

GARY BERGENSKE – (PHS 1972)

Gary Bergenske, successful business man, author and humanitarian, credits much of his success to the years he spent growing up in Portage. The 1972 Portage High graduate will be inducted into the "Portage High School Hall of Fame" (PHS HOF) on June 29th. Bergenske says, "It was those high school years that were really important in forming my character. I've carried the torch of what I learned in Portage, with regards to what a friendly small town does to teach the importance of integrity and that of helping others."

Although he never graduated from college, Bergenske credits those teachers at PHS for his education that put him on track for a successful career. "I surrounded myself with successful men who mentored me, there are 7 who I learned from along the way who guided me to the top position of one of the finest organizations in the world. President Jimmy Carter is one of those 7 who inspired and motivated me to achieve more for the greater needs of people in the world." Bergenske said.

According to his classmate Steve Anacker (PHS '72), Gary is one of those rare individuals a person is privileged to have in their life who you are always proud to call a friend." Steve noted, "He is a special friend who you may not talk to for a couple years, but after a few minutes he makes you feel as if you have talked monthly".

Gary Bergenske owns a moving and storage company in Orlando, FL for the past 35 years. Still, he carves out time to do an enormous amount of charitable work. In July of 2017 he was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors for Shriners International and Shriners Hospitals for Children. He held the top position for one-year at both organizations, guiding their 240,000 members and 6,000 employees who have provided care to over 1.3 million children regardless of their family's ability to pay. Bergenske says, "There is nothing more rewarding than that of helping and improving the lives of children."

During the time Bergenske served in this capacity, he and his wife, Anne, traveled to 19 countries, working to build Shrine membership and to attend Hospitals and clinics of Shriners Hospitals. "The need of medical care for children in some of these countries is extraordinary, it is such a rewarding feeling to be a part of making a difference," he says.

Bergenske has also authored 5 books, the newest one due out this month. Gary says, "I'm so honored to be recognized and included in this "Hall of Fame" as many of my best memories go back to Portage. I have

kept in contact with many of my High School friends and attended nearly every class reunion, this trip will be extra special."