

WPCC's Clark retiring; hopes coastal living will make dream come true

By JOHN CALLAHAM
News Herald Staff Writer

When Ken Clark returned to his hometown of Morganton on Feb. 1, 1977, to serve as the business manager for Western Piedmont Community College, he knew he had finally found a good place to work.

On Tuesday, after more than 21 years, Clark will work his last day at WPCC. His title may have changed to Vice President of Administrative Services, but in an interview last week, Clark said his duties are basically the same.

"I have always felt that my responsibility was to help others get the job done," Clark said. "I help with things like parking and telephone service to major budget questions."

So why, at age 54, would Clark want to retire? The reason was a call to the sea, literally.

Clark has always had a dream to live off the North Carolina coast. Now, he and his wife will live in the coastal town of Swansboro where Clark can use the time to pursue something he loves.

"I love the water," he explains, "I love boating. My wife and I have been married for 32 years and we wanted to move to the coast while we were still young enough to enjoy it."

Clark even says he might start a small cruise business, giving tourists a chance to tour the coast.

His future plans are certainly a long way away from his duties at WPCC. Although Clark is looking forward to his new life, he said he

will miss the people at the college.

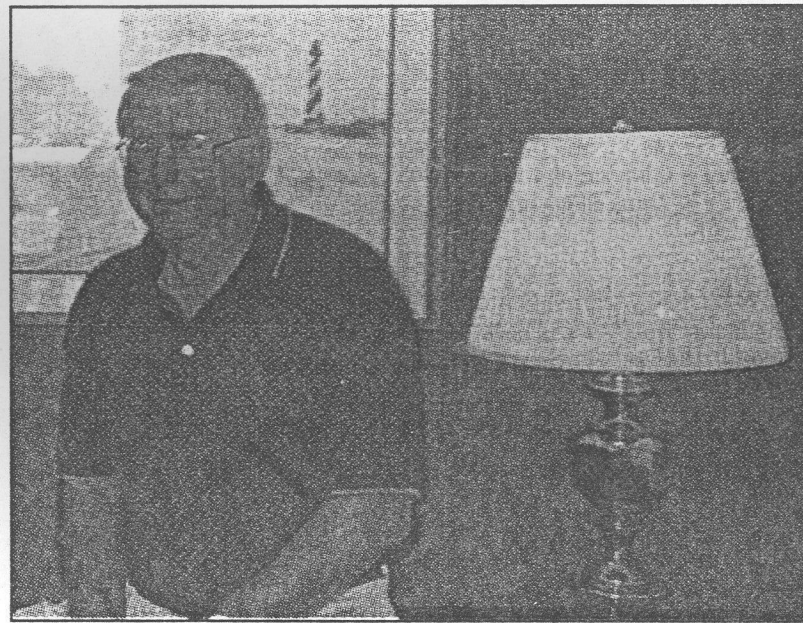
"The staff and the faculty here are in my opinion among the finest in the nation," said Clark, adding that he felt current WPCC President Jim Richardson is "the finest supervisor I have ever had."

Clark's position will be taken over on Wednesday by Malone McNeely, who has been the college's controller for the past several years.

Clark was born in Morganton and graduated from Salem High School. He attended and graduated with a business degree from East Tennessee State University.

After working a number of jobs, including a position at Western

Please turn to Page Seven



With a photo of his beloved coast in the background, Ken Clark poses for a picture in his WPCC office. He is retiring after more than 21 years at the community college. (Photo by John Callaham)

Retiring

Continued from Page One

Carolina Center, Clark came to WPCC after several hometown friends urged him to take the business manager position.

In his 21 years, Clark has seen the college grow to twice its original size in building space and has seen the student population grow from about 1,500 to more than 2,000 students.

Along the way, Clark has been in charge of a number of projects including the Carr Hall building which opened in 1997. He counts it as the best achievement he has been involved with.

There are things Clark would like to see improved on the campus including the maintenance of the college campus.

"It hurts me to see the buildings

go down," he said. "There is not enough support for maintenance and grounds.

One thing Clark hopes the college will get funds for in the future is a new maintenance building, pointing out that a structure for maintenance intended to be temporary when it was built in 1964 is still in place. Another thing Clark hopes will come to the college is a day care center.

Above all else, however, Clark hopes the college and its services can help Burke County to improve in the future.

"Our mission here is to not only help college transfers move to a four year college, but also to help create a trained work force to industry," Clark said. "I hope we can further serve the community."