When Joe Prather was a sophomore at Princeton, Triangle Club recruited him to sell programs at their show up in the Oranges; and up in the Oranges, young Evelyn Swanson was recruited to be an usherette at the same show. Joe and Ev met, they fell in love, and Joe left Princeton to marry Ev and start a family in Michigan.

But Princeton still had a place in his heart, if not a diploma on his wall. Joe was back for ’61’s second Reunion in 1963. And since then, he has missed only one. More than that, he became one of the pillars of ’61’s volunteer forces. From volunteering for his Reunion committee in 1976, he went on to be Reunion Chair for the 20th and co-chair of most to the 50th. He marched as a P-rade marshal for more years than are recorded, and twice served terms as Grand Marshal. He was elected class vice president in 1986; and at his 50th in 2011, he was elected class president.

His class is not the only organization to benefit from Joe’s volunteer time. He chaired the Alumni Council Committee on Reunions, was a member of the Alumni Council Executive Committee, and currently sits on the Alumni Council’s Committee on Community Service. As class president he asked, “What can I do for the class?” Inspired by the Class of 1957’s Caring Committee, he worked to institute a class foundation to help classmates in need. The class foundation also works with Teach for America, naming and supporting three Princeton graduates, “Class of ’61 fellows.”

Back at Okemos High School in Michigan, Joe had applied to Princeton sight unseen. When asked what he thought when he first arrived on campus, he replies, “I was impressed then, and I am impressed now.”

Lucky for Princeton and the Class of ’61.