

John Johnson had two dream careers—teaching and photography

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

John R. Johnson was born in Oakland, California. At age six he moved to Whiskey Hill, Oregon, and came to Raymond as a freshman in 1966. His father, Richard M. Johnson, was the powerhouse foreman at Weyerhaeuser.

John graduated from Raymond high School in 1970. He said, “The Class of 1970, from my understanding, was the undisputed best class ever to grace the halls of RHS. The class size was HUGE by my standard set by my old school. Whiskey Hill graduated only 12, and Raymond had much larger classes to me.”

John said his favorite subjects were biology, English, and woodshop. He said, “Some of my teachers were inspirational; some were just fun. Some were even fun to make fun of, but they never stopped leading. I spent my fair share of time in detention over the years, so I know some of the teachers gave me special attention. Bottom line—I left Raymond with the tools to allow me to excel in college and move ahead in life.”

John continued reminiscing, “The best of memories come from my days at Raymond. I was a newcomer and had to work my way into the school. I had great friends—Roxanne Erickson, Greg McVittie, Pat Rogers, and Jim Adams. Sports, hunting, dances, girls, music, and car trips all bring a smile to my face when I remember RHS class of 1970.”

John participated in wrestling at RHS and said that the sport shaped his life for many years to come. He said, “John Wahl picked me up in PE---pretty easy as I only weighed 85 pounds---and recruited me to wrestle at 105 pounds as a freshman. For two years I was horrible, but later as a senior I was Raymond’s first league finalist at 126 pounds. Later I became the Washington State Wrestling Coach of the year. I owned four wrestling camps and was head coach of the first All-star high school wrestling team to mainland China from the United States. None of this would have happened if not for the opportunity that Raymond High School gave me and the confidence that John Wahl taught me.”

After graduating from RHS, John attended Mt. Hood College on a wrestling scholarship. “I was a finalist in the Community College Championships,” he said, “which earned me several scholarship offers from northwest colleges. I attended Eastern Washington State College---wrestled again. We won the national NAIA Championship. I received a wonderful education and a degree as a Special education teacher K-12 and Speech Pathologist.”

After college John taught at Lewis and Clark in Spokane, then went to Port Townsend to teach Special Education and coach wrestling. He spent a total of 15 years as a high school teacher in various subjects, including photography. He says, “This (photography) was a lifelong career dream and was a great opportunity. In 1989 I had an opportunity to photograph some golf courses—Pebble Beach in California—for a client, which turned into my current career running an ad agency in the golf industry.”

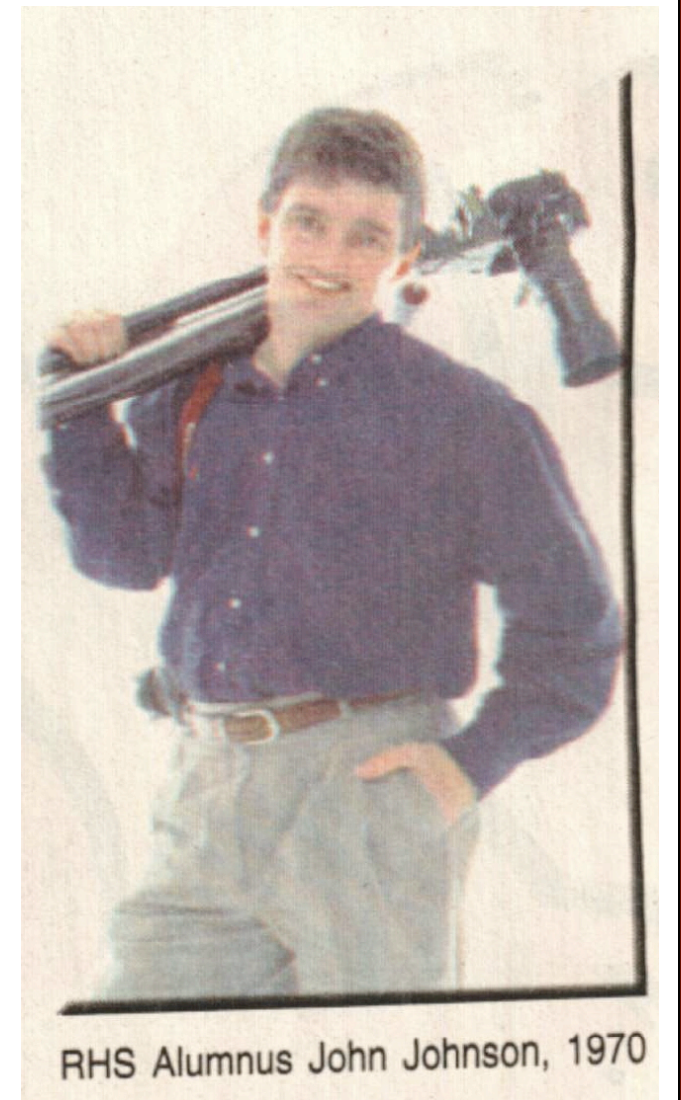
John’s firm, Golf Marketing, has won numerous national awards in photography, collateral design and web/digital marketing in the golf industry. They work for publications, PGA tournaments, private courses, resorts, and industry personalities. They have a staff of six and travel/lecture extensively. John says, “All of us pretty much consider this a dream job.”

John and his wife Eva just celebrated their 10-year anniversary. They have one son, Peter, who is nine years old. John said, “Eva moved here from Slovakia as a child and was a dentist in Seattle when we met.” They just built a new house near Sand Point Naval Base.

In addition to his work John enjoys water sports, skiing, sailing, and he says, “of course, a bit of golf.” He adds, “Peter had been on both soccer and basketball teams that travel, so we play a lot of sports. My work allows me to travel and photograph resorts. Occasionally we take advantage of that as a family.”

In both wrestling and photography John has had the opportunity to travel to Asia, Europe, Central America, and throughout the United States. He said, “The world is bigger than Raymond, but not any friendlier as some of my fondest memories live right there on the Harbor.”

John’s advice to this year’s seniors is, “You believe in yourself and never stop pursuing goals, sounds phony, but I have had two wonderful careers. Both were dreams that came true because I believed and did not let others or roadblocks stop me from achieving my goal. It can happen. I know because it did to me—twice.”



RHS Alumnus John Johnson, 1970