

We proudly salute our...

Graduates of Distinction 2014

These Walla Walla Public Schools graduates
have distinguished themselves in their
communities, professions, and careers.

They continue to give of themselves to
society and bring honor to the district.



2014 Graduates of Distinction

Thomas L. Copeland Class of 1942

Public service and leadership highlight Tom Copeland's life. These attributes were at the forefront after his 1942 high school graduation, when he joined the Army and commanded tanks and soldiers in the European Theatre of World War II. Discharged in 1946, he was highly decorated for service and bravery.



Tom then managed the family farm, experimenting with crops and equipment. During harvests, he hired and trained many local high school students. Many, including two of his nominators, Dan J. Cadagan and Jim Martine, received their first jobs that motivated them to seek higher education. Between 1956 and 1972, Tom served the citizens of his district as an elected State Representative. Examples of his many footprints at the State capitol include creation of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, open meetings, calendars of legislative proceedings and computerization of legislative processes. He also was actively involved in the Chamber of Commerce, Walla Walla County March of Dimes and the State Legislative Leadership Foundation.

Tom's nomination was coordinated by his wife, Donna, and children Tim Copeland and Brooke Copeland Saindon. A supporting letter, penned by former Washington State Secretary of State Sam Reed, praised Tom as "a man who dedicated his life and career to serving people."

Tom chose his Wa-Hi ROTC instructor, Harold Mazony, as his most inspirational staff person because of his support and encouragement to apply to Officers' Candidate School.

Paul H. Schneidmiller Class of 1970

Hard work, perseverance and dedication have been monikers of Paul Schneidmiller's life since his high school years when he worked as a custodian at the travel agency he would eventually own. Following his graduation, he attended the University of Washington, earning degrees in both zoology and education. He became office manager of World Wide Travel in 1979 and has served as President/CEO since 1992.



Paul's community service has led to service in many elected and appointed positions throughout the years. Most notable is his 12-year term as Port of Walla Walla Commissioner, during which time the new airport terminal and Railex Produce Distribution Center were built. Another lesser known accomplishment was his involvement in the Exchange Club Executive Board during the formation of the Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. He also has been active in his church, Walla Walla School District levy campaigns, Camp Fire and the local Masonic Lodge where he has served as a Master Mason for more than 30 years.

His nominators, headed by Jim Kuntz, were unanimous in praise for his life of service to others. Cindy Widmer says "He demonstrates every day a deep commitment to God, family and community." Family has always been of utmost importance to Paul and he has been very involved, with wife Jody, in the lives of their four daughters.

Paul chose Eleanor Burgess, his high school chemistry teacher, as his most inspirational staff person. He said she held all students accountable for their actions and invested her personal time to encourage their success. She still checks in with him periodically to see how he's doing in his life.

Daniel J. Hess Class of 1968

Following his graduation, Dan earned degrees in chemistry and psychology before deciding to pursue the legal profession and graduate in the top ten percent of his Willamette Law School class of 1981. He soon returned to his hometown and worked for several firms before starting his own practice, Hess Law Office.



Everyone who wrote in support of Dan Hess' nomination had a common theme in their letters: Family, community, service and dedication. Examples of these attributes are easy to find in Dan's life. He has been a very active, involved father and now grandfather. His community is very important to him and he volunteers behind the scenes for many area non-profits. He has been an active board member for the Walla Walla Mental Health Center, Goodwill and our own Walla Walla Public Schools, serving two terms: 1985 – 1992 and 2010 – 2013. And his life is a model of dedication, whether it be fundraising with members of his graduating class to raise funds for Blue Ridge playground equipment or being an advocate for children from diverse backgrounds.

Dan received the 20 year EAGLE Award from the Washington State Association for Justice in 2011 and has been named a "Distinguished Attorney" by Peer Review Ratings. He was nominated by his brother, Mark, and children, Jennifer Mouat and Peter Hess, who joined the family law practice six years ago.

He chose Dave Klicker as his most inspirational staff member. Dave was his sixth grade teacher and coach at Berney Elementary School who inspired so many of his life values.

David Wagner Class of 1993

As a high school student, David was a positive role model for fellow students, as well as a determined and competitive basketball player. Those very attributes would prove to be life changing two years after his high school graduation when a game of Frisbee on a California beach left him paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.



With the support of family and friends, and a large dose of determination, David moved forward with his life – graduating from Walla Walla Community College in 1997, then Walla Walla University with a teaching degree. In 1999, he attended a wheelchair tennis training camp and immediately loved the sport. By 2002, he was the number one U.S. quadriplegic tennis player. He excelled in the Paralympic Games, winning gold medals in 2004, 2008 and 2012, and is now the premier paraplegic tennis player in the world.

David continues to be a positive role model for anyone who has ever faced adversity, says family friends and nominators Sergio and Wendy Hernandez. He has shared his story with young people and adults throughout the nation, encouraging them to reach for their dreams. He contributes significant time each year working with wheelchair tennis camps.

His primary nominator was Earl Blackaby, on behalf of many of David's fans and friends in the Walla Walla Valley who all agree that David is a Walla Walla High School graduate worthy of this special recognition.

David chose his high school teacher Gary Peasley as his most inspirational staff person. He said Gary was always there to pick him up and help him be a better person on and off the court. David said he makes it a point to visit Gary every time he has the opportunity.

'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.'

Eleanor Roosevelt

Past Graduates of Distinction

Gerwyn Jones	Class of 1928	Daniel DeSiga	Class of 1967
Claro E. Bergevin	Class of 1941	Barbara Johnson	Class of 1967
Harold R. Frank	Class of 1941	James K. Hayner	Class of 1968
Charlotte Wirth	Class of 1944	Bruce T. Bjerke	Class of 1968
Gordon S. Riess	Class of 1944	Karen E. Glover	Class of 1968
Neil Follett	Class of 1944	Eric Johnson	Class of 1968
Gene Frank	Class of 1946	Jill A. Largent	Class of 1968
Gordon L. Jaynes	Class of 1946	Michael Maiden	Class of 1968
James F. Aylward	Class of 1946	Greg Ralston Pepin	Class of 1968
Dr. William C. Dement	Class of 1947	Dr. Richard K. Knuth	Class of 1969
Dr. George Cole Williams Jr.	Class of 1947	Michael M. Murr	Class of 1969
Val Jensen	Class of 1947	Jeanne Parker-Miller	Class of 1969
Richard P. Neher	Class of 1949	Mary Jane Towner-Glaser	Class of 1971
Wilber Pribilsky	Class of 1951	Vickie Anderson VanZandt	Class of 1972
Edward N. "Ned" Lange	Class of 1952	Mark Anderson	Class of 1973
Robert I. Brunton	Class of 1953	AnnRene Joseph	Class of 1973
H. Eugene Blattman	Class of 1954	Megan Ferguson-Clubb	Class of 1974
R.F. "Dick" Monahan	Class of 1958	John E. (Jack) Pelo	Class of 1974
Gretchen Miller Kafoury	Class of 1959	Daniel Reid	Class of 1974
Ned Shafer	Class of 1961	Dr. Philip Phillips	Class of 1975
Philip N. Lane, Jr.	Class of 1962	Jeffrey Ray	Class of 1978
John P. Folsom	Class of 1962	Tim Donaldson	Class of 1979
Carol Santa	Class of 1962	Irene Gonzales	Class of 1980
Stephen Hayner	Class of 1966	Craig Nelson	Class of 1981