

William Jackson Burkholder Scholarship

William Jackson Burkholder was born April 3, 1929 in Bedford County Virginia, attended Thaxton Elementary School and Montvale High School. Mr. Burkholder speaks of his educational career path as beginning when he started driving a school bus at the age of 16 in 1945. All the men were away at war and high school students were permitted to drive the buses when they became 16. When he graduated from high school, he joined the Marine Corps. After service in the Marines, he returned to driving a school bus to help pay for his attendance at Roanoke College. The GI Bill was not sufficient to pay for room and board, so he attended college as a day student. During this time, a typical day was arise, build a fire in the kitchen stove, milk two cows, eat breakfast, and drive the school bus for 1½ hours (which helped pay college expenses). He would then drive an hour to Salem, Virginia to attend classes at Roanoke College. The return daily trip mirrored his morning activities, including the evening milking of the cows. Mr. Burkholder's career goals did not include becoming an educator; however, when money ran out at the beginning of his last semester, he secured a position as a high school teacher. This job enabled him to save enough money to return during the summer to finish his degree. Mr. Burkholder attributes remaining in the field of education to the efforts of his first principal, who allowed him opportunities in managing the school. School administration appealed to Jack, and after 2½ years as a teacher, he became principal of a 600 pupil country school, grades 1-12. It was during this time he received sage advice from a respected colleague, that he leave the area and pursue opportunities in northern Virginia, specifically Fairfax County. In 1956, Jack and his wife, Elsie, accepted positions as teachers in Fairfax County. Although Jack preferred a position as an administrator, the County had the policy of only appointing from within Fairfax County. Since he had no previous elementary experience, Jack accepted a position as an elementary teacher and, with his wife's help, survived teaching sixth grade at Bush Hill Elementary and Rose Hill Elementary for two years, while Elsie taught fourth grade at Franconia Elementary. Their combined salaries were about equal to the \$5,000 earned in Bedford. Although the salary seemed comparable, the opportunities were enormous. In six years, Jack would be interviewing and hiring hundreds of teachers; in eight, he became the head of Personnel. To avoid a conflict of interest, Elsie left FCPS and became the director of St. Christopher's Pre-School. Jack's career mirrored other administrators during this period: assistant principal at Mt. Vernon High School; central office positions, including a stint of 13 years in personnel administration; and, ultimately, to Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), a position Jack recalls was not a position to which he aspired. Jack recalls the reputation of FCPS as cutting edge within a rapidly growing area. In his 29 years, he recalled that the unbelievable growth of the district required adding 1½ classrooms per day with a requirement to hire 1700 teachers in one year. As FCPS grew, so did the issues, which changed almost yearly, and were not limited to, but included: the development of the special education program, collective bargaining, programs for the gifted, merit pay, the creation of a local teacher retirement system, bi-lingual education, creation of intermediate schools, and the opening of Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology. After leaving FCPS, Jack served as the Deputy State Superintendent in Richmond. He shared that this provided an entirely different experience. After three years in Richmond, he moved to the U.S. Department of State as Regional Education Officer for Europe and the former Soviet Union. When asked why he decided on such a long public service life, Jack indicated that the "richness of my experiences kept me in public service." Jack is enjoying his retirement years spending time with his family. His son and daughter-in-law live nearby and his daughter and son-in-law visit often from Alabama. He has five grandchildren who live in different parts of the country but still come to visit every Christmas and more often when they can. Jack feels blessed to have worked with wonderful people throughout his career and to have unconditional love and support from his wife of almost 65 years. Mr. Burkholder passed away in 2018. NVADACA proudly offers this scholarship in Superintendent Burkholder's name.

