

Blank: I saw the dream become reality

By TROY L. HOUSER
Editor

Western Piedmont Community College President Gordon C. Blank is leaving his post at the Burke County educational institution to accept a similar position at Adirondack Community College in Glen Falls, N.Y.

Dr. Blank, 45, announced last week his decision to make the move.

He has been at Western Piedmont Community College for 13 years. He came on board as charter dean of instruction, then 2 years later was named president when the founding president retired.

Dr. Blank was reflective on his 13 years at WPCC, 10 of which were served as president.

"I've enjoyed it. I like the community. I like the place. It's a good setting, a good faculty, and a good

staff. So why am I leaving?" he quipped. He went on to explain that he feels the move is an "opportunity for professional development."

Dr. Blank and his wife Joan live in the Northwood Subdivision just north of Morganton. They plan to sell their home. Sons Jon, 17, and Dan, 15, will be affected only slightly by the move.

Dr. Blank said his elder son is a pre-med freshman at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland; and that the younger son, a sophomore at Freedom, plans to enter a prep school in the New England area. "This decision will affect their lives very little," Dr. Blank said.

The WPCC veteran president said he and his family, however, have "mixed feelings" about leaving.

He described WPCC as a "strong institution."

"Presidents come and go, but the college will live on and thrive," he said. "I have a good feeling about leaving it in good shape and I'm proud of the way it has developed over the last decade."

Western Piedmont Community College trustees, he said, have no immediate plans for a successor, but will likely begin immediately with a search committee to locate a replacement.

A native of Maryland, Dr. Blank has lived in the Midwest. He came to Burke County from Indiana University. Prior to teaching posts at that university and Indiana State University, Dr. Blank had taught public school and taught for one year in England for the military.

He did undergraduate work at Towson State College in Indiana, earned his masters at the University

of Miami at Coral Gables, Fla., then earned his doctorate at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind.

His reason for coming to Western Piedmont was that he felt a new institution provided a challenge and an opportunity.

"I've seen the institution grow from a dream to a reality," he said. "I've seen the concept of the comprehensive community college work and work well in the delivery of diversified services to the people."

He described the community college as "democracy's college" and its concept as "the most major innovation in colleges since the land grant institutions."

In looking back over his career as WPCC president, Dr. Blank said he tries to view it objectively. "This institution has developed, has an enviable reputation of being a good,

solid institution—I think we've done a good job."

But he does not claim all the credit for the institution's growth and success.

"We've been extremely fortunate in having a highly supportive Board of Trustees and community at large. Without that support, we may as well have folded our tent and gone home," he said. "The faculty and staff have been exceptionally capable and dedicated. The situation here has been a good one...the location...the people...it's been a good place for a college president to be."

He said that while he has mixed feelings about leaving, he also has a good feeling. The institution to which he is moving "is also a good, solid institution." Located in the Adiron-

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Dream became reality

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dack mountains, the community of Glens Falls is heavy in recreational activities from winter sports to the normal summer events and entertainment. Adirondack Community College is somewhat larger than WPCC—2,000 students as opposed to about 1,500 at the Burke County institution. He plans to leave Burke County this summer.

In summing up his feelings on the community college concept, Dr. Blank said he feels North Carolina's program "has unlimited potential and the state has a lot going for it—its resources, its people, and its being in the mainstream of the sunbelt renaissance."

He said the community college concept in North Carolina can be the key to providing the adult population with skills, development and training associated with the technological society and the educational, cultural

and industrial development.

The community college, he said, is not likely to go to a four-year concept he said, because the concept did not come about to compete with the state's many four-year institutions.

The presence of the community college idea, however, will attract new industry to this area, he said, because industrialists realize that the presence of such an institution insures the presence of training programs and other assistance.

As far as the quality of education gained in the community college, Dr. Blank said the WPCC student, statistically "does as well as or better than entering native freshmen" when graduating at WPCC and entering another institution as a junior.

In his new setting, Dr. Blank succeeds retiring President Charles R. Eisenhart who was that institution's founding president, serving in that post since 1961.