

WPCC inaugurates its third president

By **ALLEN VAN NOPPEN**
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Western Piedmont Community College inaugurated a new president in formal ceremonies on the college lawn Saturday.

Dr. Wilmon H. Droze, who assumed the office of president on July 1, 1979, was officially installed in the post with traditional academic pomp and trappings. Though Droze is WPCC's third president, the inauguration was the college's first.

Droze, 55, fills the post vacated in the summer of 1978 by Dr. Gordon C. Blank, who became president of a college in New York.

The first president of the 16-year-old college was Dr. Herbert F. Stallworth, who held the position for about three years.

H.D. Moretz served as interim president before Droze was hired.

Saturday's inauguration ceremony began at 10 a.m. with a procession of

WPCC faculty members, platform speakers, offices of the administration and delegates and representatives of some 50 colleges and universities.

To the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance," robed dignitaries with colorful academic hoods delineating various academic disciplines and places of matriculation marched in to the outdoor setting.

Dr. Gilbert A. Fite, Richard B. Russell professor of History from the University of Georgia, gave the principal address, entitled, "Old Traditions and New Challenges."

Fite spoke of the main purposes of post-secondary education, academic leadership, about Droze, and said he was "happy to be here to participate in this wonderful occasion in the life and history of Western Piedmont Community College."

"I believe that one of our biggest problems in the higher education

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today," Fite said, "is that we have brought an increasing number of administrators into top administrative positions who have had no personal experience with the heart of education — teaching and scholarship. I congratulate you for not making this mistake. You have chosen a president who, as the saying goes, has been through it all. Dr. Droze has not forgotten, as so many administrators have, that the faculty and students are the heart of any educational institution."

Following Dr. Fite's address, Clyde S. Brinkley, Chairman of the WPCC board of trustees, introduced Droze.

"May I assure each of you that there will never be a time when the interests and welfare of this college will be neglected or sublimated to personal considerations," Droze said during his inaugural address.

"All my energies and all the wisdom I have gained from more than two decades of experience in higher

education will be utilized to guide Western Piedmont through the difficult and uncertain years ahead, he said."

"I am convinced that Western Piedmont will survive and prosper ... because the people of Burke County, the college's trustees, faculty, staff and our students share a common view of the value this college has had to its community," he continued.

"I solicit and welcome the support to make Western Piedmont one of the model colleges in our community college system," he said. "... In the quest for educational experience, I give you my assurance that I will endeavor to make our college an institution that is adaptable, that is continually aware of its community, that relates to learners in a continuing way, that extends opportunity to the unserved, that accommodates to diversity and that serves as a nexus in the community learning system," he said.

"The faculty and staff of the college and our trustees, I submit, have the vision and the vitality to cope with the

uncertain 1980s," Droze said in closing.

"Join with them and with me in the future and continuing development of a community's college that promises to seek, with all the resources at its command, a higher quality of life for all of our people in Burke County."

Other participants in the inaugural included music by the Freedom High School Symphonic Band and the East Burke High School Choir, both of which took part in the first public performance of WPCC's proposed alma mater.

Greetings were extended by Carl Lusk, president of the WPCC Student Government Association; Richard Hawes, chairman of the Faculty Senate and Association; and Dr. Marsellette Morgan, vice president for student services of the N.C. Department of Community Colleges.

The Rev. Dwyn Mounger, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Morganton, gave the invocation, and the Rev. Paul Felker, pastor of the

Waldensian Presbyterian Church in Valdese, gave the benediction.

Members of the WPCC Phi Theta Kappa honors society served as ushers.

Following the ceremony, Droze greeted guests at a reception in the college's G-Building.

After serving with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1943-46), Droze earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from North Texas State University and began teaching high school history in the Texas public schools. In 1960, he received his doctoral degree from Vanderbilt University.

Droze has taught history and government at East Central State University in Oklahoma, East Carolina University, McNeese State University in Louisiana, the University of Texas and recently, at Texas Woman's University.

After serving as resident scholar for the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors in Washington D.C., Droze was appointed librarian and archivist for the State of Tennessee from 1969 until 1971. He served as acting assistant to the president at Texas Women's University from 1972 until 1973, and then as provost from 1974 until 1979.

Droze, his wife Carolyn and son Wesley live in Morganton. Another son, William, is completing school in Denton, Texas.

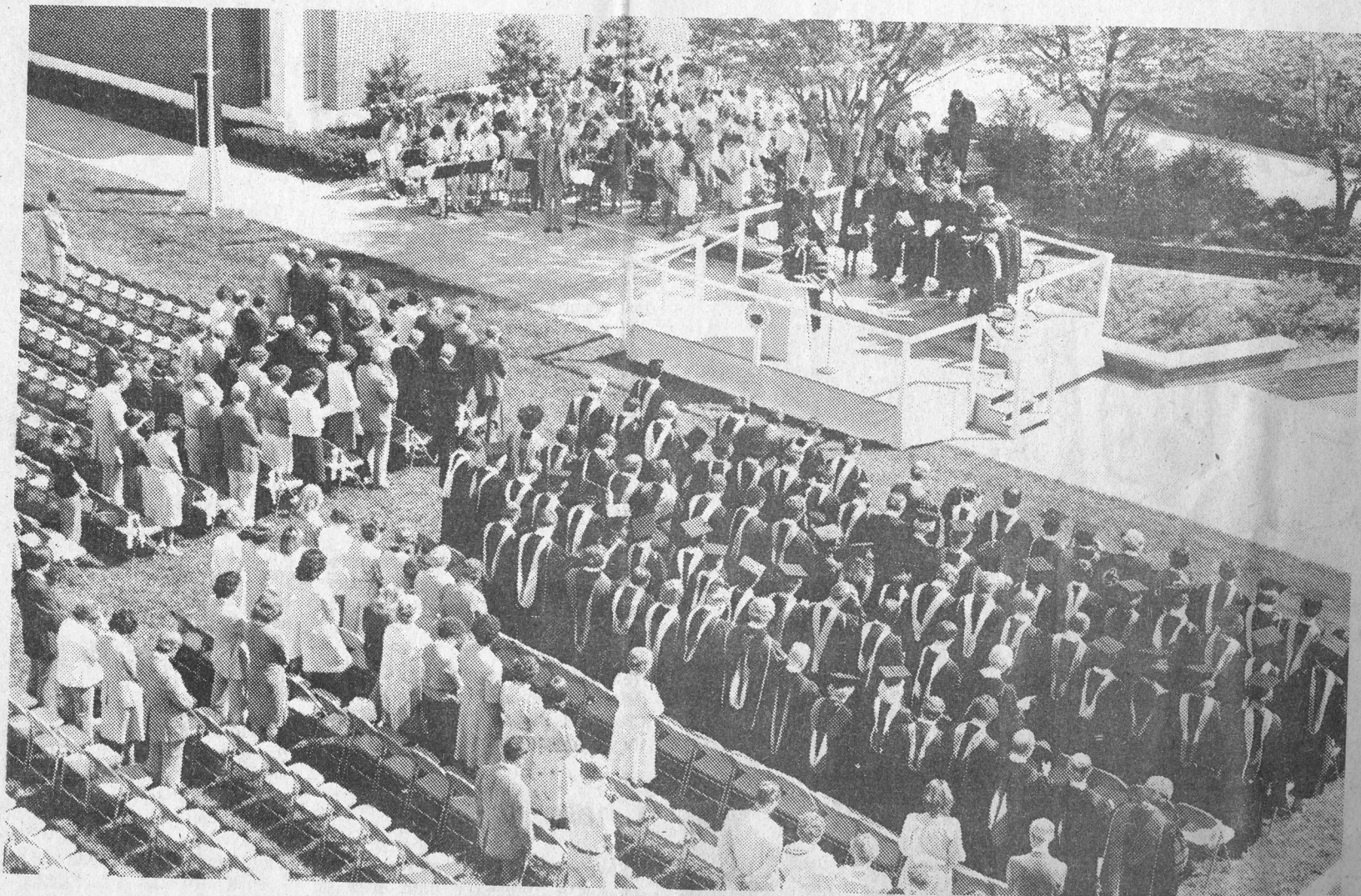


Photo taken from a rooftop at WPCC shows ceremony in progress Saturday.

Photo by Mark Phillips

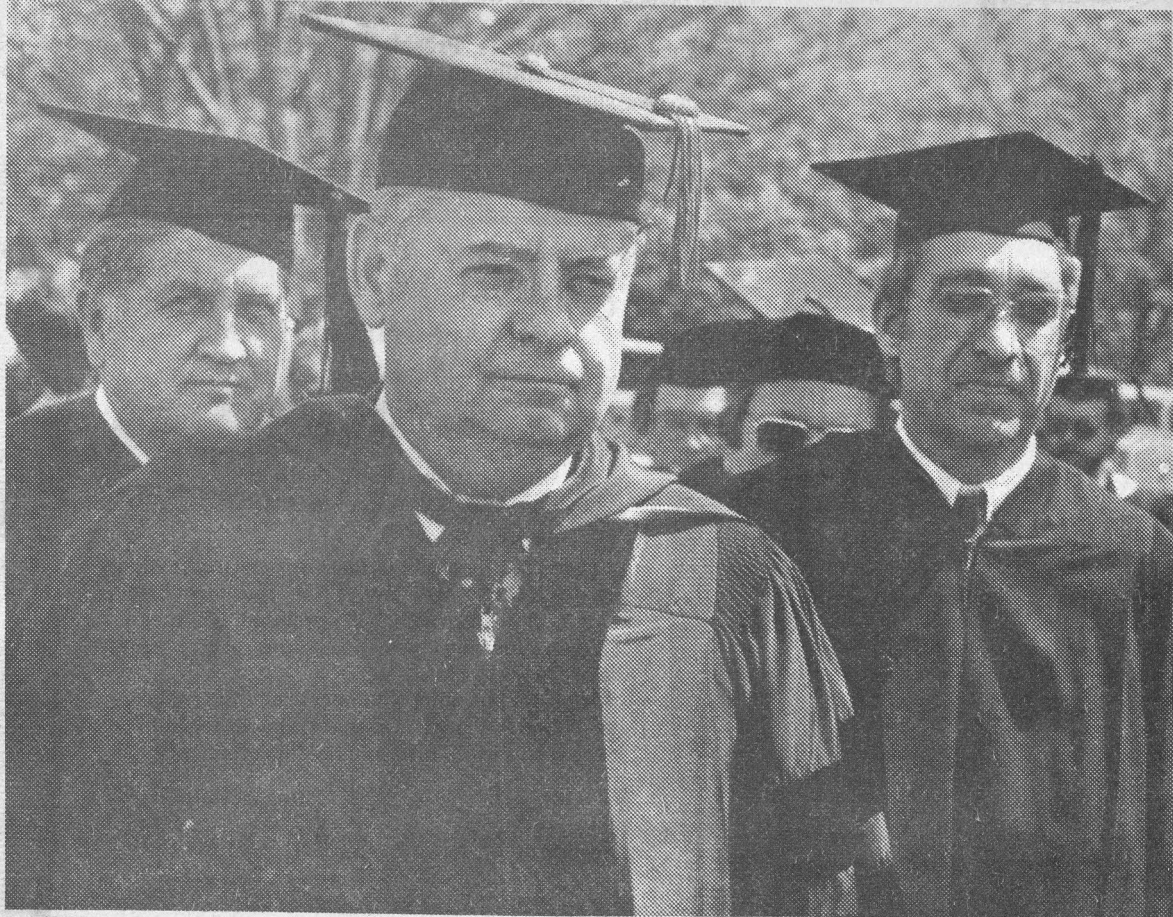


Photo by Mark Phillips

Droze (center), with trustees Sam Brinkley (left), Claude Sitton.