

December 13, 2018

//9

LEGENDARY COACH RETIRING AFTER SCHOOL YEAR

 Kyle Barton

 Kyle Barton, TR yearbooks & TR Athletics Website



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR ABOUT THE FOLLOWING STORY: I personally have had Joe White as a teacher for multiple classes through my four years at ThunderRidge. We joke around about everything varying from sports, to how he looks like Winston Churchill, and even though I do not play baseball or football, I still refer to him as 'Coach White.' The reason for that is because he is like a life coach for me, in addition to hundreds of other students. Every day, he leads by example, coaching me not only about the virtues of business, but also on the virtues of how to be a better man. The above photos show White as a younger man in the early years at ThunderRidge and more recently on the baseball field. See his story on the following two pages.

THE RETIRING OF A LEGEND: JOE WHITE

 Kyle Barton

Look up, look around, these walls were built for a reason; a vision seen by a group of people who created a planning committee. One of the original committee members was a young man named Joseph White.

White graduated from Arapahoe High School, and went on to play baseball at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction. The plan for White was to work in Palo Alto, California, working a sales job. White decided to leave—to pursue what he has always loved doing most, helping the generation of future leaders. And students are glad he did.

His classroom has remained mainly unchanged since he began his career at ThunderRidge. Decorated newspaper articles showcasing ThunderRidge are posted on the walls around the room, and desks at the back of the classroom are scattered with memorabilia. This gives the room a homey feel, and lets it be known White considers the room another home, and another home for every student who comes in.

When the committee had the school set to be called ThunderRidge, founding fathers were put in place. Teachers left year after year, but

 Kyle Barton & Haylee Owen

Joe White never left. He knew ThunderRidge was the place for him.

No other school has what ThunderRidge has, that is why White says he has chosen to stick around. Plus, it is always easier to stick around a place you helped create, as he is one of only two original planning committee members left.

The other remaining

creation of our traditions. These traditions will continue to develop and will hopefully last forever.”

Traditions that White helped form include Field Day and Seminar, and just about any event you can think of at the school.

Head Varsity Football Coach Doug Nisenson, a former student of White, put it best by saying,

‘He has been a big part of the foundation of our school and the creation of our traditions.’

– Joe Ortiz

original planning committee member is Wilbur Sameshima, who teaches engineering and physics.

Sameshima says that White “has been the compass that kept me and the school pointed in the right direction.” That could not be any more truthful. He has not only helped the school in the right direction, but also its expansion we know today.

Head Varsity Boys-Basketball Coach Joe Ortiz says, “It’s incredible to think of all the people Joe talked into coming to ThunderRidge. Including myself. He has been a big part of the foundation of our school and the

“If you love something about TR, there is a good chance that Joe White was in the meeting when ThunderRidge decided to do it.”

White is best known around the school for being the longtime head varsity baseball coach, leading the Grizzlies to two 5A State Championships. This will be the first season without White being the commander of Grizzlies baseball, but he’s sticking on as a pitching coach for the upcoming season under new head coach, Brad Johnson.

Although Johnson has been a longtime assistant, and has coached

with White for almost 20 years, he says he thinks of White as a friend first, and a coach second.

Unfortunately, far too often people come in to a job, get their paycheck and go home; not White though. He has always valued the relationships more than anything, whether with fellow teachers or fellow students.

Mark Carnes, an assistant football and baseball coach with White, and another of White’s former students, says, “He has been an inspiration and hero of mine in both my personal and professional lives. I have always known from day one that he cared about me personally and would do anything he could to help me in any way he could.”

Other friendships have lasted well beyond school as well, with Nisenson, who first met White 16 years ago while he was a freshman at ThunderRidge. Even when Nisenson left Colorado and moved to Arizona, he stayed in touch, and now the friendship has come full circle as they are peers in the classroom as teachers, and peers on the football field as fellow coaches.

Sixteen years is a long time to stay friends with someone, but that

THE RETIRING OF A LEGEND: JOE WHITE

is nothing when compared to some of the other ThunderRidge staff members.

Business teacher Genevieve Bennett had White as a teacher as well, but it was before ThunderRidge was established, as White taught Bennett at Highlands Ranch High School. "He was my typing teacher when I was a freshmen in high school in 1994 at HRHS. When I decided to become a teacher, I student taught with him."

Bennett adds, "Joe has been so many things to me over the years. In many ways, he is my touchstone. I often think, 'What would Joe do?' in different situations with students or colleagues. It helps me center myself and my reaction to situations."

Dating back even further is the friendship White has had with Joe Ortiz, as the two have known each other for over 35 years.

"I was a senior at Littleton High School and he was a freshmen at Arapahoe High School. We played each other in baseball and his dad was my head coach," says Ortiz. Even as high school for the two concluded, they stayed connected. "We started our coaching careers around the same time. We coached

the varsity baseball summer team at Arapahoe High School one year. He also lived in my condo for a semester, while he was student teaching."

These friendships will continue to last even as White retires this May, so will all the memories he has brought to everyone at the school. It's almost impossible to choose a favorite Joe White mem-

Live skits, and even playing the part of Bob Barker on The Price is Right in front of the school.

While many people have made memories of and with White, he believes his memories with students and fellow teachers have been one of the contributing factors of why he stayed so long.

Although Joe White

his impact stating the fact that "he touched the lives of literally tens of thousands of people during their time and ThunderRidge. His lessons, impact and influence can be seen throughout our society. Countless mothers, fathers, CEOs, doctors, lawyers, professional athletes, entrepreneurs, and the list goes on and on, were helped by him during their most vital years.

"Whenever I see the 'Right Place, Right Time' tagline, I will always think of Joe and the impact he has had on my life and ThunderRidge," said Bennett.

Carnes added: "I will always see him as my coach, because he has earned and deserves the respect. To me, coaches are above all others. To call someone coach is the absolute highest level of respect one can give!"

Students and faculty have just under a semester and a half with White gracing the building. If you don't think he's an important figure, think again.

"If TR had a 'Mount Rushmore' there's no doubt Joe White's face would be on it," said Nisenson. "He helped construct the culture, traditions, and focal points of our school."

'I will always see him as my coach, because he has earned and deserves the respect.'

– Mark Carnes

ory, he has had countless moments that're ingrained in people's minds.

An iconic quality of White is his storytelling ability. Nisenson declares, "If there is something he does as well, or better, than coaching others, it's telling funny stories."

Bennett adds on, saying her favorite moments that she will miss were his hilarious stories he would tell during department lunches and meetings.

White is also known to always be an active participant in assemblies, as both Sameshima and Ortiz recall White's antics, such as Saturday Night

is retiring from teaching, his impact on ThunderRidge High School will never be forgotten.

Sameshima sums it up, "without Joe White, TRHS would not be what it is today".

According to Johnson, "His impact on the lives of our school is impossible to measure. He set the tone for how our students should be treated, and coached."

Carnes explains, "He has laid the foundation for everything we do here. White was an integral part of creating the culture of ThunderRidge, he has had an influence in everything we do here."

Nisenson describes