

The Blake Family:

The Legacy of One Founding Family



Loyal Will our Hearts E'er Be"

by Suzy Post



All of our nation's independent schools bear the personal stamps of their founders and early leaders. Often these imprints fade over time, but at The Rumson Country Day School, the legacy of one founding family, the Blakes, has remained loyal and strong during the entire 88 years of the school's history.

Edgar B. Blake came to Rumson in 1926 to help his friend and fellow Dartmouth alumnus, Harold Clark, to establish our fledgling school. Clark was Headmaster; Blake was his enthusiastic and capable young assistant, an outstanding teacher and athlete who played a multitude of educational and administrative roles during his 40-year tenure at RCDS. Blake, his wife, and three sons developed a unique and very special relationship with our school (as you will read below), a relationship that continues to the present day. The family remained so loyal to RCDS, in fact, that in 1999, Jonathan '52, David '53, Peter '55, and their mother, Haven, established their own personal memorial to Ed Blake, funding a faculty enrichment endowment in his name. Many of our teachers have benefited from this fund, traveling to the far reaches of the globe and

bringing exciting ideas and experiences back to their students. Our school is deeply grateful to the Blake Family for their generosity and pleased to know that the Blake Family's legacy will remain forever at The Rumson Country Day School.

Printed below are some of the Blake brothers' memories, written by them in March 2014:

"Our father, Edgar Blake, in 1926 co-founded The Rumson Country Day School with Harold Clark, its first building being the former St. George's Episcopal Church. Several years later, a four-story building was added to the school providing additional classrooms, a dining room, several offices, an undersized gym with a low ceiling, and a teachers' dormitory on the fourth floor. When Dad became Headmaster in 1946, the Blake family, including wife Haven and three young boys (Jonathan born in 1938, David in 1940, and Peter in 1942), moved into an apartment on the fourth floor of the new building. From that moment on, our lives, our values, and our personas were inextricably linked to RCDS, our home and our school."

"It was a spacious apartment on the top floor with a commanding view of the school grounds. With no elevator, groceries had to be carried up four flights and garbage taken down. Washing machines were in the school's basement next to the furnace room, and when our dog, Sister Halloween Blake, needed to go out, we took her down and back up. These multiple daily trips, mostly running, took us through the very heart of RCDS and gave us strong leg muscles and physical stamina that helped us in athletics.

"We understood well that our home was also the school, and our Dad was also our teacher (English), headmaster, and responsible for the RCDS enterprise and the education of lots of other parents' kids. Since Dad and Mom (who served as office manager, school lunch nutritionist, and Jill-of-all-trades) were



employed by the Board of Trustees, we knew we needed to do well as students, athletes, and well-behaved kids. We were representing our parents, the Headmaster and his wife, and RCDS, the institution itself. We had a larger responsibility than ourselves, and as a result institutional loyalty became part of our makeup. "The three of us pitched in to help "run" the school in minor ways. Snowstorms would see us shoveling the sidewalks with Dad and William Albert, the school's wonderful and fiercely loyal maintenance man.

Playing fields needed to be lined; folding chairs needed to be taken down and put away after school events. Even Sister did her part by always being out front in the morning to welcome the students to school and then returning to say goodbye at the end of the school day. Sister also “belonged” to RCDS taking her duties seriously and faithfully.

“The school and Rumson communities respected and admired Dad for his commitment to RCDS and the love of learning he epitomized. Mom, her gaiety and intelligence, and Dad were charming company, becoming good friends with many of the parents

whose children they were educating. The three of us were likewise close to our classmates. Our relationship with schoolmates was terrific in the classroom, on the playing fields, and numerous kid-like things like Friday afternoon bike trips to Holmdel, tennis matches, swimming in the ocean, or going to our classmates’ homes. Life was simple, sweet, and filled with promise.

“There were minor downsides that came along with being the Headmaster’s son. Calling Dad, “Sir”, as students was no problem. It was better than calling him “Mr. Blake.” When there were more exciting tasks to be done at school, such as emptying the expired fire extinguishers twice a year, our classmates were chosen for this exciting task - never us because it might be seen as favoritism. Another example happened in 7th or 8th grade, when David had some painful leg problems that required his legs to be wrapped in Ace bandages from his ankle to his thighs and to always keep his legs elevated. One day, as students were waiting for English class to start, Dad came into the classroom where some students were being slightly unruly while David was sitting at his desk with his legs on a stool, quite immobile. Dad handled the horsing around by saying, firmly, “David, stop that.” The kids got the message, quickly sitting silently at their desks.

“Dad was one of the premier runners in the world for his distance, holding records in many track meets including the Millrose Games held at Madison Square Garden. Knowing the physical and behavioral benefits of sports, he wanted every student to participate in, enjoy, and learn the lessons that athletics teaches. He was, however, adamant about key values: try your hardest, prepare well, fair play, and good sportsmanship. All RCDS students understood that visiting teams were our guests and deserved our respect, not jeers or dirty play. This culture of good sportsmanship became one of the premier values of the Blake brothers’ athletic endeavors and in our professional careers. We were determined competitors, prepared hard for the competition, but we knew that we must never be obnoxious in victory or sulk in defeat. We learned this lesson at home - the sports fields of RCDS.

“We appreciate that the values that we grew up with are still part of the RCDS culture. Chad Small, teachers, staff, and students seem to embrace the idea that each one has a responsibility for himself and also to the school and all who are parts of it. It is good to know that the life lessons we learned at 35 Bellevue Avenue are still an inseparable part of school life.



“We established the Blake Family Faculty Enrichment Fund at RCDS upon Dad’s death because as Headmaster, in his English classes, and on the playing fields he was a consummate teacher of boys and girls. They learned how to read great literature, to write simply and clearly, to play hard, and how to live. His impact on them was life-long. It seemed fitting, therefore, to establish a fund to benefit teachers and teaching at RCDS by enabling faculty to have educational experiences that would enrich them and their classrooms. We are always delighted to read the interesting and thoughtful letters of faculty who have benefited from the fund.

“We are grateful to Chad Small and RCDS for allowing us in this small way to participate in the life of RCDS - our home and our school.”

Here is some brief biographical information for each of the three brothers:

- Peter Blake '55 graduated from Deerfield in 1960 and was awarded a four-year Moorhead Scholarship at UNC, where he was Co-Captain of the UNC soccer team, was selected for All-ACC Soccer Team, All-South Soccer Team, and nominated for the All-American team. After graduating in 1964, he earned an MBA at NYU (1967) and became a VP and Manager of Private Banking Group at Irving Trust Company until it merged with Bank of New York. He then became Senior VP Senior Credit/Lending Officer of other New York City banks. In retirement, he works as an independent Loan Review consultant.
- David Blake '53 graduated from Deerfield in 1957 and was awarded a four-year scholarship at Dartmouth, where he was President of Student Government, played on the varsity soccer team, selected All-Ivy, second team All-New England, and honorable mention All-American. After graduating cum laude, he earned an MBA at the University of Pittsburgh in 1962, and an MA and PhD in Political Science at Rutgers in 1968. David’s positions have included: Professor of International Business and Strategic Management at University of Pittsburgh; Dean and Professor at the Business Schools at Northeastern University, Rutgers University, Southern Methodist University, University of California Irvine, and the American University of Armenia.
- Jonathan Blake '52 graduated from Deerfield in 1956, was awarded a four-year scholarship to Yale, where he was Captain of the Cross-Country team, finished 19th in the Boston Marathon, graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1960, and was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship for study at Oxford. He earned an MA at Oxford in 1962 and a JD at Yale Law School in 1964. He practiced law at Covington & Burling in Washington, DC, where he was Partner and Chairman.

