



MIRA COSTA HIGH SCHOOL DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI 2018



JOHN JACKSON

It's said that educators affect eternity; they can never tell where their influence stops. No doubt, **John Jackson's** (1977) positive influence on students will extend far into the future. Just recently retired, John began his career teaching and coaching in Torrance in the 1980s. Entering administration, he served as principal in several Torrance schools before taking the Manhattan Beach Middle School principalship in 2005. Over the next decade, building on MBMS's already solid foundation, John collaborated with district administrators, staff, and parents to create one of California's most outstanding middle schools. Among

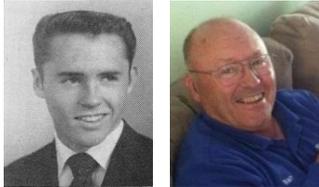
other transformative initiatives, he ensured school-wide implementation of one-to-one iPad use, earning designation as an Apple Distinguished Program School; led a shift in writing instruction to a Writers Workshop model; and created a STEM program with a focus on female students. John's leadership earned him the Association of California Administrators Middle Grades Principal of the Year Award in 2015, a singular honor. Recognition of John's contributions to young people reaches beyond the classroom. He was named Soccer Coach of the Year in two different leagues and in the CIF in the 1990s, and the softball field at the Torrance Community Complex is named Jackson Field in his honor.



BARBRA FONTANA

Sports writer Heywood Broun commented that sports do not build character; they reveal it. **Barbra Fontana's** long and successful volleyball career testifies to the characteristics that make an outstanding athlete an outstanding person: hard work, perseverance, collaboration, and generosity. Graduating Costa in 1983, Barbra was a four-year starter at Stanford where her teams made it to the Final Four each year she played. She had a highly successful 25 year career in beach volleyball, participating in more than 300 tournaments. This is particularly impressive because in that time she also attended the Santa

Clara law school, wrote for its *Law Review*, passed the bar, actively practiced law, got married, and had two children. For three years, Barbra was ranked the number one woman volleyball player in the U.S. She became part of athletic history as a member of the first U.S. Olympic Beach Volleyball Team at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. Barbra continues to be actively involved in volleyball, giving back to the sport that allowed her to achieve so much through her work. Teaming with Eric Fonoimoana and Holly McPeak (also Distinguished Alumni inductees) she works developing young women players at the "Elite Beach Volleyball" organization in Manhattan Beach.



WALTER TURK

National service is a high calling; particularly distinguished when it involves saving the lives of others. Graduating in 1953, **Walter Turk** enlisted in the Air Force, launching a 37 year career defined by competence, innovation, and bravery. Colonel Turk retired in 1991. Walt was the Honor Graduate of his Helicopter Pilot Training class in 1963. His skills served him well during the ensuing Vietnam War. Flying 15 missions out of Thailand as Rescue Crew Commander, Walt was instrumental in saving five downed

American pilots, earning the Silver Star for Valor in the process. Walt earned too many other citations to list here, but four will illustrate the breadth and quality of his service: Legion of Merit, National Defense Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross, Republic of Korea National Security Medal – presented by the President of South Korea. Later in his career, among other positions, Walt served as a test pilot and Director of Maintenance at several Air Force bases, and continued his education, earning a master's degree in 1982. Retirement sees him continually active, pursuing his love of flying and aircraft. He has designed and built two airplanes himself, selling the second just last year.



ELKA WORNER

Historian Mary Beard argues that democracy requires information. **Elka Worner's** (1980) career feeds that requirement. As a United Press International reporter, Elka covered all manner of stories, winning awards for her coverage of the LA riots and the Northridge earthquake. As the LA County District Attorney's Office spokesperson, she was key in providing information about high profile cases. As a national and international producer for Fox News, among other things, she survived two tours of reporting on the Afghan War and reported on the intense and violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Elka is uniquely suited for

this kind of work, speaking fluent Spanish, French, and German and some Turkish. She is currently the West Coast Bureau Chief for FOX Business Network, producing live and packaged material for the Business Channel. She reports on trade, technology, the economy, and covers industry leaders like Bill Gates. She produced live coverage of terrorist attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino. She has reported on Brexit from European capitals, and reports on a wide range of other national and international financial topics. Elka was nominated for an Emmy for her work on the 2016 documentary "The Fidel Castro Tapes," which ran on PBS and National Geographic International.