

Paul Flowerman

JA: Where did you grow up?

PF: Brooklyn born, my family moved to a starter Levitt house on Long Island when I was 4.

JA: Tell me about your family

PF: My grandparents immigrated from Eastern Europe to escape violence and make a fresh start. Yiddish was my parents' first language. They were introduced by mutual friends because they were both excellent pianists. After graduating from Brooklyn College at 19, my father joined the Army and was a combat platoon sergeant and interpreter in the Battle of the Bulge. He liberated a concentration camp in Austria and administered a German city postwar. My mother also graduated BC.

My dad used his language skills become a commission agent for foreign suppliers of raw materials. My mom was a family therapist who built the family services program for the Jewish Federation in Morris County, NJ. My sister is one of the many clinical psychologists in our family.

My wife of 45 years, Margot Jackler, is a wonderful educator who is doing extraordinary work with first generation pre-K and Kindergarten kids through the Literacy Volunteers of Collier County. She teaches and writes the reading curriculum for 16 volunteer teachers and 100+ kids and is a force of nature!

We are very proud of our four children and seven grandchildren, who live in Seattle, Houston, and NY/NJ.

JA: Tell me about your education

PF: Throughout public school education, I developed a passion for physics, music, and languages. I spent many happy high school Saturdays commuting to Columbia to take courses in the Johns Hopkins program. I attended Princeton University during the tumultuous Vietnam years, studying history and physics and singing in the Glee Club, a lifelong connection! I spent three summers in Arequipa, Peru, setting up lab chemistry programs, teaching (in Spanish), and leading 20+ USA college students doing community service.

JA: What did you do after graduating from Princeton and why?

PF: John Kennedy's 1960 call to national service had long-inspired me. I joined the Peace Corps, which placed me in a rural Malaysia high school to teach physics in the national language (Bahasa Malaysia). After a crash super-intensive three months language and culture training, I was assigned to a residential, Islamic high school in a semi-rural district. I had to translate the British curriculum into Bahasa, helped set up the lab, and taught 5-6 classes a day without air conditioning.

My role model was a CCNY philosophy professor, Morris Raphael Cohen, who inspired first generation Americans to become leaders of the Greatest Generation. My Malaysia students were typically the first in their families to attend high school. One became an expert in nanotechnology.

For part of my 2.5 service years, I lived in a kampong (rural village) lacking electricity and running water. One of my neighbors was a leper who owned Hussein, a coconut-scavenging macaque who didn't like me. I lived on padi fish, local fruits, vegetables, and rice. I trimmed down to 140 lbs, but I also suffered through a malaria-like illness.

JA: Can you recall any unusual event or occurrence during your stay in Malaysia.

PF: During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, I was accused by the school imam (Islam teacher) of being a Zionist spy. I found a lovely Jewish/Baghdadi family in Singapore, who gave me shelter until I could return.

JA: What did you do when you returned to the states?

PF: I entered Harvard to get a PhD in the History of Science. I greatly enjoyed the research, singing in the Harvard Glee Club, and my active Teaching Fellow and Dunster House Science Tutor responsibilities. I missed working with other cultures and languages. After completing general examinations and getting an MA, I took a leave of absence to apprentice with my dad as one of his two employees and did an International Business/Marketing MBA at NYU. I didn't return to Harvard until 2018!

My dad quickly retired at 60 and had a terrific third act. He won tennis doubles championships, "threw" thousands of ceramic objects, and was the first Jew elected to serve in his community's borough council and as chief of police.

JA: Tell me about your career

After five years trying out many business ideas, I "stumbled" the value proposition around which PLT Health Solutions has evolved and continues to thrive. The USA counterculture community was getting very interested in herbal health food products. I remembered how my Malaysia friends relied on mixtures of herbs for medicine. I began traveling extensively overseas to develop relationships with people on six continents who were interested in the same thing.

I built a company which today thrives under the leadership of our middle son, Seth. We take inspiration from traditional medicine traditions to develop branded dietary supplements which are strongly supported by clinical, safety, and regulatory work. Our formulations are in hundreds of dietary supplements which deliver meaningful consumer benefits (such as healthy joints, heart, and brain, weight management, and sports performance) and are found in all the big chains and natural foods stores, as well as on the Internet.

JA: Are you still working at PLT?

I just became "Chairman Emeritus and Executive Director of PLT's People and Planet initiative." I work on important projects where my background is helpful to the company, but I now can apply my energies to other passions.

JA: What came next?

PF: In 2017, I studied strategic thinking and developed my story and vision through a blended (Internet plus once weekly daylong seminar) through Stanford. I rekindled my passion to help kids (at scale) empower their lives through education. I became a 2018 Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative Fellow and moved to Cambridge. I worked on improving my skills and researched EdTech opportunities mainly at Harvard Business School. Through a case study at HBS, I learned about "Mindspark" and met Pranav Kothari, an inspirational person who left his lucrative USA finance career to return to India to scale this digital, personalized, gamified, data analytics informed impactful and cost effective learning platform.

I have a new title, "Mindspark Evangelist," as explained in this short video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S67pDwhVyiQ>

My value proposition is to scale Mindspark usage by periodically funding 10+ public school pilot programs. The significant measurable successes has and continues to attract much, much larger funding from USAID, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Amazon, Oracle, and Mahindra Foundation. In January, 2022, I also funded the introduction of the program to six S. Africa schools. Presently, some 500,000 children worldwide are using the program, but in India alone, there are 250 million school kids; we have a lot of work to do!

JA: How are you spending your days in Naples?

PF: I sing with Choral Artistry (out of FGCU), kayak and bike with MCA, lead a Great Decisions Group through NCWA, and work on PLT projects, including corporate ESG (carbon footprint, environmental sustainability, support for global vitamin initiatives, supporting food banks, including Harry Chapin here in SWFL). I interview many college candidates and am on the Princeton Prize in Race Relations committee.

JA: I have seen you ride your bike with the fast bikers and always ahead of most of us when we kayak. At the age of 73 you seem unbelievably healthy and fit. What is your secret and are you using any of your company's supplements?

PF: I exercise daily, take long bike rides, and love to kayak with MCA. Yes, I take supplements daily!

JA: I noticed that you understand and speak some Hebrew. Where did you learn the language?

PF: 20 years after "bar Mitzvah Hebrew," I took a full year of Hebrew at Harvard. Margot and I got very far along in getting qualified to teach in Israel, but life had different plans for us.

JA: Paul- you amaze me of how much you have accomplished and continue to do so to this day. Your desire to help children throughout the world so that they can reach their potential through education is admirable. You seem to have endless stamina and energy. I am guessing that some of PLT's ingredients work well.