

Gregg Ford teaches and coaches three sports at Ridgefield

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Gregg Ford was born on May 28, 1956, in Raymond to Jack and Peggy Ford, both RHS graduates. He lived in the Garden Tracts section of Raymond. He said, "I think Raymond was a great place to grow up during the 60's and 70's."

Gregg graduated from RHS in 1974 with a class of 69 students. He feels that the education at Raymond prepared the students well. "I just remember being so proud to be from Raymond. All my friends have had very successful lives and become productive citizens," he said.

He remembers going to elementary school across from the high school and that going to the "big kids" school for lunch was great.

Other memories include the inter-class rivalry, the Pep Club and the band at all the games, standing in line to get into the Elma games, going to state every year, and the auditorium.

He especially remembers two incidents. "Mr. Anderson sent Jim McDowell up to Centralia one morning in his car to pick up a package," Gregg recalls. "When he got back later that day, he called all of the students to the auditorium to watch 'Cool Hand Luke.' In my senior year several of us would get to school early to watch 'Leave It To Beaver' in the senior lounge.

One grade school teacher, one high school teacher, and several coaches top Gregg's list of favorite teachers. "Mr. Rich in the 5th grade was a great man. Mr. Beatty's math class was probably the first time that I thought I could be a good student. He helped my confidence a lot." Gregg closes with, "All of my coaches especially Mr. Johnson, Mr. Halpin, Mr. Coma, and Mr. Wahl. I felt that the coaches at RHS taught us the life lessons of team work and discipline."

Gregg lists football, basketball and track as his activities in high school. He said, "Raymond had such a great tradition of athletics. I think that I came out of Raymond with a positive winning attitude that I have tried to bring into everything I do. I also believe that through athletics I was able to develop strong leadership skills, Today I am a teacher and coach and the experiences at Raymond have helped me a lot."

Gregg started traveling right after high school when he backpacked through most of Europe with Ron Meek and Martin Ellingson.

When he returned, he went to St. Martin's College, where he played basketball and graduated with a Bachelor's of Education in 1978 and started teaching that fall in the Ridgefield school district. He later got a master's degree in education from the University of Portland, He taught 6th grade for four years, middle school for one and has been at the high school ever since. He also coaches football, basketball and track in Ridgefield. He has been head boys' basketball coach for 14 years. He just finished his 24th year with Ridgefield schools.

Gregg met his wife Mary Henry while at college. She also teaches at Ridgefield. They have three daughters. Allison, 20, attends Gonzaga University; Lindsay, 19, attends St. Martins and Shannon, 16, is a junior at Ridgefield High School

Gregg has kept up his interest in traveling through his teaching and coaching. In 1990 he took the boys' basketball team on a Goodwill Tour to play in tournaments in the Soviet Union. He also took a team to Australia in 1997. He has a particular interest in the Holocaust and those studies have taken him to Boston, Poland, and Israel.

When asked what advice he would give this year's seniors, Gregg replied, "One, don't think that living in a small community limits what you can do. Raymond graduates have become doctors, lawyers, mayors, representatives, pilots, teachers, professors. If anything the small town values and lessons can be a springboard to great things.

"Second, leave. Get out of town, Go see the world, the rest of the country. You can always come back. We have thought of moving back to Raymond several times. It is still a great place. Several friends and classmates make Raymond their home. But go out and experience some of the rest of the country and world. Bring those great experiences back to Raymond. You make someplace else your home, take a little bit of Raymond with you."



RHS Alumnus Gregg Ford
and wife Mary