

Exemplary Citizenship



Bob '50 and Sally '55 Schaefer with Oswald at the Clark County First Citizen ceremony

Clark College alumnus Robert Bob Schaefer 50 has plenty of accomplishments and accolades to his name: former Washington state Speaker of the House, a Fifty-Year Award of Honor from the Washington State Bar Association, 2006 Outstanding Clark Alumnus. On Oct. 1, he added another honor to that list when he was formally named the 2013 Clark County First Citizen.

Schaefer joined a group of 71 other community standouts during a ceremony at the Hilton Vancouver Washington.

Pat Jollota, the 2012 First Citizen, presented this year's award to Schaefer after lauding him as "a very wise person." Others called him a "solutions person" with a gift for bringing people together to improve things in his community.

A video highlighted Schaefer's career, volunteer activities and family life. The presentation touched upon how Schaefer and his wife, Sally, have worked for decades to ensure a brighter future for Southwest Washington. Some of Schaefer's lifelong passions include early learning education; local government leadership; and economic development, particularly the high-tech industry. He was instrumental in establishing Washington State University's Vancouver campus and in creating Paradise Point State Park.

The event had a definite Clark College connection from the beginning—with musical performances by Clark students—to the end, when Schaefer announced he was donating half of his \$1,000 award to Clark College Foundation.

Such generosity has been a hallmark of Schaefer's career. Schaefer, 83, explained to the audience how he and his sister were adopted as children and were raised to help others. He grew up in Clark County, attending Vancouver public schools and Clark College, where he met Sally (Clark College class of 1955, recipient of the 2012 Iris Award, and a First Citizen recipient herself). He later transferred to Willamette University to study law.



Clark College President Bob Knight, *far right*, and SEH Vice President of Operations Ben

Bagherpour '75, far left,
congratulate Bob Schaefer '50,
center, on his award.

After passing the bar, he got a job with Clark County Prosecutor's Office, while serving in the Army Reserves. He ran for the Washington State Legislature in 1958, spending \$560 on his campaign. He won that election, going on to serve four terms, from 1959 to 1967, and serving as Speaker of the House in his last term.

Reflecting on his past political work, Schaefer bemoaned the lack of compromise and personal relationships between current political parties. "I think it's a sad commentary of our system that these (personal relationships) are not taking place today," he said.

On the day that the federal government partially shut down because of legislative stalemate, he reminded the audience that public officials must compromise: "You just don't get your way," he said. "It has to be worked out, and it has to be in the public interest."

Schaefer wrapped up his remarks with a reminder that Vancouver is a "can-do community."

"My prayer is that each of us can participate in some way to carry out this can-do philosophy for the future," he said.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley (see more photos on Flickr)