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### Remembering Greg Kannerstein '63

Hundreds of Haverfordians – including presidents, professors, coaches, alumni, current students, and friends of the college – gathered in the Calvin Gooding '84 Arena this past Saturday afternoon to remember Greg Kannerstein at a Quaker Meeting for Worship. It was the first of two planned events that will commemorate Kannerstein's service to the College.

For more than four decades – five, counting his years as a student -- they came from all over the world to be Greg Kannerstein's peers, students and colleagues. And many returned to campus last weekend to remember a man who had dedicated his life to enriching the lives of others.

Held in the athletic center that he had labored, lobbied and longed to see built, the service was as much about the history of a college as it was a memorial to a man, so deep was his connection to the institution.

The arena was configured with chairs facing center, and those moved to speak remembered the life of someone who had been – simultaneously, at times -- a roommate, coach, teacher, colleague and teammate. And, as the dozens of speakers made clear, he was to all -- and always -- a friend.

Recollections of his time here, both somber and whimsical, conveyed the dramatic degree to which Kannerstein touched so many lives.

"[I needed] someone to believe in me before I could believe in myself," one alumnus said, while Kannerstein's former basketball coach mentioned that even though Kannerstein was "smart as a whip, there was no intellectual arrogance in the guy."

Others appreciated his photographic memory. One alumnus had run into him in a Starbucks and mentioned he was going to visit Iceland. "And Greg said, 'Oh, yeah, this

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President Steve Emerson '74 opens the Meeting. Those attending included former president Tom Tritton (in red tie). Photo: Jonathan Yu/Bi-Co News.

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particular alum's wife is there now.' He could always draw a Haverford connection to your life quick."

A former baseball coach remarked how Kannerstein was the link across generations of Haverfordians. "My son was wearing a Haverford shirt in the Czech Republic. A man on the street walked up to us and asked, 'Haverford, I went there! ...You know Greg Kannerstein?' he said. "It's the first question out of alums' mouths, from Wyoming to the Czech Republic." Another baseball coach underscored Kannerstein's unquenchable thirst to connect with every Ford he could, recounting a story about traveling with the baseball team to a game held in frigid January weather at Wyndham, Vermont. "Greg looked up in the stands and saw a guy in the corner with a Haverford letter sweater," he said. During a pause in the game, Kannerstein went to investigate and found that the alumnus from the Class of 1922 "had heard about the baseball game on the radio and trekked 70 miles in the snow to see it."

Professor Anita Isaacs recalled another trip with Kannerstein and the baseball team, this time to Cuba in 2001. "Greg was imaginative, creative, and he had an edge. Going to Cuba was a crazy idea, but his attitude was always, 'Lets go.' We needed a license from the Treasury Department. 'Lets go to Cuba,' said Greg. The Cuban authorities cancelled our itinerary days before we left, and [we could have] ruined the baseball team's spring training. 'Lets go to Cuba,' said Greg." And though the Cuban bureaucrats never did come through with permits to play in formal games, Kannerstein was unperturbed. "Let's find baseball people," was Kannerstein's solution. And so they did, miles from the capital, in pickup games in tiny towns they happened upon.

"Greg was the most skilled person with words I knew, and in all the millions of words I exchanged with him, one was HORSE," said former President Tom Tritton, referring to the basketball game where players try and match each other's shots before they miss 5 shots and accumulate all the letters in "HORSE." Tritton and Kannerstein found themselves in Ryan Gym one evening with a basketball and tried to play. "After a long time we realized we weren't making any progress, so we switched the word to PIG," said Tritton. "We still never finished that game."

The meeting ran long, which seemed consistent with an event dedicated to a man who always seemed to have all the time in the world for all the Fords in the world. And of all those stories and memories, one member of the Class of 2009 -- the class that Kannerstein had admitted as Acting Dean of Admissions -- may well have spoken for the entire room. "Thank you," she said.

--Andrew Thompson '12

*Note: A celebration of Greg Kannerstein's life will take place over Alumni Weekend, May 28-30 (Memorial Day weekend). Details will be announced in the new year.*