

Princeton Day School Honors Doug McClure

Longtime Princeton Day School Headmaster Douglas O. McClure would have enjoyed the recent gathering of colleagues, friends, family and alumni to commemorate dedicating the school's administrative wing in his honor.

Mr. McClure, who led PDS from 1966-82, took delight in banter among colleagues and wide-ranging conversations with students. He appreciated excellence, whether in woodworking or mathematics, and nurtured the intellects of all those around him.

And while he wasn't technically the first Headmaster of PDS, Mr. McClure did shepherd the merger of Miss Fine's School with Princeton Country Day School in a manner that managed to blend the two academic cultures, maintain cherished traditions and create opportunities for a new identity to develop.

"I think he was significant in making certain the two schools really became one," said Sandy Bing, longtime Head of Upper School and former interim Head of School. "Doug set the standard very high and recruited faculty to meet those standards."

Mr. McClure, who died in August following a battle with cancer, joined the PDS community after serving as Headmaster of Rockland Country Day School. A graduate of Hotchkiss School, Mr. McClure earned degrees from Yale University and the University of Connecticut. He also served as a lieutenant in the Navy during the Korean War.

Announcing the decision to name the administrative wing in Mr. McClure's honor, new Head of School Paul Stellato said the honor "recognizes the 17 years of leadership at PDS and the profound effect Mr. McClure had on its development into the remarkable institution it is today."

A plaque dedicating the office wing as "The Douglas O. McClure Administrative Offices," will serve as both a permanent and public reminder of the essential role Mr. McClure played as "the leader who established the rigorous standards of academic excellence that continue today," Mr. Stellato said.

Mr. McClure prodded assimilation of the two school cultures, said Carl Reimers, a retired faculty member and current PDS Trustee. Although "he had two faculties that really didn't want to be put together," Mr. McClure established a shared faculty room. He ruled the faculty by consensus, "which made faculty meetings interminable," and if there wasn't consensus the issue was laid aside. Mr. McClure also instituted a pay scale for faculty, responding to concerns about equal pay for female and male teachers.

"He charted the way of how this school would be," Reverend Reimers said.



Mr. McClure's tenure included some of the nation's most tumultuous years, spanning the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, Watergate, and Reaganomics. Mr. McClure was a steadfast supporter of Community Council at a time when the phrase "generation gap" was coined to describe a widening cultural chasm. Yet he supported the Council's decision to abandon the jacket and tie requirement as well as the rule requiring short hair for boys – much to the consternation of some parents.

Former PDS Trustee Rebecca Bushnell '70 remembers Mr. McClure "as a man of great intellectual curiosity and respect for the students of PDS."

"PDS strongly shaped me in the three years I was there," wrote Ms. Bushnell, now dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. "It encouraged the life of the mind, and I believe that Doug McClure had a lot to do with setting the tone of the school at that time..."

"He was always open to talking with students," she said. "And while we knew that he was in charge of the school, he made us feel like equals in the pursuit of knowledge."

Mr. McClure's own children attended PDS, including Kathleen McClure Lowell '71, Ann McClure Noel '76, Douglas O. McClure, Jr. '82 and Peter Q. McClure '85.

Expressing her gratitude to PDS, Ms. Lowell told classmates "Just after the cancer returned, (Dad) found out that PDS had decided to name the Administrative Wing in his honor and, as a friend of mine, who was visiting him in the hospital when he got the call from Mr. Bing, told me, he was 'over the moon' when he heard the news!"

When Mr. McClure left PDS to lead Sewickley Academy in Pennsylvania, the *Journal* was filled with compliments from his colleagues. "How important it has been to all of us to have a leader who could look beyond the traditional way and make us do the same," said Alison Shehadi, as chair of the math department.

Elizabeth Fine, classics teacher at both Miss Fine's School and PDS, recalled that "when Doug McClure came to PDS after all the alarms and aberrations of the first years of the amalgamation of Miss Fine's School and Princeton Country Day, he seemed like a White Knight to the beleaguered faculty, and we have seen little in the intervening years to alter our view of him."

Mr. McClure, whose vivacious smile is captured in his portrait, left a legacy of excellence, an appreciation for students and faculty as individuals and a spirit that continues to energize Princeton Day School. He will be missed.