



PROGRAM

Advance our educational program to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in a complex and changing world.

Honoring a Mentor:

RALPH PALAIA HON. 1689

by Rebecca Luzi



Ralph Palaia Hon. 1689 meant many things to many people. In his 34 years at Penn Charter, he was director of admissions, head of Middle School, assistant head of school and winning baseball coach. Remarkably, he held many of these roles concurrently. As varsity baseball coach, he and his teams amassed a league record of 157-31 and won 14 consecutive Inter-Ac titles. In 1982, he became only the second honorary alumnus to receive the prestigious Alumni Award of Merit, after Donald MacCormick, another icon, in 1948.

Palaia admitted students, shepherded them through Middle School, and coached them in not just baseball but football and basketball, too. “No one at PC has been in closer contact with more PC people than Ralph Palaia,” the Class of 1982 wrote in its yearbook dedication the year he retired. “No one greets more new faces and old grads with as much genuine consideration and friendship as Ralph Palaia.”

To Remy Fox OPC '62, Palaia was something of a father figure. Fox, having entered PC in first grade, benefited from

“Ralph really stood out to me,” Fox said of his one-time mentor, Ralph Palaia Hon. 1689, pictured at left. “I knew that if I had something and wanted to sort it out, he would give me good advice. ... I was missing something elsewhere and he filled the void.”

Palaia's guidance in adolescence. "When I was in Middle School at Penn Charter, [Ralph Palaia] was very helpful," Fox said. "He gave me stability, compassion. He offered suggestions in order for me to make the most of my Penn Charter experience."

When Fox was in seventh grade, he and his mother moved to New Hope. When his mother died in a car accident, Fox, who wanted to return to Penn Charter, lived nearby with relatives. Ralph Palaia, who directed both admissions and Middle School, welcomed him back.

"I think he did what he thought was best for each and every student who would end up in his office for many reasons," Fox said.

In 1977, Ralph Palaia hired Jack Rogers Hon. 1689, to teach sixth grade. Rogers, now chief development officer, is one of the many people on whom Palaia made an impression. "Ralph Palaia may have been the best person I've ever met in my life," Rogers said. "When you became close to Ralph Palaia in Middle School," he said, "you became one of Ralph's boys forever. Remy was one of those kids."

More than 50 years later, that relationship that Ralph Palaia forged with Fox is at the heart of Remy and Wendy Fox's gift to Penn Charter to benefit the Middle School.

The **Ralph Palaia Memorial Fund**, a charitable remainder trust established by the Foxes, is designed to give the school flexibility to pay for the needs and priorities of the Middle School program. The money will be used to support financial aid, facilities or curriculum. "I have enough confidence in the management of Penn Charter that they have the flexibility to make those choices," Fox said.

Fox remained close to Penn Charter over the years as he and Wendy built their careers. He became the principal partner of Fox Enterprises in 1970 and continued to expand the movie theater chain in Pennsylvania and New Jersey through the 1980s. The business grew into the development and management of commercial properties in the greater Philadelphia area. He retired in 2015 after selling the last commercial site. His wife, Wendy Trow-Fox, is the president and owner of WTGraphics, a full-service design studio she started more than 35 years ago.

At a celebratory lunch, Remy and Wendy, Head of School Darryl J. Ford and Jack Rogers caught up with Carolyn Palaia, Ralph's widow. Carolyn, who recently turned 95, was moved at this latest honor for her husband. "We're very proud of him," Carolyn said of her husband of 60 years,



Remy Fox and Wendy Trow-Fox (left) shared Penn Charter memories with Head of School Darryl J. Ford and Carolyn Palaia.

speaking on behalf of her family. "I thought his days of recognition were over, but when I got that call I was thrilled."

"How wonderful for other children to know the Penn Charter experience thanks to Mr. Fox," she said. "Imagine what that money can do. Ralph loved Penn Charter and would be so thankful to Mr. Fox."

Sharing stories of the Palaia's time at Penn Charter, Carolyn said, made the lunch "one of the highlights of my late years."

Next spring, Remy and Wendy Fox plan to attend the 55th reunion of the Class of 1962. Remy has barely missed a reunion since graduating from Penn Charter. **PC**

If you would like information about establishing a charitable remainder trust like the Ralph Palaia Memorial Fund, contact Jack Rogers Hon. 1689 at 215-844-3460 ext. 111.