

Distinguished Alumni

Distinguished Alumnus Award - 2002

Eugene Thayer Bigelow, Jr. '59

A Santa Barbara native, you visited Cate frequently before your high-school years—indeed you remember spending Sundays upon the Mesa during elementary school, having lunch in your church clothes with your great Aunt and Uncle, Mrs. And Mr. Cate. When you entered Cate in 1953 as part of the last eighth grade class, you worked hard to adapt to the rough and tumble of boarding school life. During your time at Cate, you enjoyed playing baseball and squash, but found the academics difficult and yearned for more support from your teachers and coaches. Indeed, you have commented that your personal relationship with Mr. Cate was a crucial tie that allowed you to make it through your five years. That relationship and a desire to help future Cate students have a more supportive experience have resulted in years of commitment to the School, inspiring the creation of a minority scholarship fund, and your significant work on the Board of Trustees.

In 1995, you joined Cate's Board of Trustees, and in the words of Rick Baum '64, president of the board, you "have brought an extraordinary amount of business acumen to the board of Cate, perspective from a number of institutions of higher education, and the ability to effectively manage the board towards its objective." You have helped Cate to substantially improve minority recruiting through chairing the Admission Committee, establishing a relationship with the Boys' Club of New York, and introducing many incredible students to the School. Indeed, one of your most meaningful experiences has been mentoring students and ensuring that they receive the support they need at Cate.

You reminisced that "I was not quite ready to take on the challenges of the world, after graduating in 1959." You struggled in your first year at college and left to spend two years in the Marine Corps. You then returned to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, with new focus and strength that led you to graduate in 1965 and earn an MBA from the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration in 1967.

You were hired at Time Warner in 1967, and within a few years your innate interest in media led you to join Time Warner's Manhattan Cable Television. There you implemented the first computerized billing and service logs that moved the company away from reliance on manual systems—an innovation not easily accepted by cable executives at the time. But computerization proved itself essential along with other early developmental steps now common features of large urban cable systems.

Between 1982 and 1987, you rose through the leadership of Time, Inc., until you were chief financial officer. You successfully avoided the looming threat of corporate takeover by engaging with top management to change Time Inc., from a "lazy, white-shoed company" to a forward-thinking media corporation.

In 1988, you were named president and COO of HBO. Developed under your leadership were such innovations as multichannel packages of HBO, Cinemax, and a new cable channel now called Comedy Central. Next, as president and CEO of Time Warner Cable Programming, Inc., you formed a group that established five of the first 24 hour local news channels at Time Warner cable systems around the country, an accomplishment that has significantly reshaped cable news. You spent two years turning around Court Room Television Network as interim CEO before retiring in 1998.

Since retiring from Time Warner, you have served as the managing general partner of Bigelow Media, LLC, a media investment and consulting firm, and chairman of H, an integrated marketing communications firm. In addition, you are a sought after director of numerous corporate boards. You have devoted substantial time to serving on the boards of several institutions – Trinity College, the University of Virginia's Darden School, and the Montana Nature Conservancy, and Cate—and as director of Visiting Nurse Service of New York and the Boys' Club of New York.

In recognition of your devotion to Cate and your professional accomplishments, the Cate School Alumni Association is proud to honor you, Eugene Thayer Bigelow, Jr. '59, with the Distinguished Alumnus Award of 2002.