

Thoughts About Paul Lowery – DMACC's First President

Carroll Bennett

In 1966 the Iowa Department of Education was about to start approving requests from area groups to found vocational/technical institutions as “area schools.” Under the recently passed law, each current junior college which was affiliated with an individual Iowa school district was required to move this affiliation to the new “area college.” The majority of new “merged areas” had at least one junior college in its newly formed district. The district in which the junior college existed had two years after the approval of the new area school to complete the merger.

I’ve always wondered what DMACC’s first president, Paul Lowery, must have been thinking in 1966. As the year began, he was living in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and was a successful director of vocational education in the DeKalb County Technical High School. I’m sure he considered himself to be very lucky to be there since he was the only survivor when his fellow crew members were killed in a tragic bomber crash in Japan in 1945, following the end of the World War II. He was hospitalized for almost a year to recover from serious burns all over his body. His hospital stay wasn’t without a nice outcome; in addition to regaining his health—he met a nurse, Hila, who became his wife.

He once told me a humorous but financially painful experience that occurred shortly after they were married. He was able to save enough money from his earnings in the military to purchase a new auto. After Hila and he were married, he wanted to show it to his in-laws—even before he had arranged for auto insurance. Her parents were impressed with their new son-in-law and asked if they could have a ride in the new car. He had driven only a short distance with his wife and in-laws when a car ran a stop sign, hit his car, and totaled it. He said nothing had ever been so depressing to him.

After his discharge from the Army Air Force, he decided to attend college in his home state of North Carolina to become an industrial arts teacher. This led to his interest in technical education, a teaching position in Georgia for high school vocational students, and eventually the administrative position at DeKalb County Technical High School. He was very successful in this role and was invited by Iowa State University to be a presenter at a conference for new and prospective merged area school board members at the university.

Several members of the Area XI Board attended the conference and were impressed with Paul Lowery. Shortly after the conference, they offered to employ him as “Superintendent” of Area XI.

I always wondered what factors were in his mind when he accepted this position since he was very respected in his current position and was a “Southerner” who had been raised in North Carolina. DMACC was fortunate that he joined the college as its first employee. Paul Lowery served DMACC as its first administrator for 20 years. From my observation, he was challenged, but very pleased to be in the role. I’m pleased that he made the decision since he approved my employment about nine months later. Thank you, Mr. Lowery!