

Remembering President Bob Knight



Left to right: Wilma Raines, Dave Smith, and Ceci Ryan Smith gathered to remember Bob Knight.

PUB 161 was packed with the Clark College community—both present and past—as they gathered to share stories about former Clark President Bob Knight during a remembrance event on January 10.

Knight, who led Clark College as president from 2007 to 2019, passed away on December 14. He was 67.

Penguin Nation Remembers Bob Knight

Julie Taylor, who worked in the president's office, experienced Knight's sense of humor and practical jokes daily.

Taylor said, "Bob had a tradition of buying the loudest, most obnoxious penguin toys and lined them up on my counter. As he

left for the day, he would activate every penguin toy on his way out, and said, 'See you later, Julie.'" Taylor would be serenaded by a loud, obnoxious penguin chorus at the end of every day.

Mark Magdaleno, head baseball coach, said that in his 43 years as a professional baseball coach, Bob Knight understood the value of student athletes. He said, "Bob knew our athletes had a choice of what college to attend. He embraced our athletes in their choice to attend Clark."

Magdeleno said Knight often attended Penguin baseball games, even after he retired. He added, "He cared about his student athletes. He cared about this school. God bless you. Let's go, Penguins!"

Michelle Golder, event services manager, shared several stories about Bob's fun-loving nature and the office pranks: "Bob lived every day to the fullest. He loved Clark and genuinely believed the work we did was making a difference in our community. He created the presidential coin to recognize Clark employees for going above and beyond."

She added, "After I organized my first commencement, Bob found me in my cubicle to especially thank me for a job well done. Kindness came second nature to Bob. He was one of the most genuine people who cared about others."



Sylvia Thornburg and Kathrena Halsinger.

Kathrena Halsinger, Interim Dean of Social Sciences and Fine Arts, recalled that Knight greeted her whenever they saw each other walking on campus. He also frequently attended the annual release parties for The Phoenix and opened the event.

Rhianna Johnson, currently director of Guided Pathways and Partnerships, was the director of Clark's educational programs at Larch Corrections Center in Yacolt when Knight was president.

Johnson said, "Bob was so supportive of the program. He always attended the graduation ceremonies. He also came to play basketball with Larch students. He really cared about helping incarcerated people reenter society successfully." She added, "We used to have Clark faculty and staff softball games. Bob was, of course, the pitcher."

Wilma Raines, a Clark alum and a longtime donor to Clark

College students and athletics, was Knight's workout buddy at O'Connell Sports Center. Raines said, "We hit the gym every morning at 6:30, and started with the elliptical."

Ceci Ryan-Smith, who was a Clark College alumni board president and Clark College Foundation board member when Knight was hired, said the leadership went around and around about Knight not holding a Ph.D. in Education, which is a typical requirement for a community college president. But Ryan-Smith spoke up on Knight's behalf: "He may not have a Ph.D. in education, but he had a Ph.D. in life. I believe ultimately, we all won because we got Bob."

Sudha Fredrick, vice president of Information Technology Service, Steven Clark, biology professor, and Sylvia Thornburg, who was dean of Instructional Planning during Knight's tenure, were among those who also shared their "Bob" stories.

Calen Ouellette, Chief Executive Officer at Clark College Foundation, served as emcee. He wrapped up the program by saying: "In closing, I encourage each of you to carry Bob's example with you. Whether it's through a kind word, a purposeful act of service, or a bold step toward a better future—honor his legacy by making a positive impact, just as he did. Thank you for joining us today to remember Bob Knight. His legacy will forever inspire the Penguin Nation."

Learn more:

Read our December 20, 2024, story recapping Bob Knight's legacy and milestones at Clark College.

Read *The Columbian's* January 13, 2025, story recapping Bob Knight's memorial service attended by hundreds at the Vancouver waterfront.

Photos: Clark College/Susan Parrish