

Alumni Focus: Gordon Beil

If you haven't had the chance to meet Gordon and Betty Beil, I would love to introduce you to them. Gordon, son of Jerry Beil and Yvonne Saunders, grew up in Seneca, Oregon, where he attended Seneca Elementary School through the eighth grade. Seneca was a lumber town with a larger population and its own money system. He remembers the town before street lights, with all the neighborhood kids running around after dark, and before the movie theater, motel, bar, post office, and store burned. His step-father owned the store, collecting a few guns and old silver dollars from the 1800s, which were lost in the fire. Gordon played flag football and basketball for Seneca Elementary. He laughs as he recalls, "playing against the John Day kids in their full pads and uniforms."

The routine changed his freshman year when his small class of six headed to Grant Union High School and began commuting by bus to John Day. He laughed as he recalled kids sneaking over to unplug the bus if they wanted an extra snow day. He stayed busy with football, basketball, and track, often arriving home after 7:00 pm. "The bus driver always made sure we made it home safely," he said, mentioning the bus driver would run them to Seneca in the Driver's Ed van with the second brake pedal. "One night that pedal had to be used when a deer ran out into the road, and we always made sure someone sat in the front seat after that."

Gordon shared many of his fond memories from high school, including participating in the Mr. GUHS Contest his freshman year, when the boys wore dresses and competed in a beauty contest. His friends called him Beatle ("and still do!" adds Betty), because he wore his hair the same as the members of the musical group The Beatles. Beil had many influences in his life, but his favorites were his coaches, Ralph Burton and Don Jones, who were both Social Studies teachers, and Eugene Winnett, an English teacher.

Beil left for Mount Hood Community College after graduation in 1972 with the desire to teach. After one year of classes, he decided teaching just wouldn't be for him, and he returned home to John Day to work in the

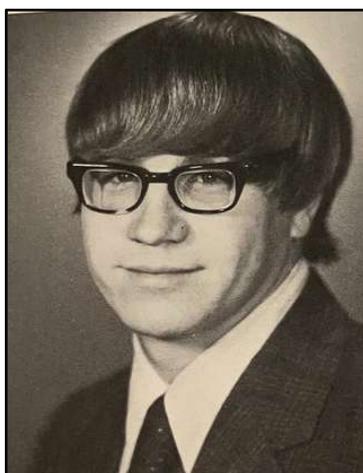
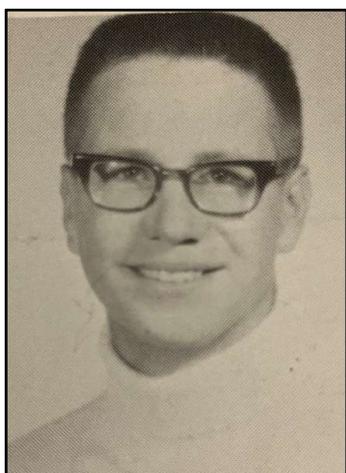
Hudspeth sawmill. He married, and his son Christopher was born.

In 1988, he married Betty, who had two sons of her own, Patrick Gibson and George Gibson. Betty worked for Grant School District 3 as a bus driver and substitute custodian at Blue Mountain Junior High, eventually becoming a full-time custodian at Grant Union High School. When work in the sawmills slowed down, Gordon accepted the custodian job at the Mount Vernon Middle School, moving to Humbolt Elementary School after the middle school closed.

In addition to their three sons, Gordon and Betty were blessed with five grandchildren: Rae Gibson, Ryland Beil, Landon Beil, Teagan Gibson, and Gunner Gibson. Gordon retired from Grant School District 3 in 2020, at the age of 67, but continued officiating at games simply because he loved sports and the students. In 2022, he retired from that, as well, having completed 22 years of basketball, 25 years of baseball and softball, and 11 years of volleyball. Retirement has not slowed life down for Gordon and Betty, who can still be found in the stands, cheering on their grandkids and the entire student body of Grant School District 3. Once a Prospector, always a Prospector!



Beil at a basketball game and with his dog



Gordon Beil as a freshman (left) and senior (right).



Gordon and Betty Beil