

## **Bob Palmer '52 Distinguished Alumni Award**



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**Bob Palmer '52** came to Highland Park High School for his junior and senior years. His experiences at HPHS have had a huge influence on his life. It was there he met a lovely red headed girl who was to become his wife, Rebecca Sparks. At Highland Park High School his association with his favorite teacher, Mr. C.H. Marshall, helped him to realize both his ability and interest in what would become his life's work; engineering. Bob received his degree in Mechanical Engineering from SMU in 1957. While at SMU he began working as a roughneck for Rowan Companies as a part of his engineering co-op program. He later returned to SMU to receive his Masters of Engineering Administration. Bob joined Rowan almost 60 years ago where he became widely respected for his work ethic and ability to analyze and evaluate opportunities. In 1972 he was named Chairman and CEO at the young age of 37 and held that position for 31 years. Under his guidance, Rowan grew from a company of 900 employees with a value of \$5 million to 5,000 employees and a value of \$5 billion when he retired. In addition to his business genius, Bob is also known for his loyalty to his employees. During the economic ills in the oil business in the 1980s, Rowan did not participate in massive layoffs, but instead Bob Palmer put his reputation on the line to raise the funds needed to keep these good people employed in what was an extremely difficult time for the industry. His loyalty paid off, Rowan was uniquely positioned with an experienced and loyal staff ready to take advantage of the new opportunities available to the company when the industry rebounded. Bob and Rebecca, who now split their time between their ranch, their home in Houston and a flat in London, say that they have had a great life with nothing better than having their family around them. Bob and Rebecca have generously supported numerous charitable causes through the foundation that they established together. In appreciation of his outstanding leadership in the oil industry it is a pleasure to present the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Award to Bob Palmer!