

Biography of James Maggert, DMACC's First Board Chair

James Maggert was the first board chair of the college. He headed a board that included representatives from the other eight districts in merged Area XI. The board was elected in June 1966, soon after the merged area was certified by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction.

Maggert was born in Kendellville, Indiana, June 12, 1932, but moved with his family to Afton, Iowa, at a young age, where he attended public schools and graduated from Afton High School in 1950. He then attended the University of Iowa, earning a bachelor and Juris Doctor Degree. He married Jane Hannum in 1954.

His initial employment after law school was with the State of Iowa, where he served as legal counsel to the Adjutant General of Iowa for several years, during Gov. Norman Erbe's term. After leaving the state position, he established a law practice in Ankeny in the early 1960s; his wife, Jane, was his legal assistant. Jane recalls that he provided legal assistance to many not-for-profit organizations during his first years in Ankeny. He later served as the Chair of the Business Department for Grandview College. He was an active participant in the Iowa National Guard throughout most of his adult years.

Maggert was active in a variety of community organizations, including the American Legion. He also was elected to the Ankeny School Board. His outgoing personality and skill in providing leadership to a board of well-qualified members were major factors in the initial success and rapid expansion of DMACC.

During the first year, the board held frequent and lengthy meetings as it recruited a superintendent (later president) two months after its initial organizational meeting, approved contracts for facilities and land acquisition, developed operating procedures, negotiated an agreement with the Board of Directors of Boone Junior College to become a part of the College, and served as a vocal advocate of this new institution. He was also a strong advocate for locating the main campus in Ankeny, and was actively involved in negotiating with Iowa State University to sell 320 acres of the former Des Moines Ordinance Plant to the college at a reasonable price (\$1,200 - \$1,400 per acre) in two separate purchases.

His personal commitment to getting the college off to a good start is illustrated by the short time frame to recruit and employ a superintendent (three weeks), find a home for Supt. Paul Lowery (two weeks), deal with numerous actions the board was required to take to meet state requirements, execute personnel contracts to staff the organization, and represent the board to the Iowa Legislature, the governor's office and the Iowa Department of Education.

Maggert served one, 3-year term on the board and chose not to run for re-election after being chosen to run as the Republican candidate to represent Iowa Senate District 20. He was defeated by his opponent, the Democratic candidate, William Palmer.

His accomplishments were acknowledged by all who knew of his work. It is impressive how the college moved through the initial organization stages into a full operating mode to respond to an increasing enrollment each of the three years he chaired the board.

Maggert passed away on February 15, 2005. He is survived by his wife, son Mike and daughters Michele and Melani.