

Mary Ellen Brown has traveled to all seven continents

By: AMANDA DOTSON

Mary Ellen Brown was born in Coos Bay, Oregon, but she grew up and lived for 19 years in Raymond with Parents Zack and Billie Brown, and her three sisters, Valerie, Melissa and Cindy.

“While we were growing up, Mom and Dad kept us under control, generally speaking, by having us help them with the delivery of the Daily World newspaper every day,” Brown said. “We all came to be known as the ‘Brown paper girls.’ I can say that the one thing I disliked intensely about the paper delivery business was collecting each month. The people were nice, however, I did not like dogs!”

Brown graduated from RHS in 1964. This is particularly interesting to her. “(I) always thought it was unusual to have been born in ’46, to have graduated in ’64, and, as I recall, to have 64 students in my graduating class.”

Mary Ellen says her favorite teacher was her first grade teacher, Mrs. Dopps. “We kids out east of town went to the old Garden Tracts Grade School,” she said. “To this day I have never forgotten one of the things she taught us, which was always to ask ‘May I...?’ not, ‘Can I...?’”

Brown says she has many memories of high school, some of which are good and some that are not so good. “The worst day was November 22, 1963. I was a junior,” she recalls. “We were all called into the auditorium where we learned that President Kennedy had been assassinated. We had just learned that our world was not as perfect as we thought.”

“On a brighter note,” she continued, “I remember fun times too: dances, football and basketball games and track meets, chorus competitions, pep staff, working in the principal’s office with Mrs. Graham, the day we had the school lunch strike, and many other activities.”

In addition to these activities, Mary Ellen was on the Pep Staff, a position that she says, “was probably the basis of my true enjoyment of sports.”

“Even now I am a rabid supporter of hockey, baseball, lacrosse, and football,” she said. “I also feel that my ‘office assistant’ hours spent in the principal’s office led to my wanting to be an ‘office person’ more than an ‘outdoors worker.’ Besides, I didn’t like getting dirty.”

Brown spent one year at Grays Harbor College and then took the Civil Service exam to get a job with the U.S. government. In October 1965, Mary Ellen went to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. She has held many jobs in many places over the years with the Forest Service, specializing in budget preparation and execution, and financial management and analysis. She’s lived in Seattle, Olympia, Portland, Bend, Eugene, Steamboat Springs, CO, Washington D.C. and eventually settled in Lakewood, CO.

“There were some ups and downs throughout the years, but by and large, I had a very good career that allowed me to do most anything I wanted. After 36 years with the Forest Service, I am retired with a comfortable income, doing part time work for fun when I feel like it, and volunteering at the Salvation Army, since I now have time to be in that type of community service.”

Mary Ellen says that in February 2001, she completed her journey to all seven continents by setting foot on Antarctica. “Travel, mostly foreign, became a primary focus with me,” she said. “I wanted to go everywhere and see everything.” Mary Ellen says her five favorite places in the world are Australia, Italy, Greece, New Zealand, and Capetown, South Africa. “I just recently discovered how beautiful it is there (Capetown)!”

Brown says she hasn’t gone back to Raymond since her 10th class reunion for anything but family visits. She has been and kept in touch through her family.

Mary Ellen says there are always things she wishes she realized after graduating. “One is how fast time passes once you graduate,” Brown said. “You think you have all of the time you’ll ever need. That’s not true. We have a very limited amount, and it’s never long enough, so you should enjoy every minute of every day. Do not waste time installing negative thoughts and life’s great. Try and do something you thought you might want to do, as long as it’s positive and you’ll get positive results back. Secondly, search thoroughly for what you want to do with your life in terms of career and vocation and make them the same. I have a very good career, but I discovered later in life that I would prefer to have enjoyed being an archeologist more. All my best wishes to RHS graduating Class of 2003.”



RHS Alumnus Mary Ellen Brown, 1964