

Greg Haerling is a photographer eyeing Hollywood

By: Amanda Dotson

Greg Haerling was born on January 3, 1980, in Aberdeen. His mother, Gayle Haerling, is a teacher at Raymond elementary and his father works for the Pacific County P.U.D. He has an older sister, Erin, and a younger brother, Paul.

Greg graduated from Raymond High School in 1998 with about 60 other students. During high school, Greg played basketball all four years and participated in track for three years. He feels lucky to have attended a small school all his life.

"After meeting people from much larger schools, I realize what a unique education I received," he said. "Where else could a student have the same teacher in his senior year as he did in first grade, Miss Jouper? I had many great experiences, but some of the lessons I learned didn't really sink in until I was out in the "real" world. There were many great teachers at Raymond High School, and I feel fortunate to have been able to take from them everything they had to offer."

The life lessons aren't the only memories Greg has of high school. "There are some things I don't think I'll ever forget about growing up in Raymond," he said. "Such as the time Spence Cearns wanted to streak down Main Street in Pe Ell on the way home from a girls' basketball game and Dani Langbraaten took off in my car, leaving us there. Also, my friends and I running around Riverview and town at night doing crazy things---nothing illegal, though, just fun things!"

Greg says he'll never forget RHS sports and the "rivalry" with Valley. "I don't think anyone will forget the "R" in the middle of Valley's football field. I'd like to take credit for that, but I had nothing to do with it and can disclose no further info on that incident. There was also the bet with Kaley Hanson that he couldn't finish four sodas in less than a minute. They didn't stay down long with all the carbonation and this was on the way to a basketball game. Needless to say Kaley didn't have a very good game that night."

Greg remembers many great teachers. "Mr. Henrie showed me an unbelievable amount of enthusiasm and support as both my track coach and teacher," he said. "Mr. Newbill showed me how to write. Mr. Lund and Mr. Olsen were always great to talk with. Ms. Thornton (now Mrs. Jordan) allowed me to be as creative as I wanted to be. I think that all the teachers helped shape who I have become, in some way or another. I am forever grateful for the many people whom helped me through my years at Raymond."

After graduating, Greg enrolled at Shoreline Community College and then Evergreen State College for a short period of time. He says he wasn't committed to either school and so went to work for a while.

"After bouncing around in few different construction jobs, I realized that I just needed to go after what I had always wanted to pursue, which is visual communication. I have always been fascinated with the moving and still images."

Haerling moved from Olympia to Santa Barbara, CA, to attend the Brooks Institute of Photography. "Brooks is one of the top photography schools in the world, and I have been opened up to a whole variety of contacts that will hopefully ensure a long success in the industry," he said.

Greg has recently been working for the Institute as a digital imaging and video assistant and as a freelance photographer. He has also been part of several documentary projects for the Discovery Network. He worked as a cameraman for "Spring Break," a documentary shot for The Learning Channel, and he worked as a Gaffer and camera operator on "Operation Anaconda." This documentary, shot for the Discovery Channel, was a re-creation of a downed Chinook helicopter in Afghanistan. Greg is currently working on a 10-part surf culture documentary for the Discovery Channel and assisting Peter Read Miller, a staff photographer for Sports Illustrated.

"All this added up with additional freelance work and school makes my life pretty hectic," Haerling said, "but I love it." "After school, I plan to move to one of the major media markets; New York, Los Angeles, London, or Vancouver," he said. "Having gained many contacts in Hollywood, I hope to be able to work on feature and documentary projects around the world."

Greg says he doesn't visit Raymond very often, except for holidays, but he loves seeing family and friends when he does come back. "It's nice to see people whom you can pick up right where you left off, even after being away from each other for long periods of time."

"My advice to the class of 2003 is this: Sometimes the path you choose may be a difficult one, but there is no reason to ever settle for something average. Never make a decision just because the temporary benefit is easier or more comfortable. You will always be happier in life if you work through adversity and strive to realize the potential of whatever it is you love."



RHS Alumnus Greg Haerling, 1998