

Richard Small, Class of 1962

Highlights at Wilson 1958-1962

The first year of high school was extremely difficult for me. I was shy and introverted. I was really intimidated having 400 kids in my class instead of 18. I knew almost nobody and I had a hard time adjusting. I walked to and from school (about a mile) and didn't say much in class. I played freshman football and baseball but other than knowing I played have no real memories of anything specific about that experience.

The turning point in high school occurred in my second year (actually a turning point for my whole life as well). I had met another freshman named Jerry Schuette in the first year and if I could be said to have a friend, he was it. He lived about ten miles away, so I never did anything with him after school or on weekends, but during school we had several classes together and talked. I confided how terrified I was of dancing. You know how some people see a weakness and try to exploit it (in this case for humor). Wilson was only a few years old when I started and everybody was talking about starting traditions. Jerry found that one of the new traditions was that each class planned a sock hop during the year and the class vice president was expected to have a "spotlight dance". Without my knowledge, Jerry signed me up for the position of sophomore class vice president, and then passed the word along to have everybody vote for me... When I found out I was on the ballot I talked to the class adviser who told me she thought I would do a good job and outlined the duties of the office. She did not mention the dance thing (I guess it did not even enter her mind).

You guessed it... with Jerry's behind-the-scenes help I was elected. In October I was notified that in November the class would be hosting a sock hop, and given a reminder that I should be prepared to do the "spotlight dance". When I found out what that meant, I was so petrified with fear that I think my bodily functions stopped. I was terrified. Jerry was in seventh heaven. Lots of people were on the inside by then and I suspect they were all waiting for me to make a fool of myself during the dance. (did you ever see the movie "Carrie"? It has the same theme).

My mom noticed a change in my behavior and asked about it. I confided my fears and she was absolutely firm that since I had been elected to the position, I would have to perform the duties of office and that included doing the dance... period. She even took an hour off from work (she was waitress at Hillvilla Restaurant which was sold and became the Chart House) to drive me up to the school because it was a cold and rainy night. When I got into the cafeteria, I ducked through the first door I came to and was amazed to find myself in the very room that the music was being played. The only other occupant in the room was a girl named Mary Von Almond. She said "Hi Dick" and continued to put on a record (it happened to be a slow dance). She turned to me and said, "I'm glad you came in, it gives me a chance to dance too." HOLY COW! I almost passed out... but Mary walked over and took my hand and started to dance and I was amazed (completely amazed) to find that I COULD DANCE!! I had been watching High Time on the TV and knew how to dance, but my fear of dancing or girls or being the center of attention or of something else had taken such a hold on me that I could not physically dance. When I realized I actually could dance, it was like the dam burst open. I laughed and spun Mary around and we had several dances in that room.

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

I told Mary about my fears and the Soph VP thing and Jerry's efforts to embarrass me and she said she would be honored to be my partner in the spotlight dance and when it was time I came back in and got her and we danced... WE DANCED! I was beyond excited. What I liked most about that moment was the fact that I was no longer afraid. A great weight had lifted. While we danced, I had a thought that there must be a number of students just like me who would really like to dance, but did not have the confidence to try. I asked Mary if she would help me find them and teach others to dance. When we were done with the dance people clapped and Mary and I went to a sophomore I knew that had not danced all night and was probably as afraid as I had been. I told him the story of what had just happened to me and asked if he would like Mary to help him dance. He was enthusiastic about it and agreed. I then went to a girl standing in the corner and told her the same story and asked if she would dance with me. She also agreed. When the dance was over the four of us stood together and I asked them to find others in the room that would like to learn to dance. There must have been a dozen or more who showed up during the course of the evening and took their first steps. We had such a good time and in my memory there were a lot of people who were glad we did what we did. I think it was knowing we would not embarrass them that gave people the willingness to give it a shot. I was never again shy and introverted. I began speaking out, assuming leadership roles, doing things I had never before tried. Jerry's failed attempt to pull a prank definitely changed my life.

Anyway, I played in the band (drummer) and played football and baseball and loved the last 2 1/2 years of high school. At the end of my sophomore year I purchased a 500 cc Triumph motorcycle and rode it for the rest of my high school years. I worked as a busboy and night janitor at the Hillvilla Restaurant for almost four years.

I did OK in the rest of high school. I was not top of class... but I did finish in the top 10% grade wise. I always heard that after college, those who were straight "A" students in accounting classes were almost always working for the "B" and "C" students ten years later because they were so focused on perfection they didn't always make good leaders. The reason I say that is because I found that to be true in my life as well... I was never the best student in the school, but I certainly led the charge after school in terms of building companies and hiring people.

I had a number of teachers, coaches and advisors that I really liked. I can remember Mr. White and many great band experiences. I remember one time the band was getting ready to perform "An American in Paris". One of the parts of the song had cars honking. Mr. White's youngest son John brought in a Japanese air raid alarm (hand cranked) and handed it to me. He said to start cranking when the horns started honking. Old dumb Richard put it on a chair behind the bass drum, leaned over it and started cranking that baby at the exact time the horns honked. I did not know it would take several cranks to get it fast enough to be loud, so it started growling real low and then higher and higher and finally let out this amazing alarm sound. By this time, however, the cars were well done honking and I looked up to see Mr. White's feet in front of me. I stopped cranking immediately but the siren just kept screaming. The entire band was rolling on the floor laughing and I could NOT get it to shut off. Mr. White was not happy with me and I finished the rest of the class in a practice room with the siren and my drum. I had Dick Voll, Mr. Sweet and Stan Stanton for football, Mr. Meinicke for Chemistry and Mr. Hertz for physics. I remember Annabelle Ashley for English and Mr. Gray for math. Mr. Witty lived up the street from me and I respected him very much. His son Tom was in our class.

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

Portland State College 1962-1964

In 1962 PSU was still PSC (college). I got my first taste of educational freedom and instead of yearning for academic excellence, I found the cafeteria Hearts game. That introduced me to Spades, and that introduced me to pool. For the next two years I did everything but study. In March of 1964 I received a letter from the Registrar informing me that I had been placed on the Dean's Academic Disqualification list and was no longer welcome in the hallowed halls of PSC. In truth I know that I signed up for classes and often only attended the first class. I was too busy having short term gratification. Because of my immaturity, it took me less than two years to flunk with a GPA less than 1.0. But I did learn how to shoot a good game of pool.

US Coast Guard 1964-1968

I had barely received the letter from the PSC registrar then I got another one from Uncle Sam. The letter said they had been informed about my success in making the Dean's Academic Disqualification List and they would like to invite me to a physical at the recruiter's office the following week. You might remember that in 1964 there was a little country called Vietnam that was getting lots of attention. As I read the letter all I could see was that I was going to be given a rifle and stationed in the jungle to shoot at anything that moved. The following day I called the US Coast Guard recruiter and asked for an appointment. They said they were elated to see me (wouldn't you say the same thing) and the following week I was on an airplane to Alameda, CA (next to Oakland). I spent three months in boot camp at this base. Because I had been a marching band drummer at Wilson (for Mr. White) I was assigned to Oscar Company (which played for all the events and parades). I got to get off base a number of times which dramatically improved my boot camp experience.

I was tested with very good hearing and was assigned to Fleet Sonar School in Key West, Florida. So off I flew to a new world and another school. The discipline of the military started to have an impact on me and by the end of school I finished #1 out of 23 students. We didn't know it during the class, but our order of finish determined the order in which we were able to select our next duty station. There were two openings on the west coast and with first choice I selected the Eleventh Coast Guard District in Long Beach, CA which had an opening aboard a 255' Coast Guard Cutter called the USCGC Pontchartrain.

When I arrived I found that the cutter had just left for three months duty to patrol a 10-mile x 10-mile patch of ocean between Hawaii and Japan. This was before the days of GPS so navigation was based on something called LORAN (Long Range Aid to Navigation). A Coast Guard cutter would maintain station in a designated area and send electronic transmissions that allowed any vessel or aircraft with a transponder to tune in and triangulate their location almost anywhere at sea. Since the vessel was gone I was assigned to temporary duty at the Coast Guard facility on Terminal Island in Long Beach (next door to where Patty Herst was incarcerated). After about three weeks an opening occurred on the [USCGC Cape Higgon \(95302\)](#) a 95' search and rescue vehicle stationed at Newport Beach, CA (the yachting capital of the world). We were moored next to Buddy Epsens blue sailboat and down the way from John Wayne's converted PT boat "Wild Goose". It was during this time that I met a girl and in an insane moment married her. (This was the beginning of a very dark, difficult and emotionally unhappy time for me until I finally found the strength to file for divorce).

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

I was aboard this vessel for about a year. We did search and rescue work, escorted some yacht races, educated the Coast Guard Auxiliary people in that vicinity and did other USCG work. I enjoyed the duty but was glad when I had an opportunity to return to Long Beach and become the Admiral's driver for the Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District. For the next two plus years I drove three different admirals and grew up. I stopped swearing (I had heard you needed to swear to be a good Coastie) and got a handle on my life.

My last Admiral was named [Admiral Sargent III](#). He was a wonderful man and we had about a year together. He was very interested in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, so we went to Hollywood a lot. From those connections we started going to events with movie stars and then I started picking up stars when they were going the same place as us. Troy Donohue was a frequent passenger as he was also very interested in the Coast Guard Auxiliary and enjoyed spending time with my admiral. I remember driving Admiral Sargent to the 50th anniversary of the USO at the Hollywood Palladium. One of the stars was the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen with his dummy Charlie McCarthy who asked if I could help him during his act. I sat on his knee and when Edgar tapped my back I opened and closed my mouth while Edgar talked. I was so nervous that to this day I don't remember a word he said, but I heard the clapping and laughing so it must have been OK. At the end of four years my wife and I packed our bags and headed back to Portland in an old VW Beetle.

Southern Pacific Railroad Portland 1968-1969

Shayla Miller ('62) lived down the street from my mom and me. Her dad (Larry) was a senior official for Pacific Fruit Express (PFE), a subsidiary of Southern Pacific Railroad. When I arrived home from Long Beach I stopped by his house and when he asked what I was doing I told him I was looking for work. He told me to go down to the Brooklyn Yard Office in SE Portland and ask for the Agent. Tell him Larry had sent you and ask him for work. The next day I was hired and two days later started work. My first job as a clerk was to walk along side all of the tracks in the switching yard and verify the correct order of the car numbers by comparing them to the lists I carried. Next I was taught how to compare the numbers of railroad cars on outbound trains to the train lists. These were simple jobs that ensured that the cars were added to the correct train and each train was verified to ensure that strays were not added. I was placed on the Extra Board (newer union workers who did not have enough seniority to hold their own jobs) and ended up working various jobs on all three shifts. The nice part was it was steady money. The bad part was it was hard to get regular sleep because I was always trying to adjust my body to a different sleeping schedule. On top of that, I determined I would be wise to go back to college and get the degree I had squandered in my first attempt.

Southern Pacific San Francisco 1969-1971

I enrolled at Portland Community College once I started working at the railroad yards. Within a year the word got to upper management that a clerk was attending college. I was flown down to San Francisco (SP Headquarters) and eventually offered a promotion to programmer. The railroad was in the process of writing a massive program that kept track of all of the inventory, maintenance, trains, transfers, cabs, locomotives, etc. throughout the railroad. They had hired over 120 programmers who occupied the fourth floor of the general offices at One Market Plaza, San Francisco, CA. I moved down and purchased a house in Martinez, CA (east bay). I joined a twelve-person car pool and ended up driving most of the time because I was the last stop and the owner of the van traveled a lot. I was sent to school to learn TOPSTRAN, which was a private language the railroad developed specifically

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

for writing this program. For two months I could not understand what was happening. An amazing thing happened. Each night I was taking this huge core dump and trying to understand what the program was doing. I would stay up until the wee hours of the morning pouring over this document that was several thousand lines of code and all of the hexadecimal (base 16) printout of what was actually happening in the computer. One night I fell asleep face down on this massive stack of papers. I woke about 5am and when I sat up I knew the code and what was happening. I was so excited I almost could not stop squirming. When I got to work I went to my supervisor's office and said, "I know the code and how the program works". He asked me some questions and called in the teacher and they could not stump me on anything they asked. Within six months I became the team leader of one of the application teams. Within 8 months after that I took over as head of a new department for High Level Testing. My team and I built a model railroad that allowed anybody to be trained and make decisions about the railroad (like a flight simulator but on rails). The company also wrote the programs for the UP Railroad (COIN and COIN II), the BN (COMPASS) and for several other railroads including British Rail. My high level test railroad made development much easier and found bugs very quickly.

Southern Pacific Railroad 1971-1979

In 1971 I was so tired of a three-hour commute to and from work that I threw in the towel and returned to Portland as a clerk. After several weeks I was assigned to a midnight shift so I determined to return to school and finish a college degree. During my clerk years I divorced my wife and started working a lot of extra hours. About a year later I was running a list on an IBM 402 machine just before 8am in the yard office. I was smoking and the smoke was making my eyes water so I put the cigarette down, rubbed my eyes and looked up and saw... a vision. There in front of me was an angel with red hair and a green dress and she was actually speaking to me. When my brain cleared I realized it was a real person and I was being asked a question about where to find the chief clerk. This was my first introduction to the person who would two years later become my wife, best friend, and father of three children. It took me about six months to get up the courage to ask her to coffee and 19 months of dates until I got the courage to ask for her hand. It was one of the very best decisions I have ever made. At the same time all this was going on, I also graduated and was promoted to Chief Clerk - Sales and with responsibility the sales offices at Vancouver BC, Seattle, Spokane, Portland, Salem, Eugene, Medford and Klamath Falls. My new office was on the seventh floor of the Pacific Building in downtown Portland with the AVP Sales (George Scholibo). I remained at this position until I grew so weary of the Railway Clerk's Union and their restrictive non-productive policies that I turned in my notice and resigned. My last day was amazing as I felt the weight of a heavy yoke being lifted from my neck. I was overjoyed at the decision and never looked back again.

Portland State University (again) 1971-1979

I set an appointment at the Registrar's office and my first task was to petition to remove all of the miserable grades, citing that I had been through a maturing process and the grades did not paint the real me. The committee believed my argument and granted my request so the previous record was expunged and I became a new freshman. This time I thrived and balanced work and school and visiting my son Daniel (I was divorced in 1974). Boy was this experience different than the first time I attended. I had matured and realized what I did NOT want out of life so I worked really hard to not only get an education, but to make it count. I took every business course I could cram into my schedule. I had gone into the dean's office to discuss my concerns about the quality of teaching

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

several times during the four years of school. When I received my degree the dean asked me into his office and said he had been listening to my "discussions" for several years and it was time to put my money where my mouth was. I asked what he meant by that and he said he wanted me to teach in the School of Business as a Visiting Lecturer (did not require a master's degree). I was elated and taught two courses per term for the next three years. I loved the feeling that my efforts made a difference and I really liked teaching. By this time I was married to Dee and we invited the students to study at my house in SE Portland on Saturdays. Often we had 15-20 students and for lunch we served Taco Salad with chop sticks (it was filling, inexpensive and easy). We enjoyed the laughter and camaraderie during these times and it was great fun being with the students and helping them learn.

Various Jobs 1979-1984

When I left the railroad I had no idea what to do, so after a couple of weeks of looking for a job I decided to start a company. I took what little money I had saved and purchased a Novoflex camera lens system and opened an action photography studio. I did shots of soccer, softball, Master's swimming, and other sports and made team photos and calendars. I worked my tail off for 18 months and didn't make a dime of profit so closed the company. Then I got a job with SaveNet (a long distance reseller) in Portland. They hired me as the data processing manager, and over the next 18 months the company was sold twice and I was extra baggage and was terminated. I talked about my situation with a friend and he offered to make me a partner at his very small distribution and sales company called Carday Sales. I leapt at the offer and for several years worked my tail off selling products in grocery stores. We handled tennis shoes, socks, candles, incense, imitation flowers, sun glasses, greeting cards, 3M generic film... almost anything that was a non-perishable that grocery stores carried. I hired ladies on the coast and as far north as Seattle to count inventory and stock the shelves in their local stores. It was grueling, thankless and lonely work and in the end my good friend stiffed me on all of the back money he had failed to pay me. I learned a lot about sales but more about integrity. I finally saw the writing on the wall and told him I was through. Next I got a job with a Lake Oswego label company and after 18 months was fired. This really hit me hard and I lay in bed and wept for two weeks. My wife finally made me turn off the TV and told me if I didn't do something it would probably impact our marriage.

IdentiGraphics, Inc 1985-2002

So I pulled on my pants and stood up and walked down to the basement and started a label company to get even with the guy who had fired me. I started a company in my basement selling labels and printed materials as a manufacturer's rep. By 1987 we had grown sufficiently to begin manufacturing the labels ourselves. The next six years produced phenomenal results and by 1993 we were the largest producer of pager labels in the US. In 1996 we were recognized by the Business Journal as one of Oregon's top 100 fastest-growing privately-owned corporations. That kind of growth affects every department and person within a company so a lot of emphasis was placed on change and how to develop strong teams that could rise to the new demand without sacrificing the high quality standards we had set. We excelled at all aspects of this and were recognized as the market leader in the US for our niche. We enjoyed great relationships with customers and vendors alike and were fine tuned like a high-performance automobile. Visitors on tours of our plant always commented about the intensity, productivity, and high morale of our 77 employees. By 1999 our revenues reached about \$10 million in annual sales. In the fall of 1999, a firm called Nokia appeared in the communications

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

industry and started marketing a digital cellular phone that cost less than the Motorola Bravo Pager with the added bonus you could talk to who was trying to reach you. They built the phone so it would not accept labels, and threatened to sue anybody who made a label for it. In the next six months 8 of our largest clients went bankrupt (MobileComm, PageNet, Air Touch, etc.) and we lost over \$4 million in sales. Just like the Titanic, we struck an iceberg and our hull was damaged and we started taking on water... fast! Over the next two years, in order to keep the company afloat and the employees paid, my wife and I sold everything we owned and even with that had to let almost half of our employees go. I purchased digital presses (Indigo) and we started making wine labels and neutraceutical labels, but it was too little too late. We searched for another company that was looking to buy a quality company like ours.

AmiSoft, Inc. 1995-2000

When I started IdentiGraphics I wrote software in DOS that, over time, supported every aspect of our label company. In 1995 I decided to move that program into the Windows environment so started AmiSoft for that purpose. I hired 9 engineers at Oregon Graduate Institute (Hillsboro, OR) and 35 engineers in Bangalore, India and wrote a very substantial made-to-order (MTO) manufacturing program that was customer centric and was highly useful to all small company manufacturing environments. We closed the company with six successful Beta sites when I could not secure funding for national release. Besides having an incredible experience, all I retained is a very expensive gold looking CD with the title "Vendor of the Year" and the greatest MTO software that has ever been conceived or written.

WS Packaging Group 2002-2004

In July, 2002, I sold the label company to WS Packaging Group of Algoma, Wisconsin (over \$400 million annual sales with 1300 employees) and remained for two years as President-Northwest Division. This was a transition role as part of the contract to allow them time to take over operations. I spent the first year responsible for sales and manufacturing for the Portland plant and when the transition began I managing digital sales with a team of four regional sales managers, fourteen territorial sales managers, and about 100 salespersons across the US. I have to say that this was the worst job I have ever done, because during the first year the purchasing company required that we completely change our great little company to resemble one of their seventeen other plants. That meant getting rid of most of our customers that remained, completely changing our workflow and printing processes, and firing a lot of our terrific employees. I was very pleased to move on.

Consulting 2004-Present

After my contract was up with WS Packaging I started consulting from my home office. In that capacity I work with management, marketing departments, create leads, trigger newsletters and e-blasts, analyze and improve office operations and workflow, and write computer programs for estimating, sales, customer service. I also work with purchasing and help develop marketing and sales plans. I help my clients deliver better products with shorter lead times and improved customer service. By using a powerful relationship database program called FileMaker, I am able to provide support for most aspects of business. In this era of information knowing how to gather, store, extract and display information provides a powerful advantage over competitors who do not.

Richard Small, Class of 1962 (continued)

Children

My wife and I have four sons... Daniel, Jon, Matt and Ben. We have 3.9875 grandchildren (3 girls and another child due in 7 days).

Life 1985-present

My wife and I were attending Mt. Park Church in Lake Oswego in 1985 and answered a call for a family to help at Rivergate Community Church in North Portland. For the next ten years we were involved as American Baptist missionaries. We started a bus ministry for children in Columbia Villa and eventually it encompassed everything from St. Johns to east of I-5 (Roosevelt and Jefferson High School districts). We grew from not having a Sunday School to impacting perhaps 650 children over the years. We look back on those days with great fondness.

We have been travelling lay preachers for the past ten years and bring worship and a positive message to residents of assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers and halfway houses. I have been making DVDs with music I call "Holy Karaoke". You can view that story and hear our music at www.wwfc.biz (click the "Songs" tab)

I sing with the Conchords Chorale, a SW Portland based community group that sings concerts in assisted living facilities and other locations where older people gather. We are also the Rose Festival Choir. You can view this group and its music at <http://www.conchordschorale.org/>.

I have been giving motivational talks and teaching business classes in high schools around the Portland Metropolitan area for about 30 years. My most requested talk is called "Lighter to Lift" and is about ten habits you (everybody) should use to encourage other people to help "lift" you to your goals.

I have served as a director on several non-profit boards including Boy Scouts of America (In School Exploring), Junior Achievement, Washington County Leaders Roundtable for Youth, the Private Industry Council and several boards of for-profit corporations. I was involved with FBLA, DECA and "HOBY" (Hugh O'Brien Youth) for about 15 years.

Advice to students

1. Make your time count... stop wasting it.
2. Leave things better than you found them.
3. Do more than is expected and do it cheerfully.
4. Work at something you enjoy that is worthy of your time and talents.
5. Marry the right person. (this will determine 90% of your happiness for the rest of your life)
6. Be generous.
7. Be grateful.
8. Be honest.
9. Set your quality bar at the very top notch... do not let it dip even once.
10. Take responsibility for every area of your life.
11. Happiness is not about possessions... it's about people and relationships.
12. Don't do anything that you won't tell your mom, and only do it if she would be proud when you told her.