

# First dean knocked on doors to fill Clark College classes

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VANCOUVER — Clark College, bursting its seams and sporting a \$12.1 million budget this year, did not always have it so good. In the early years, an "enrollment drive" was exactly that — the college dean drove around the county looking for affluent young students.

The man who did the driving, Robert T. Oliver, will return to Vancouver next week to help celebrate the college's 50th anniversary.

Oliver, 74, who now lives in Chestertown, Md., was the school's first dean and instructor of English and literature. He kept a diary during those early years and has provided copies of some of the entries he made in January 1934 — the college's fourth month of operation — for use in compiling the college's history.

Although Oliver, who later went on to become a distinguished international

adviser, today calls that first year the "wonderfully productive (if impoverished) beginning of Clark," many of his comments in the diary reflected depression and the temptation to quit.

Clark College, then named Vancouver Junior College, was started in 1934 by John Todd, a longtime Vancouver resident and brother of Edward Todd, president of the College of Puget Sound. Raising money for the college during the Depression proved difficult.

The school began with five or six full-time faculty members, who were promised \$1,800 a year. Their contracts carried the stipulation, however, that they would be paid only if money was available.

In the next several months, the college's name was changed to Clark Junior College, but raising money for the private college continued to be difficult. The college did not become a state school, and thus eligible for tax money,

until eight years later.

In his diary, Oliver gives glimpses of the difficulties and frustrations of that first year. He tells of returning from Christmas vacation laden with 50 books for the junior college library, which he purchased with his own \$6 during a visit to the University of Oregon.

On Jan. 1, he wrote, "Next week contains the most hard and disagreeable work of the term — calling on prospective students." The following day he wrote, "Started our drive for students . . . Indications are we shall not be very successful."

On Jan. 4 he wrote that in visits to Battle Ground, one student was ready to enroll if she found a job, another was "rather smart-aleckish and spurns us for the University of Washington," and one wanted to attend but couldn't afford it. "One boy, reached by walking through back pastures, said his dad wants him to stay on the farm, while

another youth will enroll if his sister helps with tuition."

On Jan. 8, the beginning of a new semester, he wrote, "Enrollment of 19 was disappointing because there were only three new students for an increase of one." After his automobile canvassing, Oliver had expected 35. He blamed the slump on negative feelings for college founder John Todd, the unfriendly attitude of the school board, the Depression, and lack of accreditation.

On Jan. 9, "Two old, stern-lipped ladies — WCTU prexy and friend — called to protest my prohibition talk to unemployed last term, and to attack the school for allowing dancing."

"Two new students — neither of whom can pay a cent — enrolled today," he wrote on Jan. 10. "We don't care for her (a returning student) but are glad to have another student on our rolls."

On Jan. 12, Oliver wrote, "Our ex-

pected students did not come in. I was rather harsh with (a student), telling her she should not take swimming lessons when she could not afford to pay her tuition. She wept a few tears. You can't trust a woman."

On Jan. 13: "Called on water company today to persuade them not to turn our water off."

On Jan. 14: "Up before eight. Afternoon shivered in a cold house, napped, ate mush for supper, and studied Cowper."

On Jan. 15: "The board met, voted to pay all bills, including \$20 apiece for faculty members. Our indebtedness is slowly being cut down. Wood bill remains high, too high. Financially, this certainly is a wasted year . . ."

On Jan. 18: "This evening I called on a girl interested in enrolling — if she can get free tuition. I discouraged her — this trend has gone too far — we'll be ruined."