

LTCC pioneers remember the start 40 years ago

By Kathryn Reed

Physically, Jim Duke believes everything Lake Tahoe Community College has become is wonderful. What the state has done to the system, that's another story.

"The philosophy of the community college has changed significantly," Duke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It was called the people's college."

When he started LTCC in 1975 tuition was free at all California community colleges. Before Proposition 13 was passed, which altered property taxes, there was flexibility with what special districts could do. Back then non-credit community education courses could be offered.



Jim Duke talks March 5 about when Lake Tahoe Community College first started.

Photo/LTN

He doesn't like what the state has done to the system financially.

Still, he is proud of his affiliation with the South Lake Tahoe campus.

Duke was one of a roomful of people with long ties to the college who showed up to the old hotel where classes were first conducted. It's now the Econo Lodge on Highway 50.

The significance of March 5 is that 40 years ago on that date the voters in the area agreed to form a college district and elected the first four board members that day. Still serving are Roberta Mason and Fritz Wenck.

Jonnie Crawford and Sally Neitling, two of the 11 students in the inaugural graduating class of 1975, attended the Wednesday celebration. Wendy David, another graduate, was also in the audience.

Duke told *LTM* about some of the applicants for the 14 teaching positions. Peg Kortess, one of the first instructors, was at the gathering. She taught business classes.

There were 1,400 applications. One was hand written in pencil on lined paper by a mom talking about how her son had just graduated and was in need of a job. Another was professionally written. In the first paragraph she told her gender, that she had a Phd and was black and dared the college not to hire her. They didn't.

But Duke said the college did strive for diversity. Hiring in the mid-1970s was much different than it is today. Race, gender and other attributes could openly play a role. And they did. Duke said the goal was to have a balance of men and women from different regions of the country who came from a variety of colleges.

"We offered the bookstore job to a black man. He looked at the community and said, 'No'," Duke said. They same scenario transpired when trying to hire a Latino for another job.

Duke, wearing a windbreaker with the original college logo on it, says he wished there had been more diversity of staff at the get-go. (The college may be creating a new logo for the

next 40 years.)

Today LTCC has 40 full-time faculty members and more than 650 adjunct available. About one-third of the instructors have doctorates.

On June 7, the college will have a more formal celebration of its 40th anniversary with a sit-down dinner from 6-8pm, plus the unveiling of the David Allan Barkley Memorial created by former Art Department Chair David Foster. For more info, contact Julie Booth at Booth@ltcc.edu or (530) 541.4660, ext. 245.