Bill Jason Priest, Community College Pioneer

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This old tintype pictures Priest’s beloved maternal grandmother, Adah Freeman Stubbs, *(standing)* with her sister, Clara Freeman, who was a medical doctor, a rare achievement for a woman in the early 1900s. Priest’s grandmother was one of the most positive influences in his formative years.
Decked out in full uniform, four-year old Priest takes a determined stance even though he is wielding a broken bat held together with tape.

Priest earned all three of his degrees from the University of California at Berkeley. This snapshot was taken of Priest on campus in the spring of 1935 when he was a freshman.
A Berkeley student photographer had Priest take a dramatic spread-eagle stance—completely inappropriate for a baseball pitcher, but the artistry made an eye-catching promotional picture.
The promotional photographs in the professional leagues had more of a Hollywood star mystique. Priest, like all players on the Philadelphia Athletics ball club, had a signed photo to give fans.
On an intelligence mission to Mindanao, Philippines during World War II, the small plane had to be landed on a dirt road. Priest (*left*) and the other officer immediately were surrounded by the Filipinos.

Priest (*left*) is standing in front of the Manila Hotel, which had been occupied by the enemy. American Marines took the hotel room by room, tossing in a grenade and then checking for survivors.
In dress uniform in 1941, Priest struck a pose with a cigar imitating Winston Churchill. Priest never smoked. Both of his parents had been heavy smokers, which repulsed him.

Shortly after arriving in Dallas in 1965, the demand for “official portraits” began. This was one of his first. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
This is the first Board of Trustees and Chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District, the people who took a goal of providing a convenient, inexpensive, quality college education to all of the citizens of Dallas County and made it a reality. Seated in the front row (from left to right) are R. L. Thornton, Jr., Margaret McDermott, and Bill Priest. Standing on the back row (from left to right) are Durwood Sutton, Loncy Leake, Frank Altick, Franklin Spafford, and Carrie Welch. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
The exterior of the Sanger Brothers Department Store building remained undisturbed when the interior was renovated to house El Centro College, which opened in the fall of 1966. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

There had been so much controversy over the structural soundness of the old Sanger Brothers building that some El Centro employees enjoyed exaggerating the lack of safety in staff offices. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
Bill Priest (center) accepts a scholarship check for Dallas County Junior College students from Durwood J. Tucker, Managing Director of WRR Radio (left) and W. H. Roberts, Executive Vice President of American Bank and Trust (right), circa 1969. The DCCCD continues to be the recipient of financial gifts from business and industry, as evidenced in the successful Rising Star Scholarship program funded entirely by private donations. The fund was the concept of R. L. Thornton, III, Chairman of the DCCCD Foundation Board. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
Eastfield College was an impressive structure on the Mesquite landscape in 1970. Today the view is obscured by the vestiges of a growing population including R. L. Thornton Freeway on the east side of the campus. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

Mountain View College in southwest Oak Cliff opened on schedule albeit with some classes and offices in trailers. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

Inspired by the design of North Park Mall, Mountain View’s contiguous structure is surrounded by man-made ponds, fountains, and a natural creek and foliage. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
Richland College on the boundary of Dallas and Richardson in far north Dallas County consistently boasts the highest enrollment in the DCCCD. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

Located in Irving in west Dallas County, North Lake was carved into the rolling terrain giving it an intriguing multilevel structure. It opened simultaneously with Cedar Valley College in 1977. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
Cedar Valley is in Lancaster in south Dallas County. The buildings are standard rectangles with only a few dramatic architectural lines. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

Cedar Valley draws its beauty from the lake and carefully planned landscaping. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
Each college had a dedication ceremony and reception for the community it served shortly after the official opening. The next to the last such ceremony was held at Cedar Valley in the arena theatre. By then, the Board of Trustees had changed by two. In the front row (from left to right) are Trustee Robert Powers, Trustee Carrie Welch, Vice Chancellor Walter Pike, Trustee Margaret McDermott, CVC President Floyd Elkins, Trustee Loncy Leake, Chancellor Bill Priest, and Trustee Pattie Powell. In the back row (from left to right) are Trustee Durwood Sutton, Vice Chancellor Deon Holt, Vice Chancellor Jan LeCroy, and Trustee R. L. Thornton, Jr. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center
The infamous and bladeless windmill loomed above the Brookhaven campus for many years before being dismantled in 1984. Deon Holt, the first president of Brookhaven, believes it was ahead of its time and that with the technology available today it would work. Courtesy Dallas County Community College District Archives, District Service Center

Marietta and Bill Priest attended many District and College functions. In this photo circa 1980, they were visiting with Carol Schlipak (center), the first director of the DCCCD Foundation.
Dale Parnell, Executive President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, gave Priest this picture taken as he delivered a speech at the national AACJC convention. Parnell’s message credited Priest with Harry Truman-like characteristics.

During Priest’s tenure as chancellor in the DCCCD, he was given many tributes. His appreciation of fine wine was well known. The lead instructor in the El Centro Culinary Arts Degree program, Gus Katsigris, made an eloquent speech and then caught Priest off-guard with the presentation of a bottle of very cheap wine.
Priest loved fishing. In 1988, he negotiated a guided fishing trip in Alaska as payment for a commencement address. He caught a forty-four-pound King Salmon.

In 1991, Priest went hunting in Alberta, Canada. He shot the quota of Greater Canada geese. Each member of the hunting party had his picture taken with the group’s total game.
Bill and Ann Priest at a social function in 1997.

Eighteen years after his retirement, Priest was still highly sought as a speaker. Here, he is addressing the 1999 League for Innovation Conference.
In thirty-seven years, the DCCCD had only four chancellors. Pictured here (from left to right) are Larry Tyree (1988–1990), Bill Priest (1965–1981), Bill Wenrich (1991–2003), and Jan LeCroy (1981–1987).

On August 1, 2003, Jesus Carreon became the fifth chancellor of the DCCCD. Courtesy Scott Keith (photographer) and Jesus Carreon.
The only picture of Priest and this biographer together was taken at his eightieth birthday party held at the City Club atop One Main Place in downtown Dallas. Pictured *from left to right* are Colin Shaw, who worked in the District Office in the 1980s, John Whitson, Bill Priest, and Kathleen Whitson, biographer.

It was a first for all four Executive Presidents of the American Association of Community Colleges to be present at one event. The occasion was a program of the newly formed Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education of the University of North Texas, held in February 2001 for the 100th Anniversary of Community Colleges. Steve Katsinas, Buchholtz Endowed Chair of the UNT Center, coordinated the event. Pictured *from left to right* are Bill Priest, George Boggs (current President), Ed Gleazer (1958–1981), Dale Parnell (1981–1991), and David Pierce (1991–2000).
The Administration Building at American River Junior College in Sacramento, California, was built in 1956. It was named for Priest when he left in 1965.

On vacation in California, Ann Priest’s grandchildren stopped at the site where Priest had spent his childhood. They had their picture made under the street sign honoring the family name of their new grandfather.

The Bill J. Priest Institute for Economic Development in the Dallas County Community College District was constructed and named for Priest in 1987.