

# Fifty Years Strong

Classmates from UNH '65 relive glory days — and make a big impact

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DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT KELLY CALHOUN NOTES THAT REUNIONS LIKE THE CLASS OF '65 GATHERING ARE HER FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR "BECAUSE IT BRINGS SO MANY AMAZING WILDCATS BACK HOME. THEY SHARE THEIR UNH STORIES, RECONNECT WITH CLASSMATES AND CREATE NEW MEMORIES TOGETHER." (PHOTO: DAVID MURRAY)  
Jeanne Leavitt's most vivid memories of her undergrad years at UNH?

"Hanging out in the student union, staying up late and gossiping all night!" Leavitt says.

They may not have stayed up all night 50 years later, but Leavitt '65 and more than 100 of her classmates gathered for their 50th reunion on campus recently to recall their favorite UNH memories and catch up on what they've all been up to these last 50 years.

Friday night's festivities included a lobster bake at the Coast Guard Station in New Castle, New Hampshire, which provided a waterfront setting for the get-together. The next day, in addition to a memorial service in Murkland and other campus activities, the class gathered in the MUB to hear "Back to the Future," a panel discussion about how the areas of science and technology, politics, athletics and education have changed during the past 50 years.

The panel kicked off with Mike Granieri '65, who provided an overview of how, especially in the areas of robotics and other technologies, what seemed like science fiction in 1965 is now reality in 2015. Other panelists included Kent Chamberlin, chair of the UNH department of electrical and computer engineering; Dain LaRoche, associate professor in the department of kinesiology; Michael McCann, law professor and director of the Sports and Entertainment Law Institute at UNH Law School; Andrew Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center and associate professor of political science, and UNH President Mark Huddleston. Veteran Boston journalist Natalie Jacobson '65 moderated the talk. Class members were able to ask panelists questions about each of their areas of expertise.

Another accomplishment the class celebrated was the 50th reunion class gift — a donation of more than \$1.2 million. The class of 1965 gift will benefit many different areas of the university, as '65ers were encouraged to give to the area that meant the most to them. Many gave to athletics, academic programs and student life, while others knew they wanted to have an impact on the financial burden facing students, and so gave to the class of 1965 scholarship fund.

"Thanks to the class's generosity, current and future students will be able to have the same memorable experiences that this class and many others did while at UNH. This gift definitely sets the bar high for future reunion classes!" says Katie Oslin, director of The UNH Fund.

Efforts to raise such an impressive amount for the 50th reunion began five years ago when Brad Aiken '65, longtime UNH volunteer, board member and supporter, formed a committee of classmates to plan both the reunion and the class's philanthropy.

"I did a lot of research ... we sent out three letters to our classmates, and we did quite a bit of calling folks," Aiken says.

Speaking from his own experience, he says, people in their late 60s and early 70s "don't want to be told what to do." That's why the committee decided not to pick out one program to support with their gift or one item on campus to sponsor.

"We told classmates, whatever is the most emotional thing connected to them, that's what they can give money for. If they can't think of something, we mentioned that scholarship money for current and future students is always a good option," Aiken says.

So what's his emotional connection to the school? He knows that the kindness of others helped him realize his own dream of going to college.

Growing up in Manchester, New Hampshire, he came to UNH to visit a friend during his senior year and decided he'd also like to attend the university. But his parents weren't sure how to fund a four-year degree. "They looked at me like I had two heads: 'How are you going to pay for that?' and I said, 'I don't know, I have no idea what it costs.'"

But he learned quickly, and applied for and received financial aid, so the cost to attend classes was paid for. But what about incidentals, like room and board? He next applied for scholarships and received one from his local Amoskeag Bank.

After he graduated, he knew he wanted to "pay it forward" for other students, so soon he started sending in about \$20 a year. The amount grew as his career success grew, and now Aiken adds to his involvement with UNH by serving on the Alumni Association board, being involved in fundraising for athletics and serving on various search committees.

Most impressive among his classmates, says Aiken, was the fact that 42 percent participated in giving money — a high rate for a class that marked its 50th anniversary.

"Our biggest success was that we got 300 people to donate, and that we broke a million. I think that even more money will result from our efforts, beyond our reunion," he says.



LOBSTERBAKE PHOTO GALLERY



## WILDCAT DINNER PHOTO GALLERY

- WRITTEN BY:  
[Michelle Morrissey '97](#) | UNH Donor Communications  
| [michelle.morrissey@unh.edu](mailto:michelle.morrissey@unh.edu) | 603-862-0527

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