



Alumna – Judy Duckworth Mulhair – WHS Graduate 1962

“It is always hard to talk about yourself,” Judy said. She considers herself as pretty ordinary, but she was filled with the energy to pursue her dreams. She was born in Walla Walla, Washington, to Gwen and Gene Duckworth on June 26, 1944. The Duckworth family had 3 boys (Ernie, Bill and Lory) and 1 girl (Judy). Bill still lives in Waitsburg and Lory lives in Walla Walla. Ernie moved to Clarkston, WA where he

built jet boats and made a real name for himself in that business. Unfortunately he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and passed away 10 years ago. Judy’s mom and dad have since gone as well and all are greatly missed. The family moved to Waitsburg when Judy was in the fourth grade. She completed grade school and graduated from Waitsburg High School in 1962.

Judy’s father grew up on Coppei Creek, where her grandparents raised wheat. Her younger brother, Bill, informed her that her grandfather had used that wheat to make the best hooch this side of the Mississippi. Bill heard that story for the first time while camping at Yellowstone Park in the 1970’s from one of the Waitsburg Brown brothers. As Bill noted, they had some stories to tell about his grandparents.

Judy’s mom was born in San Diego and lived much of her life in Portland, Oregon. She moved every year and stayed with a Salvation Army family in Walla Walla to finish her senior year in high school. She met Judy’s father there and they were married. Judy’s mother had a brother with whom she lost contact after her youthful adoption. This amazing story can be found at her business web site (www.ayhranch.com). This is a wonderful story and one that should be celebrated at this time of year. Gwen found her brother after 72 years. The address is noted above, look under newsletter and you will see the title – Miracle on Flight 50, click on that and you will know the full story. One never knows when you take a pathway in life, where that journey will end.

Judy attended Washington State University and graduated in 1966 with BA in Business, focusing on marketing and finance. Judy always had a dream of being a college graduate, particularly the first in her family. She had a passion for learning that was never quenched and she knew she would persevere until her degree was obtained. Waitsburg was a great place for her to go to school, as the classes were small and felt more like family, where all students received help and encouragement. The high school principal, Mr. Lloyd Perry, was outstanding and always encouraging. Mrs. Nadine Gerkey, her English teacher, pushed all of her students to think more deeply and stretch our minds. Mrs. Gerkey was the first teacher to make us think outside the box. There were only 18 people in her high school graduation class and they remain an extended family, getting together on a regular basis.

Upon her graduation from WSU she had a dream to see the world outside of her little corner of Washington state, so she decided to become a stewardess for United Airlines to accomplish this goal. Now 50 years later, she is still flying, but Judy plans to retire at the end of this year. She has no regrets about her career choice, as she has seen the world, and flown military charters to all parts of world. This latter activity allowed her to serve her patriotic duty, and was a highlight of her career.

Judy was able to fly around the world, raise a family and create several businesses in her spare time. She created an American Youth Hostel on her Vashon Island property, later changing the name to Hostelling International. Her hostel was in business for 30 years with the Western Theme of Indian Teepees and Covered Wagons. The hostel was open during the summer and attained a worldwide reputation. She recently dropped the hostel label to become a campground, the only legal one on Vashon Island. The hostel helped her buy a B & B called the Lavender Duck and two other rental properties associated with the web site Vacation Rental by Owner (VRBO.com #388767 and #652004). Judy’s latest business adventure is the production and sale of Teepees.

One of the most positive influences in Judy's life has been her relationship with a long-time Waitsburg resident, Carol Weir. Carol really believed in Judy's potential to be successful in life and encouraged her to join a sorority at WSU called Kappa Kappa Gamma. Carol thought Judy had great potential and said she needed a strong organization behind her. Every summer while Judy was in high school and college, Carol provided employment for her to assist in paying for her education. They developed a wonderful friendship with each other, one valued to this day. As so often is the case, role models other than those associated with school are instrumental in our successes in life.

Judy cherishes her Waitsburg friends, such as Kathryn Hall Maoli, who was and remains her dearest friend. They were roommates at WSU for 2 years and she is always there when Judy is feeling a bit low. "Friends are forever," Judy said. The biggest advantage we had in growing up in Waitsburg was the freedom from today's technology. We had to be creative in our play, as we did not have all the technology available to students today. Judy's family did not have a television until her latter years of high school. While she thinks students of those days were less advantaged in their exposure to the world, all of her classmates grew in creativity as they focused on what they could do with the material at hand.

Judy's advice to all WHS graduates is to "persevere if you want to attain your goals in life. You are as worthwhile and as good as any person on the planet. It is important to have dreams and you need to strive to obtain them. Simply put, be the very best you can be, each and every day of your life. "

