational education in Oklahoma and beyond.

The board had voted at the September 30 meeting not to interview any of the candidates who had applied. The issue of the next superintendent was still not fully resolved, but we needed to get on with the work at hand.

At the end of the executive session, the board convened in open session and voted to appoint Dr. Gene Callahan as interim superintendent. The formal motion also included hiring Weatherford as a consultant on a month-to-month basis. This change would take place on November 1, 1980. The board was confident that Callahan, with the help of the staff and Weatherford available for consultation, could keep the ship on course. His appointment produced a new round of newspaper stories.

We would enlarge the family of Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center by choosing the firm that would translate our collective hopes, dreams and plans into bricks and mortar. On October 16, we accepted bids for our first building. We would enlarge the family of Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center by choosing the firm that would translate our collective hopes, dreams and plans into bricks and mortar. In fact, the specifications called for pre-stressed concrete and an energy-efficient sloping metal roof. EV Cox Construction Company of Oklahoma City submitted the

lowest and best bid. Several details needed to be worked out before we could issue a letter of intent for construction and officially sign a contract. The board had voted to award a contract in the amount of \$7,150,000. The motion stated the intent to include alternates #1 and #2 as explained in the bid. The final decision on these alternates would be delayed until July 15, 1981, if construction funds became available.

By the date of the November 3 meeting, we had all of the data needed to issue a letter of intent for construction. This meeting was Dr. Callahan's first official meeting as interim superintendent. At this meeting, the board added another member to the family, Jim Faulkner, as plant manager. He would be on-site during construction; after construction, he would be in charge of maintenance and operation of the physical plant and the grounds. The board also heard reports about the adult education classes for 1981, scheduled to begin the first week in February at Putnam City North High School. Although the board discussed the plans for the official

ground breaking on November 13, we did not check the long-range weather forecast for that date.

Breakings and Beginnings

November 13 began as a sunny fall day in Oklahoma, the air was crisp, and the temperature was about 55 degrees. The ceremonial turning of dirt and a brief ceremony were scheduled for 3 p.m. at the school site. Following the ground breaking, a formal reception was planned at the Oklahoma governor's mansion, to be hosted by Governor and First Lady, George and Donna Nigh.

The school site at 12700 North Rockwell in northwest Oklahoma County had been a wheat field. There were no houses or businesses in the area. Mostly there were other wheat fields. We had sent invitations to the entire Oklahoma vocational education leadership, including area school superintendents and the state agency staff. All local sending school board members and superintendents, as well as representatives from the media and political community, were included.

Martha Turner, the wife of board member Bob Turner, remembered that Governor Nigh was several minutes late. A small podium was set up facing the south and those of us seated behind it were unaware of the large dust cloud rolling toward the site as the short speeches began. The audience, however, was aware. They began to brace themselves for the Oklahoma wind sweeping down the plains. Before we finished the official ground breaking, the temperature had dropped to around 35 degrees. It was a dusty and wind-blown

group that headed for the Governor's mansion for the reception.

At the reception, we presented Dr. Tuttle with a large rendering of the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center. He was still a bit overwhelmed but extremely proud to have the school bear his name.

Several days after the ground breaking, I called Dr. Tuttle and asked, "Who in the Oklahoma system has the experience to be superintendent of a school named in your honor?" He laughed at the way I had asked the question, but a serious discussion followed. Dr. Tuttle recommended Bruce Gray and Roy Peters, Jr.

Peters had been Weatherford's deputy while they were building the Moore-Norman center and had just been hired as the superintendent at Canadian Valley Area Vocational-Technical School. Gray was currently superintendent at Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School in Lawton. Gray had sent an application when the board had advertised the superintendent position in August 1979. When I called him to arrange an interview, he had asked me to withdraw his application.

Peters seemed to be the best choice to me. I phoned him first and briefly explained where we were as a board. He told me he had just taken his present job and could not leave, but suggested I get in touch with Gray. I called Gray and told him that Dr. Tuttle had suggested he and Peters were the best candidates to be our superintendent. I mentioned that I had spoken to Peters and explained why he was reluctant to move at this time in his career. The board was willing to wait for Gray to complete his contract. He promised to think it over and we agreed to talk again soon.

As a board, we wanted to get better acquainted with Bruce Gray and Roy Peters. Even though Peters had taken himself out of the running for the position, we wanted to keep our options open. Bruce Gray was still an unknown but research into his credentials and experience made us comfortable that he could come in and do the job.

At the last official meeting of 1980, the board handled the routine things like approve the minutes, authorized the bills to be paid, and approve the treasurer's report. It might be interesting to note that, in December of 1980, we were getting 13.625 percent, 10.80 percent and 8.50 percent interest on CDs we had in local banks, as well as 5.25 percent interest on a savings account. We approved a resolution to the county election board requesting an election for a member of the board of education in Zone 1. Bob Turner held the Zone 1 seat. The board also did something almost unheard of in education in that day: it set up a system that would allow adult students to pay enrollment fees using their credit cards. Our last item of business was a recommendation to Callahan that he have a commercial artist create several preliminary designs for a school logo.

One final board duty remained for 1980. Resler, Low, Turner and I were scheduled to represent the board at the national convention of the American Vocational Association in New Orleans. It would give us the opportunity to learn about the national issues in vocational education and to meet other policy makers and leaders from Oklahoma and other states. The convention also helped set the stage for the future of Francis Tuttle, the school.

New Orleans provided us with the opportunity to get better acquainted with Roy Peters, Jr., and Bruce Gray. There were professional and social events scheduled at the convention that enabled us to observe and interact with leaders in vocational education. We were individually able to informally interview people who had worked with Gray and Peters.

Bruce Gray had grown professionally inside and outside the Oklahoma vocational education system. He had earned the respect and admiration of his peers and his superiors for his work with students and business leaders. In his first teaching assignment after graduation from Central State University in Edmond, he guided the DECA chapter (Distributive Education Clubs of America) in Stigler, Oklahoma, to become a champion in just one year. From Stigler, he went to Lawton as an assistant superintendent. He later moved to the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education to fill the position of Oklahoma DECA Adviser. His passion for vocational education in general and DECA specifically brought him to the attention of the executive director of the national DECA organization, which needed to raise the funds to build its own national headquarters. Gray went to Washington, D.C., to work as director at the national DECA headquarters. Under Gray's leadership and with considerable personal effort, DECA was able to raise several million dollars for a new national headquarters building in Reston, Virginia. After three years in Washington, he returned to Oklahoma as deputy superintendent at Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School, becoming the superintendent one year later, in 1978.

Callahan was also a great source of information. He had worked with Gray in the DECA organization. When Gray was the Oklahoma DECA adviser, Callahan was his counterpart in Alabama.

January 1981 saw the beginning of adult education classes at Putman City North High School. There were also articles and legal notices about the election for our Zone 1 board of education seat. In the original 1979 election, there had been six candidates seeking the seat. Bob Turner was the winner in two elections held to elect the board. We were all uncertain about what to expect. Would there be interest again? Was the public comfortable with how the Francis Tuttle Board of Education handled their tax dollars and planned for the new school?

At the January 8 board meeting, Faulkner, our new plant manager, gave the construction report and said that, due to good weather, the building schedule was on track and there were no major problems at the site. The board voted to join the area chambers of commerce in Edmond, Oklahoma City, Warr Acres and Bethany. These memberships facilitated our administration's interactions with local business and community leaders. The board also voted to send me to the Federal Network of the National School Boards Association (NSBA). The NSBA Federal Network meets once each year for an update on education issues and to visit elected representatives in Washington, D.C.

Visitors from the Metro Area Vocational-Technical School district, also in Oklahoma County, came to discuss a county-wide aviation program for prospective students who needed training and certification in airframe and power plant. The proposed program would involve Francis Tuttle, Metro Tech and Eastern Oklahoma County Vocational-Technical School, the three Oklahoma County schools. After listening to their suggestions, the board authorized the Francis Tuttle staff to study the feasibility of such a program and report back. An aviation program had not been included in our initial building plans and it would be several years before such a program would get onto the drawing board.

The year 1981 would prove to be a year of change in many ways. Fortunately, one change would not be replacing Bob Turner on the board. After the three-day filing deadline, Turner was the only candidate to file for the Zone 1 seat on the board. The state legislature was starting a new session and we were hoping to get additional capital money—and avoid a repeat of the 1980 political fight.

By the end of January, we were elated to find over 600 students had enrolled in 39 classes offered during our first spring semester of adult education classes. We didn't have a building completed, but we were able to offer education to our patrons. Callahan, our interim superintendent, was holding a steady course.

Larry Hansen was a welcome visitor and participant at the board meeting on February 5. He had come to the meeting to officially swear in re-elected zone one member Bob Turner. February is the month in which boards of education by law reorganize their leadership. I was elected president again and Dr. Resler was elected vice-president. Up to now, Chitwood had been our clerk. Dr Callahan reported he had received a letter of resignation from Zone 2 member Bill Chitwood. Chitwood, from the Edmond school district and also a dairy farmer, explained in his letter that his dairy farm would soon

be on the bottom of Lake Arcadia, a lake to be made east of Edmond. His family had made the decision to relocate their operation to Murray County in south-central Oklahoma. To succeed Chitwood we elected our administrative assistant, Leatha Purser, to serve as our official clerk for the following year.

When a member of an Oklahoma board of education resigns, there are several options for replacement. The board can request the election board call for a special election or appoint a replacement. Any appointed member has to file and run for election at the next school board election. School board elections are held in January. A special election for one board seat would be expensive for the district and would take several months to arrange. The Zone 2 seat was scheduled to be opened for election to a five-year term in January 1982, so we chose to appoint from anyone living in the Edmond school district who would submit a resume or a letter stating why they wanted to serve on the Francis Tuttle Board of Education. We scheduled a special board meeting to interview candidates and choose Chitwood's replacement.

The rest of the February meeting involved board approval of the activity fund account. A school's activity fund is where the school keeps track of revenue generated by school activities. We had taken in \$10,293.50 in adult education enrollment fees. This represented the first money received by the district for services. Construction was still progressing according to schedule. The mild winter was allowing EV Cox to move at a steady pace. We accepted the low bid on our next school vehicle, a 1981 Ford F100 full-size pickup truck, for \$6,744.69. We also contracted with a commercial artist

to design a school logo. The board received a preliminary report of the enrollment for adult education classes. The official enrollment figure on the date of our meeting was 572. The course schedule ran from February through April. The classes such as accounting, shorthand, marketing, and real estate met once or twice a week. Other classes such as floral design, cake decorating and microwave cookery met for several weeks. The interesting thing about these "fun" classes was that they might lead students into part-time work. Before the classes ended in April, 649 students had completed over 22,000 hours of education and training. We did that without our own building.

February is also the month when school districts review contracts of administrators and give notice of intent to rehire or not rehire. By motion of the board, we convened an executive session to discuss personnel, one of the items allowed for executive sessions. When we reconvened the public meeting, we voted to re-hire Dr. Callahan, Tom DeSpain and Millie Magers, our three administrators. The board also voted to pay for teacher's retirement on all eligible employees and to re-advertise for a superintendent, with applications due by 5 p.m. on March 2, 1981.

At a special board meeting on February 25, the board appointed a replacement for Chitwood. We had eight candidates, including one candidate who had been a candidate in 1979. The order of appearance was to be determined by drawing numbers. Each applicant would make a short statement and the board would ask questions. After two hours, the board voted to appoint Buddy Sanford to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Bill Chitwood.

The March 5 meeting saw the swearing in of Zone 2 member Buddy Sanford and was also the last meeting attended by former Superintendent Weatherford. At 8:40 p.m., the board voted to convene an executive session to discuss the applications received for the superintendent's job. There was only one application.

April 9, 1981 proved to be a banner day in the life of Francis Tuttle, the school. On that date, Bruce Gray began his affiliation with Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center. Because board member Resler, a surgeon, was running late, the board voted to alter the agenda. We handled the routine agenda items first. The construction report indicated that the tilt-up concrete walls were 30 days late. Once Dr. Resler arrived, the board voted to hold an executive session. That executive session resulted in multiple motions. The first motion was to "hire Bruce Gray as superintendent of Francis Tuttle Center starting June 1, 1981, with contract to follow." The next motion was to "employ Bruce Gray as a consultant to the school during April and May, 1981." On both motions, the votes were unanimous.

Dr. Callahan had done a better-than-good job of keeping us going in the right direction. None of us at that meeting had any idea what a monumental decision we had just made.

THE BRUCE GRAY YEARS BEGIN

Bruce Gray came to be thought of as a visionary leader. Visionary is a term that almost everyone who knew and worked with Gray has used at one time or another to describe him. To his hunting, fishing and golfing buddies, he was a man who loved to compete. He loved to catch the biggest or the most fish, hit the longest drive, shoot the most quail, and brag about his "best" hunting dog. He was a high school and college athlete. As the father of three girls, Gray valued, encouraged, and aided women in sports, in life and in the workplace.

One of Gray's favorite hunting and fishing buddies was Earl Cowan. Cowan became superintendent of Canadian Valley Area Vocational-Technical Center in

Bruce Gray came to be thought of as a visionary leader. Visionary is a term that almost everyone who knew and worked with Gray has used at one time or another to describe him. 1984. Gray and Cowan became one another's sounding board for sharing and solving school problems on a professional level. Cowan also gave Gray tips that improved his hunting skills, while Gray gave Cowan fishing lessons. The "windshield time" they spent driving to and from hunting and fishing destinations

gave them another opportunity to strengthen their friendship. There was always a friendly sense of competition in their sporting adventures.

Gray was also a team player who presented male and female administrators and staff members with equal opportunities to prove their merit. This was not typical of the times. As he made his reputation, he allowed each of his team members to excel. He was quick to give credit to outstanding performers.

Professionally, Bruce Gray was an award winner and was publicly recognized many times for his outstanding performance. In 1990, Gray received the Francis Tuttle Career Excellence Award from the Oklahoma Vocational Association (now known as the Oklahoma Association for Career and Technical Education). This award was created in 1986 at the time of Dr. Tuttle's retirement. It was given in recognition of any Oklahoma vocational educator whose career embodied the excellence demonstrated by Dr. Francis Tuttle. In 1995, Dr. Tuttle endorsed the nomination of Bruce Gray into the Oklahoma Vo-Tech Foundation Hall of Fame. In his endorsement letter, Tuttle said the following:

"I believe the Francis Tuttle Technical Center to be among the best three schools in America. Bruce Gray's administration has led to the development of a very innovative, high quality, industry-oriented school. The school's students are in demand by businesses and industries all over this nation.

"His professional leadership is recognized all over the nation as well. He has a natural and acquired ability in selecting a quality staff. Many of his staff members are and have served in state and national leadership roles. "I believe Bruce Gray is the premier leader for quality and innovative technical programs in the state."

Stillwater High School DECA adviser and marketing teacher Gus Friedemann encouraged and aided Gray on his adult life path. His experience as a DECA student led to his passion for giving students opportunities to excel, to learn life skills and to travel. Dr. Tom Friedemann, who was recruited by Gray to join his administrative team at Great Plains and later in his career was employed at Francis Tuttle, shared this story:

Tom grew up in Stillwater. Gus Friedemann,
Bruce's DECA adviser, was Tom's uncle. Tom was
in grade school when Bruce was in high school. Tom
remembers watching Bruce play basketball in Stillwater. Years later, Tom's mother was cleaning out years
of accumulated treasures and gave Tom a box of his
"stuff." In that box, Tom found a stack of his Weekly
Readers. As he flipped though these all-but-forgotten
possessions, he ran across one copy where the young
reader was asked to list the name of one of his heroes.
In that space, Tom had written, "Bruce Gray."

Gray's first teaching assignment was as a marketing and management teacher in Stigler, Oklahoma and adviser to the DECA chapter. He proved himself a "people-builder" as he lead the Stigler DECA chapter to a State Championship and recognition as the "Outstanding DECA Chapter in the Nation" in 1971. Many of the members of that DECA chapter became marketing education teachers.

Gray's favorite marketing teacher-educator at Central State University, Dr. Lucille Patton, said this about Gray in her letter nominating him for the Oklahoma Vo-Tech Foundation Hall of Fame in 1995:

"From his very beginning as a vocational teacher in marketing education at Stigler, Oklahoma, he has been a very positive influence on his students, which has carried over into his administrative responsibilities. He is knowledgeable, enthusiastic, encouraging and supporting. As an area administrator he used the same kind of support and enthusiasm that worked so well when he was a high school marketing educator. He works as a member of a team; he helps his employees set goals and encourages them throughout their completion.

His ability to work with people is evidenced by the fact that there have been very few changes in key personnel since his beginning as Superintendent of the Francis Tuttle AVTS. He gives credit to his employees at all levels, encourages department heads to excel and makes sure they are recognized for their achievement."

Gray graduated from Central State University in Edmond in 1966 after a short stint in the National Guard. With his certificate in Distributive Education from Oklahoma State University, he took his first job at Stigler High School. From 1967 to 1971, he would teach marketing education and be the DECA chapter adviser.

The first thing Gray did when school started was recruit students for DECA. He visited the sophomore English classes and sold the idea of marketing as a way to be of service to a community, to compete, to win scholarships and to travel to state and national competitions.

DECA chapters earned points for local and state projects that were documented in written form and for competition in public speaking, sales demonstrations, job interviews and ad copy writing. These points were calculated at the state level; the chapter with the most points was named the state chapter of the year. State chapter recognition was usually from urban and suburban schools with large numbers of students and lots of marketing venues to draw upon.

National points, competition and recognition started with state winners. Each year, the State Chapter of the Year prepared a scrapbook detailing its activities and

Bruce Gray coached his DECA members after school and in the evening, much as basketball or football coaches did with their teams. victories. These books were sent to a national panel of judges and points were assigned to each of the 50 state winners' entries. Individual winners at the state level went to the national competition. Local chapters also received points for having members in leadership positions at

the state, regional and national level.

Bruce Gray coached his DECA members after school and in the evening, much as basketball or football coaches did with their teams. In 1970, Stigler was recognized as State DECA Chapter of the Year, an accomplishment not usually achieved by a small school. Gray took his model to other DECA advisers and into the college classrooms at CSU. He had created something good and he shared it. He instilled his students and other marketing education teachers with his passion and his vision.

According to the Francis Tuttle Student Activities Adviser, Marianne Prentice:

As a 14-year-old high school student, I met "Mr. Gray." We started as teacher and student in a small vocational classroom in an old gym in Stigler, Oklahoma. Over the years, my teacher "Mr. Gray" became my friend "Bruce." The qualities I saw in him as a teacher I now see in him as a leader, goal oriented, student orientated, a visionary, enthusiastic, a risk taker, understanding, a professional, knowledgeable and a continuous learner.

Bruce is a role model and mentor for many people but I hope I'm the first in that line! If I could emulate any one person, it would be Bruce. Without his leadership and example I can't imagine what I would be doing or where I might be. I have suspicion many people feel the same about Bruce's influence in their lives.

I can think of no one I respect more than Bruce Gray. We all have someone in our lives we cannot imagine living without. For some it is a parent, a spouse or a child. For me it's Bruce Gray."

Gray's success in Stigler got him recruited by Great Plains Superintendent Milton Worley. Worley wanted Gray to bring his Stigler DECA model into an area school. He wanted him so badly that part of his employment contract allowed Gray to continue to work with the Stigler DECA chapter, preparing them for the 1971 national DECA competition.

Gray was hired as an assistant superintendent at Great Plains, where he was responsible for all of the student organizations and adult education. While at Great Plains, Gray also became the administrator in charge of coordinating and overseeing the construction of a new building, including purchasing the equipment and the furnishings. He assisted in developing policies, rules and regulations for the school and created and implemented a student recruitment program.

Gray returned to his hometown of Stillwater in 1973 and became the assistant state supervisor of Distributive Education and the Oklahoma adviser for all of the DECA chapters in the state. He had been recruited to replace the retiring Ted Best. Gray served in this capacity for only one year, yet even in that brief time, he initiated many innovative ideas in the Oklahoma DECA program. One of his changes was to upgrade the awards ceremony. He believed in recognizing talent and making a big deal out of that recognition. Under his leadership, he created a special atmosphere for recognizing state winners.

In September 1974, Gray was recruited by the executive director of the national DECA organization to join its staff in Washington, D.C. There, he headed the campaign to raise money to build the new headquarters. To accomplish this goal, he created a plan that included individual, corporate and DECA chapter donations. While in Washington, Gray rubbed elbows with corporate leaders and was in contact with DECA leaders in every state. The contacts he made were invaluable to him as he continued in his career. When the fundraising campaign was over, \$1.5 million had been raised. Once the funds were secured, Gray coordinated the entire building project.

Three years in the Washington environment were enough. When Worley called, Gray came back to Okla-

homa—and back to Great Plains as deputy superintendent. In 1978, he was named superintendent to succeed the retiring Worley.

Earlier, I mentioned that we had tried to schedule an interview with candidate Bruce Gray. We had advertised for a superintendent and had chosen eight candidates to interview. When I called to schedule an interview, Gray thanked me, but asked me to withdraw his application. In a 2006 interview with Dr. Mike Bailey, I discovered Gray's motivation for withdrawing his applications at that time:

After his appointment as superintendent of Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School, Gray began to assemble his leadership team. One of his choices was Mike Bailey from Alabama. Their DECA backgrounds had caused them to cross paths and there was professional respect. Their families also became close over the course of their years in Lawton. Bailey had heard a rumor that Gray had added his application to the mix when the top job for Francis Tuttle, the school, had been advertised. Bailey had moved his family to Oklahoma and he wasn't through learning from Gray. He confronted Gray and got a commitment that he would withdraw his application. In an interview in 2006 with Dr. Tom Friedemann, I asked him if he knew why Gray had submitted his application in the first place. Dr. Friedemann speculated that Gray was somewhat frustrated at the time with the slow progress he saw in attempting to implement individualized self-paced curriculum at Great Plains and saw an opportunity to hire instructors who were willing to

implement this kind of curriculum delivery from day one.

As it turned out, Bailey got two years of schooling in the Bruce Gray leadership academy. In 1981, Gray got the opportunity to hire a staff willing to follow him into the uncharted territory of self-paced individualized curriculum delivery.

Getting Started at Francis Tuttle

Gray started his Francis Tuttle experience on April 1, 1981, by spending one or two days in Oklahoma City. He bunked with Callahan in his apartment, which gave them time to get acquainted and to make the best of their time together working on the details of getting a school built and ready to open in sixteen months. Gray held meetings with several of the superintendents of the sending school districts. They reached an agreement to hold regular meetings to better prepare for the coming year.

On May 4, the board approved new policies for investment of funds, bidding requirements, and a purchasing authority. Gray was translating his leadership style into official school policies. When Gray became the consultant/superintendent-designee, he reviewed the school's business operations and began making changes. He recommended we begin to look for an outstanding business manager with school experience. Education finance is a horse of a different color and we needed someone whose focus would be on our financial well-being. That Gray would work closely with the business manager was reflected in the new investment policy. The new policy

established an Investment Committee that included the superintendent, district treasurer and school business manager. The board also approved a bid for an AMC Jeep Cherokee that would become Gray's authorized mode of transportation as superintendent. Dr. Tom Friedemann later said, "as soon as Bruce came to Great Plains driving that white Cherokee, we knew he was going to 'The City'."

Former Superintendent Weatherford had felt he was well versed in school finance; therefore, a business manager was not a priority. However, he did recommend we employ a school treasurer to control the investment of our own money. In January of 1980, the board had appointed Gene Davis, president of Wilshire Bank, as treasurer for the district and paid him \$5 per hour, up to \$150 per month, to perform the treasurer's duties. The board also designated Wilshire Bank as the official depository of the district. Many school districts allow their County Treasurer to hold and invest the tax money accruing to the school district. When you do that, the County Treasurer keeps the interest. By having our own treasurer, we added the earned interest to our bank account.

By February 1980, Davis had over \$500,000 invested in certificates of deposit and the first interest we earned on a 60-day CD was 13 percent. Each month thereafter, the board voted to retain a certain amount of money to pay obligations and designated the remainder be invested. We were setting policy each month to invest our money and Davis was getting a good return on the district's money. Until May 1981, there was not an official investment policy.

Gray also brought a slide presentation introducing us to the Tech Ed Foundation. Several Oklahoma vocational-technical education districts had formed the foundation and hired a consultant to keep in touch with national industry leaders and the national vocational education political agenda. Gray suggested it was time to get our Advisory Council active in bringing in community opinions and suggested we schedule a meeting as soon as possible.

Leatha Purser, who had been the administrative assistant since October of 1980 and official clerk of the board since Chitwood's resignation, submitted her own resignation. This prompted the board to appoint Buddy Sanford as clerk. The board also added Ruby Nell Randquist as the school's first financial secretary. In later years, Randquist would be the first Francis Tuttle employee to retire from the staff. The board also passed a motion to approve and advertise employment for a director of public relations and media development. With

Bruce Gray recognized the potential for Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center to become a showplace for one of the nation's top vocational education delivery systems. fewer than 30 days on the job, the results of just a few of Bruce Gray's changes were already evident.

Gray may have been in Oklahoma City only a few days each week, but his influence was being felt throughout the district. As I crossed paths with our sending school superintendents, they were excited about Gray's

hiring. It was a good thing the weather had delayed our construction. One of the first architectural changes the new superintendent discussed with us was the redesign of the administrative space. Gray recognized the potential for Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center to become a showplace for one of the nation's top vocational education delivery systems. He felt the space for meeting dignitaries from private and public organizations needed to reflect the environment in which industry and government leaders would feel at home.

Dr. Callahan had kept busy developing the ground-work that was required to open a new school. When Gray arrived, those activities kicked into a higher gear. Developing policies and procedures, writing job descriptions, advertising for staff, developing equipment and furniture specifications, processing bids, recruiting and enrolling students, conducting short-term adult education evening programs in rented space, working with the state legislature to ensure adequate funding, welcoming new staff, planning and conducting in-service programs for the new staff, planning and hosting an open house and dedication ceremony, and welcoming the first student body were just a few of the responsibilities that awaited the new superintendent's attention.

The board meeting on June 4, 1981, was Bruce Gray's first as superintendent. At that meeting, the board looked at health insurance plans, approved six bids for equipment ranging from machine shop equipment to audio-visual, photographic, recording studio equipment and portable display units. The board also approved the school calendar for 1981-82 that identified the approved holidays. After an executive session, the board voted to employ Garland McWatters as director of public relations and media development. McWatters had held a similar position at Great Plains under Gray.

We passed a resolution addressed to the Board of Directors of the Technical Education Foundation, Inc., requesting Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center be approved for membership and made plans to attend a Foundation meeting in June in Oklahoma City. TEF was formed in 1980 by five Oklahoma area schools to help member schools solve common problems. The original member schools were Great Plains in Lawton, Tri County in Bartlesville, Central in Drumright, Northeast at Pryor and Tulsa County. One function of TEF was to procure equipment from major manufacturers for use in school programs such as automobile engines, computer equipment and other specialized equipment. TEF retained a Washington consulting firm that helped identify major companies looking for places to donate equipment and funds.

The board voted at the July 1981 meeting to enter into an agreement to join TEF as the sixth member school. We learned from our architect that construction was 70 days behind schedule. There were so many commercial building projects, there was a shortage of skilled craftspeople. However, the work was expected to be caught up and completed in time to open in the fall of 1982. Enrollment for the fall adult evening classes at Putnam City North High School was scheduled to start in August with 65 classes offered in areas of business, clerical, general interest, health, home economics, technical, management, marketing, horticulture, and small business management.

The board reviewed the preliminary FY1982 budget. The budget would be approved at the August meeting. We also approved more bids for equipment. This would become routine business. We would need over \$3 million worth of equipment and furniture to open the school for training and educating students. We began discussing our need for a computer to use in the finance area to keep and produce our financial records. Dr. Callahan was assigned the duty of researching the products on the market and to come back with recommendations.

August 13, 1981, found construction still over 70 days behind schedule but the work was expected to proceed much faster, now that the walls were nearing completion. The board approved a policy on reporting students under the influence of or possessing non-intoxicating or intoxicating beverages or other controlled dangerous substances. This policy was required to be in place at each state school to meet the requirements of a new law.

The board granted easement to Oklahoma Natural Gas and Oklahoma Gas & Electric companies so gas and electric lines could be brought to the new building. We had a long discussion about a phone system capable of handling 100 individual stations within the school. We authorized the acquisition of additional office space adjacent to the rented space now occupied to house additional clerical employees. These personnel had to be hired to handle the paperwork that was part of the employment process of adding teachers and support staff. We approved a detailed budget that was expected to exceed \$10 million. Dr Callahan reported on his computer research but was not ready to make a recommendation. There were several products on the market, but

the software capable of meeting our needs in the finance area were not well defined. Most financial institutions were still using large mainframe computers to complete their work.

First Computer

The reason the purchase of our first personal computer was such a milestone was because it was the first of many. We didn't know it at the time, but on September 3, 1981, when we approved the purchase of a Model II, TRS-80 computer from Radio Shack, we took a small step into our great computer future. Dr. Callahan looked

By October 1, 1981, Bruce Gray had been the superintendent for five months. We had felt his influence for over seven months. at all of the makes and models of personal computer on the market in late 1981. The personal computer was then a new technology.

After the 1980 fight for capital money, it had been much easier to secure an additional \$750,000

of capital funding in June of 1981. However, Gray wanted to make sure we got more equipment money in 1982. He invited one of our district's elected representatives, Representative Mike Lawter, to attend the September board meeting. Lawter vowed help in the appropriations process in the upcoming legislative session.

By October 1, 1981, Bruce Gray had been the superintendent for five months. We had felt his influence for over seven months. The plans for the official opening were progressing and we were approving bids and purchase orders for equipment and furniture. We approved new positions for a director of short-term adult programs and a career services counselor. These two positions, plus a part-time secretary to operate the new TRS-80 II, would be the only staff expansion until we moved into the new building.

Gray set another important precedent as 1981 was ending. The Francis Tuttle administrative staff requested a meeting with the leadership at South Oklahoma City Junior College. They were given an overview of the college's programs and a tour of its facility. SOCJC offered several vocational programs on a post-secondary level and the Francis Tuttle staff had concerns of overlap of services. After the visit, the overlap possibility did not appear to be substantial. Gray reported that the two schools could have a good working relationship and could collaborate to provide quality vocational training to metro-area adult students. It would take almost a decade, but this first visit and the seeds planted would grow into a beautiful cooperation.

The construction report in October was exciting. Exterior work was nearing completion and the building would soon be fully enclosed, which meant the weather would be less of a burden. The front portion of the building should be finished by mid-May 1982, so the staff in the temporary offices could move into the building several months before students arrived on August 23, 1982, the first day of school.

November and December of 1981 were busy months at the temporary offices and at the building site. By the end of 1981, construction had recovered over ten days of the more than 70 they were behind on the building schedule. The board added Mary Greenwood to the staff. Greenwood was an experienced career counselor with four years as a counselor at the Gordon Cooper Area

Vocational-Technical School in Shawnee and ten years in the Oklahoma City school system. Our affiliation with TEF was proving to be worth the money. TEF had gotten commitments from Oldsmobile and Pontiac for the donation of one diesel engine and four gasoline engines for use in the auto mechanics program. They also found a large paper folder we had bid specifications for at a 25 percent discount from the factory.

The board also approved a school logo. This topic had been discussed but had gotten pushed to the back of the agenda due to the circumstances of the superintendent search.

After months of planning and preparation, the staff was ready to advertise, screen, interview and employ applicants for 24 teaching positions and two administrative staff. The search for a new business manager would also begin in earnest.

A copy of our employee brochure, "Strategy for Tomorrow," had reached Dr. Tuttle's office in Stillwater. He called Gray's office after reading the brochure and praised the content while suggesting we might correct the spelling error on the front cover. In our haste to get the publication to the printer, the misspelling of "Tommorrow" had not caught anyone's eye. Our printer quickly re-printed the cover and the error had been corrected. There was no blaming or hand-wringing; it was simply fixed and made better. That would become an important part of the culture that remains today.

In a November-December 1981 LASER article, Bruce Gray was quoted as follows:

"We want everyone to know up front what we perceive our mission to be and how we plan to approach it. I can speak for all the administrative staff and the school board members when I say we all feel a deep commitment to the quality of our programs. And we want every prospective employee to be aware of that commitment and be willing to share it."

The fall semester of our adult short-term education courses ended and final enrollment figures surprised us all. We enrolled over 1,300 students. This was more than a 100 percent increase over the spring 1981 semester. We would have one more semester at Putnam City North High School before we moved into our new building.

The board kept approving bids and purchase orders for equipment, furniture and other supplies as the year drew to a close. It was a monumental job. We were all doing our part to facilitate success. As bids for large pieces of equipment were presented, the staff spent extra time making sure the board understood why the equipment was necessary and how it would be used. It was an education for us all. The team spirit was prevalent throughout the small but growing organization.

THE FIRST SCHOOL YEAR

As soon as the state legislature convened, it became evident that Superintendent Gray would be more involved in the legislative process. He was chairman of the Legislative Committee for the Council of Local Administrators. This position would require he spend time at the legislature, promoting vocational education and working for funding which would benefit Francis Tuttle and the other area schools. As Legislative Chairman of the Oklahoma PTA, I was a registered lobbyist. Together we were able to keep up with legislative happenings and work together when necessary to accomplish good things for Francis Tuttle, the school.

In February 1980, we had appointed a 14-member Advisory Council to help us identify and select programs needed in the community before we began to plan the building to house them. Most of the members came from business and industry. Gray believed our Advisory Council should be more diverse and that, if you asked community leaders to join your family, you should use their expertise and experience frequently. He expanded the Advisory Council to 23 members and added members from government, secondary and higher education, and religious leaders. After appointment by the board,

the Council met on January 28, 1982. The agenda included an update on student recruitment, staffing, review of the educational philosophy, feasibility of forming a foundation to receive equipment donations and offer tax incentives, and input from Council members regarding job market demands and technology changes in the marketplace. Members of the re-energized Francis Tuttle Advisory Council were:

- Rex Ball, Chairman of the Board and CEO, HTB Architects & Engineers
- · Marilyn Bush, Manager of Quail Springs Mall
- Andy Coats, Attorney
- · Jim Cox, President, Cox Construction
- Ralph Downs, Superintendent of Putnam City Schools
- Richard Glasser, Oklahoma City Comptroller of Western Electric
- H.L. Grover, Vice-President of OG&E
- · John Harris, President of Lakeshore Bank
- James L. Henry, President of Baptist Medical Center
- Rev. Jerry Johnson, Western Oaks Christian Church
- Joseph L. Johnson, President of Kelly-Johnson Enterprises
- · Mike Lawter, Attorney and State Representative
- Chet Leonhardt, Builder
- Larry Lucas, Investor
- Bruce Moran, Insurance Agent
- Earnie Morris, Vice President of Operations, Fred Jones Manufacturing
- Dr. Lucille Patton, Dean of the School of Special Arts and Sciences, Central State University

- Donald Paulsen, President of Fife Corporation
- Layton Perry, Attorney
- Fred Suhre, Vice-President of CMI Corporation
- Phil Watson, State Senator, District 41
- Clarence Taylor, Sales Manager, Woody Ayres Chevrolet
- · Nazih Zuhdi, MD, Heart Surgeon

As I look back at this list of notables in Oklahoma County, I am impressed with what many of them went on to do to benefit their communities. Bruce Moran became a member of the Francis Tuttle Board of Education. Andy Coats was elected mayor of Oklahoma City and appointed the Dean of the OU Law School. Don Paulson became Chairman of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Dr. Zuhdi established and chaired the Organ Transplant Unit at the Baptist Medical Center.

DeSpain and Greenwood were visiting the schools that were eligible to send students to the Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical Center and making presentations. DeSpain reported to the board that high school students were expected to fill nearly all of the slots available. Spaces not filled with high school students would be made available for adult students where appropriate. Buddy Sanford was re-elected to the board after being appointed in 1981. When we reorganized the board in February, I was again elected president, Doug Low was elected vice-president, and Sanford was elected clerk of the board.

At the close of business on February 26, 1982, the school office had received 526 job applications for fewer than 45 faculty and support positions. We approved a

preliminary salary schedule for personnel. The board also approved the staff recommendation to employ Ronald Gappa as director of short-term adult education. Gappa joined Magers' staff and was responsible for planning, promoting and coordinating the evening adult short-term offerings. On February 1, the last semester of adult short-term evening classes got underway at Putnam City North High School. Enrollment was at or above the record set for the 1981 fall semester.

Construction reports indicated the building was approximately 80 percent complete. We were still buying equipment and furniture. We made the decision to lease an IBM 34 mainframe computer to use in the computer operator program. It would also be used for storing school records and financial data. The board commissioned one of America's leading portrait photographers, William S. McIntosh of Dallas, Texas, to photograph Dr. Francis Tuttle. Tuttle's portrait would occupy a prominent space in the entryway of the school to remind everyone of the high standards that the school would strive to maintain.

In March and April, the board continued to approve bids for equipment, furniture and carpet. Work on the building was progressing; the architects and contractors continued to promise partial completion and occupation by mid-May. According to the bid schedule, we should approve expenditures of over \$2 million in the next few months. We got a much needed and appreciated gift from the Caterpillar Tractor Co. in Peoria, Illinois. They donated a forklift valued at \$20,000. The gift arrived at a time when hundreds of pieces of equipment were being delivered and the forklift would provide the ability to move this equipment easily.

We also received two automotive engines from Pontiac and a car from the Ford Motor Company. TEF was beating the bushes for us and coming up with great contributions. One of the challenges with the equipment bidding was coordinating delivery dates.

In April, the board approved the June 1 employment for the school's first 11 instructors and a maintenance worker. We approved Beverly Gilmore, accounting; Susan Emig, cashier-checker; Joan Flanagan and Kim Maurer, clerical; Marit Baxter, practical nursing; Claude Childers, small business management; Karen Long, food service; Betty Pelton, commercial and home services; Ted Dorton, welding; Nelson Buts, graphic arts; and Doris Floyd, building and grounds.

Cox Construction, the general contractor, had come before the board in early April to request an extension of the term of the original contract. The contract called for a completion date of May 3, 1982 and a \$1,000 perday penalty if that date was not met. Cox had asked for a 60-day extension and had good documentation of bad weather, delayed sub-contractors, faulty equipment that had to be returned, and labor shortages. The board granted a 55-day extension to June 28. The board also discussed the possibility of a partial certificate of occupancy for the administrative area so that the staff could move in to coordinate equipment delivery. Support staff and instructors would be reporting for work on June 1. Garland McWatters reminisced later about those days leading up to moving into the new building. He said that the temporary space was so limited, the staff would compare schedules so they were not all in the office at the same time.

The May 7 board meeting was the last meeting held in our rented temporary office space. Moving day was set for Monday, May 17, 1982. We had a long agenda that included a proposal from W. Ray Newman, a partner in the group that had sold the original 80 acres of land in 1979. Newman was developing the land just to the south of the school and wished to include 24 acres of the original 80 acres we had purchased in his development plan. We had bids to consider for a lawn sprinkler system, a variety of automotive and machine shop equipment, cafeteria tables and chairs, and duplicating and data processing equipment. We also had quotes for the landscaping.

Good news arrived from the state legislature. In Senate Bill 440, \$1 million had been allocated to the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education for equipment purchases for our school. In 1980, we had asked for \$2 million and had received \$1.5 million; \$750,000 had been appropriated in 1981; and \$1 million was now provided. That made a total of \$3.25 million available to spend on building and equipping a school that would be on the leading edge of technology.

As we considered our membership in the Technical Education Foundation, we were impressed with the report from the TEF consultants. In the 12 months we had been members of TEF, we had received donated equipment from 11 organizations. The market value of this equipment was reported to be over \$450,000.

Mary Greenwood, coordinator of career services, reported that, as of May 7, 530 high school students from Edmond, Putnam City, Deer Creek, and Western Heights had enrolled in a vocational program. Applications were being taken for adult students on a

space available basis in those programs and in the four adults-only programs of practical nursing, small business management, cashier-checker, and respiratory therapy. Magers gave the board the enrollment summary for the spring 1982 adult education short-term classes. We had served a total of 1,122 students who had completed 26,843 class hours at Putnam City North High School.

The last item of business at the last meeting in rented offices was to enlarge the Francis Tuttle family. The board approved the employment of new instructors, administrators and support staff. Most would come aboard on June 1, 1982, but two important members would be coming to work on May 10 and May 17, respectively. Gray had his long-awaited business manager when we hired Bruce Campbell. On moving day, May 17, Marion Cowherd began her new position as Gray's administrative assistant.

Other members of the staff we approved to start on June 1 were instructors Marianne Ammann (a former DECA student from Stigler), Bill Clugston, Nancy Dennis, Leonard Demmer, Billy Derryberry, Dean Huster, Danny King, Amy Henderson, Howard Johnston, Kurt Loeffelholz, Gail Maxwell, Bill Parrott, Susan Prater, Dr. Kay Rogers, and Dorene Stall. New support staff were Marge Bratches, Cynthia Hoel, Colin Webb, and Bonnie Gonzales.

Moving day was scheduled for Monday, May 17, 1982. The small but efficient staff would occupy the administrative wing of the 126,500-square-foot new building. A majority of the faculty and support staff would report for duty on June 1 to begin two-and-one-half months of training and planning prior to the first day of school on

August 23. It had taken two years and 10 months to get from the first official meeting on June 29, 1979 to moving day.

In a May 14, 1982 article in *The Bethany Tribune Review*, Bruce Gray was quoted as saying, "It's been a long time coming, and this is one move we're going to enjoy every minute of."

Deputy Superintendent Gene Callahan had this to say in that same article:

"This is a monumental task. I don't think anyone really understands the myriad of details that must be considered and acted upon just to get a new school open. I feel like I've earned a post-doctorate the last two years. When I took this position, I scarcely envisioned the amount of work necessary to open the doors of a new school."

Callahan had been with us almost from the beginning. We had approved his employment on December 11, 1979 and he had been involved in almost every phase of planning. He had for a short time been tapped to fill the superintendency as interim superintendent while we struggled to replace the first superintendent during a critical stage in our development.

The rest of May saw a beehive of activity at the new building. Most all of the equipment the board had been approving over the last few months was scheduled to be delivered after May 17. There were several semi-trailers filled with furniture and equipment backed up into the loading area every day. It was estimated that it would take about three weeks to set up the shops and classrooms.

The new staff reported to work on June 1, 1982. They were getting acquainted and learning more about the Francis Tuttle way of doing things. It was a time of learning about individualized self-paced curriculum, which would be the foundation for the success of Francis Tuttle graduates. Everyone hired would be immersed in this concept.

Self-paced instruction was not the only concept that the staff had to embrace. They also needed to understand how we intended to administer and manage the day-to-day operations and what we expected from them. We expected them to teach and nurture their students, but we also wanted and needed their input about how they could do their jobs better and what they needed from administration and from the board to achieve excellence.

To realize and complete our mission of quality training through quality instructional programs and support services, Superintendent Gray, his administrative staff and the board agreed to apply the innovative method of participative management. We wanted to demonstrate to the staff that we were seeking and needed their participation to create a climate of excellence. Experience had shown that people will support what they help to create. Therefore, each employee had to understand the elements of participative management and how we expected them to contribute within the structure at Francis Tuttle, the school.

We were committed to a team management approach in planning and operations. There were eight key areas included in our plan: (1) identification of needs through assessment; (2) long- and short-term planning; (3) problem solving; (4) organizational communication, top to bottom and bottom to top; (5) shared decision making when possible; (6) frequent evaluation of the processes; (7) rumor-clearing; and (8) interpretation of school policies and procedures.

Instead of the traditional education structure of all decisions from the top, each Francis Tuttle administrator would operate within their own area with clearly defined roles. Two-way communication is an essential ingredient to any type of management. The communication between areas would be expedited through a system of task forces, committees and Superintendent Cabinets.

To the framework of participative management we added management by objective, a process where each staff member developed individual job objectives based on their job description. Each administrator would work closely with their teams in the development process and then schedule periodic reviews to assess progress. Each new staff member and administrator had to fully understand the principles involved in participative management and management by objective. Training sessions were part of that first week and would continue over the next months to ensure everyone's comprehension and compliance.

Policy making is the responsibility of the board of education, based on recommendations from the super-intendent and laws passed by the legislature. Participative management would require that information flow throughout the organization from the board to the superintendent's office to the entire staff and back to the superintendent and the board. To assure the communication flow was open and thorough, four cabinets and five committees were formed. These groups allowed for

maximum participation by all groups of people affected by the school:

- The Superintendent's Cabinet made up of 10 representatives of the certified professional staff would meet monthly.
- Two Superintendent's Youth Cabinets made up of secondary students from each program—one for morning students and one for afternoon students were scheduled to meet monthly.
- The Adult Student Cabinet met monthly with the assistant superintendent. The membership included one post-secondary student from each program.
- The Staff Development Committee, chaired by the assistant superintendent, was required by school law and its membership must include representatives from the faculty, administration and a parent of a student. This committee was responsible for planning staff development activities.
- The Curriculum Development Committee met with the deputy superintendent to plan strategy for curriculum development.
- The Evaluation Committee had a membership of five, representing the faculty, who meet with the deputy superintendent to develop the evaluation processes for certified personnel.
- The Support Staff Committee had six members representing the non-certified support staff and met monthly with the deputy superintendent to plan the agenda for the monthly support staff meetings.
- The Public Relations Committee was chaired by the director of public relations and media development with a membership from the professional staff and

the support staff. This committee worked together to identify ways to promote the programs and services offered at the school.

This system supported the plan for participative management and provided opportunity for a cross-section of all groups involved in the delivery of instruction and services to provide their input. These meetings enabled the two-way flow of communication.

June 3, 1982 was the first official meeting at the new permanent address at 12777 N. Rockwell. The new Board Room was carpeted and the conference table was in place; however, the comfortable chairs were AWOL in the furniture shipment. There were finishing touches to address, such as landscaping, decorations for the interior walls and the final certificate of completion, which was still several weeks away. Landscaping decisions had become the prerogative and responsibility of board member Don Resler. When I drive around the campus I think of "Doc" and am thankful for his knowledge and expertise in that area. Because we put so much thought and planning into landscaping the first building, it became part of our culture. Every time we built or remodeled a building, we had a landscape plan along with construction and we always planted an abundance of trees and shrubs to enhance the environment and improve the aesthetics of the campus.

The board continued to approve bids for equipment and furniture. This would remain an agenda item for many months. We purchased a 15-passenger mini-van for transportation. We had discussed the school bus issue and Gray had a plan that would allow us to provide transportation for students by contracting with

our sending schools to use their buses and drivers. That enabled us to have students transported without having to deal with school bus maintenance and driver issues. Magers had the final enrollment figures for the last semester of adult evening short-term instruction. We had provided instruction for 2,949 students while reviewing over 500 employment applications, interviewing almost 200 applicants, and preparing bid specs for everything from huge pieces of equipment to forks, spoons and knives for food service. Our small staff of administrators and secretarial support had accomplished miracles.

Toward the end of the week, Superintendent Gray invited me to attend one of the staff meetings. I was to welcome the staff on behalf of the board. For a meeting like that, I usually didn't make notes. When I stood before everyone, I was not sure what I was going to say besides welcome. However, the most extraordinary story appeared in my mind as I looked out on the assembled group. Because I didn't have a formal speech ready, I cannot remember the exact words, but I can paraphrase them here:

"As I stand here today, I can only relate what I'm feeling to the way I felt as I stood before the nursery window and looked down at my newborn children many years ago. That excitement you feel that, after the months of anticipation and planning, here is this living thing ready to take its place in the world. That sense of awe and deep feelings of attachment with a touch of fear mixed in for that uncertain future. I know you mothers here can relate to that feeling and you fathers, too. I feel that way about Francis Tuttle Area Vocational-Technical School.

"This district started in 1979 and in the beginning, we didn't know what it would look like inside or out. We didn't know who would join us in its development. Those facts began to emerge and now we are together today to celebrate the milestone of beginning.

"I have nurtured this school with certainly the same determination, willpower and resolve I had as I watched my children grow. I have done all in my power to see that it developed to its full potential to this point and I shall not cease. This district was born just three years ago and it is growing up. It is but a toddler. As it took those first steps, together we were a small band of supporters. Now we have many to nurture our baby. And it will need encouragement and understanding and help along the way as, like most growing toddlers, it may stumble and fall. Now there are all of you to give it a hand up and set it on the right path to excellence.

"Thank you for making the conscious choice to join our family and welcome to Francis Tuttle."

During the month of June 1982, the professional support staff and faculty members were enrolled in an accelerated six-hour program developed by the Vocational Education Teacher Education Program at Central State University in Edmond and the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education. Competency-based, self-paced vocational education had a different approach to leaning. As a result, the new professional staff and faculty needed to learn how to deliver programs to fit the individual student's needs. First, the instructors must know about performance-based learning. Next, they must understand the different delivery system and

materials needed to teach in this manner. Finally, they needed to become familiar with the actual planning of the program. Most of the new instructors embraced this innovative delivery system, but some had difficulty adapting to competency-based, self-paced learning.

In less than two months, students would arrive for learning. We also were planning our Open House.

In July, the board dealt with more bids for the purchase of equipment and services. We bought insurance; more furniture; instructional, office and food service supplies; graphic arts, welding, machine shop, and building and grounds maintenance equipment; copiers; and even micro-computers. This time, we bought Apple computers for use in the parts training and applied accounting programs. We had already purchased an IBM 34 mainframe computer with 16 on-line terminals for the data entry and computer operator programs. At this meeting, we also heard a presentation for building and grounds graphics. Our students and visitors had to be able to find their way around the school.

The construction report delivered by Domby Zinn produced a "Certificate of Substantial Completion" with a punch list of things that needed attention. Zinn estimated it would take about three weeks to fully complete the building. We began the re-employment process prescribed by school law. We voted to re-employ our non-certified support personnel. We approved our first official policies and procedures manual. We were already getting recognition and awards for excellence; Garland McWatters reported we had been given an award of merit for our employment brochure and our newsletter, "The Laser." We set September 11 as the

date for our official Open House and dedication ceremony.

The staff had begun the enrollment process for high school students from Putnam City, Edmond, Deer Creek and Western Heights in January 1982. In July, the enrollees were invited to Francis Tuttle to a get-ac-

quainted open house. The students were welcomed and given a preview of the school through an audio-visual presentation, "Strategy for Tomorrow." They were given a tour of the school by their instructors which ended in their individual programs, where they were introduced to the equipment they would be using when school started on August 23.

Enrollment for adult students, loosely defined as anyone 16 years of age or older, was opened in July. Adult students could enroll in most programs open to high school students, such as applied accounting, auto mechanics, carpentry, clerical secretary, computer operator, data entry, drafting, electronics, food

August 1982 was an important month in the history of Francis Tuttle, the school. On August 23, the first of many students officially started using the building and grounds we had planned since 1979, constructed since 1980, and furnished and equipped and planted and groomed. A dedicated and newly trained staff of instructors, support personnel and administrators would be on hand to aid the learning process.

service, graphic arts, machine shop and parts training. They were enrolled on a space available basis and could choose morning or afternoon or attend both sessions and finish sooner. Our policy for adult students was open entry, open exit. Therefore, they could enroll at almost

any day and begin as soon as their enrollment was completed. The only program restricted to adult students was practical nursing. We received notice that we would have funding for another adult program, respiratory therapy. It was scheduled to begin in February 1983 and would accommodate 15 students.

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The month began with the new staff and faculty attending the annual Vocational-Technical Education Conference in Stillwater. This conference began in 1967, the year Dr. Francis Tuttle was named the director of the state agency. It was a time when the entire Oklahoma vocational-technical education community comes together to celebrate success and to share ideas for the future. The new family of Francis Tuttle, the school, joined the crowd in Stillwater.

Dr. Gene Callahan, our Deputy Superintendent, was recognized by his peers, the Oklahoma Council of Local Administrators, as Outstanding Young Administrator. Callahan was recognized for his ability to step in as interim superintendent and for putting together the staffing plan and employment process.

Official business at the August board meeting included, you guessed it, more bids for furniture, equipment, services and "stuff." Approving the acquisition of goods

and services would remain an integral part of the duties of the board. The board approved the new respiratory therapy technician program, the first Staff Development Committee, and gave Superintendent Gray authorization to purchase five lots in the Walnut Creek sub-division. Those lots would be used by the carpentry program to build homes. We were informed that Governor George Nigh would attend our dedication ceremonies on Saturday, September 11.

The first students arrived for classes on Tuesday, August 23, 1982. The new staff and faculty had been in training, getting ready for them since June 1. This was a dream that we owned and had been waiting to become a reality since early 1979. Everything was in place to launch a beginning filled with anticipation of success and fueled by visions of a great and grand future.

Francis Tuttle, the School, Officially Dedicated

The date 9/11 has come to be an important date in our lives. Almost every adult can tell you exactly where they were on that date in 2001. Our 9/11 carries a much kinder and gentler memory. We were together to celebrate and dedicate our new technology center.

It was a grand night. There were 400 invited guests, including the Governor of Oklahoma, George Nigh, legislative leaders, Advisory Committee members, school officials from the four sending districts, state agency staffers and representatives from all of the area newspapers, radio and television stations. Bruce Gray and I welcomed the audience and then presented an elaborate slide show. Our production carried the title, "A Strategy

for Tomorrow," a tag line we had been using since we began to recruit the staff and faculty.

Governor Nigh had arrived during the slides show and, after it concluded, Bruce Gray came to the podium. The Governor was always a great fan and admirer of vocational education and of Dr. Tuttle. Dr. Tuttle was honored at the dedication ceremonies. He was also the featured speaker. The following are quotes from his speech:

"Vo-Tech has made tremendous strides in this state. We attempted to polish programs from other states and use them in Oklahoma. We are doing a creditable job but we still have a way to go.

"This school has one of the best qualified staffs anywhere. Some of the equipment here is the best in the state and we know that it will be in industry tomorrow. Three hundred industries have been attracted to Oklahoma since the institution of programs that relate to industry. Industries have located in 100 communities in Oklahoma and area vo-techs located in 39 campuses across the state have trained over 40,000 persons for new jobs.

"Higher education may not be the cup of tea of all young people. I suspect more than 30 percent of the high school graduates go on to graduate college. Those that don't graduate and learn a skill perhaps need to take a look at Oklahoma's vo-tech education. This would save them and their parents a considerable amount of money and time.

"I call on all educators to do a better job of informing students and parents of potential in vo-tech programs in the state of Oklahoma. I think the strategy for tomorrow is that, a greater emphasis will be put on the technical aspects of vocational training in almost every field.

"Almost every program in vocational education requires electronics as a background: machine tools are numerically, electronically controlled, some of the printing program areas and basic parts of welders are computerized, and in the computer and business machine program, emphasis is put on electronics. Most jobs coming up are going to require basic electronics understanding to learn on a level that students can compete in the job market.

"This area school has a tremendous opportunity and a running start to be the new high-tech training center of the Oklahoma City area. That doesn't mean we compete with the universities, but we have to update what we are doing and train people to operate, repair and make the machines run, as opposed to the engineering or building of the machine.

"If this country is progressing in the direction of more technology, we must get in step with it in terms of rethinking how to educate our young people. I think maybe our future, our survival depends on how we do that. Productivity in industry and business depends on how well we do this."

Governor Nigh then gave a short speech that was followed by a slide presentation highlighting the 19 daytime programs offered at the new school. It was also noted that in the 126,500 square feet of the new building, there were over 19,000 persons attending adult evening classes.

In 1982, our media department was known for its elaborate slide presentations using multiple projectors, music, and sound that were impressive. Unfortunately, we were not yet doing a great deal of video and this is one the early events for which we have only have a written and photographic record.

The Saturday night dedication was followed by a Sunday afternoon open house. Over 2,000 residents visited The Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech Center during our first Open House. Visitors were able to tour the 19 different program areas. Instructors and a few students were on hand to demonstrate some of the newest electronic equipment. The electronics program demonstrated sophisticated testing and measuring equipment as well as oscilloscopes and digital volt meters. Visitors to the office and secretarial science classes were shown the IBM Displaywriter, electronic typewriters, word processors, Dictaphone machines and talking calculators. Applied accounting had Apple microcomputers and data entry was showing the IBM 5285 and System 14 computer. Visitors to the computer operator program were given calendar printouts and horoscopes the students had programmed the computer to create. In the machine shop program, a Bridgeport computerized numerical control machine had been programmed to draw an outline pattern of the school.

As the fall of 1982 came and went, classes and activities settled in to a comfortable routine. The vocational student organizations elected officers, attended conferences, and began winning awards. At our board meetings, we made plans to increase our parking and discussed items important to the business of the school.

We continued to hire personnel and, of course, approve bids for supplies and equipment.



Video Information

Access YouTube to view an historic video of the 1982 Francis Tuttle Vocational-Technical Center grand opening ceremony. Locate the full one-hour version or a condensed 16-minute version by searching for the title "Francis Tuttle Vocational-Technical Center Grand Opening."

"A must read for educators! The Francis Tuttle Technology Center has set a standard for providing quality CareerTech education that is literally the envy of the world. Nearly every state in the union as well as many foreign countries have sent delegations to Oklahoma City to see how we did it. Suzette was there when the school was only a vision and was actively involved with every critical step as it quickly became a premier workforce training provider. Who better could document this historic recipe for institutional success than Suzette? That's exactly what she has done in this book."

—Tom Friedemann, Ed.D. Superintendent/CEO (2009-2019) Francis Tuttle Technology Center

"Oklahoma had outdone the professionals' expectations and even its own ambitions. It also had outdone its original model: South Carolina. In fact, it had left South Carolina far behind not only in its special schools but in the area schools as well.

"There was a reason. Right from the start, everyone from Governor Bartlett and Francis Tuttle on down had insisted that Oklahoma must build area schools open to both secondary students and adults."

—Danney Goble, Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma