

Clark College may have lost presidential debate, but wait until 2012

How close was Clark College to becoming the center of the political universe for a day?

The answer to that question is, well, debatable.

Clark and a Portland partner had applied to host one of the four 2008 presidential debates; they were among 14 finalists.

"I have no idea how close we came," said Clark President Bob Knight.

"We were disappointed," but it did simplify things, he said. "We're beginning our fall quarter, celebrating our 75th anniversary, and finished accreditation. That's a lot of balls to

juggle.

"In some ways, it was a blessing," he said.

"But we wouldn't have turned it down."

Portland's Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission would have hosted the debate at the Oregon Convention Center.

"We'd have had some smaller events; our students would have been heavily involved," Knight said. "We'll pursue it again in four years."

Keep your powder wet

Researchers know a bit more

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about a historic cannon linked to Fort Vancouver, but questions remain.

Maybe Chris Havel posed the most inter-

esting cannon question of all: Is it loaded?

The cannon in question recently got some high-tech scrutiny, thanks to a laser-scanning 3D imager and a high-powered X-ray that sees through layers of rock-like crust called concretions.

That gear, lined up by the "History Detectives" TV show, helped investigators conclude that the short-bar-

reled cannon, known as a carronade, probably had been aboard a U.S. Navy ship that visited Fort Vancouver in 1846.

But nuclear-powered peeking couldn't determine whether the cannon was armed and (remotely) dangerous.

"It was not unusual to have the carronades loaded" during a voyage, said Havel, an Oregon Parks and Recreation official. "Depending on the powder, it can still be viable.

"Whoever does the conservation will have to be very, very careful. Cannons like this have gone off," Havel said.

But it takes pretty specific conditions. The carronade and a similar cannon found on a beach are being stored in tubs of water, which prevents unexpected fireworks.

"If the cannons are loaded, they pose a remote danger when they are dried out and the conservators start chipping away at the concretions with tools," Havel said. "In their current waterlogged, sealed state — loaded or not — they pose no danger."

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