

Clark College honors Vietnam War veterans by dedicating Witness Tree



More than 100 Vietnam War veterans, families and supporters gathered at Clark College on March 29 to dedicate a Witness Tree commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.



Left to right: Clark College Board of Trustee Chair Paul Speer with Col. Larry Smith (Ret) and Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle

Hosted by the Community Military Appreciation Committee, the event began with a

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Col. Mike Burton, USAF (ret) said, "Many Vietnam vets are still carrying the scars, both mental and physical. When they came back, nobody talked about it. Nobody wanted to talk about it."

Then the crowd walked outside along a sidewalk lined with veterans holding American and military flags and stopped at the base of a majestic Turkish black fir to dedicate the tree.

Clark College Board of Trustees Chair Paul Speer told the crowd that selecting the campus as the site of the Vietnam War Witness Tree "recognizes the important role that Clark College has played for generations of veterans and their families whether in supporting their educational goals or their struggle with the physical and emotional scars that have been inflicted upon them. Whether in the classroom, at the Veteran's Resource Center, or in the community, Clark has provided a beacon of hope, opportunity, and transformation for 90 years and will continue to do so for at least the next 90."

Vietnam veterans' connection to Clark College



Left to right: Vietnam War Veteran Luis Munoz, US Navy 1960-64 received a service pin at the event, and Vietnam War Veteran Larry Lewton, 72, US Navy 1969-71.

Many Vietnam veterans attended the event, and many had Clark College connections. Luis Munoz served in the US Navy aboard the *USS Canberra* from 1960 to 1964. When he returned home to Vancouver, he took mechanical engineering classes at Clark. Munoz's career included working in the missile program at Lockheed.

Larry Lewton served in the US Navy aboard the *USS Kittyhawk*. After his military service, he took photography classes at Clark College, had a career as a medical photographer and worked at OHSU in Portland.

Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle told the crowd that President Barack Obama proclaimed March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day in 2012. The day is meant to be observed with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that commemorate the 50-year anniversary of when the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam of March 29, 1973.

McEnery-Ogle said, "In Vancouver we prioritize honoring all

veterans and their families for the sacrifice and their service for this country. Let's remind all who were in that conflict that they are still respected, still honored 50 years later."

Photographs: Clark College/Susan Parrish