

For Whom the Letter Tolls

Clackamas Community College was recently donated a rare, unpublished letter by Ernest Hemingway

Sage Niles
The Clackamas Print

Clackamas Community College was treated to a gift that is not often bestowed upon community colleges. It received, from a private collector, a rare 80-year-old letter written by Ernest Hemingway.

The letter written in 1933, intended for his friend Charles Thompson, details deep sea fishing in Cuba, a car that he left in Florida and about setting a later date for a scheduled hunting trip to Africa. The letter was written in pencil while Hemingway was staying at a Havana hotel.

The donor is Larry Peterson,

a Lake Oswego based lawyer. Peterson came into possession of the letter at an auction in 1993 and it has largely sat untouched since then.

"I believe he paid about \$5,000 and it has recently been appraised at close to \$23,000," said CCC Major Gifts Officer, Vicki Smith.

The letter was given not only to the college but to the Alden E. Miller Law Library of Clackamas County.

"We drafted up a memo of understanding between us and the law library. Larry Peterson had to give it to one place so we could give him a receipt, so he gave it to CCC but we share ownership with the law library," said Smith.

Plans on unveiling the letter at CCC are still in the works and much is still on the table in regards to how to show the letter. Another concern is what the most responsible and academic way of handling the letter will be.

"We've been in touch with the National Hemingway Society and professors who study nothing but Hemingway," said Smith. "And they say don't

display the original and there are ways to get really good copies and I don't know where that will be displayed yet."

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Greg Fitzgerald
CCC Foundation Director

The English department has hopes for the letter as well and expressed interest in possibly passing the letter around to other colleges in the area. English Chair Dave Mount had some ideas about what could be done with the letter.

"I think one thing we could do is facilitate making sure that Hemingway scholars in

the area do know about it," he said. "Maybe writing a letter and sending it out to UO and OSU to let Hemingway experts in the area know it's here. It's kind of a responsibility actually."

Greg Fitzgerald, Foundation director, has overseen the letter since it first arrived at CCC.

"At this point we're leaving up how to display the letter to the English department. They are going to figure out what they want to do to unveil this. It'll be spring term," said Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald offered more concrete details on what the plans for the letter will be.

"We've had a lot of interest from Dr. Suzanne Clark at the University of Oregon, but also from Penn State University who has a project called the Hemingway Letters Project, and from the Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston," said Fitzgerald.

The Hemingway Letters Project at Penn State is a unique and ambitious project with their hopes to publish 6,000 of Hemingway's letters, and the letter that was donated to

CCC was previously unknown to them.

The college, however, cannot publish the letter or put out a transcript of the letter, and will rarely show the original.

"The content of the letter is copyrighted by the Hemingway family for some period of time, but it will be published in a series of books with the other Hemingway letters," said Fitzgerald.

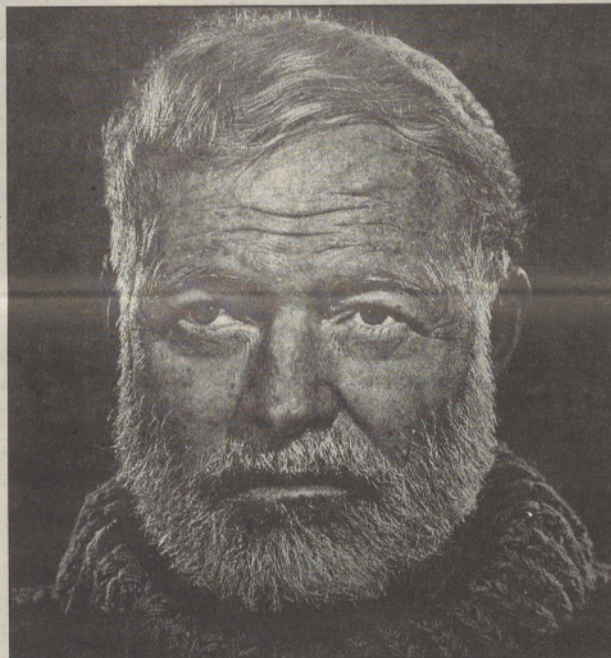
A donation of this size and importance is a fairly rare thing for the college, and overall everyone involved with the letter has expressed hope, joy and excitement at getting the opportunity to work with it.

"Certainly it adds to our academic status that we have another piece to add to our collection and our research collections. It's a good legacy for this college all the way around," said Fitzgerald.



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Daljish Clackamas County Law Librarian


Larry Peterson and wife Trina Peterson show off the letter. After acquiring the letter from an auction in 1993, Peterson decided to hand it over to CCC this past December.



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