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Each of us asks the same question: Where have the years gone? And, here are the highlights of my life as I look back over what now seems like such a short period of time:

After graduation from South Salem High, we remained in Salem and those first years were devoted to my home and family. We first bought a small home in the country then moved to a larger home on Kurth Avenue which better accommodated our growing family. My older son, Jeff, and middle son, Steve, were both born in Salem.

In 1975, I moved to the Vancouver B.C. area. It was there in Canada where I began my long career in the Insurance industry. I managed an office for the principal of our agency, then was fortunate to branch out, form my own company and opened my own agency. My client list grew and my business thrived. I bought a home in Richmond B.C. and, during this time, my 3rd son, Cris, was born. We lived in Canada for about 13 years. It was a wonderful place to raise a family and experience the culture of a different country.

As the boys grew into young men and gained their independence, I returned to the states and settled in the Portland area to be closer to my Mom (Dad had already passed) and to my brother, Michael Atkinson (SSHS Class of '65) and sister-in-law, Linda Holcomb Atkinson (SSHS Class of '63). My sister, Barbara (SSHS Class of '63) still lived in Chicago at that time. I'll pick the next chapter of my life up further down but, with pride, want to tell you about my children and grandchildren:

Cris, my youngest son, remained in Canada, works for Telus Communications, married Rebecca (an elementary school teacher) in 2011, and they are expecting their first baby in December. It's time for a new baby in the family and we are filled with joy.

Steven, my middle son, lives in Dayton, Oregon. He and his wife, Jennifer, have dogs, kittens and cows. Steve and Jennifer both work full time and, when home, tend to the tasks and chores of their farm in Dayton. It keeps them so busy.

Jeff, my oldest son, married his high school Sweetheart, Darla. They live in Laguna Niguel, California. Jeff is a Manager with FedEx and Darla is a Director for a non-profit. They have two children (my wonderful grandchildren), Brianna and Braden. Brianna is a senior at Long Beach State. And Braden, having graduated from Saddleback College, with his degree in mid May, was just married on May 31 to Morgan. It was a beautiful wedding and, with his recent enlistment, he will now be in the Air Force.

In picking back up on my life . . . After moving back from Canada, I bought a home in Aloha, Oregon. I started my 2nd career, this one with the State of Oregon's PERS department, which is Oregon's pension system for state employees. I traveled the entire state – south to Medford and Ashland, east to Ontario, and spent much time on the road between Portland and Salem providing financial/pension and retirement planning options to state, city, county and school district employees. Then, selling my home in Aloha and taking a year's hiatus, I purchased a motor coach and traveled the West: Oregon, California, Nevada, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

After that year, I returned to work with the State of Oregon and retired in 2010. I bought a home in McMinnville and enjoy work in my gardens which are filled with flowers and vegetable beds. As needed, I acquiesce to work for a few months a year for PERS during their busy time. My home in McMinnville is mid point between Steven and Jennifer in Dayton and my friends and Michael and Linda in Portland.

I've been fortunate to have traveled home to Hawaii (all three of us were born in Honolulu) a few times, toured within Canada, flew to England and sailed across the The Channel to France, and motored the Western US. Every Thanksgiving, I travel to San Diego to spend the holiday with my sister's family and Jeff/Darla/kids and visit.

I am blessed with good health, three wonderful sons and daughters-in-law, two and soon-to-be three beautiful grandchildren, friends and cherished memories of high school at South Salem.

Fifty Years! That's where it's gone.

