

“Semon “Andy” Anderson took care of RHS and its kids for 25 years

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

This will be the last of the profiles on Raymond High School and its graduates. The committee thought it fitting that we should begin and end with two of the schools most beloved principals, rather than alumni. Our first profile was Louis Bruno (Sept. 18, 2002 edition), principle from 1931 to 1941.

Semon A. “Andy” Anderson was principal from 1959 to 1976.

Unfortunately, Semon A. Anderson has passed away and was not able to be interviewed for this article, so we have put together some information gleaned from old yearbooks and some memories and impressions submitted by former students.

Semon A. Anderson studied at the University of California, Pacific Lutheran College, and College of Puget Sound. He held a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees. He served in the Army for 3 ½ years during World War 2. He started at RHS in 1949 as a classroom teacher and visual aid director. After eight years he advanced to vice-principal and in 1959 became principal.

Darlene Clements, a member of the committee, remembers Mr. Anderson fondly. She said, “Andy Anderson---the little Giant---the mention of that name to anyone having attended classes at Raymond High School from 1949 to 1976 can conjure nostalgic memories of a man whose stature did not top 5’ 5” standing on his tiptoes. His stature belied the size of the impact his presence would have on generations of students passing through the hallowed halls of RHS. While there were many great people who taught or were administrators at Raymond Andy has to be at the top of the list of those most fondly remembered. He taught history, print shop, was an unofficial activities coordinator and counselor and then in 1958 became high school principal. The reason Andy was so well thought of by generations of students and the community was that Andy cared. He always had the students’ best interests at heart and had a knack for knowing who needed special care and attention. Plus he played no favorites. Even when he would get mad about something dumb a student did, he would be nice, but firm, when chewing the student out. Andy made it very, very difficult not to both like and respect him. There’s hardly anyone that knew him that hasn’t an “Andy story” to relate.

Pat Rogers, an RHS alumnus says this, “While I have fond memories of Mr. Anderson during my high school years, my fondest memories of Semon A. are of knowing him after high school. I was an honored and fortunate to be able to spend time with him in his hometown of Stanwood. He really was a humble man. I remember being at social gatherings in Stanwood and wonder if the people there knew what he had accomplished and how many lives he had affected. More than once I wanted to stand up and yell, ‘DO YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS?!’ I don’t ever think his sisters knew how important he was at Raymond High School. He just never talked about it. I could go on and on about Semon A. I miss him and am proud to say that he was my friend.

“Andy Anderson put forth an effort that is insurmountable in working to improve all the school functions ranging from athletics to scholarships to extra-curricular activities. Personal guidance to students was an attribute of his character that is one of helpfulness and sacrifice to the school. Many of Raymond High School’s graduates did not realize how BIG OF A GIANT Andy Anderson was until we, too, became adults, parents, and educators. Thank you, Mr. Anderson, for the valuable life lessons you taught us. We will never forget you.”

Another alumnus Bob Jones had this to say, “Mr. Anderson (Andy) always had students’ best interests at heart. I came into disfavor with a certain English teacher and was asked not to attend history class for one quarter. Andy tutored me each day during that time school would not lose the credits and I passed the course, thanks to him.

Leon Lead, another RHS graduate says this, “I’m one of the so called kids from the other side of the track that Mr. Anderson helped get me through high school. I was a very angry teen with a wee bit of a drinking problem during those teen years, so I had more than my share of school problems in school. Throughout my stay at RHS, Andy patiently counseled me on issued maintaining a positive attitude controlling my anger, and deserved opting positive self-esteem. The time I spoke with Andy he told me got the biggest kick out of reasoning in the local paper how I was teaching those same attribute with other people in the New Challenge Program at Grays Harbor College. Andy had a tremendous impact with me, and he helped me create the person that I’ve become. Every time I pass on the valuable lesson others that he taught me.”

Janet (Adams) Wall remember Andy in this way, “As an educator myself I now realize the depth that his contributions to Raymond High School and the community. One day during my college years, I wrote Mr. Anderson a letter thanking him for all he had done to make high school years so meaningful. Two summers later I remember how stunned and touched I was when I discovered that same letter on his bedside table when I was cleaning for him. Noting the worn paper, that experience reminded me of the little things we sometimes do an be knownst to us that will have a lasting impact on the lives of others. Mr. Anderson was, by far, the most inspirational figure in my high school and early professional years.”

In one of the yearbooks we found Andy Andersons advise to all seniors. “A distinguished speaker at a meeting recently made this statement, ‘It is a wonderful time in which to grow old. It is a wonderful time to enter your middle age, but it is the most wonderful time to be young.’ He was referring to you, the youth of today. Many of you will be graduating to schools of higher education. Some of you will enter a new phase of life’s work. I say to all of you, remember this idea---it is a wonderful time to be young, take advantage of it.”



RHS Principal Semon Anderson, 1959-1976