

News Release – May 19, 2012 - Danville Community College

By Marie R. Harris

Danville Community College's second annual Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony and following reception was held May 19 in Oliver Hall on the DCC campus.

Inductees George (Buddy) Clayton, retired instructor in Heating and Air Conditioning at DCC; Dr. Shirley Day Primiano, retired educational psychologist; and Dr. Grady C. Tuck, retired DCC Coordinator of Admissions, were honored by the Alumni Association, which represents Danville Community College and the two predecessor institutions, Danville Technical Institute and VPI-Danville.

As the second honorees for the DCC Alumni Association's Sports Hall of Fame, each individual possesses extensive sports background in DCC sports or sports commitment as well as involvement with Danville Community College's sports programs, past and present.

The first honoree, George (Buddy) Clayton enrolled at Danville Technical Institute in 1964, playing basketball for the college in both the 1964-65 year and 1965-66 year. "We had a good team. We played a lot of junior colleges with far greater drawing power concerning student athletes; we had about a 50-50 season," Clayton explained.

His coach, Grady Tuck, commented that "Buddy had quick hands," with regard to his ability, while playing defense to "snag the ball." Tuck proved an instrumental encouragement to keeping Clayton active on the team. "I was married the spring of my first year, working part time and going to college," said Clayton. "Thanks to Coach Grady Tuck, who aided me in obtaining part-time jobs while playing, I was allowed the opportunity to continue on the team."

Upon graduation in the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration diploma program, Clayton worked three and a half years in the field before returning to be an instructor in the same program at DCC. A recipient of DCC's *Outstanding Faculty Award*, Clayton retired in 2007 after 38 years of teaching at the college.

While teaching, Clayton was involved with campus intramural sports once team sports were no longer supported by the state. "They varied through the years: flag football, softball, basketball, and faculty teams. I also taught a couple of classes in golf." Clayton speaks of the earlier part of his career, saying, "Grady and I played city softball and basketball, participating for at least 25 years." During those 25 years, Clayton was also pursuing higher degrees, gaining his B.S. in Applied Science at Elon University and his Masters in Vocational Education from Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Throughout the years, he maintained an interest in sports: "In the 1980s, we would have basketball matches at the YMCA with other faculty members." He still remains active in sports, formerly playing softball and basketball on a team at Mt. Hermon Baptist Church where he is currently a deacon and Chairman of the Repairs and Maintenance committee. He still plays golf about three times a week.

Clayton, along with his wife, Jolanda, have a daughter, Whitney, a son, Wickham, and two grandchildren, Catie and Little Wick, to whom he has attempted to pass on his skills. He has coached his children's teams in T-ball, Little League baseball, and indoor soccer while they were in elementary and middle school. He has taught Catie, 12, to play golf, and Little Wick, 2, to throw and kick a ball.

The second honoree, Dr. Shirley Day Primiano, remembers the days when Danville Community College's sports program was totally missing. The Community College legislation, passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1966, specifically denied funding for sports at community colleges, thus from 1966 to 2002, sports programs did not exist on the community college campus.

“We sat down, a group of us, about the year 2000, with Dr. Ramsey, to discuss how to fund sports at DCC. I, along with Pat Daly and H. F. Haymore, inductees last year, served on the Foundation Board—we all three were at that initial and succeeding meetings. The overriding issue, of course, was how to fund sports on the DCC campus; there wasn’t any money; we couldn’t use state funds.”

Eventually, the group decided that a golf tournament would be the vehicle to help develop funds for the sports program. A portion of the money raised from the tournament would undergird sports programs for a maximum of three years to help the programs move toward self-sustainability.

From the opening pitch in 2002 until five years ago, Primiano and her husband John were constantly at the DCC Knights’ home games, cheering from the sidelines. Baseball was the first sport developed through monies raised in the annual golf tournament.

“We hired a coach; I listened to the recommendations; I think we chose a man of true passion—John Bailey. He took the program forward immediately. In the first year, the team won the state championship, but they couldn’t bring home the trophy; because sponsors of the tournament were so sure this first year, upstart team wouldn’t make it that they had the other team’s name engraved on the trophy ahead of the tournament. But we beat them, and they had to purchase a new trophy with *DCC Knights* on the award.”

From that start, Primiano served tirelessly on the Baseball Advisory Committee. According to Coach Bailey, “She is one of three or four original committee members. She has been on the advisory committee since day one. She makes things happen. She is so important to our program that I have cancelled meetings when she couldn’t be present. She is an advocate for baseball, a monetary supporter every year and someone who can always put action behind needs.”

Primiano explained that one of her desires, a bus, was just too much of an undertaking, but “I didn’t like those students out on the road on cars for long trips to opponents. We didn’t give up on better transportation. We did get a van purchased, which has helped tremendously. And John Bailey gets things done; these players raise their own funds, listen to him, and work hard. This team has been state champions or first runner ups since this program started. And we sought to start other sports programs for the students,” she added.

In looking back, Primiano notes that sports participation is in her genes and in her early, formative years. Her grandfather played baseball; her mother played on the 1938 state championship basketball team but wouldn’t allow Primiano to move up to varsity play in basketball when she was solicited by the coach while Primiano was in eighth grade—varsity was too rough, her mother cautioned. Her father owned the South Boston Speedway and raced when Wendell Scott, local NASCAR driver, was racing, early in his career. “We’ve always been very competitive, sports wise; I still shoot a tough game of pool,” she explained.

In Primiano’s career, she graduated from Longwood College with a teaching degree with specializations in counseling, guidance and special education after which she received her Master’s Degree in Psychology from Lynchburg College and her doctorate in Educational Psychology from Columbia Pacific University. Teaching in Danville and Pittsylvania County for 18 years, she gained experience that would serve her as she joined the Child Development Clinic for the next 17 years, eventually being hired by the Virginia Department of Education to supervise field consultants.

For seven years, she taught psychology classes at DCC. Beyond these responsibilities, she served as an elected member of Danville City Council for ten years and was, in past years, a member of the debriefing team for the Life Saving Crew, which led her to train for licenses in trauma, mass destruction, responding to critical situations and stress management. She is a 25 year member of the DCC Educational Foundation, giving countless hours to college funding initiatives which have helped add scholarships and support countless student needs and is also serving on the Danville Industrial Development Authority serving local residents.

She was president of the Science Center Board, is a past member of the Luncheon Rotary Club, was president of the Danville Exchange Club and is a member of the Wednesday Club. In her free time, she has become the Regent of the Dorothea Henry Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and President of the Henry Corbin Chapter of the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century.

The third honoree, Grady Tuck, coached basketball at Danville Technical Institute from 1964-1967. "The team had a real disadvantage in those days; we practiced at a little gym at Robert E. Lee Junior High School but had to play on big courts in the Cavalier-Tarheel Conference. We played Ferrum, Lynchburg, Chowan, College of the Albemarle, Gardner-Webb, and National Business College," Tuck explained.

Noting the highlights of the teams, Tuck said, "We may not have always won, but Jesse Meadows was in the top ten in scoring average in college basketball in the nation. In his first year playing, he averaged 27 points per game and in the second year he averaged "only" 20 points because of constant double teaming when he played. I got to coach Bruce Burnett, the strongest guy in the association while Bill Vaughan was the most dedicated basketball player I ever coached.

Previous to coaching basketball, Tuck played basketball for the Marine Corps as well as in high school. He coached junior high teams along with coaching DTI's team, but when the Virginia Community College System was launched, the sports program "had to go to club status," Tuck explained.

Commenting on Tuck's career in basketball, Vickie Taylor, DCC professor, explained, "Some of the trophies I sent to the Learning Resource Center were won by teams coached by Grady. I remember his stories about traveling with the students to away games and how they would have to get the food to bring back to the team members to eat on picnic tables, because there were blacks and whites on the team. Obviously, this was prior to the Civil Rights Act."

Tuck began the intramural program at DCC operating softball for five years handling scheduling, umpiring, everything. Softball began as a male sport at the college but became co-ed very quickly. With games operating from 3-5 p.m., Tuck functioned as the sports coordinator, planner, and all-around sports operator until his college counselor position changed. When he became coordinator of admissions, his work hours overlapped the team hours, so he had to resign.

Vickie Taylor assumed the intramural sports position. "He taught me most of what I knew. He taught me how to referee flag football, umpire a softball game, how to line the softball field and even how to sweep the water off the field. He prepared me very well for my position as Coordinator of Student Activities.

Tuck still played city league basketball and softball. In Halifax County, he played semi-professional baseball for ten years and continued to play softball in Danville until he reached the age of 50. Chosen to play in Roxboro, NC, for the All-Star Team from

Virgilina, Virginia, Tuck's team played the All-Star team from Camp LeJeune. The game was tied in the ninth inning. As a centerfielder, Tuck saw the LeJeune team score the winning run.

With four children and fifteen grandchildren, Tuck has found many opportunities to coach young people, coaching Little League and at Coates Elementary School.

In his early years, Tuck earned his B.S. degree in Physical Education from Elon University, attained his Master's Degree in Counseling from the University of Virginia and his doctorate in Community College Administration from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. From 1956 to 1958 he served in the U.S. Marine Corps.