

Two longtime Heppner teachers say goodbye to students this year

When the students say goodbye to their classmates at the end of this school year they will also say goodbye to two beloved, much admired teachers--Al Beck at Heppner Junior/Senior High School and Karen Dubuque at Heppner Elementary School, both of whom are ending 30-year teaching careers, all 30 of those years for both spent in Morrow County.

After 30 years of stimulating the minds of students and often challenging the way they think, Al Beck, Heppner High School social studies teacher, has announced his retirement. Beck, 52, who has taught in Heppner for his entire 30-year career, will retire this June, to the dismay of many of his students.

It's not hard to figure out why Beck's a favorite teacher at Heppner High School. He comes alive before a classroom. Able to erase the years spanning the generation gap, Beck makes "ancient" history, such as the Vietnam War, relevant to today's students. Part of Beck's appeal is that he is interested in what the kids have to say and they know it.

"My favorite class is law," said Beck, "because the kids argue more than they do in other classes. The kids tend to argue less in social studies. In law class they don't mind at all disagreeing with me. I guess it's the nature of the class." Beck says that the neat part about law is that it is always current, is constantly changing and is even more accessible to classrooms via the Internet and e-mail. "I have set lesson plans," says Beck, "but if something comes up we can talk about it." An inquiry this year about a Native American who was charged with illegally selling eagle feathers and claws and went before the Supreme Court on federal charges evolved into a visit to the man's Web page and eventually a phone conversation with him. Another appeal of law, says Beck, is that it is varied enough that there is something interesting to everyone and each class is different. What stimulates one class and results in several days' discussion, may not even cause a ruffle in the next year's class.

Besides law, Beck has taught a variety of subjects, such as social studies, global studies and U.S. history, to a multitude of students from the fifth grade on up through high school seniors.

Beck received his bachelor's degree from the Oregon College of Education at Monmouth (now Western Oregon University) in 1968 in social studies and came to work at Heppner Junior High School in 1969, while the Vietnam War was still underway. "When I started in 1969, World War II was 24 years old. The Vietnam War is "now" to me but it's just as ancient history to the kids now as World War II was to me."

When Al and his wife, Karen, also a teacher at Heppner Junior/Senior High, first came to Morrow County, they lived in Ione, where she had a teaching job. He commuted from Heppner to Ione with another long-time teacher, Dale Conklin.

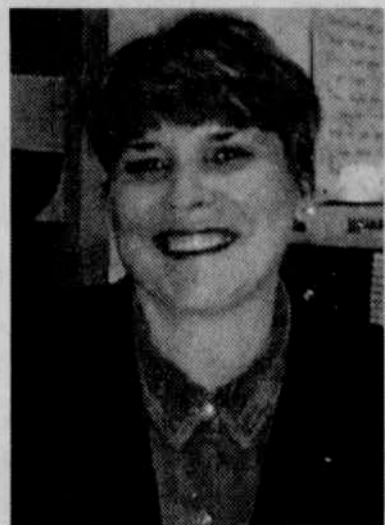
In 1975, Beck received his master's degree in U.S. history and in 1985 the Becks moved to Heppner. He moved up to Heppner High School in 1995 when the high school and junior high consolidated.

Beck says that the biggest change over the years has occurred in the girls. "The boys are pretty much the same," says Beck. "The girls now are more willing to speak their minds and are more honest. They see themselves as more equal to the boys and they see themselves as athletes in their own right." However, he adds, "Kids are still kids, even though their problems are somewhat different now than they were." Even the clothes are much the same, he says, although when he first started teaching the girls could not wear pants. A of couple girls who had very strong feelings about that issue prompted class discussion about the subject, which resulted in the formation of a dress code committee and a subsequent dress code. That early dress code is not too different from that in force today, he says.

An avid runner, Beck first started running to get in shape for basketball with fellow long-time teachers Les Payne, Steve

Brownfield and Conklin, who played against high school kids in Friday games. The basketball games are a thing of the past, but the running stuck. Beck ran his first race in 1979 and started getting competitive in 1982. He ran the Boston Marathon in 1981, has run the Hood to Coast Run every year since 1984, and now is running in Master's Track meets, which are like high school track meets for competitors 40 and over. He also likes to play golf, but only for fun.

The Becks, who will be married 30 years June 7, have two grown children, Michelle and Daniel, both of whom live in Portland.



Karen Dubuque

Always positive and sensitive to the feelings of her young charges, Heppner Elementary School teacher Karen Dubuque, who will retire this year, has nothing but wonderful things to say about her students, their parents and her co-workers.

"The children I've had over the years are just really nice. I'm proud that I was a teacher. I've always felt I've had such great help from my school parents," says Dubuque. "They have really supported me. I will also miss working with the staff because they are such dedicated people. They work each day to make Heppner Elementary a nice place to be."

Dubuque, over her 30-year career, 28 of those years in Heppner, has also worked to make Heppner Elementary a very nice place to be--and it shows, in the faces of her young students and their parents, some of whom were Dubuque's students many years ago. "The kids sometimes call you 'mama,' but now they call me 'grandma,'" she says with a laugh.

At a youthful 52 years, however, Dubuque isn't ready for the rocking chair. She has quite a few plans for her retirement, including "having a really nice garden," playing a lot of golf and doing some traveling with her husband, Doug, starting with a cruise to Mexico this summer. "It's been a really rewarding experience," laughs Dubuque, "but now I'm ready to go out to recess."

Dubuque is herself a Morrow County alumna. She attended

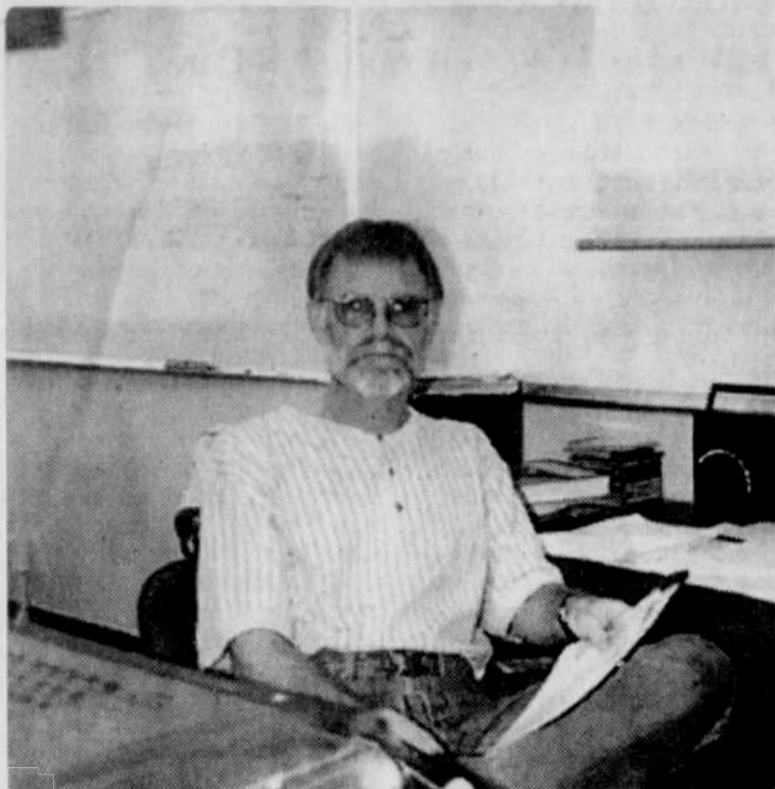
first grade in Ione, moved to Heppner in the second grade and graduated from Heppner High School in 1965. After high school she went to Eastern Oregon State College one year and then transferred to Oregon State University where she graduated in 1969 with a degree in elementary education.

After receiving her degree, she returned to Heppner and married her husband. She had an idea to apply for a library aide job, but Ron Daniels, the school superintendent at the time, told her she should apply instead for a second grade teacher position in Ione. Needless to say, she got the job and taught in Ione for two years before accepting a position as a second grade teacher at Heppner Elementary, where she has been ever since.

Dubuque started teaching in Ione the same year as Karen Beck did. "We were known as the 'Dubecks,'" jokes Dubuque. "We kept a pretty tight playground."

Dubuque says that children are expected to know so much more now than when she began her career. "The requirements for them have really stepped up over the years," she says. "But, kids also read more for pleasure now."

What did she enjoy most about teaching? Of course, it's the kids. "The kids are always the nice part," Dubuque. "I love the mornings when the kids come in and everyone has something to tell you. It's just a wonderful time. I'm sure when September comes and everyone goes off to school, I'm going to miss it."



Al Beck

Bert Mason wins surveying excellence award



Bert Mason

March 14 was an exciting night for Bert Mason at the meeting of the Western Federation of Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon and the American Congress of Surveying and Mapping in Portland.

In the company of his friends and hundreds of his surveying peers, Mason accepted the 1999 National Society of Professional Surveyors "Excellence in Surveying Award". This award is given to an individual who has performed outstanding service to the surveying profession.

Mason was born and raised in Ione where his father was in business. After high school he spent three years at Oregon State College studying in the school of forestry. During WWII he was in the Navy's First Aerial Photographic Mapping Squadron serving in Guadalcanal.

After the war he returned home and married Ellen Nelson and continued his education at Syracuse University, graduating

in 1947 from the school of photogrammetry.

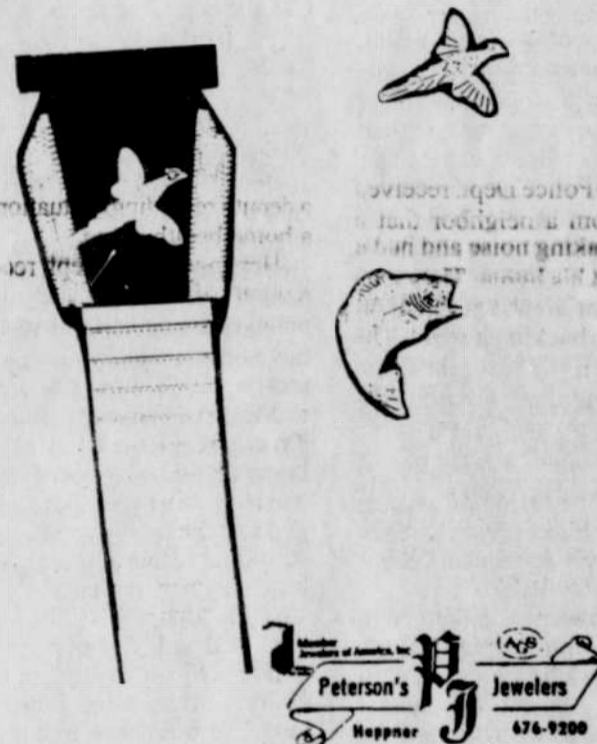
He was licensed as a professional land surveyor of Oregon in 1954 and has worked in that field for some 40 years. He now lives in Oakgrove and is still executive secretary of the Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon. He is known to have helped numerous surveyors over the years with special problems because of his extensive surveying knowledge.

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