

VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

catalyst

**A QUARTERLY DIGEST
of NEWS of SPECIAL
INTEREST to the
COMMUNITY**

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In this issue...

BIG BUSINESS HELPS SMALL BUSINESS — a look at Howard Carter, owner of one of the largest car dealerships in British Columbia, and a man who takes time from his heavy schedule to act as mentor to students in Langara Campus's small business development program.

ELECTRONICS: FLYING INTO THE FUTURE — a talk with Brian Margetts, a vice-president of Pacific Avionics and a Vancouver Vocational Institute graduate, who advises the electronics program on developments in this greatly expanding and increasingly more complex industry.

NEW EXPANSION IN MECHANICAL TRADES — see how new technology and the quest for cheaper fuels are changing life in the classroom.

"BE OUR GUEST" SAYS K.E.C. — King Edward is a pioneer on the Vancouver education scene, but the old man starts life over in a new streamlined, 24,000 square meter campus in Mount Pleasant. Mark November 4 on your calendar and pay a visit!

President's Introduction



A. S. Manera, President of VCC.

An agent of change — that's the role we take on at Vancouver Community College. As fast-paced technological advances and the information explosion transform the world, we give our students skills to cope with this change on the job, in the community and in their own lives. When it came time to name this magazine, "The Catalyst" was an apt choice.

As you look through this first issue you will see education is a far from static process. At VCC we continually reach out to business, industry, labour, social services, government and even the individual, taking the pulse of our modern world and building programs that meet needs not just today, but well into the future.

Here you meet two of the several hundred people active in business and industry who sit on Vancouver Community College advisory committees, providing direction and guidance on our programs. A story on the mechanical trades shows how future concerns are translated in the classroom today, where, for instance, our diesel mechanics students are in the forefront of testing experiments on dual fuel systems. And we briefly introduce you to King Edward Campus, our new, streamlined facility, created to meet educational needs into the next century.

I look forward to your ideas and comments.

A.S. Manera
President

BIG BUSINESS helps small business



Howard Carter, Langara Campus, Advisory Committee Member.

The road to creating a successful business is rough and hazardous, as any entrepreneur will attest. In these days of recession, an astounding number of ventures fall by the wayside. Yet, despite the odds, there are hundreds of people waiting to take this route.

Vancouver Community College offers a kind of insurance to the aspiring entrepreneur through its small business development program. This one year certificate program at Langara Campus helps people with any number of business aspirations over the initial hurdles, grounding them in communication, marketing, finance, management and business planning skills.

Theory is great, but practice is the true test of business acumen. While students obviously can't put their ideas immediately into practice, they can benefit from decades of successful business experience accrued by the 12 people who sit on the program's advisory committee.

Howard Carter, owner of Carter Pontiac Buick Ltd., one of the largest car dealerships in the province, is one member who works with students, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses in their business plans and giving them insight into the market place.

"I came onto the advisory committee three years ago," Carter explains, sitting in his quiet, spacious office, a few paces away from the hum of activ-

ity of the year with wine and cheese. I really enjoy this because we can move around and talk with the students, get to know them, find out where they are going and what they hope to do.

"You know, not everyone in a program like this is just out of high school. Some are, but the age range goes up into the thirties. Many of these people have worked for someone else and are now ready to branch out on their own. They have a skill or a talent, but they may not have the business acumen to put it to work. Along with the classroom studies, that's what we help them hone."

He goes on to cite an example. Last year there was a fellow in the program with terrific potential. He operated an electronics repair shop from the basement of the family home. But he wanted to expand and set up properly, handling the shop as a business, with proper accounting and inventory systems.

"He had a skill," Carter says, "and it was obvious there was a need for what he could do. But he required training in all the systems that support a business. And the program gave him that."

Throughout their study, students develop and refine a plan tailored for their particular business. As these plans progress they meet again with the advisory committee members. "Our members come from all kinds of business backgrounds so we can provide a variety of information and criticism," Carter explains. "Once they have their plans in order we go over them and try to spot the holes. We ask them about capital. 'How are you going to get through those first months when money's going out but not coming in?' 'You can't work 36 hours a day and the way you're set up you'd have to do that.' These are the sorts of things we can tell them from our own experience."

Howard Carter is anything but a small businessman. As one of the leaders in this province's automotive industry, he employs more than 100 people, does an annual sales volume in the millions of dollars and is associated with General Motors, a worldwide corporation. How does he relate to the struggles and concerns of people attempting to start small businesses?

"I didn't start out with my own dealership, needless to say," Carter explains. "Actually my father was one of the pioneer car dealers in Winnipeg. So I had the car business in my blood. I started out to be an architect. But after two years of that I knew I didn't want to continue, so I went to work for my father. When I was in school I'd spent

Big business helps small business can't

half my time selling cars to the professors and the veteran students — this was just after the war.

"It took me a fairly long time, but by the early sixties I put together everything I owned in the world and came out here to buy a business that was for sale in Kerrisdale. We've grown and expanded tremendously since then. Though we've had our ups and downs too. This isn't the first recession the business community's been through. When I started out I had my whole life invested in the venture. To go into business you have to be prepared to do that."

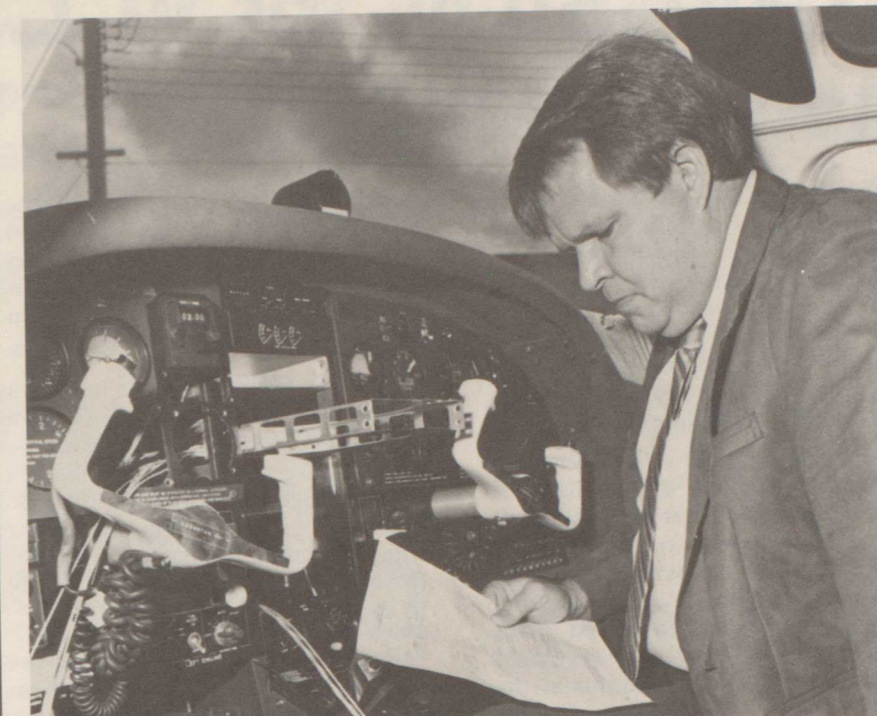
Howard Carter took a great number of management courses offered through General Motors, even attending the company's own accredited university, as he prepared to go on his own. "Even today people from throughout the operation are going to classes and seminars to upgrade their knowledge and to learn about new systems and technologies, particularly in the area of computers," he says.

In the case of a large business like Carter's, the parent company provides training. But in the case of individual entrepreneurs or small businesses with limited resources, programs such as those at VCC offer the skills and knowledge they need.

"I think that's one of the most important roles the college can play," Carter stresses, "teaching people how to cope with new developments."

Overseeing Carter Pontiac Buick takes most of Howard Carter's time. "I've been trying to fit in French lessons," he says, "but I only make about one class in four. It seems business always intervenes." Along with the time he gives to Vancouver Community College he is active in the Vancouver Symphony. Music is a shared family interest. His wife Marnie is active in staging the annual Vancouver Community College Spring Festival.

Looking back on a career that has a solid record of success, Carter contemplates the qualities that got him where he is today. "No matter what you want to do you have to have confidence and determination," he says. "If you don't believe you're going to succeed you won't. It won't make any difference how skilled you are or what talents you have. Going into business takes a total commitment. This is one of the key factors I look for when I talk with students in the small business development program."



Brian Margetts advises on VVI electronic programs.

ELECTRONICS: flying into the future

Brian Margetts has come full circle. In 1965 he graduated from the electronics program at Vancouver Vocational Institute. Today, 18 years later, he heads a program advisory committee, made up of representatives from the industry, who give guidance and advice with an eye to ensuring students coming out of VVI's electronics program can meet the needs of this rapidly expanding industry.

To this task, Margetts brings a broad range of experience acquired as vice-president and general manager of Pacific Avionics and the company's chief avionics inspector for Transport Canada. He grew with the company. When he was hired, as a technician newly graduated from VVI, the firm had only a handful of employees. Now the firm, in which he has become a partner, has up to 40 employees.

Avionics is the application of electronics to aviation. In the early years Pacific Avionics mainly worked on aircraft communications systems. But over the last decade, with increasingly more electronic instrumentation, the firm expanded to take in all instrumentation on aircraft, ranging from tiny Ultralights to corporate and commu-

ter jets. Today they design systems, trouble shoot, do maintenance and repairs on a wide range of sophisticated aviation equipment for companies throughout the world.

The ever-expanding area of electronic aircraft equipment and lightning pace of technological advances demand a technician who can adapt. "In our firm technicians are constantly challenged by new products," Margetts notes. But, he goes on to add, this keeps them interested and combats boredom or complacency.

The half-life of a technician is about four years unless that person is committed to keeping pace with development in the industry," he says. So life-long learning is a fact of day-to-day life in electronics.

Margetts takes time from a heavy schedule to sit on the electronics program advisory committee at VVI because, he says, "As a company manager I want constant input to ensure the product, even if I'm not looking to hire right now." He is concerned that graduates have skills to meet the industry's demands.

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EXPANSION for VCC mechanical trades

Perhaps the most visible presence on the new King Edward Campus is the mechanical trades. Machinery in diesel mechanics occasionally billows white smoke over the campus and, behind the glass and steel garage doors that span the north side of the campus, coveralled students are seen leaning over engines or welding on fenders.

Diesel mechanics, auto mechanics and autobody repair date from 1949, when they became part of the curriculum at Vancouver Vocational Institute. With VVI space at a premium and changes in the industry arguing for more equipment and expanded facilities, the mechanical trades were slated to join King Edward Campus at the new China Creek location, opened this spring. In fact, the mechanical trades moved last fall into some old buildings



New, expanded facilities at KEC.

on the site, before the new campus was completed, becoming the first residents on the new site.

Just as other industries are buffeted by world economic trends and the advances of technology, so too are the automotive trades.

As department head Bob Brady explains, diesel mechanics originally started to supply people for the marine industry. "But over the years diesel power expanded tremendously," he says, "going into off-highway equipment, heavy trucks and so on. So con-

sequently the program changed, too. Now only about 25 percent of our graduates go to the maritime industry. The majority go to employers dealing with heavy equipment, diesel engine rebuild specialists, that sort of thing.

"We're seeing a lot more in the way of electronic controls, but basic diesel concepts haven't changed over the years. We're pretty broadly based. If we can teach the student to think for himself logically, it doesn't matter what he goes on to do or what changes there are in the industry, he'll be able to cope."

Recently the diesel mechanics program has done a lot of specialty testing for research projects. This is part of the federal government's push to convert diesel engines and heavy equipment

over to cheaper natural gas. "We've just completed tests with B.C. Hydro on converting diesel to natural gas," Brady explains, "and we have another contract coming up with UBC on converting truck engines and heavy mining trucks to a dual fuel concept. In other words, converting them so they can run on diesel or natural gas.

"This is not to say the diesel machine is becoming obsolete. I believe it will certainly be around in the next century. But it won't necessarily be running on diesel fuel. Even though

diesel is better than gasoline, there is a big push to improve its efficiency. Researchers feel they can almost double it. And we're heavily involved in the tests they're doing."

Just as electronic wizardry is making inroads in our daily lives, so too is it revolutionizing the automobiles we drive. "We're training people to enter an industry that's changed almost 180 degrees in five years," auto mechanics instructor Dennis O'Neill states.

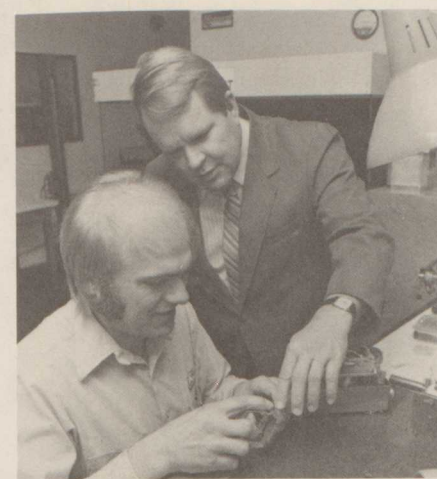
"Automobiles have become very sophisticated electronically. Many of the systems are solid state. You need a technician who can diagnose them properly. If you don't, you'll wind up spending a fortune on repairs. From the advent of the automobile until the late seventies repair procedures changed very little. But in the last few years they've changed far more radically than they did in the first 60 years. Now you almost need to be an electronics specialist."

In autobody repair, explains instructor Ken Whitney, methods have stayed much the same over the years but materials are always changing. "We get innovations in paint and the metallurgy changes too," he explains. "Parts are getting lighter all the time and many of them are disposable."

All mechanical trades training at Vancouver Community College is pre-employment training. That is, it is designed to take students to a point where they can work at entry level jobs in the industry. Most of the students in diesel mechanics and autobody repair go on to apprenticeship, working three years in the industry and returning to school for six weeks each year, before collecting their journeymen's papers. Because of the rapid, across-the-board changes in automechanics, many of the students go immediately into specialized areas after graduation and do not go on to get their general mechanic's papers.

"In some ways the apprenticeship system hasn't been able to keep up with changes in the industry," O'Neill says. "Because cars have become such sophisticated pieces of equipment there aren't too many general mechanics who repair all cars. In Vancouver most people send their cars to a couple of different specialty shops — one for brakes, another for mufflers, still another for transmissions.

"These kinds of shops aren't interested in hiring a general mechanic. They want someone with a solid mechanical background and the basic training to come into a shop and learn the specialty quickly."



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He credits instructors at VVI with being "very responsive" to what people in the field are telling them.

"It takes just such keen people, prepared to struggle to produce the product the industry wants."

Margetts admires the program for its practicality. "Whereas test equipment is glorified in some places, at VVI students learn to use the equipment they are actually going to encounter in the industry."

Expansion for VCC mechanical trades can't

O'Neill goes on to say that automotive graduates go on to a variety of jobs in areas where a basic foundation in the trade is an asset. "We have people go on to become insurance appraisers and adjusters, service managers for large dealers or parts managers for retail stores, like Canadian Tire. In all these cases they are helped by having some technical background, but they don't need their papers."

Though many of those out working in the industry get on-the-job training, there is definite need for upgrading programs to keep them in tune with rapid changes in technology and workmanship. This was one of the prime assumptions when the new facilities, with 5,000 square meters of shop, lab and study space, were built.

But, as instructors explain, in these times of restraint, expansion into upgrading has been shelved, at least in part.

"In this case, it is unfortunately not a matter of handing out 100 pencils and pieces of paper," Brady says. "We're very capital intensive. You have to appreciate that there are already 56 students a day lining up to use the equipment we've got."

Recently the electronics program was reorganized with a six month basic program leading to one of two advanced program options: electronic technician or computer electronics.

While Pacific Avionics hires only technicians, Margetts' knowledge of the industry generally convinces him there is an "absolute need" for the computer option. His own experience as a student leads him to believe that dividing the training into different levels is the right route to go. Uncertain about what he really wanted to do, he left the VVI electronics program at one point and, on the advice of his instructor, went to work for Canadian General Electric for a few months. When he came back with some work experience, he had a far clearer idea of the direction he wanted to go in the industry.

Though no one graduating from VVI could be a ready-made avionics expert, Pacific Avionics is prepared to invest the three to five years it will take to get a new graduate there. Students coming out of the program have, Margetts says, versatile, basic skills that are the foundation for specialized training on the job. As he puts it, "the product is right."

The future of the industry is an almost exponential growth, he forecasts. "The industry is becoming extremely complex and, more importantly, it is becoming non-repairable." That is, technicians are increasingly called upon to analyze what components need replacing, rather than repairing. The trend is toward analytic skills.



All mechanical trades training at Vancouver Community College is pre-employment training.

"It's this hands-on training that makes our graduates employable," O'Neill explains. "They haven't just had theory, they've had practice. Today, when you're hiring someone at between \$5 and \$7 an hour you can't afford to make a big investment in training. You have to find someone who can go right to work."

We get a lot of equipment second-hand," Brady says. "Then the students rebuild it. This gives them experience and saves us a lot of dollars in equipment costs."

While the economic downturn has made jobs harder to come by, none of the mechanical programs has suffered greatly. Graduates have to look longer than they did in more prosperous times and some have to go farther afield than the Lower Mainland.

"Actually one benefit we're finding," Brady notes, "is that people are looking to repair equipment rather than replace it with new."

There seem to be a good number of men and women, too, who think mechanical trades can provide them with a good future. Wait lists to get into the program range up to two-and-a-half years.



“BE OUR GUEST” says KEC

“King Edward at your service,” that’s the theme for a day of information, education, entertainment and fun, as the newest addition to the Vancouver Community College family proudly opens its doors to the public, Friday, November 4, from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Along with academic upgrading, from grade school through high school, and English language training, King Edward Campus oversees career programs in music, homemaking and institutional aides, pharmacy assistant and para-professional worker for the hearing-impaired and visually-impaired. And with the move to the new campus at 1155 East Broadway, mechanical trades joined KEC, with autobody repair, auto mechanics and diesel mechanics.

You can see most of these programs in action on open house day. Here are some of the highlights:

- a tour through the mechanical training facilities, where you can get a peek at a road simulator at work and see what a frame straightening machine does
- drop in on a graduation ceremony to see the rewards of long, hard work
- listen to jazz, choir and chamber music performed by our students
- experience what it is like to learn a foreign language
- take a class in sign language
- drop into our learning centre and look at classes in action
- relax in the cafeteria overlooking the city

While the campus on East Broadway is new, “King Edward” has a long tradition in secondary and post-secondary education in this city. It was the name given to one of the city’s pioneer high schools at the corner of Oak and West 12 Avenue. The school became a satellite of McGill University and as such home to the first post-secondary courses offered in British Columbia. Later the school was reborn as King Edward Adult Secondary and Senior Matriculation Centre, the first high school in Canada offering day and evening programs solely for adults. When what was then called Vancouver City College came into being in 1965 King Edward Centre was home for university transfer and career programs. Many of these programs went to Langara Campus when it was built in 1970 and through the early part of the last decade what had become King Edward Campus developed a mix of programs primarily concentrated on educational upgrading and English language training.

In 1973 a fire destroyed all the old high school buildings, except for the gymnasium. This and a temporary building were to house the campus for the next ten years.

The fire, the sale of the land to Vancouver General Hospital and the growing enrolment — under 1,000 in the early seventies to about 7,000 today — made a new campus imperative.

The Mount Pleasant site was a logical choice. The college was moving into the east end of the city where many King Edward Campus students live and work. The site, on a gentle slope from East Broadway to East 7th Avenue, was once the home of the bicycle track built for the 1954 Commonwealth Games.

The new, 24,000 square meter campus is the product of a committee that joined architects, planners, staff, instructors and administrators together to create a centre that would meet a broad range of needs. In addition to housing King Edward programs the campus is home to Continuing Education’s headquarters and the college’s board and central administrative offices. For the first time the college has a full service library and study area, a language lab, a bookstore, student lounges and a cafeteria.

Mark November 4 on your calendar and stop by to take a look at our new home!