

## Dick Pehl works with radiation detectors

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Dick Pehl was born (Nov.27,1936) and raised in Raymond. In fact he has lived on Barnhart Street since 1939. His parents were Henry, who became a Raymond resident in 1918, and Annabelle Pehl. Richard graduated from Raymond High school in 1954 with a class of 50 seniors.

He went to Riverview Elementary School and recalls that there was quite a rivalry in those years between Riverview, Riverdale Elementary, and Garden Tracts Elementary. There was a graduation ceremony after the fifth grade. Pehl was a graduation speaker for the ceremony and can still remember the first few lines from his speech. He remembers the Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> earthquake in 1949 when he was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He was sitting by a window on the floor of the building that was later condemned because of the earthquake. When the shaking started, he looked out the window and the cloud structure is still etched in his brain.

Later in high school he recalls with some sadness the polio epidemic in the fall of 1953. "Mary Ford died in that," he said. "I said at the time that I wanted to make a difference in the medical world. And I believe I have." He commented that to have one death was quite an event in the small school. In March of 1954, Pehl's senior year, "Youth Views the News," a national radio program sponsored by Weyerhaeuser Company visited Raymond. He was a member of the panel of four students that gave their opinions on current news. "I probably did most of the talking," Pehl said wryly.

"RHS was blessed with really great teachers," he said. There were three super teachers he thought. Dwight Runner was the science teacher. "He was one who changed my life. We became good friends, not just teacher and student. In fact, my high school chemistry class made chemistry so easy for me as a freshmen in college that I decided to change my major to Chemical Engineering."

"Lloyd Percy was a "good" math teacher," he recalls. "I had him my last year. Norm Amundson was the English teacher for one year. Certain people make you think; he was one of those. I spent a lot of hours with him just debating things.

After graduation, he went to Washington State College in Pullman, receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering in 1958, graduating with highest honors. The school grew and was changed to Washington State University. He got his master's Degree from WSU in Nuclear Engineering in 1959. He was the first graduate from the nuclear technology program and one of the few graduates to hold degrees from both WSC and WSU.

Pehl says, "Using reactors for power is now seen in a negative way but it was one of the first applications considered for nuclear energy."

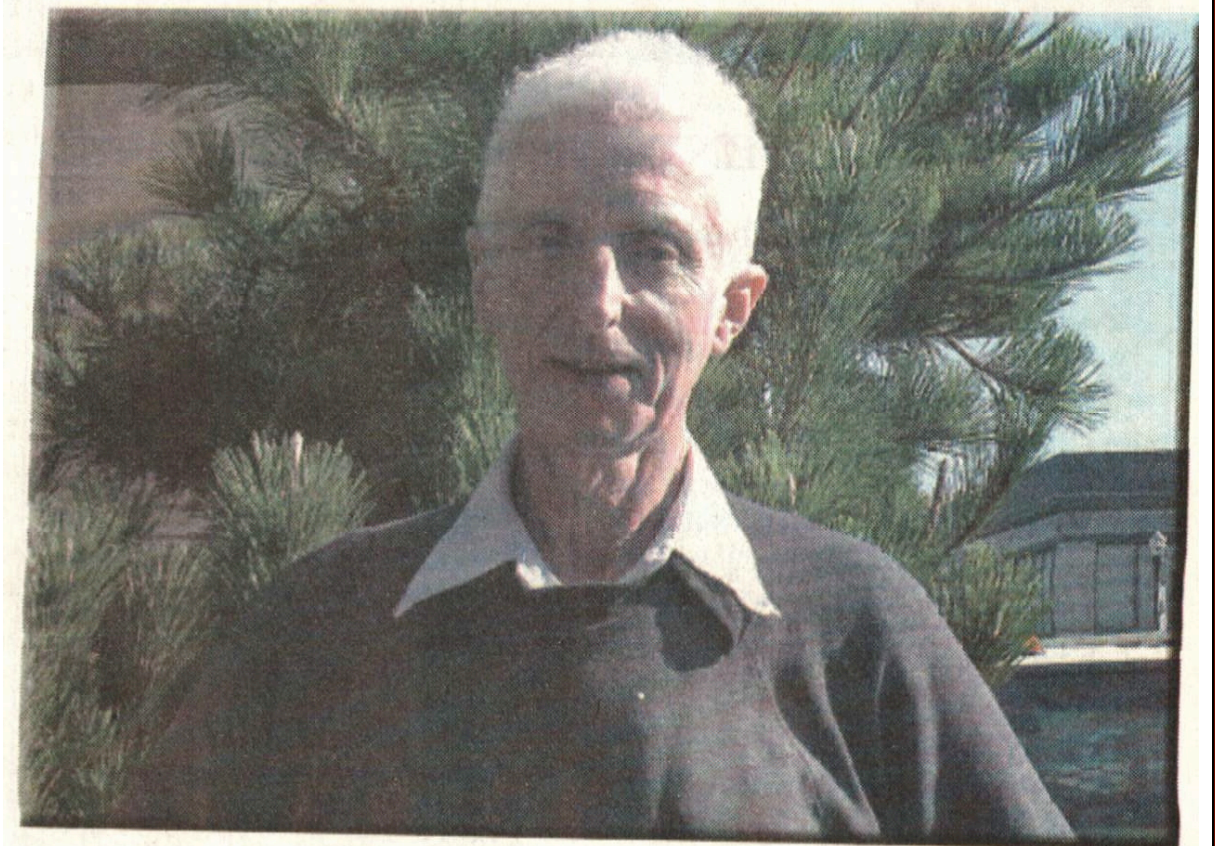
He then got his Ph.D in Nuclear Chemistry from the University Of California, Berkeley, in 1963. He says "although my degrees are in chemistry, I consider myself a Physicist."

He continued working at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in radiation detector research until 1994 when he took early retirement. However, he continues to work on a wide variety of projects in the fields of nuclear physics and space and is still associated with the Lawrence Laboratory, along with several other institutions and companies.

Pehl says that his work has a lot of medical applications. He has worked in advancing how melanoma is handled and is a director of the national Radiological Assessment which is making gamma ray cameras used to look for tumors or for cardiology. He was also on the National Committee for the NASA Mars observer Gamma Ray Spectrometer and wrote the specifications for a germanium detector flown to Mars.

Pehl is married to Dr. Paula Pehl and now divides his time between Berkeley and Raymond. He said "With computer link-ups, I can work from Raymond as easily as from California. I still consider Raymond my hometown." He and his wife still maintain the family home at Barnhart Street.

Pehl's advice to this year's seniors is, "work hard and take part in whatever you do. The quote subscribed to Thomas Edison, 'genius is 99% perspiration, 1% inspiration, "is accurate, painfully sometimes. I've known and worked with eight Noble Prize winners; their common traits was hard work and perseverance. With hard work and a little luck, you, too, can feel you've left the world a better planet."



RHS Alumnus Richard Pehl, 1954