

Distinguished Alumni

Distinguished Alumnus Award – 1981

John Rodman Hooker '21

A third-generation Californian, you came to Santa Barbara School in the fall of 1917 and have remained deeply and actively involved in the mission of Mr. Cate's School every since. In what would become family tradition, now sixteen members strong, you enrolled at the School upon the heels of your cousin Kenneth G. McIntosh '17, joining your brother Robert G. Hooker, Jr. '18. You excelled as a student and became an avid camper. You managed the baseball and basketball teams and held the position of Associate Editor of *El Batidor*. The sense of humor you revealed in school plays brought levity and a new sense of camaraderie as you stood up and actually told jokes during Mr. Cate's after-dinner speaking hour. After graduating with distinction and earning a medal from the Harvard Club of San Francisco for best academic record, you matriculated to Harvard, graduating from there in 1925. You returned to California to live and work. You were founding partner of the San Francisco stock brokerage firm Hooker and Fay, a member of the board of the Palm Springs Civic Art Association and a founding member of the Palm Springs Desert Museum. In 1942, you served your country by entering the U.S. Navy and becoming an instructor in Naval Radar Training Schools. You received an honorable discharge in 1945, as Commander.

While serving on the Board of Trustees from 1920 to 1936, your father, Robert G. Hooker, was instrumental in the development of the School's upper Mesa. Your remodel of the old woodcutter's shack and your attendance at the second dinner of the Santa Barbara School Club of California in San Francisco heralded your own beginning of service to the School. While at Harvard, you helped organize the Santa Barbara School Club there. Twenty-five years later the Santa Barbara School Alumni Association was officially recognized, and with 50 members present you were elected its first chairman.

Thus, representing the alumni, you began your tenure on the Board of Trustees, serving from 1947 through 1964 and from 1966 through 1969. In just two years, you were elected president, presiding for five years from 1949 to 1954. You witnessed and helped shape a multitude of changes during your tenure on the board. The King retired in 1950 and the School was renamed in his honor. As president of the board, you hired the next two heads of School. You were instrumental in the fundraising for the building of Long House dormitory to enlarge the School and increase income. You saw the School grow from 68 students in 1947 to 151 in 1969. You oversaw the building of Bothin House, the new classroom building, the Katherine Thayer Cate Memorial Chapel (so dear to you and Josephine), the Long House second story, the McBean Library with its Hooker Art Gallery, the Hooker wing of the infirmary, and the Class of 1925 House. The Hooker name and legacy has shaped Cate's history.

You say you learned the meaning of *Servons* by observing Mildred and Tom Savage and their dedication to the School. John, you too, have lived by that motto. You have continuously worked to strengthen the School. Your wise counsel has guided headmasters, the board and

administration throughout the years. As a charter member of King's Court, you have provided for Cate's future. As trustee, class agent and decade chair your fundraising efforts have had profound effect on the growth of the School. So too, has your active participation in student admissions. Many young men have succeeded at Cate and in life because of your firm belief that part of Cate School's "job is to try and make a student out of a boy who is willing to try, but for whom it is difficult."

With boundless energy and enthusiasm you, and your wife and family, have worked to ensure that the School maintains its fine reputation as a strong educational institution. Your foresight always supported the most positive changes. We recognize this again as Cate School becomes a coeducational place of learning, and opportunity you so wholeheartedly endorse.

For your faith and steadfast belief in Cate as a growing and evolving institution, and for your countless efforts on behalf of the School, you, John Rodman Hooker are named the Distinguished Alumnus for 1981.