

Beloved Island educator Reg Reid dies at 92

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Reg Reid spent 36 years as a teacher and vice-principal in School District 61.

Reg Reid, tireless and devoted to his calling, was everything an educator should be.

He died on April 22 at age 92.

Reid spent 36 years in School District 61, first as teacher, then vice-principal, and influenced thousands of students at Oak Bay Junior High, Central Junior High, Victoria High School and Mount Douglas Secondary. Reid stayed

interested in, and remained connected to, many of his students, and followed their careers with keen interest after graduation. He beat the bushes to help hundreds of them get scholarships and bursaries they might not otherwise have pursued.

“Reg saved the Vic High Alumni Association. He was kind, gracious, remarkable, authentic ... a man of humility,” said Roger Skillings, who in Grade 12 was prime minister of the Vic High student body, and graduated in 1968.

“What a wonderful life,” added Skillings, a key member of the alumni association.

Reid’s celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. on June 3 in the Vic High auditorium, where, as a student, he delivered the valedictory address for the Class of 1943, and later presided over so many school assemblies as vice-principal from 1967 to 1977.

It was in that auditorium that an 18-year-old Reid dropped his prepared notes on the way to the dais, and, unable to find them, delivered his valedictory speech from memory. No easy feat under such pressure.

It was such a compelling address that a Victoria Daily Times reporter in attendance asked if the newspaper could publish it in the next day’s edition.

Not having a copy, Reid spent the rest of the night rewriting the speech, and missed the graduation dance that followed the ceremony. The Daily Times ran the speech in its May 29, 1943, edition.

The family's connection to Vic High runs deep. Reg's father, Clifford Reid, was a Vic High student from 1913 to 1916 before enlisting to fight in the First World War. He returned to graduate with the Class of 1920, many of whom were also war veterans. Two of Reg's uncles, his dad's brothers, were killed in the war. Reg and his late brother, Jack, were named in honour of those fallen uncles.

Clifford Reid and Canadian field nurse Clara Detweiler met in France during the war and married. Their son, Reg, enlisted right after graduation for the next world war with the Royal Canadian Air Force in September of 1943 and received his wings as an air gunner in 1944. Reg was re-mustered to the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps from 1944 to 1945, but the war ended just as he was to be deployed overseas. He joined the reserves in 1945 and became a captain in the Canadian Intelligence Corps Air Photo Intelligence Division, in which he served for two decades.

Reid began his studies after the war at Victoria College, before graduating from UBC in 1951.

Reid's wife of 70 years, Iris, is also a Vic High graduate.

The third generation of Reids graduated from Vic High with Reg's and Iris's daughters Janet Reid in 1975 and Linda Reid in 1977, the latter in Reg's last year at Vic High. He was given an emotional standing ovation farewell by students and fellow staff in a special ceremony on the final day of school in 1977 — in the same auditorium in which he gave his valedictory address in 1943 and in which his life will be remembered on June 3.

"Dad loved Vic High and was so passionate about it," said daughter Linda.

Reid's first posting at his beloved Vic High was as an English, history and physical education teacher from 1957 to 1963. He also taught at Oak Bay Junior High from 1952 to 1957 and was vice principal at Central from 1963 to 1967 and Mount Douglas from 1977 to 1987.

Reid continued in the education field after retiring in 1987 and mentored hundreds of future B.C. teachers as a student teacher supervisor at the University of Victoria.

Reid was also involved in myriad community activities. Former Mount Douglas principal Jack Lowther, in a letter of nomination for Reid to the Order of B.C., stated: "No one in the school district was respected more than Reg. He was always positive, kind and service oriented."

Reid was on the board, and later president and chairman, of the United Way of Greater Victoria and president of the Oak Bay Kiwanis Health Care Society from 1980 to 2004. The boardrooms at Kiwanis Pavilion and Rose Manor are named in Reid's honour. He was also heavily involved in Operation Trackshoes, the Oak Bay Kiwanis Club's Salvation Army Christmas Kettles annual door-to-door canvassing and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Reg played lacrosse (brother Jack was a Shamrocks player) and was a coach in the Victoria Minor Hockey Association in the 1950s and 1960s. Reg always tried to build a well-rounded student, and believed the gymnasium, field, track and theatre were as central to school life as the classroom.

He was especially a great believer in the value of school sports, a passion that bled into the community, with roles such as co-organizing with Ed Fougner the 1994 Canadian track and field trials for the Commonwealth Games. The Island high-school basketball championships, which Reid chaired for many years, were especially dear to his heart. Reid was also one of the greatest supporters of University of Victoria basketball and a diligent fundraiser, event organizer and MC for the Vikes.

“I never heard Reg utter a negative word. He was such a gentleman and always had a bounce in his step,” said former UVic basketball coach Ken Shields.

The community Reid supported so well returned that support when it rallied around him in a big way following a near-tragic incident in December of 1977 when he was stabbed in the Mount Douglas school parking lot after a rugby game by an unknown assailant jogging by in a track suit and wearing a balaclava. The incident was serious and the blade just missed a vital artery. Reid was hospitalized, yet his steely resolve shone through in recovery. The community response was immediate and compellingly heartfelt.

“There was such an incredible and huge outpouring of support for my dad from students, staff and the community ... the banners and cards were extraordinary,” daughter Linda Reid said.

“My dad never skipped a beat and returned to doing what he loved, which was teaching and supporting youth. . It’s quite remarkable.”

Two years before he retired, School District 61 sent Reid a letter in 1985, signed by superintendent B.A. Chandler and board chair Carol Pickup, thanking Reid for his more than three decades with the district. It read: “Your commitment to our young people is legendary, as is your community dedication. We simply do not know how many hours and days you have given of yourself over the past 30 years and if we tried to calculate it, we would undoubtedly need more than one adding machine.”

Reid is survived by wife, Iris, children Cliff (who became a musician), David (a Vancouver lawyer), Janet (a nurse and teacher in Utah) and Linda (a Victoria family doctor) and grandchildren Colin, Allison, Miles, Naomi, Fiona and Simon.