

Environmental Safety Specialist loses leg...

Attitude and humor makes for successful adjustment

by Tracy Grier and
Claudia Smulders
Staff Writers

How did you spend your winter break? If you were like us, you did some shopping, relaxed a little and battled the snow. There is one staff member at Clackamas Community College who spent his vacation in a different way.

George Sims, environmental safety specialist at CCC, spent his winter break recovering from having his left leg amputated. This was a result from a rare bone cancer, called Cardona Sarcoma, that attacks the cartilage. Sims found out he had the cancer Nov. 12, and by Dec. 1, he was in surgery to have his leg removed.

Knowing only that Sims had his leg amputated, we set up the interview. We were both worried about how the interview would evolve. We were scared that maybe Sims would not even want to talk about it.

When we were thinking about questions to ask Sims during the interview, we worried about how to bring the topic up. We also couldn't help but wonder how we would feel in the same situation. We came to the consensus that neither of us could handle facing anyone so soon after surgery, not to mention going to work.

When the interview began we both realized that the easiest way to handle the situation was to be completely honest and direct with Sims. The first few moments were awkward as we decided how to start, but after the initial question, "Why was your leg amputated?", the ball was rolling. After that, it seemed like we bombarded Sims with questions. Luckily, he survived it.

Sims had always had bad knees. So when his left one was swollen on Nov. 12 he went to the doctor and didn't worry too much about it. He left the doctor's office a completely different person.

That day was a turning point in his life. Sims, who had previously worked as a firefighter for 10 years and had also worked for the city of Oregon City, had to come home and tell his two sons the news. Sims is the single father of Ben, 16, and Matt, 14.

"At first they were kind of shocked, but they knew what was happening right up front," Sims said. He felt his sons handled the news pretty well. They had to realize life goes on. However, Sims said that now they are just grateful "that Dad is still there." This is especially evident since the cancer could reoccur at any time.

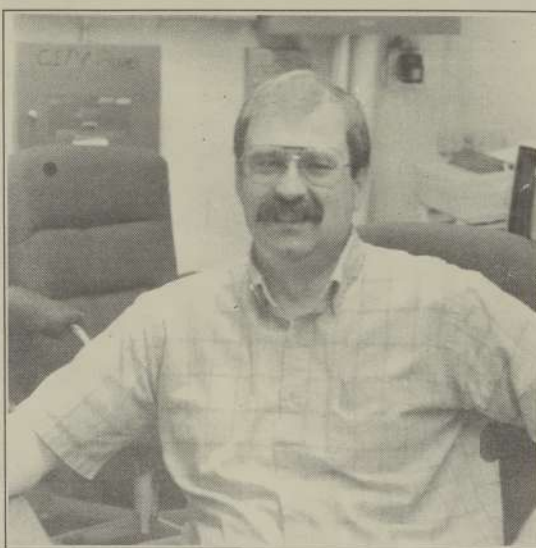


photo by Vivian Johnson

George Sims, environmental safety specialist, recently had his left leg amputated as a result of a rare bone cancer.

Sims sees himself as a very quiet person and pretty much kept what was happening to him quiet. The news spread quickly throughout the staff at CCC, though. Sims told us he was pleasantly surprised by the reaction of the people working here. He was very grateful for all the food they sent him, along with their prayers. He was very surprised at the warmth he

got from his co-workers.

They tried to make his life a little bit easier. "You usually don't find that in such a large place," Sims said. "It was like a big family taking care of one of its own ... it makes you feel happy to work here."

A lot of employees were surprised when Sims returned to work on Jan. 4, but Sims was

eager to get back. "It helps getting back into a normal routine," Sims explained. He said it helped "normalize" his life.

Sims doesn't feel that the loss of his leg has affected his job very much. "I can do 90 percent of the job without any difficulties," he said.

He does have trouble reminding himself that he can't carry things and use his crutches at the same time. He explained how his brain still thinks his leg is there and he has to remind it otherwise. Despite that, Sims feels that he has adjusted very well.

Sims said his successful adjustment is due to his attitude. He frequently proves his philosophy that you have to put humor into the situation. This has been helpful for him when dealing with the stares of curious people, especially children.

A lot of people could not see the situation in the same light, but they probably wouldn't have adjusted as well as Sims.

We were both overwhelmed with the feeling of respect we had for Sims following the interview. It made us feel like all our problems were petty compared to this. We only hope that if we were in a similar situation that we could handle it only half as well as George Sims.



photo by Vivian Johnson

Susanna Lundgren and Ron Rasch will be exhibiting this and other artwork in the Pauling Gallery through Feb. 9.

Art show receives positive feedback

by Nicole Turley
Staff Writer

The works of Susanna Lundgren and her husband Ron Rasch decorated the walls of the Pauling Gallery Jan. 9 during the exhibit's opening reception.

Many of the people who attended the reception from 12 to 2 p.m. were visual art students and instructors from Clackamas. "I look forward to more students showing up eventually," Rasch said.

Those attending gave much positive feedback as well as advice on how observers should approach viewing the drawings and paintings.

One Clackamas art student,

Trygve Berg, who aided in the transporting of the exhibit said, "It's important to take a deeper look at the paintings and avoid just taking in the first impression."

Lundgren hopes people will have open minds when approaching her work.

"It might take some people some time to understand the strong imagery," she said.

The large paintings by Lundgren and the smaller ink drawings by Rasch will be on display in the Pauling Gallery through Feb. 9.

Anyone interested in the exhibit can call ext. 2386 for more information.

Self-professed 'local boy' builds theater department

by Scott Morris
Co-Business Manager

The house that Jack built is an apt way to describe the Theater Arts department that has been under the supervision of Jack Shields, chairperson of Communication and Theater Arts classes, since its inception in 1972.

Shields, a self-professed "local boy," who grew up at the corner of 82nd Avenue and Sunnyside Road, was teaching at Clackamas High School when CCC recruited him to head up the fledgling Theater department.

"It was more like an appendix to the English department at the time," Shields explained.

Although he liked teaching at the high school level Shields admitted, "I don't think I would have lived this long at that pace."

With his high school experience behind him Shields is serious about his commitment to the college.

"It is my intention to stay here for the duration. The community college is the most important educational institution available in America today."

Shields believes that the community college gives the student a chance to "feel out" what they want to do with their lives. Something, due to price, that the four-year university can no longer provide for most students.

Another thing that may

draw Shields to the community college level is his own college experience. Shields spent time at Clark Community College between "washing out" after five terms as a pre-med. major at Oregon State University and getting his theater arts degree at Portland State University. It was at Clark that an instructor told him, "You ought to be a teacher."

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Shields continues to act while he teaches with more than 150 plays under his belt as an actor. Shields considers acting "imperative for one teaching the craft", and uses acting to gain insight on what it takes to be an actor.

Of his many roles in theater, including a 30-year run as Santa Claus, (a role he no longer plays), Tevya, the lead role in "Fiddler on the Roof", remains his favorite.

To go with his acting credits Shields has directed more than 230 plays to date. Like his acting credits, his directing credits have come at many different levels including high school, college, regional and community theater.

One of the aspects of Clackamas' Theater department that excites Shields is the accessibility of his program to the public as well as students.

"You don't have to be a student at CCC to be involved with our program, interest is all it takes to be involved. We provide a wide range of opportunity to work in and around the theater."

Due to budget cutbacks,

Shields' department is currently shrinking, not growing. Shields remains optimistic. "I would indeed enjoy the time when I could have a full-time technical director."

Even with the tight budget, the college does have a newly remodeled Theater department. "Yes I'm quite happy with the remodel(ing) overall," stated Shields, "but you must understand that the theater is, and always will be a sows ear, never a silk purse."

In the future, Shields would like to see Clackamas move in the direction of making itself into a cultural center.

"I would like very much for CCC to have a performing arts center with the capability to host invitational theater events," stated Shields. "This would also give us the capability to produce the theater that is most highly supported today, the big musical."

Shields cautions that a performing arts center would not make money for the college. "Never have the arts supported themselves, they exist for people not money."

With all the changes that have taken place at Clackamas and in his department over the years, Shields seems content.

"I'm proud of the theater area I have developed through the years. We have a very strong batting average of production excellence."