

Distinguished Alumni
Distinguished Alumni Award – 2024
Frank Huerta '85

As a timid freshman on your second day on the Mesa in the fall of 1981, you heard loud, popping echoes coming from the old Fleischmann Gymnasium. You walked from the McBean Library balcony into the gym, up the old steps into an odd-smelling, white room with red line markings, and looked down to see two teachers playing a game you had never seen before. You sat there transfixed and watched for thirty minutes. That fall, you wrote an essay in Mrs. Edwards' English class called "Squash Court: The Arena of the Modern Gladiators," later published in *The Cate Review*. It wasn't long before you purchased a bamboo racquet at the bookstore and learned how to play, later winning the school championship as a senior.

Born in Richmond, Calif., you moved to the Santa Barbara area when you were in the first grade. You started your academic career at Aliso School and Carpinteria Junior High School and always played local sports growing up. Your parents, Raymond and Diane, valued and worked in the education field and sacrificed to give you and your sister, **Anamarie Huerta Franc '91**, access to the best education opportunities possible. In 1981, you applied to, and later enrolled at Cate, joining the School's first co-education class.

On the Mesa, you were an exceptionally strong student, especially in math and science. You served as a science and math tutor and were the co-editor of *The Cate Review*. As a junior, you won the Harvard Book Prize and in 1985, as a senior, you were awarded the Mathematics and English Department prizes. Athletically, you were the starting point guard on the varsity basketball team under the tutelage of your advisor and head coach, Frank Griffin. During your final two basketball seasons, Cate never suffered a loss in the Condor League. Your team made the CIF quarterfinal during your junior year, before losing to powerhouse Crossroads. As a senior, you helped lead the team to a regular season victory at home over eventual CIF Small Schools Champion, Temple Christian, in what is still one of the biggest wins in school history. On the baseball diamond, you started as an infielder during your junior and senior seasons. In his last advisor letter to you, Frank Griffin wrote: "You have certainly distinguished yourself as an outstanding student, athlete, and person throughout the four years. You are to be commended for all the awards and scholarship recognition, including the *Cum Laude* selection. What impressed me most was the professional way you accepted the praise and the consistency you maintained in your work."

After graduating from Cate, you matriculated to Harvard University with sophomore-standing and concentrated in physics, where you worked on high temperature superconductors and graduated *cum laude*. It was there that you met your future wife, Daniele Schechter. While at Harvard you walked on to the top-ranked squash team. You started second from the bottom of the Junior Varsity ladder, steadily climbing the ranks until you made the varsity team as a junior. Your team won the National Championship in 1988, and you were voted co-captain of the 1989 team that finished tied for first nationally but lost the title in a tiebreaker. Later that year, you and your co-captain were runners-up at the National Intercollegiate Doubles Tournament. Your squash career did not end after college. You continued playing the game you love, winning many tournaments, mainly in California – including the Cate Invitational. In 1991, you reached #2 in the national rankings at the Men's A-level.

You gained admittance to Stanford Business School while at Harvard and worked for two years at the Hughes Santa Barbara Research Center (SBRC) where you trained as a summer engineering intern. Hughes SBRC sponsored your MBA education at Stanford and after two years, you returned to SBRC to help commercialize their infrared defense technologies. You wrote the original business plan and convinced senior management at Hughes to invest in a new product called the Smog Dog, that passively measured car emissions using infrared and spectral filtering technology. From there, your career took off.

In 1996, you moved to Silicon Valley and started working at Seagate Software and then at VeriFone Internet Commerce, focusing on internet security and payments technology. You were recruited to do security services at a startup called Exodus Communications which went public in 1998, and where you later became Director of Business Development. After a major hacking incident, you left the company to start the internet security company Recourse Technologies, Inc. in February 1999. Recourse's products "trapped and tracked hackers." With over 110 employees, Recourse was the first company to commercialize honeypots with its ManTrap product, and it pioneered a high-speed, non-signature-based network intrusion detection system called ManHunt that had a correlation engine that analyzed and prioritized multiple security data feeds—technology that is still used today. Recourse had many Fortune 500 customers and was about to win the United States Naval Marine Corps Intranet contract when Symantec bought the company in 2002. After working at Symantec as a Vice President for over a year, you co-founded a company called Adapt-a-Path in 2004 to try to win the DARPA Grand Challenge to build a self-driving car to drive across the California desert. In 2005, you co-founded Cartilix with an orthopedic surgeon and a Johns Hopkins researcher to build a device to help regrow cartilage. This work was especially meaningful to you, as you had suffered a hip injury causing arthritis and were told it could not be repaired. After promising clinical trials, but facing huge industry startup investment headwinds in 2009 due to the Great Recession, you sold the company to medical device behemoth Biomet. From there, you led TransLattice, a distributed relational database company, whose assets were sold to Qualcomm—technology that was two to three years ahead of its time. Now; your focus is at Curtail, Inc., as you believe that the best way to improve computer security is to write better code and test it early and to build resilience into the IT monoculture. The recent worldwide outage caused by a CrowdStrike upgrade in July 2024, is an example of the type of problem the company addresses.

Beyond your extensive work in technology, you have always found ways to support your communities. You are the chair of Santa Barbara School of Squash, a year-round after-school program that teaches squash and provides academic tutoring and counseling to at-risk children starting as early as fourth grade. Your involvement with SBSOS combines your early love of the sport with a desire to help young people in their educational journeys. You have given your time to serving various boards, including: The Ansel Adams Gallery (run by classmate, **Matthew Adams '85**); the Arthritis Foundation (Northern California); and Hispanic-Net, promoting Latino Entrepreneurship in the Bay Area. In 2012 you were named the winner of the Stanford Business School Jerry I. Porrás Latino Entrepreneur Award.

Since 1985, your spirit of giving back always extended to Cate. In 2009, you were appointed to the Cate School Board of Trustees. You served in this role for 12 years, from 2009-2021. You were the chair of the Audit Committee and later expanded its charter to address risk—to become the current Audit and Risk Committee. With fellow board member, **Monique Parsons '84**, you helped write the 2012 Cate Strategic Plan. You have supported the Cate Fund for 40 consecutive years, each year since your graduation. Your support does not stop there. You have supported capital efforts

including the building of the Class of 1985 House Admission Building and the newly opened Inquiry Collaborative. You have consistently supported the School's endowment, including establishing the *Huerta Family Hispanic Scholarship Fund* in 2020. You have been a staple figure at Cate events across the world for forty years – attending receptions across the United States as well as the 2016 Asia Summit in Hong Kong. This unwavering belief in the value of a Cate education, led you and Daniele to move your family to the Santa Barbara area. Your sons, **Bryce '17** and **Mark '20** graduated from Cate. You wanted your children to learn the critical thinking skills that Cate proudly teaches and to broaden their horizons by sharing experiences with students from all over the world.

For your distinguished career in entrepreneurship, especially in cyber security; service to your communities; and dedication to Cate School, we are honored to award you, **Frank Huerta**, Class of 1985, with Cate's Distinguished Alumni Award for 2024.