

## *Charlotte (Sowa) Taylor was on the first girls' track team*

**By: LaRAYNE WATTS**

Charlotte (Sowa) Taylor was born in Raymond and grew up on Park Avenue in Riverdale with her three brothers---Rick, Jerry, and Terry. Her parents are Earnest (RHS Class of 19937) and Neva Sowa.

Charlotte's graduating class of 1967 was the largest class to graduate from, RHS at the time. She says, "I believe we had 90+students that graduated. We started our freshmen year with about 115-120 students, but the enrollment dropped by the time we graduated."

Remembering her elementary school years, Charlotte says, "My all-time favorite teacher was Tunny McCollum. I had him in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>h</sup> grade. In penmanship classes we had to learn how to write all types of letters, and in English and reading classes we had poetry. I still recall poems that we memorized.

In science we had 'hands on' experiments. We planted trees on the old Raymond-South Bend road near a cemetery. For years, I watched those trees grow, and how they have been harvested. He (Tunny) had a vision, gusto for life, and a love of teaching. Everyone who had the benefit of being taught by him learned about life experiences with our everyday life.

Charlotte recalls that in high school they did not have title 9(equal sports for girls). So for girls GAA (Girls Athletic Association) was the group to belong to. Ms. Hadler and Ms. Ogden, the girls' P.E. teachers, tried to get girls to participate in sports. Charlotte was on the first girl's track team. It was the first organized sport for girls other than badminton. She says, "The only track meets we had were with Valley, South Bend, and Ocosta. It was a start, and I admire these teachers for allowing girls to participate in an organized sport. It was a lot of work for them to get us permission to use the track and the equipment and to travel to another school."

Charlotte remembers playing basketball. "we played girls basketball. We could only take three steps and then had to pass the ball. You couldn't cross the center court line unless you were forward. There were six girls in a team. Ms. Hadler and Ms. Ogden were on the leading edge of all good things to come for women's sports. At that time we didn't know how women's sports would evolve. I wish I could have had the experiences that are now available for girls in high school athletics."

Charlotte says, "I'm still an avid sports follower. Now that my jogging days are over, all I play is golf. I know that golf is a lifetime sport that I can play for many years."

Another high school activity that influenced her future was being an editor for the annual and the newspaper. She says, "I worked for the South bend Journal for a while after school, and now I work with reporters. I do a lot of writing in my job, so yes, my learning experiences in school have followed me throughout my life."

Charlotte has been married to Scott Taylor for 26 years, and they have two sons and will soon be grandparents. She attended college but did not graduate. She says, "I may be a 60-year-old grandma walking down the aisle getting her college diploma someday!"

She worked for the pacific County department of Public Works for ten years. At the present time she lives in Olympia and is the City clerk for the City of Lacey, where she has worked for 16 years.

She travels someplace different in the United States every year and has been to Europe twice. She also tries to get away to their retirement home in Arizona every chance she gets.

When asked what advice she would offer to seniors at RHS to day, she replied, "Personally, my school, and family friends have been my lifetime friends. I may not talk with them or see them as often as I would like to, but they are just that-lifetime friends. Where we see each other, we pick up right where we left off. They want nothing from me; they just want to be my friend. I think that coming from a small town like Raymond has afforded friendships like this. I would hope that those in school now will have the friendships that last them throughout their life, like mine have for me."



RHS Alumna  
Charlotte (Sowa) Taylor, 1967