

Pickets protect penguin

Clark students rally for mascot

By MICHAEL ZUZEL
The Columbian

A dozen Clark College students took to the picket line Thursday afternoon to protest a matter most fowl: the removal of Oswald the Penguin from the gymnasium floor.

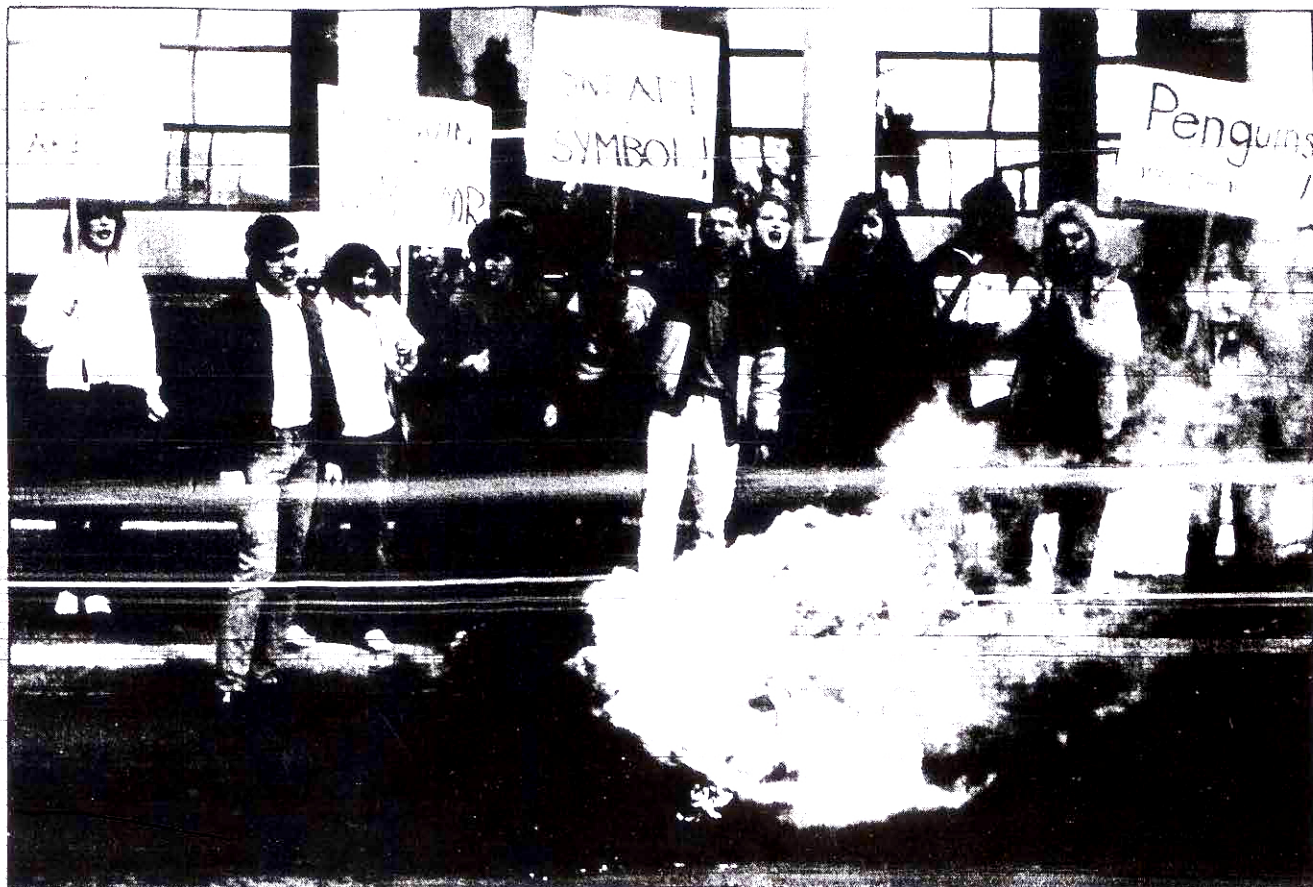
Carrying signs reading "It's our sweat, we want our symbol," and chanting such slogans as "P-E-N-G-U-I-N, it's our right," the students marched in front of Clark's Baird Administration Center in a show of support for their waddling mascot.

By day's end, a compromise had been reached that apparently will save the imperiled penguin.

The modest example of campus unrest was prompted by a \$60,000 floor replacement project in Clark's O'Connell gymnasium. Plans included replacing the penguin logo in the basketball court center circle with a script version of the word "Clark," similar to the college's official logo.

The penguin has been Clark's mascot almost since the school's founding in 1933. The current penguin design has been on the gym floor since 1983.

In October, student-body officers asked that their own design, which includes both a penguin



Clark College students burn a tree Thursday to protest the threat of losing their penguin.

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and the script "Clark," be used in the center circle. Administrators turned down the request, saying it had come too late.

The conflict escalated, leading to Thursday's demonstration. Despite the small turnout, student President Jeff Ritter described the protest as "a landmark achievement that hasn't happened (at Clark) since the early

1970s."

Ritter conceded that some might consider the penguin issue trivial and the picketing overly dramatic.

"A lot of people kind of smirk about it, but as time goes on, a lot of people will remember it," he said. "We want due consideration when they're making policies that affect the students."

Observing the protest from his office window, college President Joe Johnson seemed to take the protest in stride.

"I'm excited about the fact that students are interested and that they care," Johnson said. "It's a good learning experience for them."

At one point, protesters burned a small evergreen tree in the

building's driveway, a gesture apparently aimed at the tree in the college's logo.

In a meeting after the demonstration, Johnson and Ritter agreed to a compromise in which the student-designed Oswald and a script version of the letter "C" will be used.

"Peace was struck," Johnson said.