

Interview with James A. Rapp

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue

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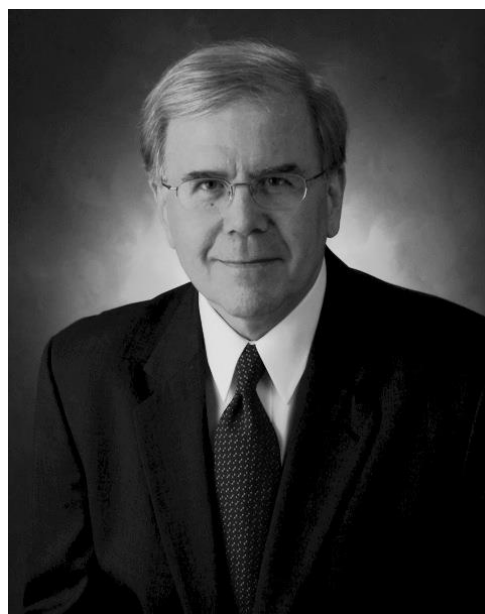
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Pogue: This is Philip Pogue for the oral history project about the history and development of the Illinois Community College System. It is May 21, 2013. I am in Quincy, Illinois, with Mr. Jim Rapp, who will be talking about John Wood Community College. Mr. Rapp, would you give us some background about yourself, your education and family background.

Rapp: First of all, I'm a little informal, so please call me Jim. Quincy has been my home since I was five years old. This is actually where my parents, Roy and Lucille Rapp, were born and raised. My father was a general surgeon here in Quincy. My mother taught accounting at what is now known as Quincy University; it was then Quincy College.

I was actually born in Williamson, West Virginia. We lived across the Tug River in Stone, Kentucky. That area, if you're not familiar with it, has its own interesting history. This is where the Hatfield and McCoy feud took place. Williamson was in Mingo County. That's where most of the Hatfields lived, and Stone was in Pike County, Kentucky, where the McCoy's made their home.

It was a mining company area. In fact, I always remember, moving back to Quincy, that seeing sunlight early in the morning or late at night



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was something unusual, because we lived down, actually, in a valley. My dad had moved there after his release from World War II and worked as the coal company's doctor. We lived in a company town; we lived in a company home, and we shopped at the company store.

It's interesting, too, that Henry Ford actually owned the coal company there and had a home in Stone, Kentucky. My dad had the opportunity to treat John L. Lewis, who was well-known then, because he was then the president of the United Mineworkers. During the time we were there, my dad delivered more than 3,000 babies, often in homes—shacks, really—in the few years that we were there.

My parents really valued education. One of the main reasons we moved [to] Quincy was my dad and parents thought we would have better educational opportunities here in Quincy. Also, many doctors and executives with the mining company sent their children away to eastern boarding schools. And my dad said, "Oh they always like a few hillbillies, like us." But he still thought it would be better to move back to Illinois, and we packed up and we headed here. It's been my home ever since.

As far as my background, and particularly as it relates to education, I'd like to share a couple of stories, if you don't mind, about my parents. My mother was the eldest of ten children. She never had the opportunity to go to college when she was younger. Her parents, in those days, didn't think college was a place for a woman. Besides, she had younger siblings to help with. Years later, my dad, who loved education, valued education, encouraged her to go to college.

She started college when she was forty-nine years old, in the 1960s. That was not a time when women, and particularly older women, would go to college. But she went ahead and she graduated number one in her business class. She majored in accounting and subsequently earned a master's degree from Western Illinois University and passed the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam. She then actually taught for Quincy University for twenty-eight years, well into her seventies. What she accomplished and when she accomplished it, very few older students did the same. We now call people like her a non-traditional student, and I really admired her courage and stamina to get an education at the time.

As far as my dad is concerned, he often would tell us a story about applying for a clerical job after high school. It was at the Standard Oil Company, which is now, of course, part of Exxon Mobil. It actually had some executive offices here in Quincy. He graduated from high school and applied for a job. He reported that he had no interview and not even a thanks but no thanks response.

Years later he applied for a job at Standard Oil Refinery Company near Chicago. At that time, he got a royal welcome. He got a job offer on the spot, but, of course, by then he was a medical resident at Cook County Hospital. He told the refinery superintendent about that [his previous experience with Standard Oil]. The superintendent paused a moment and then he said, "The difference? A little education." And so education, frankly, has always been a priority in our family.

I, myself, went to the University of Illinois in Champaign and earned a degree in communications. I graduated from Washington University School of Law. I married Martha Brune, who I met at the University of Illinois. We then, after law school, moved to Quincy, where I've been practicing law ever since.

We have three adult children. Rebecca's currently a judge in Wisconsin and is a lawyer. Elizabeth is a CPA. She also lives in Wisconsin. And I have a daughter Amy, who has a degree in communication disorders and is a mother. We have seven grandchildren who, of course, are wonderful. Rebecca has three children, Elizabeth two and Amy two.

I, myself, am one of six children, four lawyers, including myself. My oldest brother is a doctor and a lawyer, and my sister is a CPA. That's a lot of tuition to pay, even for a doctor. So education is important, and that's why I've so valued my relationship with John Wood Community College, literally from the beginning.

Pogue: You talked about the importance of education; how did you get involved, then, with John Wood?

Rapp: Frankly, so much of life is by happenstance, and that accounts for my relationship with community colleges and John Wood Community College in particular. John Wood Community College, it was mandated, in effect, in 1974. That was the year I graduated from law school with plans to return to Quincy, after taking the bar exam. My father-in-law, Rey Brune—and for the record, that's R-e-y for Reynold, not R-a-y—happened to be Chairman of the Illinois Community College Board. Rey, himself, was a great guy and was unable to complete college, due to World War II and thereafter, family obligations. But he became the Director of Press Relations at Deere and Company in Moline.

His passion for his volunteer life was making college education accessible, affordable and attainable, something he called his three A's. That was largely because he did not have the opportunity that he wished he would have had when he was younger. He was one of the ones that helped persuade the Quad City voters to form Blackhawk Community College in 1961. He was a charter member of the board, and he then eventually served on the Illinois Board of Higher Education for at least twenty-seven years, more than any other person to ever serve on that board.

Just before I returned to Quincy, Rey said to me, "You know, Jim, there's going to be a community college that's going to be started in west central Illinois. Maybe you might give some thought of getting involved." After we moved here, I gave his suggestion some thought and I decided, what the heck, I'll run for the Board of Trustees. I was one of twenty-eight candidates who ran for that first board. I lost. Not one person from Quincy, including myself, was elected, and only one from rural Adams County was elected. What's amazing is two-thirds of the population is from Adams County.

Interestingly, that was the best losses I ever had in my life and one of the best things that ever happened to me in my career. The reason for that was the newly-elected board had to select a law firm to represent the new community college, and the dean of education law, frankly, in central Illinois and much throughout the state, was an attorney named Bill

Dietrich. I was sworn in as a lawyer in 1974, a few weeks after the Community College Board election in October, and Bill recommended the firm that I was joining as the lawyer for the new community college, because he was unable and unwilling to do it. December of 1974, the month after I was sworn as a lawyer, I began as the college's attorney. It's a position that I've been privileged to hold for nearly forty years.

What did I know about community college when I started? Little or nothing. But I valued education, as I said before, and the first board was nice enough to give me a chance, and for that I'm forever thankful. With that opportunity given to me by happenstance, I've enjoyed a professionally rewarding career in education law as part of my general practice. I became so involved that I eventually authored a number of books and still do. One of them is a seven volume treatise, *Education Law*, published by LexisNexis. I've also had, among other privileges in my career, to represent the National School Safety Center when it has appeared before the United States Supreme Court.

A couple of years ago, I had the opportunity to reminisce about my career at John Wood Community College at its graduation, and I told this story, that I think says a lot. I made the point about telling about a "meet the teachers" meeting that my wife, Martha, and I attended at Quincy Senior High School. We actually thought about skipping that last session, because it was about P.E. class, and we thought, Gee, what can we get out of that?

But the teacher, Jim Schultz, said something I've never forgotten, to this day. He said, "There's only three things that your children need to do in order to succeed in this class, show up, dress out and participate." That's exactly what Rey was saying to me years earlier, and what I shared with the graduates. Taking that advice from Rey left me with a life and career changing career in education law. As I see it, community colleges provide that opportunity to people today of all sorts, by making college accessible, affordable and attainable, if only the students show up, dress out and participate.

Pogue: John Wood is named after an individual. Not many community colleges have that distinction. How did it gets its name?

Rapp: Well, as the name implies, it's named after John Wood. John Wood was a governor of Illinois. He became the governor of Illinois in 1860 after Governor William Bissell died. He served less than a year, but we've always remembered him as Governor John Wood. The board of trustees actually considered a number of names. The public was actually invited to suggest names. I hate to say it was a contest, but that was sort of how it was portrayed, and John Wood Community College was among a number of finalists. The other ones were Great Rivers, Algonquin, Hopewell Valley, Mississippi Valley and Indian Mounds Community College. There's actually an Indian Mounds Park here, and they actually have Indian mounds in it.

But in February of 1975, John Wood Community College was selected. It wasn't unanimous. As I recall, Great Rivers was the runner-up. But nonetheless, that was the name that was picked. Why John Wood? Well, what appealed to the board at the time, and still does today, is that John Wood had ties, the man had ties to both Adams County and Pike County. Wood was actually from New York and moved to Illinois in the 1820s. He first

located in Pike County. He then moved to Adams County, where he founded Quincy, along with a few other individuals. Adams and Pike Counties were the only entire counties of the newly formed district. The major population area of the district was and remains Quincy, which is located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. The balance of the district fans out from there.

The board was very, very concerned, as was the population generally, that Quincy would dominate the district, and there would be little concern extending beyond its boundaries. So, one of the reasons the name was selected was an effort to unify the district and make clear that the district was going to serve the entire region.

It was helpful at the time that James Sanderson, who was then president of the Pike County Historical Society, and Debbie Miller Damhorst, who attended Quincy High School, each submitted this same name. So again, it brought together the district. The fact, too, was that John Wood was a pioneer, and the board of trustees well knew that they would have some pioneering efforts before it, in founding John Wood Community College. So, it's turned out to be a good name.

Pogue: Now John Wood's formation itself was unique. How did that all come about?

Rapp: Unique says a lot, because it certainly was. John Wood was actually established by operation of a state statute on August 1, 1974. A board still needed to be elected, a staff hired and everything else to begin operations.

I would like to say it opened its door a year later in 1975, but that really doesn't tell the whole story. It did enroll 668 students at that time, and most of them attended other colleges, although John Wood did have a sprinkling of evening courses throughout the district. To show how things change, one of the first courses offered was shorthand. I would suspect that not many people who ever listen to this interview will even know what shorthand is, but I'll leave that for another history interview.

Pogue: Senate Bill 1188, what was that all about?

Rapp: John Wood was the only community college created under what was a 1973 law which, as you say, was known as Senate Bill 1188. This was one of the initial efforts to have a statewide system of community colleges, but it entailed somewhat involuntary or forced action on the part of local communities. Every territory of the state was either to be annexed to an existing district or a new community college district created. That's what was unique about Senate Bill 1188.

Pogue: Did that have any particular challenges, once that bill was passed?

Rapp: It did have some tremendous challenges, and the reason that it had some tremendous challenges was because the 1973 law was opposed by a number of individuals in the northern suburbs of Chicago. So literally, because of that litigation, a legal cloud loomed over John Wood Community College, and it had to do with that 1973 law.

Here was the problem. The law, as I indicated, required that all territory in the state that was not part of the community college district had to either form a new district or annex to an adjacent district. The Illinois Community College Board [ICCB] eventually authorized only two new districts. They were what was ultimately to become John Wood Community College. The other was comprised of the North Shore suburbs of Chicago, including the Evanston and New Trier Townships.

When I say that the ICCB authorized two districts, I need to be a little more clear. The state board actually did not want John Wood to be established. Instead, what they wanted was that our area would be annexed to Spoon River College. Believing this was not desirable for the community, the state board was petitioned by residents of the now John Wood Community College district to allow them to undertake a feasibility study to create a new college, using what was known as the collegiate common market concept, and finally the state board did allow that.

By contrast, the state board pushed and eventually approved, by a four to three vote, a new community college in the North Shore suburbs, but the North Shore suburbs were highly divided. A very proactive and eventually successful group wanted to join Oakland Community College, rather than support the new community college there. So, as things turned out, the end results were that we're the opposite of what the ICCB wanted and had tentatively approved.

We had a new college, when we were supposed to be annexed, and the North Shore annexed, when they were to have a new college. What that did was create some legal challenges, because in order to accomplish that, a group in the North Shore had filed suit, challenging the validity of this senate bill. The leader of that group, or the chairman of that group, was a man named William Spaulding. He headed an ad hoc referendum committee in the North Shore to challenge that law. The reason was based on equal protection.

The trial court actually found the law unconstitutional on this basis. So the trial court said that there was no rational basis for distinguishing between residents of proposed new districts and residents of non-district territory on referendum. In other words, if you annexed, you had a referendum. If you didn't annex and created a new district, you did not. And so, the theory was that violated equal protection.

What happened in that case—and it became even more complicated—was that in the fall of 1975, the General Assembly passed yet another law, after John Wood was already operational. The governor at that time vetoed this new law and asked the General Assembly to provide a referendum for new districts, just as the North Shore litigants wanted. The General Assembly finally included that in the law, and it was approved by the governor, and the North Shore folks had their referendum and overwhelmingly voted against the creation of a new district. So eventually what they did was join the Oakton Community College, that district [#535].

Now the trouble was, if you remember, that a trial court had already found the law unconstitutional. So at that point in time, John Wood Community College was the only district in the state that was created under that senate bill, and now that law had this

conclusion by a trial court that it was unconstitutional. It created just an overwhelming cloud of illegality over the district. But the North Shore folks said “Well, we don’t need to pursue this case anymore because, after all, we had our vote; we got what we wanted; so dismiss the case.”

I then, and at earlier times, became involved in the case on behalf of John Wood Community College, because I knew it was just a matter of time that someone could equally challenge the validity of John Wood Community College, as well. So, as a lawyer basically right out of law school, I became involved in this case, Spaulding versus Illinois Community College Board, that ended up going to the Illinois Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court decided to hear the case, largely because of John Wood Community College. It acknowledged in its opinion that the North Shore decision did, in fact, cast a cloud over the validity of John Wood, which was then already operational and accepting students. So, what about their tax levies; what about their degrees that they would grant; what about every other aspect of the community college? It was something that was not really widely appreciated locally at the time. But from the lawyer’s perspective, it was something that made a huge, huge difference in the future of that college.

Fortunately, the Supreme Court was convinced that the law was, in fact, constitutional. Among other things, the Supreme Court recognized that the organization of a new community college did not necessarily present the same issues as annexation. There was a rational reason for the legislature to do what it did, and these problems might not have anything to do with the need or the desirability of a community college. They speculated, for example, that there might be fear of real or imagined dominance of the board by a particular geographic area or some distrusted faction. And frankly, that was an issue here at John Wood, based on its original election.

There’s no doubt in my mind that, had the residents of what became John Wood Community College had the opportunity to vote, there wouldn’t have been a John Wood Community College. I think that they would have voted, despite the fact that the college without walls was promoted. I think they would have voted down a community college, to wait for another day and another time to fight the existence of a community college. So the Spaulding case proved to be a critical, early victory for John Wood Community College.

Pogue: When you talked about that college without walls, what were you talking about?

Rapp: Well, the theory of John Wood Community College and the reason that the community college board actually approved it, was the fact that it would be founded on a collegiate common market idea. What that meant was that rather than having educational services offered in a more traditional way, that it would be a college without walls. It would, instead, purchase services from the many fine area institutions we have.

It’s kind of interesting when you think about it, that Oxford University—and one of my daughters graduated from Oxford University in England—doesn’t really have a physical facility. It really is a cooperative of colleges in Oxford. That’s, in effect, what we were doing. We were intending to, and what was promoted to the community and convinced the Illinois

Community College Board to proceed, was the idea that we could hire and purchase virtually all of the services we needed from this common market, from area colleges, including Culver-Stockton College, Hannibal-LaGrange College and Quincy University, then Quincy College, and some technical schools that were in the area, and also even a broad network of other community colleges and other institutions beyond that. We even contracted with Jacksonville colleges.

It was an idea that, in essence, that there would be a common market of educational programs offered through other universities and colleges in the area.

Pogue: Was that one of the issues, then, that the community had, that this would be a college that would not have its own buildings, but instead a shared type service?

Rapp: An issue in the community, in the sense that that's what they expected. Almost forty years later, you'll still hear people say, Well, gee, I thought this was to be a college without walls. Why do you have a faculty? Why do you have a staff, as you do? Why do you have a campus? It has, at that time, certainly been an issue and one that we have dealt with and, frankly, was continued until in the early '90s. It was essentially abandoned, or largely abandoned, but it was an issue, and migrating from that, has continued to be and, to some extent, was a significant issue to the community. I don't really think it is today, honestly. The reason is because I think the community really welcomes now the community college, as it didn't in those days.

I remember when I started as the attorney for John Wood Community College. I remember going to a judge's chamber once. There had been a hearing that had absolutely nothing to do with John Wood Community College, but he then asked me to come to his chambers, and he immediately blasted me for John Wood Community College. He said that we didn't need that college; we don't need their taxes; the students are already being served, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I finally interrupted and said, "Judge, I'm only the lawyer." He responded, "I don't care. The fish stinks from the head to the tail." I know what he was saying, but nonetheless, folks were very, very fired up, because we had a community college at all.

John Wood was a second choice; their first choice was no community college. Their second choice was, well, if we're going to have one, we'd rather have it here, you know, a beast near, rather than a beast from afar. They really did not want it. They did not welcome it, but they could tolerate it, if it was a college without walls.

Pogue: Well then, who determined how all these contracts were going to be set up, since you had a set up where you didn't have a central campus?

Rapp: We actually developed these contracts, literally, from scratch. And frankly, I was the one who took the lead on that. One of the things that probably was one of the more controversial aspects of it is not just contracting. I would say that the institutions that we dealt with were extremely cooperative, because they really didn't think they had a choice. They also felt that it was important to make the best of this situation. It was really developing contracts from raw cloth with the other colleges and schools with which we contracted.

That doesn't mean there weren't some philosophical differences, frankly. There was the view...and I believe that the first acting chief administrator, Larry Auten, shared this view. The reason he did is because Larry was an attorney who had worked for the Illinois Community College Board and was a participant and involved in all of the day-to-day hearings that were held, under the senate bill that resulted in John Wood to be formed. So he heard the pleas and the calls for this common market idea.

There were others—frankly, I was among them—who felt that it was more important that we have the community college of our own, that it was a community college in its own right, not a half-baked community college. I and, fortunately, the board took the position that that's exactly what we needed and what we wanted. So the contracting process, and to the extent there was any conflict that ever arose, really came from the fact that the contracts became sort of a bill of rights for John Wood Community College.

There would be issues like, there had been talk at one time that students could go through John Wood; John Wood would pay their tuition, so it would be more or less a paper institution, but that the four-year college could start to award a two-year degree, so students would, in effect, simultaneously get a degree from John Wood Community College and also from, for example, Quincy College, at the time. Under the contract, we prohibited that. If they went through John Wood, and the only requirements that satisfied the degree were taken through John Wood, that they were prohibited from giving a second degree, as it were.

And there were other issues. For example, many of the institutions that we dealt with were sectarian; they were religiously based. Did our students have to take theology? Did our students have to attend what they would call chapel? But in each of these instances, we insisted on our students being, in effect, freestanding, that they were our students; we determined the requirements; we awarded the degrees, and that, I think, set the stage for John Wood having its own identity, which at that time I felt, and the board felt, was critically important.

Pogue: As to the change, when you talked about the school without walls, when did all of that change?

Rapp: Primarily, it started to end in 1991, and they started to end the contracts with the common market concept. Dr. Paul Heath was the first president, had left, and the new president did not have as much interest in it. Also, some of the contracting universities did not have as much interest in it. In many respects, some felt that it was degrading to have contracts with community colleges. So they just, frankly, lost interest in it.

The rationale, from John Wood's point-of-view, was enrollment demands had been increasing; there were community needs that were not being fulfilled, and also, that there were escalating costs associated with that approach, the common market approach, and there was some truth to that. However, I think that, for the most part, there just was an increasing lack of interest in that and the desire of John Wood to develop its own programs, its own campus. I think it's been certainly a good idea; it's served its purpose.

When Rey Brune, who was the graduation speaker—again, my father-in-law and then chairman of the Illinois Community College Board—spoke at the first graduation, he predicted that the time when the common market would end would come, and that it's a good thing, and there's a benefit from it. But, to serve the community as a whole, it required that we be our own college. I think that the four-year colleges and other institutions, with which we contracted, felt that way, too.

In other words, they were no longer afraid of John Wood Community College. They realized that we were serving sometimes different populations, different needs and, therefore, it's not to be feared anymore. I think it's been proven to be that case, as well. I think that we have returned, though, to some common market elements in the collaboration.

I want to just highlight that. The collaboration among the institutions are good and wonderful. In fact, I see us at common market 2.0 now, and that's probably a better one. The other thing I think is noteworthy about the common market, and probably one of the lasting benefits, is that John Wood Community College had the benefit of having to explore new and innovative techniques of providing services. For example, in the early 1980s, they issued a paper about John Wood Community College that talked about the delivery of an education in a rural community through technology. Now we take that for granted; we have the internet. But in the 1980s it was pretty foreign. They explored with all kinds of techniques.

The other thing that they did, and this was an innovation of Dr. Paul Heath, is the Open Learning Center, where courses could be taken vis-à-vis this Open Learning Center, where students could start basically anytime during the semester, finish anytime during the semester. They could come anytime they wanted to. So it was a tremendously flexible program. That program really continues to this very day. I can't say enough good things about Dr. Paul Heath. I attribute a lot of the future success of John Wood to the foundation that he gave. He died recently, but he added a tremendous influence.

He came here at the age of forty-one. We had an immediate bond, because he came here from Parkersburg, West Virginia, and so we were both sort of hillbillies, and he had a beauty queen wife. He was a very personable fellow, a handsome guy, gracious. You couldn't help but like him. He believed in the cause of community colleges and what they had to offer. He persuaded this community that community colleges were a good thing and that we weren't here to compete; we weren't here to destroy. We were here to provide some sorts of services that were never provided before, and we were here to provide them in an accessible way that were not previously available, and we were trying to make them more affordable for kids who did not go to college.

Some of the early surveys showed that over 60 percent of the students who attended John Wood Community College said they would not have attended college but for John Wood. So it was not a matter...and I think the common market really ended, because they were secure with it; they were comfortable with it, that we now realize that community colleges are a little bit of a different beast than a four-year institution. A lot of that convincing was Paul Heath.

There have been many, many good people since that time. Dr. John Letts is our current president, who is a huge asset and benefit to the community, because he has taken the community college to a true, mature level and a welcoming level in this community. It's leaders like that who have made a real difference here.

Pogue: As to the boundaries of the college, you talked about the concern, originally, about Adams being the largest county, and you talked about Pike. What are the other parts of the community college boundaries?

Rapp: The original John Wood Community College was the combination of twelve school districts and, as I indicated before, that included all of Adams and Pike Counties. It only included parts of Hancock, Schuyler and Calhoun. That really came from the addition of Southeastern School District to John Wood Community College.

That was added for a variety of reasons. One of them was to boost the population, because the ICCB really wanted a 100,000 minimum population. Our population was 90,000, roughly, at the time. We did have enough assessed valuation. We were over their \$400 million goal. Since that time, in 1987 Brown County annexed the Meredosia-Chambersburg, and Scott-Morgan School Districts joined the district in 1990. So, now we are all of Adams, Pike and Brown Counties, and we have parts of several other counties, Hancock County, Cass, Morgan and Scott.

The district is about 2,400 square miles. Our population hasn't grown much, even with the annexations of the original population of the district. It's now about 96,000. Our assessed valuation has more than tripled, to \$1.45 billion. So, in many respects it's much the same, and in some respects it's still doing better. But that's the geography of the college now.

Pogue: The interscholastic programs began much later than the formation of the college, almost seventeen years. Why?

Rapp: They didn't want to be anything but a college without walls. Our students were, in some instances, unable to participate in the interscholastic programs at the colleges that they attended. So, for some purposes, we didn't want them to be, really, their students, and for some reasons we did. That was one of the reasons we did. So the common market started to end in 1991. That coincides with the start of interscholastic athletics because, if we were going to be a campus and a college of our own, that was an integral part of the fabric of the modern high school and college experience. So that was included, as well.

The other thing was, the board of trustees did not want to spend money on athletic programs. They considered them kind of a waste and was sending the wrong message to the community, because the board of trustees still is, but then was, especially frugal. I remember a board member, Hugh Hurt, who was a farmer, a fine board member, but he watched the pennies. And as an example, when the board staff went out and bought a gross of pencils, he spent a half hour explaining to them why that was a total waste of money. He told them to go down to the local feed store or the local fertilizer store and just grab a bunch of the pencils off the shelf. They would give them to them and give them some advertising to boot.

So athletics was... You couldn't quite get those at the local fertilizer store or feed store, but it was not something they wanted to spend money on. When they finally approved it, they did insist that it be self-sustaining. It probably wasn't self-sustaining then and never has been. But today, student fees cover most of the cost and, I think, on the whole, they feel that it's been a good experience.

Initially, they offered women's softball, volleyball, tennis and men's baseball, golf and soccer. They had women's basketball and men's basketball added a year later, 1992. They did abandon soccer. Our men's basketball and women's basketball teams do have winning records. The teams are known as the Trailblazers, which goes along with the John Wood theme of pioneering. It's done well.

Pogue: How many main campuses have existed in John Wood's history?

Rapp: John Wood first rented space at what was then known as the Illinois State Bank building. It's at Sixth and Hampshire. We were in suite 712. We were crowded in there like sardines. What I still remember about it is [the] 1970 era orange shag carpeting, which does take some memory of that. It was our home, but it was certainly not a campus.

In 1975, the college started to rent space from Our Lady of Angels Seminary, which is at 1919 North Eighteenth Street. It's a Catholic seminary. It had a diminishing number of applicants for the priesthood. They welcomed us as a tenant and literally gave up the whole front administrative and classroom section to John Wood Community College. It provided not only nice office space, but it also housed some much-needed classrooms. In fact, I taught business law there, as one of the first part-time faculty members of John Wood Community College. I guess I would consider that to be our first, but rented, campus.

In December in 1983, we moved to Forty-eighth and Main Streets, to the former Lincoln Elementary School. This was our next main campus. In 1996, the board acquired the property from the Deters family, which is our present and main campus. It's at Forty-eighth and Harrison Streets, here in Quincy. It remains, as I say, our campus today. The first building that was constructed there was a science and technology center that opened in January 1998. It's a beautiful and nicely located site of 154 acres, partly wooded and partly open for the buildings themselves. I expect that this will meet the needs of the college permanently, and I would not expect any new change in the location of our main campus.

Pogue: Were there any issues tied to trying to create a main campus?

Rapp: The issues, really, were one of money, frankly, and also just the issue of whether we should have that campus at all. I have often, when asked about it, have mentioned just the hostility. I already mentioned the story about the judge calling me into his office, and the fish stinks from the head to the tail. But when John Wood Community College originally announced that it was going to seek a new campus... That is myself, the president and the chairman of the board, Hobe Sholz, were actually summoned to a meeting at a local hotel here, motel, by virtually every political leader in the area and a number of the community powers to be. The whole purpose of that meeting was to tell us why we should not be developing a new campus at a new site and leave well enough alone.

To this day, I think that one of the persons who deserves a lot of thanks is a guy named Hobe Sholz, Robert Sholz, who's a local dentist. He was the chairman of the board. At that meeting, he made it clear, and in no uncertain terms, that John Wood was going to proceed with this new campus, that that's what we needed, and that's what we were going to have. He was blunt; he left no doubt, and of course, the campus is now here. That made it pretty darn clear that that's what was going to happen. He did tell them, though, he said, "If we really don't want the campus in Quincy," he said, "I'm sure there's a few other communities that would be happy to have us." Hobe deserves a lot of credit for that.

I think that history has proven that the new campus was the right decision, and I think those people who met with us, at that day and at that time, agree as well, because many of those who opposed that community college campus in the first place, and the community college from its origin, are now key supporters and advocates of the college. I think if there's any lesson to what John Wood did, not only to have the courage to move forward, but that if you have the courage to do what's best for the students, it will eventually win over the community.

Pogue: Does John Wood have any extension sites?

Rapp: John Wood does have several other sites. One of them is located in downtown Quincy; it's the Kinscherff Center. This was donated to the college by Central State Bank, in recognition of John and Wandalee Kinscherff. It is a downtown campus that is primarily aimed at providing programs for the GED diploma or certificate.

We also have the Orr Agriculture Center in Perry, or the Perry Agriculture Center, which is, in and of itself, a very valued site and location. The reason that is, is because at that location we have a agriculture center, which is the Perry Agriculture Education Center that is in cooperation with the University of Illinois. It adjoins the Orr Research Center, which is an agronomy research center, and also the U of I's Beef Research Center. The building that we have there is also utilized by the University of Illinois. This is probably one of the very unique relationships that John Wood, or any community college has with our [flagship] university.

We also have in Quincy, a Workforce Development Center. This provides truck driver training and other workforce training programs. We also have leased sites in Mount Sterling and Pittsfield. Those are the sites that I think, in the future, are going to have attention by the board to provide for some permanent sites and locations.

Pogue: What are the major topics you deal with, as the college legal counsel?

Rapp: At the beginning, it was defending John Wood Community College and, of course, contracting and things like that. The other thing that's developed from that, over the years, is that just the whole general work that comes with any big business. Community colleges and educational institutions in general deal with all of the same things as any for-profit business does, but then they deal with a host of other issues that relate to employment law; they relate to just general issues of anti-discrimination law that extends both to faculty, staff and student

issues there. It's a tremendously diverse interest and practice, because of the fact that a community college does do a lot of things with a lot of people in a lot of different ways.

This was, of course, a unique experience, only because of trying to also help with some of the policies and strategies that go along with trying to convince people that we need a campus, that we need the college and everything that went along with that.

Pogue: How have these issues changed over your thirty-five years with the college?

Rapp: Well, I think one thing that I probably would mention is that the college, at all times, has somewhat been, at least in the early and mid-range, somewhat in a defense mode. In fact, I think that I might relay how, in connection with this, we even ended up with our main campus, versus sticking at the old Lincoln School campus. I think there was a tendency, "Well, we'll just leave well enough alone." I recall being at a meeting of the board of trustees, and I commented, after having talked to the president at the time, who didn't seem to want to rock the boat, I made the statement, I says, "You know, really, do you think it makes a lot of sense to stick with this campus? Why do you want to spend \$25 or \$30 million for a new campus at this site that's probably going to run its course? Eventually you're going to have to cross the street; you're going to have to acquire other property." The board was convinced that maybe this was a good idea. That's what led to our exploration to this new campus.

But just that movement to really say, you know, "We are going to be a college. We're going to be our own college" has been one of the things that's permeated a lot of the legal representation. I really think that, had that suggestion not been made at that time, we might still be at the Lincoln School site today. I think it's one of the most important things to do.

Representing a community college, particularly from its formation, has involved a lot more than just lawyering. I sometimes jokingly say to people that I'm an attorney and counsellor at law. Sometimes there's a lot more counselling that goes on, and that's probably been the thing that has permeated and changed and evolved as we've gone through this. I mean, obviously, there have been a lot of issues regarding... When we started, tenure wasn't here, except what the college voluntarily did. Now it's mandatory. Collective bargaining wasn't here. Now it is. We have many new laws.

I mentioned earlier that I write this book on education, law that's now seven volumes. When it started, that book was three volumes, which could probably have fit in one of the current volumes. That tells you just the burgeoning issues that have faced community colleges today. So it's been the same, but very different. A lot of that is because of the evolution we've had to go through.

Pogue: As far as the trustees, when we began our discussion, you talked about your concern that, of the twenty-eight people running, Adams County would dominate. Where do the current trustees come from now?

Rapp: [Of] the original twenty-eight, as I said before, not one came from Quincy. Only one came from Adams County. Again, when you think of two-thirds of the population being here, that's rather amazing. Either it means there's some voting blocs or something going on, but

the truth of the matter is that there was concern about some of that geographic sensitivity that was fearful that would not exist.

I will say that probably the best darn thing that ever happened to John Wood Community College is that not one Quincyian was elected. I really mean that, because that person would have been under so much pressure and tried to so influence, that it would have skewed the whole future board.

Since that time, now it's almost all reversed. At the present time, there's only one member who is from outside Adams County, and most of the trustees are from either Quincy or the immediately surrounding area. So, it's reversed. But that first board set the standard that we are a community college of the entire district, that geography doesn't matter, we need to serve everyone wherever they are.

The board, to this day, when there are vacancies—just as the very first board when there was a vacancy—they appointed someone from Quincy. To this day, when they appoint new individuals, they appoint them usually from one of the Mounts to Brown County or Pike County, because they want to provide that geographic diversity of the district.

The board regularly journeys to other communities. They've insisted on maintaining centers, whether they're economically and attendance justified. I think the board, to their credit, has taken the term "trustee" to heart. They have served the entire district. So, while it was of concern at the beginning, I think that it's worked out well, even though the trustees themselves have reversed where they come from.

Pogue: The Community College Act talked about funding sources for the community college coming from tuition, from property tax and from state sources. How has that gone for John Wood?

Rapp: I think it's gone the same way for John Wood that it has every other community college in the state. As you say, the theory was a three-legged stool, you know, local support, a third; tuition support, a third, and state support, a third. As we sit here today, the state leg is either broken or certainly far in decay. Right now, the students of John Wood who attend, pick up well over half the cost of attendance. That's not the way it was intended. John Wood, though, has been very fiscally responsible, due to its board, due to its staff, due to sacrifices that faculty have made throughout our history. We are facing the same perilous situation that other schools are, and I don't think that's likely to change.

While I probably am speculating when I say this, I sometimes wonder whether our experiment in public higher education may be coming to an end. Higher education originally started as purely private institutions. We thought the wisdom was to have public institutions we have, and I'm certain we will still continue to have fine research institutions. But day-to-day education, you kind of wonder whether there's that dedication today. I would point out that the Illinois Constitution in 1970—when you remember that the Community College Act is from the late 1960s—the 1970 constitution provides that primary and secondary schools would be free. But it says that there could also be higher education that would also be free. I think, at the time, the intent was that community colleges would become free. That's not going to happen.

I think that the time may come where we'll join a model, like Cornell University, which is partly public, partly private. It's a land grant college, but it's privately endowed. Whether or not we're going to have to transition to this is something that I think that a future generation is going to have to struggle with, unless the state does live up to its obligations to community colleges. I don't see that happening, though.

Pogue: Over the next five years, where do you see John Wood going?

Rapp: There's probably two areas that I think are going to be the most important in the future of John Wood Community College. First, I think John Wood will make a permanent campus commitment to areas outside of Quincy. Just where and how is to be seen, but as I mentioned before, we have leased sites in Mount Sterling and in Pittsfield. I don't anticipate any other bricks and mortar changes other than that, but I think one or the other or both of those will be accomplished.

I hope that does happen, because that's geography, and the cost of transportation is a problem. The Internet can only do so much. There's a certain camaraderie that comes from attending a class with others and hearing them in person or face-to-face. Yes, to some extent you can do that, vis-à-vis Internet, webcast and all that, but I hope that we can extend the true campus experience to those communities.

The other thing that I think is going to be predominant in John Wood is technical and career education. I think that that's what's needed, and I think that's what we're going to see more in our community, as well.

Pogue: As far as the community college movement, you were actively involved with John Wood and the unique formation of it, the experiment with classroom without walls and the common market approach. Where do you see community colleges in Illinois going over the next decade?

Rapp: I see the future of community colleges very, very bright. The reason is because I think they're positioned better than any other institutions to provide, in effect, accessible, affordable and attainable education. They're our best hope. I think community colleges will grow in stature. We are not junior colleges, or second-rate colleges, but we're able to often provide better the needs for students in a changing society. I think that will result in a growth in the stature of community colleges.

I also think community colleges have the advantage that they can adapt. Unlike a ivory tower institution, as good as they are, community colleges have to be flexible and nimble and responsive. While it would be helpful to have some statutory changes and perhaps more creative collective bargaining, I expect community colleges will be able to ensure their ability to adapt to the changing future.

Finally, the reason I think community colleges have a bright future is because it will become, more and more so, the go-to place for lifelong learning. When we really acknowledge that some of our most successful people are college dropouts—like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, as just but a few examples—we realize that a four-year degree is not an end all. Our goal in modern education has to be to teach the initiative and the

skills to solve problems and adapt to an ever-changing work environment. That means that the jobs we train for today are not the jobs that will be there tomorrow.

So, it's going to take continuing education, and that's not going to be going to a four-year institution, away from their home. It's going to have learning brought to them. And a good place to have that brought to them is through the community college, because, again, life learning is going to be lifelong, and it's going to be more so in the future.

I reminisce that, when I was in grade school, what I always remember was they talked about this university of research and that university of research and how it was going to be so important in the future. I remember at the University of Illinois they had these stairs that went to nowhere. Well, gee, why were those stairs there? Well, because that was the first experiment on reinforced concrete. Well, you know, of course, now we have that all over the place. I remember, too, going to the movie *2001[A Space Odyssey]*, well before 2001. And, of course, "Hal" the computer was born in Champaign-Urbana, essentially at the University of Illinois.

I think that today often educational institutions, and with all due respect, particularly four-year institutions and graduate schools, are following business and industry. They're not the leaders. I think that educators are having to play catch-up to business and industry. I think community colleges are more able to get in front of business and industry in the future. That will involve, again, this lifelong learning.

So again, I consider the future of community college to be very bright, and I'm confident that the administrators, faculty and staff, like we have a John Wood Community College, will be there to accept and meet this challenge.

Pogue: Jim, I want to thank you very much for giving us an overview of the unique history of John Wood and its position since the 1970s to the current time.

Rapp: It's been my honor.

(end of transcript)