

*Jim Willis worked 32 years as teacher, coach,
and vice-principal*

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Jim Willis was born in Clintwood, Virginia, on February 5, 1940, to Clyde and Dixie Willis. His parents are now both deceased.

Jim grew up on cedar Street in the Riverdale section of Raymond. He remembers Tommy Ray, Wyman Fields, Phil Rise, Jim Corcoran, Jim Olsen, Leon and Larry Klube, Don lapinski, and Gary Bugh as neighborhood friends.

Jim graduated from Raymond High School in 1958. He said, "All of my memories of RHS and Raymond in general are positive. It was a great place to grow up in the 50's. We were never bored." He remembers spending time with his friends. "Stan Kophs, Alan Basore, Denny Evans, and I would each chip in a dollar for gas and cruise all evening in our parent's car (gas at 25 cents a gallon)."

While in high school he was ASB president, a delegate to Boy's State, and was a graduation speaker for his class. He was a member of Honor Society and thespians. He recalls one incident from his days as a thespian. He said, "John Dunsmoor was supposed to plant a smoke bomb in a TV during our senior play. He put in too much powder, and I was blown across the stage."

Jim lists Earl Bach, Inez Simkins, and Principal Semon Anderson as his favorite teachers. He remembers, "Semon Anderson would take five of us to a Seattle Rainer game and everyone would fight for the back seat." He recalls another time when, "Some really 'bad guys' carried Ms. Simkins car up to the third floor." Jim continues, "We had a teacher, Mr. Snow, who at a certain time in the morning would leave the class room to use the restroom. We would all put up a nickel and whoever got closest to the time he left would win the pot. We would also try to guess the exact time Mr. Svendsen would fall asleep."

Jim played basketball, baseball, and football in high school. He remembers Dick Frazier, Bob Svendsen, and Bob Aubert as his favorite coaches. He said, "We were one of the first classes to play in the 'new' gym."

After graduation Jim attended Grays Harbor College. He said, "I appreciated Bob McCoy and Weyerhaeuser giving me a job to earn money for college. Wolfgang Plakinger and I loaded a lot of box-cars during the summer. During the school year, I worked from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. on the 'green chain,' then got up at 6 a.m. to catch the Grays Harbor College bus."

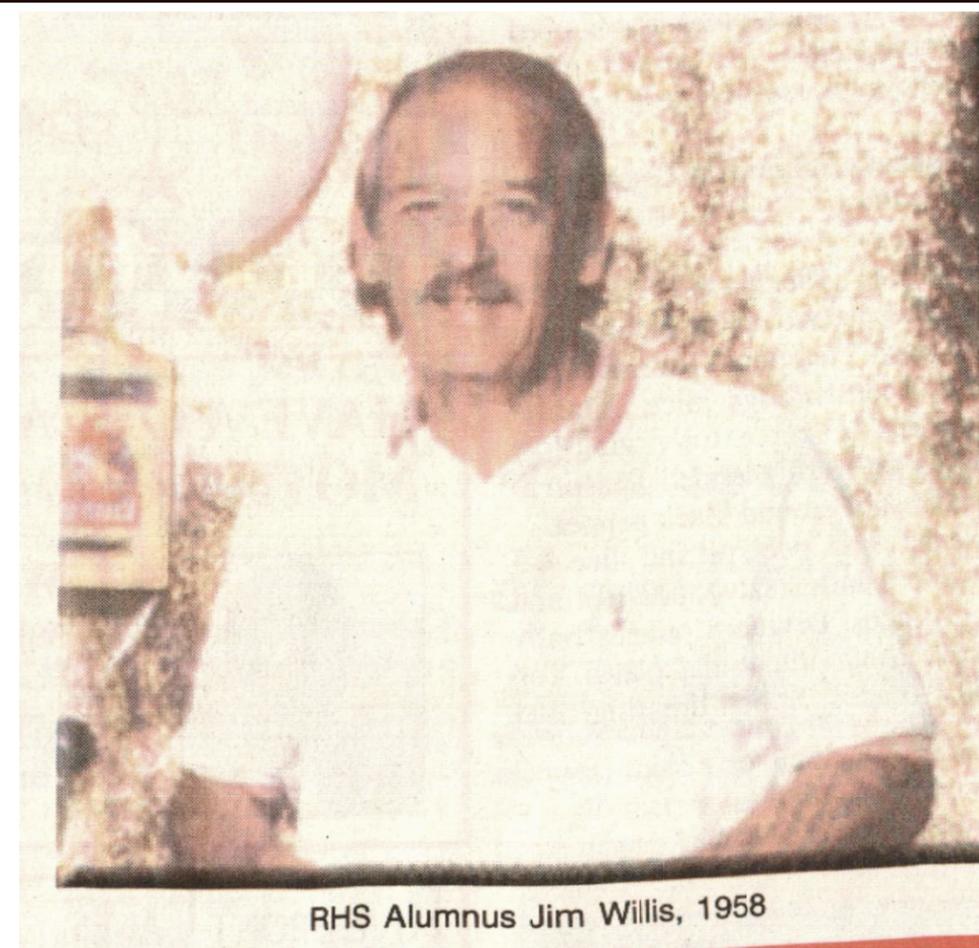
Jim transferred to Central Washington University in 1960, receiving his B.A. in Education in 1962. He taught junior high Social studies in Sumner Washington, for four years. He also coached junior high basketball and track. Then he moved to Lacey Washington, to teach high school social studies at St. Martin's High School for two more years. He coached high school basketball, baseball, and cross country at St. Martin's. He was a high school counselor and basketball coach at Montesano from 1968 to 1970.

In 1970 Jim got his Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Central Washington University and became vice-principal/athletic director for Shelton High School. In 1982 he gave up the athletic directorship, but continued as vice-principal until 1994.

Jim married Toni Rice (RHS Class of '61), but they divorced after 19 years. They had three children. Shelly lives in Snohomish; Chris is in Austin, Texas; and Curtis lives in Maui, Hawaii.

Jim has worked with Little League baseball and Little League and Church League basketball. He is a member of Shelton Kiwanis Club and was Youth Activities Chairman for three years. He has also worked with Untied Good Neighbors of Mason County.

Jim lists his other interests as golf (at the Lake Limerick County Club, travel, gardening, sports, and water activities at Lake Limerick.



RHS Alumnus Jim Willis, 1958