

KeizerCommunity

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Weddlers leap into reading



Students at Weddle Elementary School took part in a literacy event at the school on Leap Day, Feb. 29. Attendees played games, listened to story readings and crafted their own book boxes.

A: Carrie Saucy-Bowersox performs as part of a book reading for Weddle students. B: Javier Garcia cuts out decorations for a book box. C: Lily Griffiths takes part in a word scramble. D: Brayden Smith looks over story card words.

KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald



Stumped no more



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

Roger Lorenz works on taking down a 300-year-old stump in front of the Keizer Lions Club building on Feb. 23, where Keizer Iris Festival events take place in May. Lorenz had a backhoe but first had to use a chainsaw on the stump.

Former councilor Al Miller remembered for baseball ties

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

Al Miller was a longtime Keizer attorney and served on the Keizer City Council throughout most of the 1990s.

He's most remembered for his baseball connections, however.

Miller, known as Big Al, passed away suddenly at his Keizer home on Feb. 16 at the age of 68. A service will be held Sunday, March 6 at 5 p.m. at the Keizer Elks Lodge. All attendees are asked to wear Oregon Duck gear.

Miller got his law degree from Willamette Law School in 1974 and opened his own law firm in Keizer in 1979, which he operated until his passing.

But baseball was always a passion for Miller.

Miller was born in Eugene in 1947 and played both baseball and football at the University of Oregon. He transferred to Eastern Oregon University for his senior year to focus on baseball and was on the 1970 championship team. Miller was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies and spent a year in the minor leagues in Walla Walla, Wash. as a pitcher before heading to law school.

Miller's community service was highlighted by his time on the city council. He joined the council in 1991 and stayed on until January 1999. He served as council president in 1993 and 1994.

During Miller's time on council, he and former mayor Dennis Koho were key in bringing the Bellingham Giants to Keizer. The team was rechristened the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes and started playing baseball at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer in 1997.

"Al Miller was a good friend," said Jerry Walker, Volcanoes co-owner along with wife Lisa. "He, along with Dennis Koho, were the driving forces behind the building of Volcanoes Stadium. Lisa and I were shocked to hear of his passing and are terribly saddened."

Walker was amazed by how well Miller delivered the Volcanoes Stadium dedication address in June 1997.

"This stadium is a tribute to the extraordinary efforts of all those who helped make it a reality," Miller said on June 22, 1997. "It is truly our field of dreams. It represents what our community stands for; dedication, hard work, strong family values, a commitment to our youth and the ability to

work together to accomplish a common goal, even in the face of seemingly impossible odds. It is with great pride that I hereby dedicate this stadium. May it long serve as an inspiration to others and as a symbol of who we are and what we are."

Walker will honor Miller this season.

"I can honestly say, no one did more than Al Miller to make Volcanoes Stadium a reality," Walker said. "We plan to honor his memory this coming opening night, Friday, June 17 as the Volcanoes open their 20th season. Al's fabulous stadium dedication speech will be read in its entirety in a pre-game ceremony and the Volcanoes, that night, will play on Al Miller Field at Volcanoes Stadium."

Jerry McGee met Miller when the two served on council together.

"It was my first, and continued impression, that he was a hard worker," McGee said. "He read everything and was a very good student of any issue that came up."

McGee said the one thing he disagreed with Miller on was the Volcanoes.

"The first meeting we had with the Walkers, Dennis, Al and myself met with the Walkers at Shari's," McGee recalled. "Al and Dennis were enthused right from the start.

I was the only one against it. I didn't think it was a good financial deal for the city. But Al was in favor from the start. He rented the Walkers office space when they first came to town. He was very instrumental."

McGee, who said he would usually run into Miller once or twice a year after they both

left council, noted the two had similar mindsets while on the dais.

"We were almost like a tag team the eight years we served together," McGee said. "That was the only issue we differed on. He saw it one way, I saw it another. We were both fiscally con-

servative. Our votes quite often were similar. I viewed him as a good councilor."

McGee is missing his old friend.

"It was a loss of a good friend for me," McGee said. "Al will always be remembered for his activities with the Volcanoes. For me, personally, I would put it as comparable to the loss of Bob Newton."

Miller is survived by daughter Lindsey Swineheart, son Brock Miller and their respective spouses, four grandchildren, significant other Barb Cooney and dog CharlieBill. Donations in lieu of flowers may be made in Al's name to the Oregon Duck Athletic Fund.



Al Miller

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