

Jill Monson has taught eight years in Saudi Arabia

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Jill Monson moved to Raymond ten months after her birth in Puyallup when her father Cas Monson and Ralph Storey bought the Western Auto and Pacific Hardware stores. Her father, who briefly served as interim mayor of Raymond, died in 1980 and her mother, Ruby Monson, now lives in Olympia.

Jill graduated from RHS in 1964 with a class of about 66 students.

Like most graduates Jill has many fond memories of growing up in Raymond. She tells of one particular memory of her childhood. "My family lived at 727 Jackson Street then and to be in "the club" in our neighborhood you had to go out on the balcony of our house, climb over the railing, climb up on the roof and touch the chimney, I'm happy to report that I was in the club."

She continues. I had a lot of fun in junior high and high school. My best friend was Candy Berbells (Zellar), and we continued on to Grays Harbor College together. Life was simple and carefree then. We didn't lock our doors. During the summer we could pack a lunch and go for a daylong bike ride to the Valley or walk to South Bend. But I had to be home for dinner at 6 o'clock- no excuses. Our family of six sat down to dinner together every day (and usually breakfast and lunch as well since we walked home from school and Dad came home from the store), and I am very grateful to my parents that they made dinnertime a hard and fast rule. That quality family time is something I think of often."

In high school Jill says that she was a member of Girls' Club and enjoyed participating in choral groups because they had to work together effectively and were judged on performance. She also belonged to FHA (Future Homemakers of America) and GAA (Girls' Athletic Association). She says, "There was little encouragement for girls to be athletes, not that I probably had a great potential in that arena. I do believe that athletic programs for girls is one of the best changes that has occurred in the schools in the ensuing years."

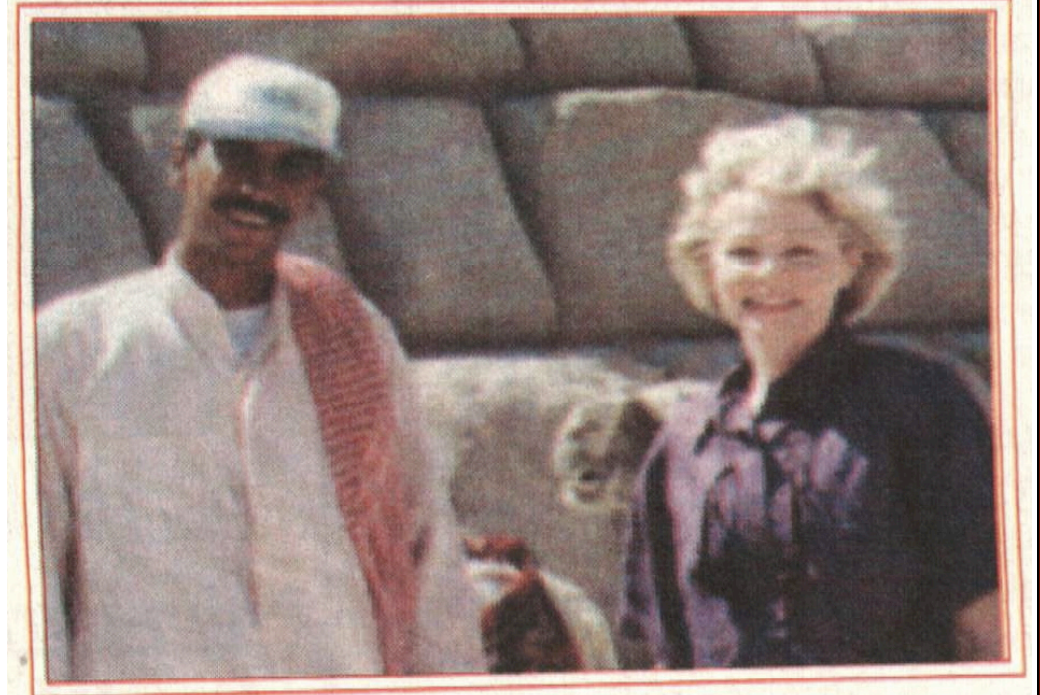
Jill remembers five teachers in high school as being special: "Mr. Neisinger (band), because he managed that delicate balance of a relaxed, no-nonsense approach, while appearing to enjoy working with us--- Mr. Aubert, because he seemed to like the students--- Mr. Schufele and Mrs. Melberg, because they challenged us and were interesting--- and Mr. Knobel, because he seemed to really care that we understood math.

Following graduation Jill went to Grays Harbor College. She then went to Western Washington in Bellingham and finished her undergraduate degree in education at Pacific Lutheran University. She married after her junior year at Western, but divorced in the early seventies and went to graduate school in Illinois

After finishing her graduate program, she worked in school districts in Tacoma and Puyallup, then moved to South America, where she spent two years working at an American school in Bogota, Colombia. She is now finishing her eighth year working at an American school in Saudi Arabia.

Jill says, "Travel is my passion. Little did I think, growing up in Raymond, that I would some day see the Taj Mahal, go on safari in Kenya, spend days aboard a ship cruising down the Nile, swing on a "Tarzan" vine in the Amazon jungle, spend a week on a boat with ten people exploring the Galapagos Islands, see penguins nesting off the Straits of Magellan at the southern tip of Chile, scuba dive in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, and learn to ride English style on an Arabian horse in the Arabian desert. I am an example that anything is possible."

When asked what advice she would give to today's seniors, Jill replied, "The remarkable good fortune I've had with the way my life has turned out probably has a lot to do with the following three things 1) choosing my parents wisely, 2) being willing to take risks (calculated risks, not the careless kind), and 3) a lot of good luck. The advice I would offer to the current senior class at RHS is: No matter what others say to you, don't sell yourself short. Figure out a way to do not only what you think you can do, but what you dream of doing."



RHS Alumnus Jill Monson, 1964 (shown with her guide at the base of one of the great pyramids in Egypt)