

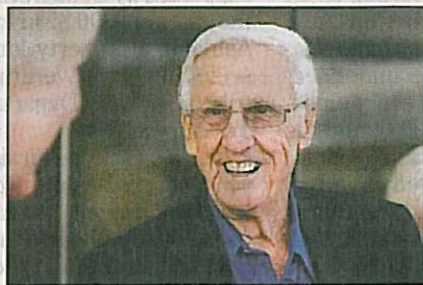
One high school diploma not nearly enough for former teacher

When Al Bauer was honored a few days ago, the former teacher and state legislator was described as a leading advocate for education.

It's interesting how that turned out, considering Bauer's own educational track.

Bauer never did graduate from high school. But he did wind up with four diplomas: Two didn't count and two were issued by high schools Bauer never attended.

The 82-year-old Bauer had a chance to chuckle about it last week, when Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center named the main road through its campus after him. He was introduced at Thursday's ceremony by John McKibbin, who'd been Bauer's colleague in the classroom as well as the Legislature. Their classrooms at Columbia



MEG FRENDR/The Columbian

Al Bauer greets friends Thursday at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center.

River High School were back to back, McKibbin said, and they often carpooled to Olympia.

"For 30 years, his primary concern was the quality of education for students in Washington," McKibbin said.

That span did not include Bauer's own years in high school. In a conversation before Thursday's event, Bauer recalled his own experience as a dropout.

"I wanted to farm. I didn't care about school," Bauer said. "I left high school with a D average."

Then he decided to enroll in a correspondence school that offered a high school diploma.

"I did all the work on my belly, in front of our wood-burning stove. I four-pointed correspondence school and thought, 'I guess I'm not so dumb after all.'"

He decided to resume his formal education and enrolled at Clark College. After two quarters, Bauer

joined the Navy and served during the Korean War.

He went back to Clark and then transferred to Portland State, where he earned a bachelor's degree while also working on a master's at Oregon State.

But Portland State said he couldn't graduate because he didn't have a high school diploma. Bauer

dusted off his old correspondence-school diploma, but Portland State wouldn't accept it.

Officials suggested that Bauer take the General Equivalency Degree test. He passed the GED test, only to be told there was a paperwork problem because he was a Washington resident.

Off Beat
NOT QUITE the NEWS

The frustrated Bauer finally talked with a Clark College adviser.

"He said, 'Let's look at your Portland State transcript.' He said I had a lot more credits than I needed and transferred some of them."

Bauer got a diploma in 1958 from Hudson's Bay High School — "which wasn't even built when I was in school" — and was teaching school in the fall.

Bauer got an honorary diploma from Fort Vancouver High School in 1975.

His own school experience continued to shape his career, he said.

"In the Legislature, I worked hard to prevent dropouts."

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