

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD

UNADOPTED MINUTES

October 7, 2009

APPENDIX A

A tribute to BENITA HATCHER, by David R. Brannen

Good Evening Friends. Unfortunately, I bear incredibly sad tidings tonight. One of SCC's bright beacons of light, my dear friend and more-than-worthy colleague, Miss Benita Hatcher, suddenly and unexpectedly passed away last week. She will be missed by all who knew her here at SCC.

Benita represented all that is wholesome and good at Solano Community College. Already a vocal member of the Athletic Boosters, she came to us at ASSC in the fall of 2004, at the urging of a close friend and former ASSC Senator, and submitted her application to serve as ASSC's Health & PE Senator for the term. At that time, the ASSC Executive Board, of which I was a member, felt very strongly that the Student Senate should reflect the entire cross-section of the student population at SCC. Benita represented a potential coup for ASSC in that department, as she already stood as a prominent student leader and advocate for both the PE and DSP programs at the College. She also had overcome a slew of personal life obstacles, and had successfully steered her way from the brink of personal destruction to the very positive place of rebuilding her life in a productive and rewarding fashion. We were impressed with Benita's achievement at self-renewal, and cautiously appointed her to the position. The Semester then began in earnest!

We were immediately faced with Benita's ardor and passion for what she saw to be the right course of action concerning any given issue. Just as with meetings of SCC's Governing Board, discussion at ASSC meetings can become somewhat contentious from time to time. It was no different during Benita's tenure. At the time of her initial term as Senator, Benita was unaccustomed to abiding by standard rules of etiquette, decorum, and parliamentary procedure; we frequently felt compelled to admonish her to wait her turn and utilize civil language in her discourse with her colleagues on the Student Senate. I remember how aghast I became at these outbursts at the time, but now, ironically, I remember them quite fondly. Frankly, most of the time, they were just damn funny! However, Benita did not mean to be funny- she desperately wanted to meaningfully and effectively serve the student interest, and to learn the proverbial 'tools of the trade', so to speak.

And so, we embarked upon a course of teaching Benita how to use those tools. The Executive Board developed a sort of sign language with Benita- if she began to get too worked up about something, one of us would call her name to get her attention and simultaneously hold up a pencil. At the sight of the pencil, Benita would know it was

time to shut up- and, she did so, because she wanted to do the right thing and let everyone have a chance to speak on the issue at hand. Eventually, Benita put her own twist on these incidents: upon receiving the 'pencil sign', she would take her own pencil and place it in her mouth, clamping down and holding it there until others had exhausted their opportunity to speak. It was an effective tactic, much appreciated by all. At our final meeting of the fall semester, the E-Board presented Benita with a huge pencil, about a foot long and about an inch or so in diameter, to symbolize her achievement of attaining such a good measure of self control. To our everlasting amusement and satisfaction, Benita returned in the spring and began to utilize *THAT* pencil when she sensed the need to take a breather from the discussion.

Benita went on to serve for three straight years on the Student Senate. Afterward, when health and other considerations forced her to scale back her commitment, she never wavered in serving in whatever capacity she could manage, and was always nearby, volunteering to undertake whatever job needed done, no matter how small or dirty it might be. Unlike many of our fellow ASSC members, Benita never failed to complete a task to which she had been commissioned, nor did she ever 'flake out' or express discontent at being asked to do it. We always knew we could count on Benita, no matter what.

In recent years, Benita's health took a general turn for the worse, and she began to suffer seizures more frequently. In order to continue her commitment to SCC and its students, she obtained a service dog to help her along. 'Aries' became Benita's faithful sidekick, and we all learned to love her as well. Benita and Aries could always be found about the Fairfield campus, performing one task or another. Sometimes, they could even be found assisting with the preparation of this very room for SCC's meetings of the Governing Board of Trustees. With Aries' assistance, Benita kept on truckin', consistently doing her part to achieve SCC's mission for all.

Benita, I am proud to say, was probably the best damn ASSC member ever to grace this campus. She was happy to serve, and both tirelessly and selflessly advocated for the cause of her fellow students. She was a better person than I, and I daresay many others here at SCC as well. It would be entirely fitting for the ASSC to endow a suitable memorial in her honor, as she did more to advance the student interest than many who enter these chambers have ever done themselves.

In this life, we make many acquaintances, some of great distinction. However, Benita Hatcher stood far apart from such individuals. She was a person of the absolute highest class of humility, integrity and honor. Benita was my colleague. Benita was my dear, sweet friend. I love her, I miss her terribly, and the world and SCC in particular are much worse off without her here. However, anyone who knew Benita knows that her spirit lives on at SCC, and I know that her influence will continue to be felt as long as people who knew her remain a part of this organization.

In closing, I'd like to share the reflections of former ASSC President Shawn Bee, upon receiving the news of Benita's untimely passing. He writes: "It is very sad to hear this news of the passing of such a great good hearted person as Benita! She gave selflessly to everyone and never complained about it. She was always there to help no

matter of her condition that day. She never let anything stop her from always being there for all of us when we needed her. She was a great asset to both Solano College and the ASSC. I wish I had been able to see her one last time before she had passed, but I know that no matter what she will always be around because as everyone knows...Benita just won't leave! She was a great friend and a wonderful person and she touched the lives of many people even if she didn't know it.

Please keep me updated with any additional information and if there will be services. I regretfully will not be able to attend services given my location, but I hope that someone will extend my heartfelt sympathy. Benita will be missed, but never forgotten.”

Here's to you, Benita! You will be sorely missed.