

Paula Gruginski gives medical aid as she sails the Alaskan waters

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Paula Denney was born in Kansas and moved with her parents to Centralia, Wash., in 1943. The family moved to Raymond in 1949 when her mother Grace Denney accepted a teaching position in the Raymond Schools. Paula started 5th grade in Mr. Smith's class at Riverview Grade School.

She graduated from Raymond High School in 1959 in a class of 57 students.

During her high school years Paula was active in many groups including Girls' League, Student Council, GAA, Thespians, newspaper staff, band, and pep band. She was in the Junior Class Play and the Senior Class Play. In her senior year she participated in music, was the co-editor of the annual, and was a Girls' State Representative. She says, "My many activities helped prepare me for leadership roles in my adult life."

Paula remembers some interesting times growing up in Raymond. She says, "With my mother as a teacher in the high school and Mr. Flanagan, the principal living across the street, I must have felt a little restrained, but I do recall some adventures. One time we put some part of our dissected frog in Mr. Melberg's desk drawer. Another time some butric acid, which smells like vomit, ended up in the third floor vents at RHS. We all go to go home early that day. One of the other 'chemists' still lives in Raymond."

She remembers Mr. Bach as her favorite teacher. She said, "I think Mr. Bach was special because he seemed to understand that I was in kind of a different situation because my mother worked in the same school I went to. I thought he was always objective and understanding with all the kids. Mr. Bach's wife, Bernice, came to the high school and talked to us about nursing and especially operating room nursing, which is where I specialized later."

"And then," she said, "I have some wonderful memories of the CYA, the city youth group that Len Odd supervised. It was especially nice because I got to meet and participate in activities with the kids from Valley and South Bend."

Paula recalls working as a swimming instructor and lifeguard at the Nevitt Memorial Pool. The summer after graduation she attended National Aquatic School and obtained her Water Safety Instructor's certification. She taught survival swimming for the 13th Naval District in Seattle for a few years.

Paula attended Seattle University, Clark College, and Concordia University and holds degrees in Professional Nursing and Health Administration Management. She is a Register Nurse and is board certified in Occupational Health.

Paula married Ken Gruginski (RHS Class of 1958). She says, "For 20 years we moved around from one Army post to another including stints in France and Germany." They have two children Keneth Anthony and Mary Catherine and three grandchildren.

She worked as a RN in the South Bend hospital one summer and in a number of places over the years as the family moved around with her husband's US Army assignments. Paula finally ended up as an Occupational Health and Safety Manager for Tektronix in Beaverton, Ore. After 15 years at Tektronix, Paula took a buy out package and accepted a job as a medical officer on a large fishing vessel in the Bering Sea.

She said, "That began a new era in my life. I loved the work at sea, and 14 years later hold an Unlimited Able Bodied Seaman's document and the US Coast Guard Merchant Marine Master's license, plus several other certifications associated with the position. Because of our sometimes very remote locations that are outside of the US Coast Guard rescue range, I am still called upon to render medical aid, both on my ship and for others that may be in the area. I have worked in the North Pacific and Bering Sea in various ships including oil spill recovery, factory trawlers, and crabbers. At the present time I am working on a license upgrade to inspect 1600 GT US/3000 GT international. For fun I sail as Mate on the Schooner Zodiac, a 'tall' ship and the largest wooden vessel under sail on the West Coast."



RHS Alumnus Paula Denney Gruginski, 1959