

Archie Gacek will be celebrating 50 years in the insurance business

By: Amanda Dotson

Archie was born in Raymond on September 13, 1923. He was the ninth of ten children born to Felix and Ann Gacek. Eight of those children grew to adulthood in Raymond and seven graduated from Raymond High School.

“We were the children of the Great Depression and of World War 2,” Archie said “as depicted by some as the ‘Greatest Generation.’”

In addition to Archie, John Gacek graduated in 1927, Henry in 1932, Leo in 1933, Ted in 1938, and Paul in 1948. Henry Gacek, Jr. also graduated from RHS. So as Archie says, the Gacek Family “has a long association with Raymond High School.”

Archie says he and his brothers were lucky to have grown up in Raymond. “We has the good fortune of growing up in a multi-ethnic community, as well as a school with the same make up,” he said. “I don’t recall any problems with a diverse ethnic community. The Fourth of July was celebrated as an ‘All Nations’ day parade.”

In 2001, Archie and some of his classmates celebrated their 60th class reunion. “I believe the class of ’41, a group of 52, had more class reunions than any class in the history of the school.” Gacek said.

Archie has many moments to recall with his classmates at these reunions. “My high school years were memorable and active,” he said. Archie participated in basketball, tennis and the Senior Play. He also served as the Student Body President and was selected to the Inaugural Boys’ State in 1940. He was a pioneer for the first ever boys’ cooking class at RHS, which, he says, “was really an experience.”

After graduating from RHS, Archie worked for a year before attending Washington State College (now WSU) in 1942. He was an instant hit at WSC.

“I was a walk on for basketball and was on the starting five for the Frosh. Freshman were not allowed to play Varsity,” Archie explained.

After less than a year at school, Gacek joined the Navy in March of 1943. He served aboard the Saginaw Bay, a small aircraft carrier in the South Pacific.

Archie discharged in March of 1946 and enrolled at the University of Oregon in January of 1947. Now he was able to play Varsity basketball in what was at the time the Pac8. He had the opportunity to play in Madison Square Garden in New York City, and what was then known as the “Cow Palace” in San Francisco. Archie explained that this arena was used for rodeos, but a temporary floor was installed for basketball games.

Archie married Elizabeth Stewart of South Bend in August of 1947 and graduated from U of O in March of 1950. The Gaceks moved to Portland and have lived there ever since.

Archie’s son, Stan was born in August of 1952. He attended Parkrose High School and then went on Harvard and Harvard Law School. He now lives in Maryland and works in Washington D.C.

“We are expecting our first grandchild in August,” Archie said. “And we’ll probably go East for that event.”

On April 15 of next year Archie will have worked for 50 years in insurance business under the name Gacek Insurance Agency Inc. The company is licensed to do business in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho and Arizona.

Our agency developed a program working with 100 agencies in Oregon and Washington providing insurance for their accounts because they do not have the insurance companies to write the risk,” Archie explained. “In the future we may provide the service for agents in other states.”

And Archie intends to still be working in the future. “I’ve been an insurance broker for 49 years and still go in to the office every day,” he said. “I enjoy what I’m doing and have no desire to retire.”

All of Archie’s life experiences have provided him with an insight that he shares with the graduates of 2003.

“To the students of Raymond High School, you have certain talents. Recognize what they are and use them for your benefit and others,” he said. “In our minds we have an idyllic vision of traveling on a train through life with various stations when I’m 18- When I graduate-When I get a promotion-When I retire. We need to realize that is no station; no one place to arrive once and for all. The true joy of life is the trip.”

“So high school and graduation is just part of the trip. The ultimate station will come too soon for all of us.”



RHS Alumnus Archie Gacek, 1941