

2018 Cate Distinguished Alumnus

Hal Burroughs '68

I grew up in the northern suburbs of Washington near the district line, close to the upper river and the old canal. It was a heavily wooded area back in those days, and winter storms were surprisingly fierce during that time too, which meant a lot of memorable snow activities plus shoveling chores, and if we were lucky, no school. Sometimes we were.

My parents came from little country towns in Maryland, on an historic place in the north near the West Virginia border, the other a tiny crossroads village along the lower Potomac near the Chesapeake Bay. We spent a lot of family time in those areas as kids, and we came up in what would be called today, sort of an outdoor life. Fishing, hunting, boating, sailing, and being on the water were all a big part of the program for us, along with the usual school, sports, and scouting activities.

Our family was also in the tour and transportation business there in the D.C. area, and assignments connected to that were our regular holiday and summer jobs. My parents were also into the history and culture of the area, and had a library stuffed with information about that and other interesting things. Local lore was all around us when we were kids, part of our parents' business as well, and it was in connection with our business that the family migrated very abruptly and unexpectedly to California during the summer after my sophomore year.

I landed at Cate as a new junior, having spent the previous years beginning with seventh grade at the Georgetown Preparatory School. About the Cate years, it's fair to say it's complicated; it wasn't my idea at all to move across the country to a new home and spend the rest of high school away in a small boys' boarding school; I didn't embrace it, and it didn't embrace me. I think I was a little too old and a little too restless in some ways to be starting in the School as it was back then. I was also mostly out of organized sports due to a back injury playing football before I got there, but I did have an electric guitar, and I had a number of other interests that this gave me some extra time to independently pursue.

The things I remember most of that time at the School: extraordinary comradeship, some of which came with the general circumstances but much of which was unique to Cate and the distinct personalities of classmates, including those ahead of and behind us. It was a mutual support culture that sustained itself beyond our school days. Also, music was a gigantic factor for a group of us who liked to play it or get out and listen to it. My friend Billy (Steinberg '68) who had also arrived junior year was kind of a musical sparkplug and had drafted some of us early in the year for the talent show and impromptu jug band recitals at first, later by senior year we had a working band that played the School dances and outside dates in Santa Barbara and Claremont. We also somehow managed to get out for all the great shows that were then happening almost weekly nearby at the little pavilion at the SB fairgrounds and in the gym at UCSB. It was incredible to routinely see so many now legendary acts like Hendrix, the Doors, Cream, the Dead, and numerous others in these little venues where you could pretty much stand or sit right at the stage and check it out.

And I do remember the particular friendship of a couple of teachers who would stick their necks out to defend what in some quarters may have been regarded as consistently unacceptable deportment. One of these was the late Andy Lapidus, instructor of French, who took about 8 sophomores, juniors and a senior on a foreign studies trip to the University of Grenoble, France in the summer of 1967. There were enough adventures and misadventures on this trip that he either instigated himself (or in my case allowed) to materialize some compelling nonfiction, including a couple of weeklong hitchhiking forays into adjacent countries. He also in the following year took a couple of seniors, including myself, on a scouting trip to the Camarillo State Mental Hospital to create a new service project working with very disturbed young kids. It was deeply disturbing in itself to have a complete, candid tour of the whole place that day, but we did implement a weekly visiting program which a number of students participated in, and aided some heartbreakingly afflicted young people.

A couple months following graduation from Cate and the day after I arrived to start college in Berkeley, my father died very suddenly. This of course changed everything for my family, including our business interests, most of which had just recently been acquired in a very highly leveraged, turnaround type

situation. So during college there was very heightened involvement in family decisions. I studied a lot of economics and dramatic arts while ultimately receiving a BA in history. I am sure the Cate preparation was a key factor in navigating through a particularly diverse college education, including the ability to viably explore a number of very different fields of study, while still continuing to play some music and enjoy the incredible music scene of those days in San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Less than two years after graduating from Berkeley, while I was working in Los Angeles in the finance division of our family company, First Gray Line Corporation, my mother died unexpectedly. My younger brother, sister and I were the only remnants of our family at that point, all working in the business. In taking control of what was already a complex portfolio of far-flung private businesses that included bus and car rental operations operating at airports, hotels and terminal outlets in seven states, I became Chairman and CEO. The next three decades were primarily consumed developing and expanding these businesses. This period was one of the most dynamic and fast changing in the history of the industries we operated in; airline deregulation, operations automation and computerization, dramatic airport expansions, major industry consolidations, all were under way. As part of these developments, our car rental unit was the exclusive Avis operator in much of the southwest, including several of the very largest U.S. airports; our bus operations included Gray line tour and charter operations in a number of major cities from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles, as well as the Las Vegas area mass transit system. Later on, having evolved to become a very large, successful and customer-focused private business with around 1500 employees, we were able to create an Employee Stock Ownership Trust (ESOT) for our car rental unit personnel, one of the largest that had been implemented to that time; when that business was ultimately acquired at the end of the 1990's, every employee was financially involved.

While this was happening, I did take time to continue a number of personal pursuits as a pilot, a traveled fisherman, hunter and conservationist, a rancher in the Sacramento valley, a restorer and collector of classic sports cars and later, American paintings, eventually developed a professional investment platform, became a parent of three sensational children and of course, an involved trustee and supporter of independent education as well as arts and conservation organizations.

The Cate trusteeship, which has been so enduring and meaningful an experience at this point having begun in 1995, was not something I would have initially foreseen at all. I dropped off the radar for a long time after graduation, like many former students from that period, and was getting the mail but not paying much attention. But at some point I realized how much terrific effort had gone into modernizing and developing the program at the School, beginning with the completely transformative move to coeducation. After a chance encounter with my former teacher Scott McCleod at a social event, I happened to do a modest favor for the School's financial aid program because I believed in the job they were trying to do there. A couple of years later, Dan Emmet talked to me about joining the Board, and really on the strength of my boundless respect for Dan, whose place I was also taking on the board of a different school that my young children attended, and though extremely tied up professionally, I came on.

The Cate trustee experience was overwhelming and rewarding from the start. My friend Dave (Chan'68) from Hong Kong came on when I did, and although we barely knew anybody there except Dan, we were immediately exposed at our first meeting to the unique and deeply thoughtful talent, dedication, and very high-spirited humor that characterized what the School itself was at that time. So many great people – Paul Denison, Norm Sprague, George James, Bill New, Mike Morphy, to name just a few no longer with us, plus of course Rick Baum, Greg Kubicek, Nelson Jones and others who are now great old friends both on and off the board currently - they were all there. Also there were administrators and faculty, all of whom I was meeting for the first time. The friendship of all these colleagues, their talent, commitment, generosity and effort to provide any assistance and support to the mission of the School and its students was obvious from the beginning and couldn't be overstated – the School's service ethos was powerfully demonstrated right then and there. That's how it all started in my case. Much history and evolution has followed.

Coming forward to the present time, the School leadership and team that we are so fortunate to have and work with, and the caliber of our diverse student body and its cohesiveness, focus and esprit, has never been at a higher level. Even as a non-parent trustee for many years until just recently, I have been able to see that the value of the Cate project is truly very great, and it has been a terrific experience to be able to continue participating in it.

