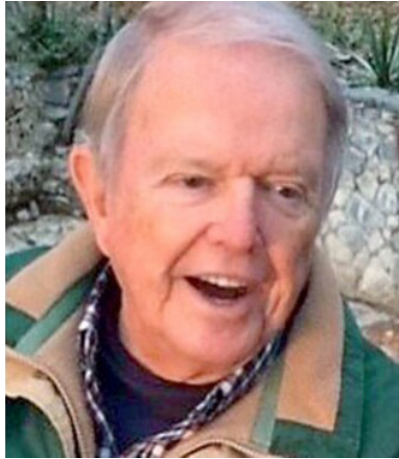


Remembering Thomas James Taylor



I remember Tom Taylor's smile, sitting at the circular table in Jodie's office, the smile echoing in a soft southern accent and lighting up his eyes; I remember his questions about the values that shaped our school, the accomplishments of our students and his desire to see us grow. There was a joy to Tom Taylor, not a shallow happiness of the moment that would vanish with circumstances that could change at any moment; it was a joy undeterred even when age and difficulty added a tremble to his hands. He was steadfast.

The Neighborhood Academy has always been a journey of faith and an expression of God's grace. I am reminded of that mystical and voice from Field of Dreams, "If you build it, he will come." People said the business model "wouldn't work" and was not sustainable. We built it, and Tom and his lovely wife Joan came and through the gift of time, wisdom, and treasure we continued to build year after year. He was steadfast and because of his constancy then, we have students published and admitted to some of the finest colleges in the country now.

Tom Taylor was a well anchored nomad. His life and career took him to the navy, California, Indiana, Georgia, and Germany. His last stop was Pittsburgh and he became a founding Board member of The Neighborhood Academy. The anchor was his faith. No matter where he went, he knew where he was and whose he was. The faith and wisdom of a rich and varied career and a deep and abiding faith he brought to The Neighborhood Academy, and we were, and are, so much the richer for it.

So, there is this bounty, this rich legacy of a grace filled life; a marriage of 68 years, children and grandchildren, of service to country and church. And there is a school where opportunity for so many that would not have been possible under different circumstances is a daily occurrence, an opportunity of growth of mind body and spirit.

We began to build, and Tom Taylor came. With that special grace that animated his life, he helped us continue to build and to flourish. What so many said could not be done, has been done because he came to us.

So, on this day, we are grateful for the gift of his life and talents and faith lived daily. May God bless him and keep him.

May his memory be a blessing. Amen.

The Rev. Thomas E. Johnson Jr.
Co – Founder & Headmaster Emeritus / The Neighborhood Academy