

Joyce Curtis Mulliken Class 1963
Ephrata Alumni Association Noted Alumni



While attending Ephrata High School, Joyce Curtis realized that, “having limited athletic abilities”, she needed to find some other way to fill her time. She perused the opportunities offered by the school.

Joyce joined the Future Homemakers of America, Future Teachers of America and served on the annual staff. She also worked in the school office. She became a member of the KOVE club that encouraged high school students to gather at the Ephrata Recreation Center for socializing and dancing to juke-box music.

Most importantly, Joyce turned to Mr. Truman Youngberg’s choral music and became a member of the music department’s Tri Trio. She was inspired and encouraged by Mrs. Mabel Thompson to become part of the Ephrata High School’s Thespian group.

Performing in music concerts and class plays were among her most memorable times at Ephrata High School.

After graduating from Ephrata High School, Joyce...

...attended Kinman Business University in Spokane, WA and later attended Big Bend Junior College at Moses Lake (BBCC).

...married Mike Mulliken and in 1965 moved to Fort Campbell, KY where Joyce worked in Civilian Personnel. While Mike served in Vietnam 1967-1968, she returned to Ephrata and worked for the United States Bureau of Reclamation.

...returned to Ephrata in 1975. Joyce attended Big Bend Community College, Central Washington University and Western Oregon State College for advanced sign language and special education classes and workshops. Began working as a classroom interpreter for DeafEd in the Ephrata School District 1976-1982.

...decided to return to college at the age of 46 in order to complete Accounting and Business Administration degrees.

...began career representing the people in the 13th Legislative District of Washington State which covers most of Grant, all of Kittitas and part of Yakima counties. After losing in her first-time effort, Joyce was elected to the House of Representatives in 1995 and served four terms before winning a seat in the State Senate in 2003. She resigned that seat in 2006 upon appointment to the Growth Management Hearing Board.

...was appointed to committees that she felt would most benefit the people in Central Washington such as Committees for Higher Education, Water & Natural Resources and Rural Economic Development. Joyce went on a trade mission to South Korea to promote agriculture. She agreed to support the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass project if it would include the widening of SR 17 between Ephrata and Moses Lake. She proudly ended her Legislative experience with this final accomplishment.

...shared her wins and losses, successes and failures, returning to college mid-life, in the hopes people are encouraged to never give up, and keep the faith. Joyce was honored to work in the Washington State Legislature.

Joyce Curtis Mulliken Class of 1963

Sometimes, like King David, God chooses the unlikely to accomplish His purpose. I went through the Ephrata Schools, and most of my adult life, with little notoriety, until 1994.

Following EHS Class of '63 graduation, I attended Kinman Business University in Spokane. In the Fall of 1963, I joined several of my classmates and attended Big Bend Junior College (later renamed BBCC). We were the first class to attend the new (south) campus in Moses Lake. I met the wonderful man who was to become my life's partner and best friend, Mike Mulliken, while attending BBCC. We were married in Ephrata in 1964 and I put continuing education on hold.

In 1965 Mike was drafted into the Army; following his training we moved to Fort Campbell, KY, where I worked in Civilian Personnel. While Mike served in Vietnam (1967-68), I returned to Ephrata, and went to work at the USBR (Bureau of Reclamation.). After Mike returned home with a Purple Heart, we were sent to Fort Huachuca, AZ until his honorable discharge in 1968. After living in Moses Lake and Burien, we moved to Ephrata in 1975 to raise our son, Dan, who was born in 1970 (EHS '88).

From 1976-82 I worked as a Classroom Interpreter for DeafEd in the Ephrata School District. During those years I attended, BBCC, CWU and Western Oregon State College for advanced sign language and 22222 education classes and workshops. Mike and I also owned a couple of small businesses in Ephrata and Quincy. But life was not always about work — it was about giving back. We became foster parents, and a host family for an exchange student. My life was full as a wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend. I volunteered at Saint Rose of Lima School and Church, the Ephrata Hospital North Wing, and Birthright. Once our family was raised, at the age of 46, I returned to college to complete my Accounting and Business Administration degrees.

My intent was to earn accreditation to teach Business Law and Civics. However, life's experiences had created an acute awareness of the influence government plays in the lives of families, education, and business owners.

In 1992 State Representative Harold Hochstatter asked me to run for office to serve in the WA State House of Representatives. After in depth consideration and consultation with family, close friends, and my Spiritual Director, Mike and I said yes. I won a three way Primary, but lost in the November General Election. In 1994 WA State Rep. Gary Chandler and Senator Hochstatter, once again asked me to run for office. November 1994 I was elected to the WA State House of Representatives, and in 2002 I was elected to the WA State Senate.

A new chapter was being written, and all my past experiences proved beneficial to represent the people living in the 13th Legislative District; comprised of Grant, Kittitas, Yakima and Benton Counties — 12 County Commissioners, 16 Mayors and Councils, 16 school districts, 16 Chambers of Commerce, 16 parades and community celebrations. I was a "Citizens' Legislator."

A favorite memory I have following my 1992 election loss, came from Mabel Thompson. She suggested I was too young and needed more life experience, and to try again. After I was elected in 1994, as a Republican and completed my first Legislative Session in 1995, I made it a point to give an annual Legislative update to the Grant County Democrats, along with dozens of constituent groups. Mabel pulled me aside and told me I was doing a good job. In addition to my parents, Mervin & Georgia Curtis and my husband, Mike, I was most inspired and influenced by Mabel Thompson's honesty and straight forward approach.

I was appointed to Committees like Higher Ed, Appropriations, Local Government, Water & Natural Resources, Rural Economic Development, Land Use, and Transportation — committees which would most benefit the people in central Washington. The importance of our agriculture economy took me on a trade mission to South Korea to promote our fruits, vegetables, beef and other commodities.

The accident and death toll on SR 17 were a big concern for people commuting between Ephrata & Moses Lake. I was "strongly advised and encouraged" to support the Transportation Budget to include the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass project, which was also in the 13th District. This project was needed for our farmers to get

their “products to market” since much of Washington’s economy depends on our exports. I agreed to support this multi-billion dollar, 10+ year project IF they would include the widening of SR 17 between Ephrata and Moses Lake. I’m proud to have ended my Legislative experience with this final accomplishment.

After serving the people in the 13th District for 12 years, I had determined it was time to step aside and allow another citizen the opportunity to experience this amazing journey. In addition, my father’s health was failing and it was time to come home and have more time with my parents and our son’s growing family. In 2006 Mike and I decided I would not run for re-election. Following that decision, I was offered a different kind of opportunity. Governor Christine Gregoire appointed me to a six-year term to serve on the quasi-judicial Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) for eastern WA; where I could work primarily from my home office. Although the appointed position started July 1, 2006, I opted to not accept the appointment until the November election was certified, and the voters in the 13th District had elected their next Senator.

When we take an oath to uphold the United States and Washington State Constitutions, and the laws of the State of Washington, it’s important we follow the laws. But, when the laws conflict with the Constitution, and jeopardize a citizens’ protected rights, then we must work to change or clarify the laws to bring them into Constitutional compliance. Our Founding Fathers gave us three equal Branches of Government — Legislative, Executive & Judicial. Imagine a three-legged stool, and if one leg is missing the stool cannot stand. The Legislative Branch makes the Laws, the Executive Branch implements the Laws, the Judicial Branch interprets the Legislative intent of the Laws when there is a dispute. The Legislative Branch is the elected voice of the people. I believe we must defend the foresight and brilliance of our Founders.

I share my wins and losses, successes and failures, returning to college mid-life, in the hopes people will be encouraged to never give up, and keep the faith. Education and hard work is critical to success — in a classroom, or learning through life’s lessons. My life is evidence God always has a better plan when we trust Him. To this day I pray, “God will open doors no one can close, and close doors no one can open; even me.”

On a personal note, Mike and I recently celebrated our 55th Wedding Anniversary. Our wonderful son, Dan, and daughter-in-law, Lynai, have given us seven amazing and accomplished grandchildren (plus spouses) and, 14 great grandchildren. We are grateful to remain in contact with our two beautiful foster daughters, Selena and Shannon, and their families. I’m happy to be a lifetime member of the EHS Alumni Association; enjoyed working on the EHS 100 Year Celebration, and look forward to attending our EHS Class of ’63 Reunions. My heart will always belong to the people in Ephrata and my sincere gratitude for life’s lessons learned while growing up in Ephrata, and raising our family in Ephrata. It was an honor to work for you in the Washington State Legislature from 1994-2006.

In Your Service,

Senator Joyce Mulliken, (R), District 13