

## **Clifford Woods**

### **Former Director of Student Activities at TCJC/TCC**

*Interview conducted by*

*Trevor Engel & Sarah Rose*

*August 22, 2016 in Rockland, New York*

Disability Studies Minor

Special Collections and Archives

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### **Biography**

Clifford Woods was the first Director of Student Activities at Tarrant County Junior College, which would later become Tarrant County College. He graduated with a master's degree in student personnel administration from East Texas State University, which would later become Texas A&M Commerce, in 1967. He began working at TCJC in June 1967 when the school first opened and worked there until the end of 1970. After that he went back to school to get his doctorate in higher education and community college education. He then worked at various community colleges for 50 years before retiring in 2016.

### **Topics discussed**

- Woods' s position at TCJC
  - Characteristics of TCJC in Woods' s first years
  - Characteristics of students at TCJC
  - Jim Hayes' s initial activism and the Student Bill of Rights
  - Jim Hayes' s personality and characteristics
  - Accessibility of the campus
  - How Jim Hayes interacted with others
  - Jim Hayes' s other projects
  - Woods leaving TCC and further contact with Hayes
- 

Rose

This is Sarah Rose.

**Engel**

And Trevor Engel.

**Rose**

Interviewing Cliff Wood for the Texas Disability History Collection at UT-Arlington. It's August 22, 2016 and we are interviewing him by phone and he is in Rockland, correct?

**Woods**

Rockland County, New York.

**Rose**

<topic>Woods' s position at TCJC</topic>

Okay. So, we spoke with Dorothy Estes a couple of times over the last month and she said that you were-I wanted to get your exact title-basically Dean of Students at Tarrant County...

**Woods**

I was actually the Director of Student Activities.

**Rose**

Okay. So...

**Woods**

Off-campus.

**Rose**

Okay.

**Woods**

Of TCJC, within Tarrant County Junior College-now Tarrant County Community College-from 1967 to 1970.

**Rose**

Oh, okay. And that must have been pretty early in your career, right?

**Woods**

It was my very first job. So, when I leave—I'm retiring next June 30<sup>th</sup>— I will have been a college administrator at a community college for 50 years.

**Rose**

That's amazing!

**Woods**

Amazing.

**Rose**

That's very cool!

**Woods**

It's very cool.

**Rose**

<topic>Characteristics of TCJC in Woods's first years</topic>

Wow. So, where was TCJC as an institution when you arrived?

**Woods**

When I went to Tarrant County Junior College, it was its first year of operation. I was hired in the spring and was asked to come to work on August 1<sup>st</sup> because I was going to be Director of Student Activities. The executive then...Phil Segal was...they had executive deans at the campuses and my boss was Phil Segal, the Dean of Students. And he called and asked me, because they had so many students apply, if I could come to work in June instead of August. And I said, "well, I'm getting married June 2<sup>nd</sup> so I can come on June 12<sup>th</sup>."

**Rose**

Oh, wow!

**Woods**

Because what I did the first couple of months is they had interviewed every...every student then had to take the ACT test and then have a personal interview. So they had expected 2400 students. And you probably know this, but I checked it out when I was doing an article a couple of years ago, Tarrant County had 4700 students; it was the largest first day opening of any college in the country. It was a lot of students.

**Rose**

Wow! Actually, Trevor went to TCC.

**Engel**

For a year.

**Rose**

Yeah, for a year, like many of our students.

**Woods**

Oh yeah, right. And then the second year, we shared the campus with the northeast campus because their facilities weren't ready. So it was really a very busy, crowded place for a couple of years.

**Rose**

Okay.

**Engel**

How were the campuses set up then? Were there many? Because there's four now, I wouldn't imagine that there were four then.

**Woods**

No there was one. The first one was the south campus and it opened in '67 and then I think the second campus was the northeast campus and it opened... I don't know if it opened in '69 or what the official year was but a couple of years later. So those-when I left in '70- those were only the two campuses. And Rushing was the chancellor.

**Rose**

Okay, well I guess...I'm sorry what was that name?

**Woods**

Joe Rushing was the first chancellor.

**Rose**

Okay.

**Woods**

And the Executive Dean—they called the heads of campuses the Executive Dean—it was a guy named Charles McKinney. Then Phil Segal was my boss, the Dean of Students. And then there...

**Rose**

Hello. Hello.

**Woods**

Yes?

**Rose**

Oh! Okay. Didn't know if we'd lost you.

**Woods**

Oh no, you haven't lost me I'm here.

**Rose**

Okay. So what was your preparation before becoming Director of Student Activities?

**Woods**

Well, I had gotten a...I went straight through college and got a bachelor's and a master's degree in student personnel administration for what was then East Texas State University, which is now Texas A&M Commerce. So I had a fresh master's degree and I wanted a job in the area because we had promised...my wife Erin said we would stay in the area so she could finish school. And there were all these community colleges opening and I had been very involved in student activities when I was at East Texas State University. So, I had a lot interest in student activities and I had this new master's degree so they hired me.

**Rose**

Wow.

**Woods**

And I was 22 years old. I was young.

**Rose**

<topic>Characteristics of students at TCJC</topic>

So what were the students like that first year?

**Woods**

Well you know it was really interesting because what made this very unique was this: remember that schools in Texas didn't desegregate until 1964, this is 1967. So this was the first time most of those students had been in a school that was integrated. For me personally, because when I went to college, the college in East Texas was segregated until '64 so I had never been in a classroom with a person of color until I got my master's degree. So it was very interesting because we had students, they came from the high schools so, for the first time, they were in an integrated school.

We had a big gay population, a very large gay population that very traditional-age students. And of course the college overall in the evening had nontraditional students. But that first year we had a lot first-time 18 and 19 year-old college students. So we had to do some sensitivity training and we did a lot of things to promote race relations. It was interesting...have you ever been to the south campus?

**Engel**

I've been on it but I haven't been around it too much.

**Woods**

It was interesting because the student union building had a big, open cafeteria that was two stories and around it was a balcony. And after the first week all the white students were on the first floor and all the African-American students were seated on the balcony around at the top, it was almost as if you'd put signs up.

But what I learned is—because I've spent a lot of time just walking around the student center keeping everything cool—but I also found out that the students were also segregated by high school. If you went upstairs, you had the kids from Phillis Wheatly on one side and the kids from Dunbar was on the other. Downstairs, Holley was in one place, Eastern Hills was in one place. And I'm trying to think of the school Jim went to, do you remember?

**Rose**

He went to Paschal.

**Woods**

Paschal! I couldn't remember it, I've been trying to think of Paschal all day long. Of course, it was a place where a lot of students hung out because many of them didn't have color televisions at home. We had a pool room, a billiards room, a lot of cards, they played a lot of cards, they danced. And what happened is because then a lot of the minority students came by bus and the bus came 8:00, noon, and at 5:00. So in the afternoon a lot of students just stayed there all afternoon, more so probably than hang out now because they didn't have transportation. So it was a very interesting environment. I learned a lot there, I enjoyed it.

**Rose**

It sounds like it. So there was really a pretty strong community to draw on. At least numbers wise.

**Woods**

Right. And a lot of kids from...Dorothy Estes had **come in** there, she had been the journalism teacher...is it, Polly? What was the high school, the old high school?

**Rose**

I think it was Polly, yeah.

**Woods**

I think it was Polly, I can't remember.

**Rose**

I'll check while we're talking, because we have the first interview transcribed. Yeah I'm pretty sure it was Polly.

**Woods**

I think so. Well probably one of the ones on that part of town, on the east side of Ft. Worth. Of course, Eastern Hills was close too.

**Rose**

<topic>Jim Hayes's initial activism and the Student Bill of Rights</topic>

Yeah, she was definitely a Polly. So how did you meet Jim Hayes?

**Woods**

Well, Jim Hayes enrolled in the college and he came to my office and told me he would like to get involved. So he became probably...we had student elections and he...and it was incredible because remember how long ago this is and he came and he was in a wheelchair but he was very accomplished with the use of that wheelchair and very, very independent. Because, once he got involved in student activities, he sort of made his home in the student government office.

And then he became, I guess he was the second president of student government. I want to say the first one was a guy named David Karen. But I think Jim Hayes was the second of the student government association, I'm pretty sure he was. Anyways, he got very, very involved. And once he got involved we had a very, very active group.

And even in that first and second year, they were named the outstanding student government association by the Texas Junior College Student Personnel Association. Because they were very, very involved, they had a lot of activities, they did a programming course. And Jim was very...also remember at that time, this is the height of the Vietnam war. And the Tarrant County **Tees** Committee, do you know what that would be?

**Rose**

I do but Trevor doesn't.

**Woods**

It's anti-war demonstrators, they made the campus their home. They were not an official organization. So we also had to be very aware of the free speech activities. And I was always getting a little...to tow the line because the chairman of our board...two of our board members, one was an officer at Carswell Air Force base and the other was a high level official at General Dynamics and they were not very excited that we had these anti-war activities at the campus.

But Jim was very concerned about free speech for students and about the same time, there was an organization...do you know what the SDS was during that period, it was for a democratic society.

**Rose**

I do, but if you could explain it.



**Woods**

Students for a Democratic Society was a national organization that probably started at Berkley with the free speech movement for students. And they created a national Student Bill of Rights. So, Jim Hayes found out about this and he decided that we should have a Student Bill of Rights for our students at Tarrant County, for the Texas Community College. And I said, "okay, we have to work on that," and they developed a draft which was really much, almost a replica of the national organization's.

And our board was not very happy about that but Joe Rushing was very good, always been a good, "no guys, they have a right to do this." What the board said we had to come back and do was they would not approve a Student Bill of Rights without a Student Bill of Responsibilities. So Jim and his committee went back and they really worked really, really hard. They spent hours and hours on campus on that document.

So, we were the first community college in the country to have a Student Bill of Rights. If I go through my stuff I might even find it and send it to you.

**Rose**

That would be amazing.

**Woods**

I'm not sure, I've been moving so much lately, getting ready to downsize, but at one point I know I still had that document. But if you went into the library in Tarrant County...go online to their library and see if they have a copy of that first Student Bill of Rights or call the system office to see if there's a boardroom because it was approved by the college board of trustees. And it was really quite something for that particular period of time. And the other thing you might be interested to do if Dorothy ~~inaudible\*\*\*~~ 12.59-13.00 I suspect that she still has-I don't know where mine are-bound copies...we had a really great campus newspaper. And I'm trying to remember the name of that newspaper but Dorothy...if you went back through the years that Jim were there, I bet you'd find some great pictures of Jim and some information about Jim.

**Rose**

Yeah, that'd be really...that'd be fascinating because we don't have that much for the early period.

**Woods**

Yeah, Dorothy had...because she gave me every year, she gave me a bound copy of all the student newspapers and I bet she still has that or their libraries have a copy of it. And if you went there you would find some great pictures of Jim.

**Rose**

Okay. What were you going to say Trevor?

**Engel**

Well, I was curious about the Student Bill of Rights because I think...I'm wondering if that served as a basis for his handicapped students proposal here at UTA at least in drafting that kind of a document up and it would be interesting to see the similarities between the two of them.

**Woods**

Yeah, I bet there would be because Jim, we worked on that a long time. The Caroline, the campus newspaper was called The Caroline because there's a music system right out there, a tower that's the Carolina Bell Tower so I think the newspaper was called The Caroline.

**Engel**

Okay.

**Rose**

<topic>Jim Hayes's personality and characteristics</topic>

Okay, interesting. And the other thing that...I didn't know about Jim Hayes's free speech activism but Sam Province, who he met at UTA and who was kind of the community disability rights activist paired with Jim Hayes. And they worked together a lot. But Sam Province, when Trevor and I interviewed his siblings we discovered that he had been involved with the ACLU and he was a counsellor for two years there in the '70s. So that may have been part of the way they overlapped.

**Woods**

It may have been but Jim was very respectful. One of the things I have to say about Jim is when he was in his role as student government president, he came to campus in a suit and tie. And he was always dressed and if he had to make a presentation somewhere he was always very professional in his dress.

**Rose**

What was it like the first time you met him? If you remember.

**Woods**

You know, I had just sat down and he came to see me and we just had a really interesting conversation. He told me he really wanted to get involved. He was a smoker, and I'm not sure let smoking on campus then, probably, but he certainly was a smoker, I remember that about him. I don't know why I remember that but anyway. And just very engaging, very respectful but really wanted to be involved and he really was a very outgoing student. He spent a lot of time rolling around—I don't mean to be funny but he did—rolling around the student center chatting with students. And he was a real politician, he was very good at pressing the flesh, he was very good at that. And he was just also a very nice guy.

**Rose**

Dorothy Estes said that he was still really adjusting to acquiring a disability when she first met him and when you met him.

**Woods**

You know, that part, maybe she has a better memory than I do but certainly it was new and I know—I don't know how old he was but I think he was probably—you told me he was 17 when he had his accident?

**Rose**

I think it was his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, like the day of his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; he was born in '49.

**Woods**

18. And I'm trying to think of how old he was then, was he 20?

**Rose**

Yeah he came in '69.

**Woods**

So, he came in '69. Yeah, he was part of student government that year...that '69, in the fall of '69. I was there '69 and '70, I left at the end of '70. And like I said, I was very impressed with how accomplished he was with his wheelchair.

It didn't seem to me...you know we went on a couple of trips, student government trips, we went to...had a retreat at a campsite and he went. And he really, really...he didn't expect a lot, he didn't ever expect people to not do things because of him. He figured out a way to be involved and I thought that was very impressive.

He would've been a great role model for these guys today, for the people that are quadriplegic, about the way in which he got around. And you know, I don't remember how he got to school, if someone brought him in a van I don't remember that. He was just always there, he spent a lot of time there.

**Rose**

<topic>Accessibility of the campus</topic>

And what was the campus like? Because one of the things that we're tracking in our research is UTA, for instance, had a lot of older buildings and they were made accessible and the administrators were really very willing to do that, much more than most schools.

**Woods**

Tarrant County was new and at the time in '67 when it opened, it was new and it was modern. And I don't know how accommodating they were at that time or what the requirements were.

**Rose**

There were none.

**Woods**

Of easability, most of the buildings were one story at that time and we had an elevator in the student union building that was two stories, so he could definitely come up to my office. And it was a flat-well, Texas is flat-so it was very easy to get around in the sense that it was all very flat and sidewalks...the campus was built on a big interior courtyard.

At that time with the number of buildings, that classroom buildings were all one...there was a classroom complex, there was a big physical education building, there was a science complex in the student union, and a theater complex. And all of that seemed to be at that point...in that sense it would not have been difficult for someone to get around with the things being flat and the doors being wide enough and that sort of thing.

**Rose**

Do you remember if there were stairs into the buildings at all or was it just flat completely?

**Woods**

The only buildings that I remember that had stairs, the student union would be where we had stairs but going into the building, I think it was all flat.

**Rose**

Okay, because a couple of the schools that still today have wheelchair basketball were built the same year and started accepting students with physical impairments really early on, same time as TCC.

**Woods**

Yeah, his personal disability or needing special accommodations I honestly don't remember being an issue.

**Rose**

Interesting, and so he...Dorothy had mentioned something about him working on accessibility for disabled students at TCC and we were wondering if you remembered that too or maybe she was thinking of UTA much more.

**Woods**

I think she was probably talking about UTA much more. I'm trying to remember, I don't remember that specifically, and I'm trying to think of any other disabled students that we had and I don't recall a significant number. I just don't.

**Rose**

Okay. Because UTA got a reputation, I mean it was created in part...

**Woods**

**Inaudible\*\*\*20.54**

**Rose**

For serving students, even from like Indiana and Kansas.

**Woods**

<topic>How Jim Hayes interacted with others</topic>

Yeah well, good for him. You know I think he probably came there with that intention. Because I think he...he really was interested in helping people and he was really, like I said, he had a great sense of self—and I mean that in the most positive way—that he never seemed like a person who would let disability stand in his way and if he needed something, he asked for it.

**Rose**

We have a pretty funny quote from Dorothy here...

**Woods**

Dorothy is one of the funniest ladies that ever lived. She could have been a standup comic.

**Rose**

Yeah, interviewing her and John Dycus together was amazing. They're very funny. She said that you had told her, "I get from six to eight calls from Jim Hayes every night asking for advising strategies. Sometimes he calls as late as 11:00 at night, I don't know when he sleeps."

**Woods**

Jim Hayes would call me a lot. And he was a nice person. He didn't like mornings and in fact I think...we had a college hour maybe at 10:30 to 11:30 where there were no classes and a lot of activity and I remember him wanting to move that to later in the day, so he was not a morning person.

And maybe it just took him a while to get up, to get ready, acclimated, and dressed that may have been part of the issue. He clearly was a night owl and he would stay at the campus sometimes very late.

And he always had a posse of friends, he knew how to gather people around him who both were interested and also very willing to help him.

**Rose**

Do you remember any of those friends by chance?

**Woods**

Pardon.

**Rose**

Do you remember any of those friends by chance?

**Woods**

Oh, I wish I could think of that. The girl—I can see her now—who was secretary of student government, they were such good friends and they may have even been boyfriend at one time.

He was not shy about girls. He didn't let the disability stand in his way about that either. He was always very social with the female students. And again that's not a negative at all it's just a fact. It's nothing inappropriate he was just. He just never...I just can remember being so impressed about how he approached life.

What was her name! Dorothy might know. She had short hair and worked on the newspaper, if I can find the newspaper I'll go find.

**Rose**

That'd be great. And we'll ask her too, she has an amazing memory.

**Woods**

If you look, if you find those bound copies of the newspaper and read about the student government activities and if you see the names of some of the students I could tell you.

**Rose**

Okay, okay.

**Woods**

If I could find them...I'm trying to remember...like I said, I think...I'm not sure I have them both anymore, I think they got lost in someplace. I had them in my office for a long time, maybe until I moved here 13 years ago or so.

**Engel**

They may be on microfilm as well which would be—since we have the rough dates—might be easier to look through at some point.

**Woods**

Yeah, go back to the student newspapers of '69 and '70 and I think you will be surprised.

**Engel**

Okay.

**Rose**

<topic>Jim Hayes's other projects</topic>

Okay, yeah cause it'd be two years. That's a great idea because I'm sure that he was covered. So, what kind of issues was he working on in addition to the Student Bill of Rights when he was president?

**Woods**

Hmm...that's a really good question. I don't know...

**Rose**

Or I guess, what was he calling you about six to eight times a day?

**Woods**

He was always...it was generally about supporting some activity at the college. I was trying to think of some of their other projects that they had. You know, I wish I could remember. I'm trying to think.

**Rose**

Well and I guess this is where the newspapers will be really helpful.

**Woods**

Yeah, and at one point we had some questions about speakers. I think we brought Dick Gregory on the campus as...I don't think the board of trustees were real happy about that.

**Rose**

Who is he? Or who was he?

**Woods**

Dick Gregory was a comedian, a black comedian, that was very outspoken and I think he wrote a book at that time, this is around 1970; I want to say it was called "Nigger". And he went on speaking tours across college campuses talking about free speech.

Jim was very interested in race relations, as I said he really reached out to get some of the minority students involved in the student activities.

**Rose**

This is explaining some of his later activism too.

**Woods**

Pardon?

**Rose**

It's explaining some of his later activism too.

**Woods**

Oh, he was...he really made the connection about student rights. I had to be careful with my accent; they thought I was saying riots. Rights.



But, he was very interested...Jim was very interested in what was going on across the country with students and the free speech movement; the students being able to be actively involved. And he took that real seriously.

**Rose**

That's interesting. By the way, the first law that was passed in terms of barriers: there's a Federal Architectural Barriers Act in 1968 and then Texas passed one in 1969, it was one of the last four states to pass one.

Then as far as Trevor and I can tell, the regents didn't really do anything for the UT system until about 1975 but Jim Hayes and Sam Province, who was in grad school at UTA by then—because you couldn't go to law school, he was barred by two campuses because of his disability—basically Hayes and Province asked to meet with the Board of Regents in about '73. Then, that really got things rolling more intensely at UTA. But, somehow they found out about the laws we think and we're waiting for Jim Hayes's sister to transfer more of his papers, because she has a lot of papers from him.

**Woods**

Oh, okay.

**Rose**

But we don't know, it's clearly like they got clued in about the law but perhaps some of his free speech activism and student rights is how he was getting into some of these issues.

**Woods**

Well I think if you go back and find this Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, you will see Jim's involvement.

**Rose**

<topic>Woods leaving TCC and further contact with Hayes</topic>

(To Engel) Do you want to explain a little of the model campus thing? Okay.

So, at the end of the year you left, at TCC in 1970?

**Woods**

I did. I went back to graduate school to get my doctorate.

**Rose**

Ah, okay. In?

**Woods**

In higher education and community college education.

**Rose**

And then did you stay in touch with Jim Hayes?

**Woods**

You know, I did for a while and then I lost touch with him. I went to Houston Community College for three years when it was new. Then, I moved to Northern Virginia and Washington D.C. and I lost contact with him. I got some information when my friend at UTA sent me some information about Jim Hayes and Dorothy. But I really did lose personal contact with him. I'm sorry about that but I did.

**Rose**

Well is there anything else that you've thought of or you think that we should ask?

**Woods**

No. I wish that I could think of two or three of those students. I can see her, I can see her face. There was another one named Carol Conaughton I think that was involved in the newspaper. But what was that other...

**Rose**

Well, we'll check with Dorothy and check the paper too. And if you do find anything...

**Woods**

If I find anything I will certainly send it to you.

**Rose**

Yeah, that would be great.

**Woods**

I'm not being very helpful but I wish...I can see Jim and just exactly what he looked like. I remember some of our conversations. And like I said he was...he took his role as President of Student Government very, very seriously and he spent a lot of time at the campus.

**Rose**

I mean, what you've said is very helpful. It's stuff we haven't heard from anyone and haven't actually seen in the sources yet.

**Woods**

Okay, well I hope you find that. Like I said, I hope...I think if you go back and find those newspapers you may get a little better sense of some of the other things he was interested in.

And I'll try to look back through and if I find anything else...I actually found this figure out what year this is—I actually found...I was looking through some stuff this morning. I had one folder and I found one student newspaper from then.

**Rose**

Oh wow!

**Woods**

It was 1969; it was the fall of '69. Because, that's when my daughter...I was in a faculty play that I was supposed to be in the day she had a **inaudible\*\*\*31.15** performance. But anyway, find those! I think you'll find those very helpful.

**Rose**

Okay, great. Well, thank you so much for your time.

**Woods**

Hey, good luck to you and I look forward to seeing what you put together, okay?

**Rose**

Will do, thank you very much.

**Woods**

Appreciate it, bye.

**Rose**

Take care, bye.