

Rallying Around a 50th

Jane Simon Stricker '70 and Priscilla Coffin '68, '71G honor their respective UNH roots with reunion-inspired gifts

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Jane Simon Stricker '70 attended her first of many UNH reunions when she was a child. They were a family affair. Her mother, Selma Bacon Simon '42, was president of her UNH class until the day she died and over the years presented checks for class gifts to a number of UNH presidents. "She loved them all," Stricker says. Her father, Edward Simon '42H, always at Selma's side, was famous for the reunion hospitality suites he would set up at the Ramada Inn in Dover, welcoming a continuous stream of returning alumni. Stricker and her sister, Henri-Ann Simon Sussman '64, with the Simon grandchildren, led the parade in class beanies and performed other duties as assigned.

Stricker's enthusiasm for reunions hasn't waned, and now she's looking ahead to her own 50th in June. In honor of that milestone, and her parents' lifelong love for UNH, Stricker and her husband, Rob, have made a generous gift to the Edward and Selma Bacon Simon Endowed Fund to provide scholarship support for students in the hospitality management program at UNH's Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics. "My mother was a real personality, and a great ambassador for UNH," Stricker says. "When the family traveled, she would make a point of arranging to meet any UNH graduates who worked at the hotel or chain where we were staying."



This is not the first gift the Strickers have made in honor of Jane's parents. The Edward and Selma Bacon Simon Endowed Fund was the lead donor — Stricker served on the design and selection committee — that brought the wildcat statue to campus in 2006. And a granite bench engraved with Selma and Edward Simons' names greets every visitor to the Elliott Alumni Center. Says Stricker, "The reason we do what we do is to preserve their legacy at UNH."

For Priscilla Coffin '68, '71G, planning and attending her 50th reunion in 2018 was the catalyst for creating a student impact scholarship that will support a student in the College of Health and Human Services for four years. "As an older person living in a rural state, I want to see our young people stay," she says. She hopes that helping a student avoid debt will allow them to be engaged in their community professionally and as a volunteer.

Like Stricker, Coffin's UNH roots began in childhood. As a 14-year old at UNH's Summer Youth Music School, she loved the freedom of living in Scott Hall and roaming the Durham campus. A decade later, as a transfer student in the Elizabeth DeMeritt House (the home economics "practice house"), she delighted in encountering the food

and cultures of classmates from other countries. Coffin didn't stay especially connected to UNH after graduating, but an article in UNH Magazine inspired her to learn more about the occupational therapy program and, after a call from the UNH phonathon, to support it in a small way; she had experience developing adaptive technologies for a child born with craniofacial anomalies, and saw in hindsight a program that might have suited her.

UNH REUNIONS

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unh.edu/reunions

When a member of the UNH advancement staff reached out to her about working on her reunion, Coffin wasn't sure where she fit in, having been a non-traditional student. But, she says, the early planning sessions felt a bit like therapy. The group discussed what a remarkable — and turbulent — time their college years in the 1960s had been and the vastly different paths their lives had taken since, putting the past in a new light for Coffin. She was moved to tears during a faculty member's retrospective of the period that was part of a reunion program and awed to learn about classmates who had worked full time or raised children while they were at UNH.

“I was so fortunate that my parents paid for my college education, and that I had the flexibility to spend an extra year to enjoy my time at UNH,” says Coffin, who especially looks forward to meeting the recipient of her scholarship. “Coming back to UNH for my reunion and walking down Main Street made me realize, ‘I was really happy here.’”

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