



**STORYBOOK CAREER** – Mike Carrigan is moving on to the next chapter of his life after teaching and coaching at La Conner for 26 years. The former Stanford football player tackled numerous assignments during that time. As a shop teacher he helped build relationships with the Swinomish Tribal Community, enlisting the talents of carver Kevin Paul and taking an active role in Lushootseed instruction.

– Photo by Brad Reynolds

*Played football at Stanford*

## Retiring teacher Carrigan hands off rich legacy

By Bill Reynolds

During his more than a quarter-century at La Conner High, Mike Carrigan has tackled a wide range of teaching assignments – from algebra to U.S. history to industrial arts.

Turns out, he was a big-time tackler long before arriving here in the early 1990s.

A native of Orting, southeast of Tacoma, Carrigan played defensive back at Stanford University, where he squared off against the likes of future Seattle Seahawks head coach Mike Holmgren and 1968 Heisman Trophy winner O.J. Simpson.

His Stanford teammates included Jim Plunkett, the 1970 Heisman choice and a Rose Bowl Most Valuable Player.

Because of his unique skill set and ability to connect with students, Carrigan from the start established himself as a valuable member of the La Conner faculty.

His lasting impact was apparent during La Conner High's recent commencement exercises when attention briefly turned from this year's graduates to the soft-spoken Carrigan.

He was greeted with a heartfelt standing ovation from the large crowd at Landy James Gym.

The feeling was mutual. "I see many people," Carrigan said, "to whom I feel I owe so much."

Among those who rose in applause was Dallas Wylie, grandfather of La Conner grad Jack Tronsdal, and a friend of retired

Mount Vernon High and Skagit Valley College coach Dave Quall, a former state lawmaker who had coached Carrigan at Orting.

"Dave Quall," said Wylie, "told me Mike Carrigan was the best athlete he had at Orting."

Good enough, in fact, to draw attention of college coaches.

Carrigan enjoyed his time at Stanford, where he earned a degree in political science, and followed his older brother, Andy, a starting linebacker, onto the football team.

As a sophomore, Carrigan and his Stanford teammates faced Simpson and high-powered Southern Cal.

"They were ranked No. 1 in the country," Carrigan said, "and ended up beating us 30-0."

But Stanford even then was developing a program that would win successive Rose Bowls after the 1970 and '71 campaigns.

Carrigan sustained injuries during his junior and season series, yet has no regrets.

"It was a great experience," he said.

But he was ready to return to the Pacific Northwest after college, where a younger brother, Casey, was a renowned pole vaulter who had set the Washington state high school record and qualified for the 1968 U.S. Olympic team.

Still, it was the long road that Carrigan took to La Conner.

He taught in Soap Lake, in eastern Washington. He worked in an office in Everett. He fished and worked heavy equipment in Alaska.

La Conner eventually beckoned.

Carrigan was then at a job where he felt he "was trading time for money."

La Conner had an opening for a shop teacher and assistant football coach, and Carrigan was interested.

"I decided I needed a change," he recalled.

It helped that La Conner High's principal at the time was Ken Winkes, a fellow Stanford alum who had known Carrigan's brother Andy while at The Farm.

If the well-traveled Carrigan

needed a sign as to whether La Conner would be his new home he received it while checking out Whittaker Field.

"I climbed the bleachers and prayed about it," he reflected.

"When I opened my eyes, I was looking down at that beautiful field. There was a tractor plowing next to it. There was a fire engine and logging trucks out on La Conner-Whitney Road. I could see Mount Baker in the distance. And I could see the masts of sailboats going down the channel.

"To me," he said, "this seemed like a storybook town. When I walked around, up along the waterfront, that feeling was confirmed. I knew then that I wanted to work in a storybook town."

Little did Carrigan know at the time but he would write many new chapters of his own.

His approach as a teacher and coach was to build self-confidence among students while expanding his own parameters. By all accounts, he succeeded at both.

Carrigan enlisted Swinomish carver Kevin Paul to join him in the La Conner High shop, which in turn led to a fruitful interaction with the Tribe that continues to this very day.

"What I appreciate about the Swinomish Tribe," said Carrigan, "is that every event there always starts with a prayer. There's an underlying respect for something greater than one's self."

In retirement, Carrigan plans to do much of what he's done during his lengthy tenure in La Conner. His tools of the trade will remain close at hand.

"I like building stuff," Carrigan said. "Of course a lot of it is just repairing stuff."

And he'll continue helping students build strong foundations for the rest of their lives through work with the Young Life Christian outreach program.

"For me," said Carrigan, "the spiritual piece of the puzzle is a pretty important one."

Travel is also part of the game plan for the former college football player and his wife, Joanne, who look forward to visiting their 12 grandchildren and his 97-year-old mom.

The couple will maintain their home base of five acres south of Conway, while still being connected to La Conner. The reason is simple.

"La Conner," explained Carrigan, "is a great place to be part of."

## La Conner sports stars tops in county

By Bill Reynolds

La Conner High was center stage when the Skagit Valley Herald's fifth annual Sports Stars program was held at the Bruce Performing Arts Center last week.

The Sports Stars venue rotates each year and 2019 was La Conner's year.

Both the timing and location couldn't have been better as two of the top three awards went to La Conner recipients.

La Conner High senior Matty Lagerwey was named the Overall Girls' Athlete of the Year while State Hall of Famer Suzanne Marble garnered Coach of the Year recognition.

Burlington-Edison's student Taino Ferdinand was the Overall Male Athlete of the Year. He was an all-conference performer for their basketball team, and this spring he won the Class 2A state high jump title.

Lagerwey was the lone finalist to have received multiple seasonal top athlete accolades. She was the Herald's choice for both volleyball and girls' track-and-field.

The La Conner High senior was Most Valuable Player at the State 2B Volleyball Tournament last November when the Lady Braves secured the program's fourth championship, all of which have come under Marble's tutelage.

Lagerwey closed out her La Conner career by capturing a fourth straight state long jump title and repeated as triple jump champion. Lagerwey added a bronze medal in the javelin and fifth place state finish in the 100

meters.

In addition, La Conner High freshman Emma Worgum was honored as the Girls' Golf Athlete of the Year, one of nearly two dozen Skagit County students honored in various sports – with Lagerwey tabbed for two.

Herald sports editor Dan Ruthemeyer served as Master of Ceremonies for the nearly two-hour event. The paper's publisher, Heather Hernandez, and La Conner Superintendent of Schools Dr. Whitney Meissner also addressed the large audience.

Meissner brought with her to the podium a thick album of newsclippings highlighting the 1962-63 La Conner High State 'B' Tournament basketball team, gifted to La Conner Schools earlier in the day by Granite Falls researcher Gil Winje.

"The same day I received this," Meissner said of the handsome album, "I have the opportunity to talk to students who will be talked about in years to come."

Meissner noted the positive lasting impact of Title IX legislation from 1972, which has made possible the soaring achievements of Lagerwey, Worgum and other female athletes.

Meissner said her mother graduated from high school in 1965, seven years before Title IX.

"She didn't have this opportunity," said Meissner, "because of being female."

Ruthemeyer praised Marble for both her past success – she guided

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**SHINING MOMENT** – La Conner High volleyball coach Suzanne Marble (left) and senior volleyball and track-and-field standout Matty Lagerwey flank Burlington-Edison high jumper Taino Ferdinand on stage during the Skagit Valley Herald Sports Stars program at the Bruce Performing Arts Center in La Conner last week. Marble was saluted as the Herald Coach of the Year and Lagerwey was recipient of the SVH Overall Girls' Athlete of the Year. Ferdinand was chosen the Boys' Athlete of the Year. La Conner freshman Emma Worgum was also recognized as Girls' Golf Athlete of the Year.

– Photo courtesy of Bill Reynolds

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## Contract Bridge

BE THANKFUL FOR SMALL FAVORS

South dealer. Both sides vulnerable.

**NORTH**  
 ♠ 6 4  
 ♥ Q J 4  
 ♦ A Q 10 9 7 3  
 ♣ 8 3

**EAST**  
 ♠ Q J 9 5  
 ♥ K 6 5  
 ♦ K 8 2  
 ♣ J 9 6

**WEST**  
 ♠ 10 8 3  
 ♥ 10 9 8 2  
 ♦ 5 4  
 ♣ Q 10 7 2

**SOUTH**  
 ♠ A K 7 2  
 ♥ A 7 3  
 ♦ J 6  
 ♣ A K 5 4

The bidding:  
 South West North East  
 1 ♣ Pass 1 ♦ Pass  
 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♦ Pass  
 3 NT

Opening lead — ten of hearts.

Assume you're East and your partner leads the ten of hearts against three notrump. Declarer covers with the jack, and you realize it would be wrong to play your king because declarer, who certainly has the ace, would thereby acquire an additional entry to dummy's diamonds.

After the jack holds, South plays a club to the ace, leads the jack of dia-

monds and finesses. Again you duck, since your only hope of defeating the contract lies in preventing declarer from utilizing dummy's long suit. He thereupon leads another diamond to the queen, but this time you take the trick and shift to the queen of spades.

As a result of your holding up the king of hearts at trick one and the king of diamonds at trick three, South eventually goes down, and you have a right to congratulate yourself on your defense. At the same time, your ebullience is tempered by the realization that you were pretty lucky to defeat the contract, since if declarer had played correctly, nothing could have stopped him from making five notrump!

All he had to do to ensure success was to play the four of hearts from dummy at trick one instead of the jack. After taking the ten with the ace, he leads the jack of diamonds and finesses. When the jack wins, he repeats the finesse.

You take the king and return a spade or a club. South wins and leads a heart to dummy's Q-J, establishing an entry to dummy that enables him to score five diamond tricks as well as two tricks in each of the other three suits.

Thus, if declarer stops to think things over before making his first play at trick one, he's sure to wind up a winner regardless of how good a defender you are.

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by Steve Becker

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