

# Gavilan ram comes down after 36 years as the college's mascot

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By Lori Stuenkel

Gilroy – After 36 years of standing guard over Gavilan College's park-like campus, the ram statue was laid to rest this weekend.

About three dozen people, mostly college faculty, gathered Friday afternoon to formally send off the crumbling 6-foot-tall mascot nicknamed "Bucky."

"I think it's kind of special that we have this ram statue here and I'm sorry to see it go," said Jan Bernstein Chargin, Gavilan's spokeswoman, who organized the ceremony. "It's something that I think we're all proud of and we're all sad to see it go."

In a story typical of Bucky's role as a true mascot, Chargin recalled attending a state-wide community college conference.

"I was talking with someone from a community college whose mascot was also the ram," she said. "And she said, 'Yes, but (Gavilan has) a statue'."

The highlight of Friday's ceremony was the unveiling of a time capsule that Bucky artist Chris Stuker placed in the statue's rear end while building it in 1968. Inside were items essential to Gavilan students at the time: A class schedule; a map of the campus; an edition of The Rambler, Gavilan's student newspaper; and class registration cards.

"We're still using those," quipped Kinsella.

Since a stiff breeze was blowing and the time capsule appeared to have aged as gracefully as the dilapidated ram, Chargin did not separate the items, but the audience was allowed to take a closer look.

The items will be photographed, then wrapped up to be placed in a new time capsule when the mascot statue is replaced.

Stuker, 56 and still a Gilroy resident, said he placed the time capsule in the part of the statue that was sealed last.

Made of concrete with a fiberglass finish, the ram officially met its fate this weekend, when the college's Director of Facility Services Art Kerr removed it from its post atop a rock near President Steve Kinsella's office. He kept the head intact, Chargin said Monday, in case the college decides to

do something with it later.

Bucky had to come down, college officials said, because the elements took their toll on the statue and made it risky to have on campus. They predicted he wouldn't safely last more than a few more months.

"It's been here a long time," said Stuker, art director for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "If it's a safety hazard, it needs to come down. I don't know if it is, but I don't have the time to work on it."

Accompanying Stuker was Debby, his wife of 35 years. The two met as Gavilan students, he a basketball player and art student, she an editor of the student newspaper. When Chris was busy building the statue, Debby said she would bring him lunch.

Debby Stuker said she looked in the time capsule to see if her name was on The Rambler edition, but it wasn't.

She said she had mixed feelings about the statue's demise.

"It was beautiful and very special," she said. "But we've never been very happy since they changed the horns."

When Bucky was less than 10 years old, the horns Stuker fashioned were replaced because people hung on them, which was unsafe, Stuker said.

"Doughnut"-shaped horns that are connected to the ram's neck replaced the ones that curled out in front of it's head because they were stronger, she said.

College officials have said they want to replace the ram somehow and since classes started yesterday, they plan to get feedback on what the best ram mascot would be.

"The consensus I've heard anecdotally is that people would like to see something, some image of our mascot, but that hasn't really been discussed," Chargin said.