

A Walk on '71's WILD Side Across the Years

Editors' note:

*Many classes have left a mark on Princeton in its 280-year history, but few with so conspicuous or lasting a brand as the Great Class of 1971 or, as we like to call it, The WILD Life Class! Our now ubiquitous "Joe Cool" Tiger logo – think Marlon Brando sporting a leather motorcycle cap – has gone through several metamorphoses, but is almost as recognizable today as it was when some unidentified artist sketched it for the class beer jacket when we were seniors. It matured (if that's the right word) over the years thanks to **Tom Kleh, Marilyn Machin s'71, David Chamberlain** and others' working from Tom's original drawing from our 10th, evolving into the jaunty Tiger leading the conga line of the Wild Life Class.*

*No one has been more devoted nor more dogged to stamping this emblem of 1971's identity on beer cups, Reunions garb and accessories including beer jackets, T-shirts, caps and signs than **Stu Rickerson**, who with his customary elan has penned this definitive account of "The Many Faces of the WILD Life Class." We think you'll enjoy this leisurely stroll down memory lane to learn the "backstory" on how this came to be.*

The Many Faces of ‘The WILD Life Class’

Class of 1971 Logos through the years

By Stu Rickerson '71 P21¹

As this essay is published in 2026, as Princeton University celebrates the 280th anniversary of its 1746 founding, the Alumni Association its 200th anniversary,² and Princeton Reunions are nearly 170-years-old,³ it's worth looking back at how *The Great Class of 1971* identified itself through the years and, in the process, created one of Princeton's strongest class brands.⁴

Classes have created slogans, themes or logos for their reunions for the past century. A few stand out. Among my favorites are the logos for the Classes of 1939, 1965 and 1968 (shown below). Most class logos are more transient. Do you have some favorites?



¹ With major assistance from Class Historian the late *Jack Hittson '71 P03 05*, his brand manager *Ronnie Hittson s71 h71*, principal artists *Marilynn Murphey Machin s71*, *David Chamberlain '71*, and *Tom Kleh '71*, graphic artist *Amy Hepler h71*, as well as Yearbook Editor *Ray Ollwerther '71* and Reunions Chair *Jeff Hammond '71*, without whom this project would not have begun, and tirelessly edited by *Chris Connell '71*. Contributions of Reunions Chairs *Robby Browne '71* & *Richard Ferrugio '71* and Class President *Steve Powers '71* are posthumously recognized here.

² The Alumni Association was founded in 1826 “to promote the interests of the College and the friendly intercourse of its graduates.” Its first president was former U.S. president James Madison, Class of 1771. <https://alumni.princeton.edu/our-community/alumni-association/200th-anniversary-committee>

³ Alumni regularly gathered for Commencement and other special events, but the start of the modern class reunion was organized in 1859, organized by Charles Woodhull, a member of the Class of 1856. <https://princetoniana.princeton.edu/traditions/reunions>

⁴ This 2026 e-supplement to 1971's Reunion Yearbook expands a 25th Reunion Yearbook story on Princeton's private eating clubs, and an interview by Bill Zwecker about how 1971 came to hire Motown-legend, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and Songwriters Hall of Fame member, Smokey Robinson h71 in 1996, reported in 1971's 50th Reunion Yearbook. Some photographs or drawings are not the best, for which I apologize. If you have better photos or different memories, I appreciate your sending me updates and your memories. dfensnet@pacbell.net or by snail mail at P. O. Box 510, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067.

Some were drawn by such professional cartoonists as Henry Martin '48 who regularly provided Reunions-themed cartoons to *The New Yorker* and the Class Notes column in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, like this one marking 1948's 55th Reunion.⁵



Few class logos are *New Yorker*-worthy, but that makes them no less fondly remembered as the years go by. Seen together, as in this wall art from 2023, they can overwhelm. For instance:

⁵ In my first job after grad school, my boss was a member of the Class of 1948 who chaired his 35th Reunion. He drafted me to help him execute that Reunion and in the process I could observe, up close, how the class mobilized Martin's characters in pursuit of attendance and to create a vibrant persona for the class. In time, that would serve us well.



Few classes have a “brand” stronger or more durable than *“The WILD Life Class”* of 1971. Several Classmates were involved in its evolution, notably *Marilynn Machin, Robby Brown, Ronnie & Jack Hittson, Steve Powers, David Chamberlain* and more recently, graphic designer *Amy Hepler h71*. Thanks to all!

How did 1971 “discover its brand”? how did it identify and define the beliefs core to its Class identity, strengths, and personality?? This is a story of how it began and how it evolved:

1971: In the Beginning, There was the Class Beer Jacket

Perhaps due to student strikes (or in my case, maybe I just couldn’t afford one in the Spring of 1971), few of us seem to have received a “*Beer Jacket,*” now politely called “*Class Jacket*”). (For anyone who wants to part with theirs, let me know!) . We don’t know who drew the unsigned logo on its back. I’m guessing the University designed it. (Today, Princeton facilitates the design with a contest and senior vote on designs). Our jacket drawing (on the left) has implied sexual innuendo. Could it be considered sexist? Possibly. Standard for the time? Definitely. Compare ours with the full-color logo used by the Class of 1926 at its 45th Reunion the same year (R).

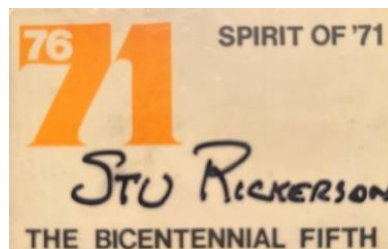


Because the original '71 Beer Jackets were rarely seen, *Class President Steve Powers* decided that 1971 Beer Jackets should reemerge at our 25th Reunion in all their WILD Life glory as “extras” that could be purchased. Compare how far our Class image evolved, as it had taken on its own personality. It shows a rollicking animal Conga-line on the back, and a character we came to call “*Joe Cool Tiger*” on the breast pocket. Joe Cool was also on the cream-colored Camp Shirts that were part of the uniform in 1996:



1976: “Bicentennial Fifth: Spirit of ‘71”

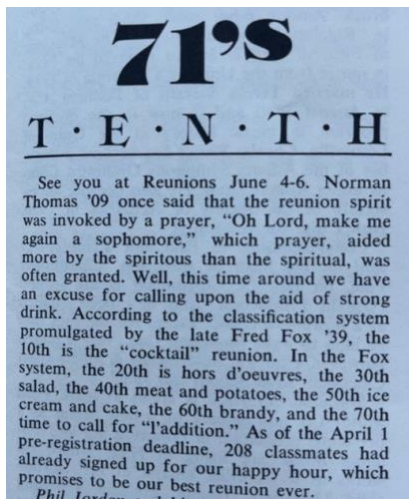
Our 5th Reunion almost never got planned. The Hittsons and a few others stepped in and pulled something together on a shoestring budget. This is evident with our slapdash -- or shall I say, the “clean, bold lines” -- of the logo, as shown on our 5th Reunions button.



For those who have forgotten, our “uniforms” in 1976 were acrylic rugby jerseys with orange bodies and black and orange hoops on the sleeves. These are still occasionally seen at Reunions today. The pants were unfinished rugby pants, long and unhemmed, that we rolled to length. That year, I took a nap after the Alumni-Undergraduate Rugby match and missed the class dinner Saturday night, only to find after I got up that I’d been elected Tenth Reunion Chair. (NOTE: Never miss meetings when life-changing decisions can be made!)

Tropical Tenth: The ‘Cocktail’ Reunion: Tiger stands tall and measures up

The pre-Reunions Class Note is still worth reading today (L). This is also the year 1971 introduced what’s been called “*the Holy Grail*,” the ubiquitous 16 oz. beverage cup that we designed and which the local Budweiser Beer distributor gave to all classes for free for which it supplied beer. They were infinitely better than the metallic-tasting tin cans that they replaced, but years later would be criticized as “not sustainable.” How many housewares are you still using that are 45 years old? The cup just need to be washed for reuse.



We had a tropical theme for our Tenth, with corporate sponsorships from *Mount Gay Rum* (which turned our basic Bar Tent into a Tiki Bar while we were at the P-Rade). Our uniform was a reverse-print, Tiger Aloha shirt, provided by *Ocean Pacific Sunwear*, shown here and worn by Reunions co-chairs Stu and Ed Milne (waving), which a few of us still wear at Reunions year. The pants were gauzy, bell-bottoms (they have rarely made an appearance since).



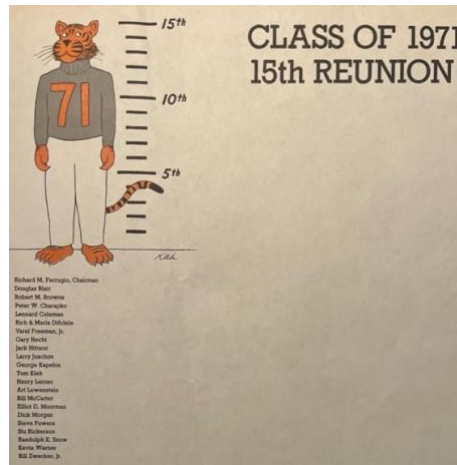
Despite rainy weather, 1971 set what would become the first of its many Reunions registration records that year. *Carl “Bo” Hunter* hand-carried Hawaiian leis on an overnight flight from

Honolulu, arriving in time to give to spouses of Class officers to wear in the P-Rade. Fireworks took place in the Dance Tent too, lit by the Saturday band from the Research Triangle of North Carolina, each time they played which Kool & The Gang's "Celebration."

1986 Fifteenth: Tiger with yardstick, a reprise



How did this logo-adaptation for the Fifteenth happen? As Class Secretary, I asked Tom Kleh's permission to update his Tenth logo, re-sized the ruler by hand, and then drew in the five extra lines to get to the 15th mark. I thought Tom's cartoon was a cool image (showing "how 1971 measures up"), and was worth extending. When he agreed, we started using it in Class Notes and on the Class Stationery, shown below, with the Reunions leadership listed on its letterhead (Remember? We were still snail-mailing invitations, newsletters and registrations!). Richard Ferrugio was Reunions Chair; Robby Browne was the Entertainment Chair.



Robby snapped his Achilles on the dance floor early on and, as he was being carried off, asked me to keep the *Rosanna Band* playing, which it did in Little Courtyard until after dawn on Sunday. As a result of 1971's 15th Reunion partying, the next year the University instituted a "hard stop" on music at 2 a.m. Another element of 1971's brand: hearty parties!

1991 Twentieth:

“Save the WILD Life” makes its first appearance

After two forays with large personality Tigers drawn by Classmate Tom Kleh, the brand evolved further for our 20th Reunion. *Robby Browne*, who would recover from his Achilles tear to chair our 20th, deserves the credit for coining 1971’s “*Save the WILD Life*” slogan. Robby teamed with graphic artist *Marilynn Machin s71*, who studied drawing with a Disney cartoon artist, to bring to life an array of cartoon images, including our now-famous, lovable Tiger casually wearing a Brando-style cap, riding a motorcycle seen here for the first time on a 20th tee-shirt (L) or leading a conga-line of jungle beasts (elephant, giraffe, monkeys). “*Save the WILD Life*” (emphasis on WILD), Robby’s tongue-firmly-in-cheek *double entendre*, continues to resonate – with variations -- as we barrel into our 55th.



Take a closer look the 20th logo. “WILDLIFE” could be seen as one word, in ALL-CAPS. This conga-line was the inspiration to extend the double entendre. WILD is ALL-CAP all right -- and is emphasized (called out) in **ORANGE** -- while Life seems to be a separate, initial-capped word. The “*Save the WILD Life Fund*” is about to be born.

Marilynn says she was inspired by Marlon Brando’s character Johnny Strabler (and his well-broken-in, tilted, pale twill motorcycle cap with leather visor and band across the front) in the 1953 film “*The Wild One*.” The Brando character is famously asked at one point in the movie, “*Hey Johnny, what are you rebelling against?*” He answers “*Whaddaya got?*” Nice! Similarly, Marilynn’s Tiger-on-motorcycle definitely has an attitude as he emerges from a jungle glade!



Jack & Ronnie Hittson and I began calling our Tiger “*Joe Cool*,” after one of the alter-egos of *Snoopy*, Charles Schultz’s legendary character, which by happy coincidence made his first appearance in Peanuts in 1971!



From that point on, Joe Cool returned again and again in various forms as 1971’s brand evolved. Our Major Reunion themes evolved, too:

- From Robby’s *Save the WILD Life* (20th);
 - To *Saving the WILD Life* (25th);
 - To *Still Saving the WILD Life* (30th);
 - To *Savoring the WILD Life* (35th);
 - To *Sharing the WILD Life* (40th);
 - To *Celebrating the WILD Life* (45th);
- For our 50th Reunion, simply to *The WILD Life Class*.
- Now, with our 55th, we will be *Sustaining the WILD Life*.

The Class of 1971



The Class brand went into hyperdrive in the run up to the 25th Reunion, “the Big One.” Joe Cool Tiger became ubiquitous. To build Class identity, empowered by Powers and enabled by the Hittsons, we conceived and found ways to permanently establish four of 1971’s now-annual Class events, intended to foster class camaraderie without which we’d have a very different class identity and brand today:

- Free Pre-P-Rade off-year luncheon, beginning 1992; these began on the patio behind West College, later moved to Joseph Henry House and East College, and now under a tent on what’s called “Alexander Beach.” (Still held);
- Free off-year Post-P-Rade reception; mostly held at the Library of Prospect beginning in 1994 (Now on hold as Prospect is extensively restored);
- Off-year Class Dinners at Reunions at Prospect, beginning 1994
- Free Fall Football Post-game receptions on Prince-Tiger weekend (later, Homecoming) at the Class of 1971 Library in Tiger Club, beginning in 1995 (Still held).

1996 Twenty-fifth: “Saving the WILD Life” debuts

For our “*Saving the WILD Life*” celebration – both our 25th Reunion and Princeton’s 250th anniversary – we felt our needed a special logo for the double celebration. The black tee-shirt’s Tiger grabbed me and made me think of a further extension of our brand. It implied everything, while needing little explanation. Henceforth, “*Joe Cool Tiger*” on a motorcycle would be the heart of our branding. I asked Marilyn Machin to reimagine the now familiar Conga-line, and add four elements, to mark the double-special occasion that was 1996:

1. Add a Revolutionary-era Tiger with tricorn hat, recognizing Old Nassau’s part in securing the liberty of the patriots from the British Empire, including at the Battle of Princeton in December 1776;
2. Turn the line around so it marches from left to right, figuring that after grad school, establishing careers, with many venturing into marriage and families, and most of us homeowners, the Class might be slightly less radical than in college;
3. Add Nassau Hall’s iconic cupola and clocktower -- amazingly, *these had never before been part of a Reunions logo*, as far as we could tell -- as it strikes 2 p.m., the exact time when 1971 would step off behind the U. S. Marines Drum & Bugle Corps and the Princeton Marching Band and lead the P-Rade for the only time in our history; and,
4. Temporarily, take Joe Cool is off his motorcycle, and have him carry a Drum Major’s silver Mace to lead this most auspicious Reunion, the 250th since Princeton’s founding!

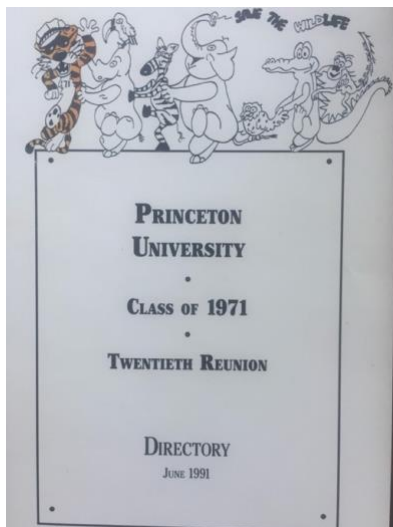
Here’s Stu, standing between Campbell and Holder Halls, holding his Class of 1902 Fifth Reunion cane, and joined by the drum majors of Princeton and the Marines with their ceremonial Maces, In the background, the Marines and Tiger band members seem to eye each other warily. One of the four conjoined tents where Smokey performed the evening before can be seen in the distance:



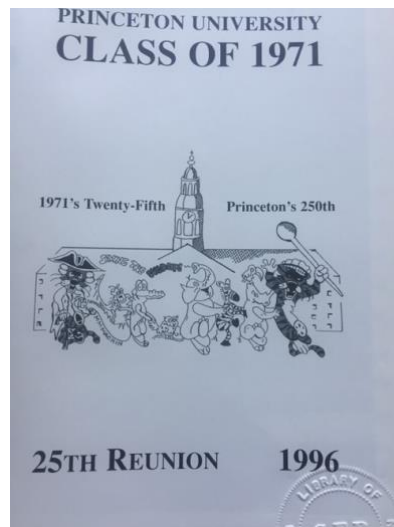
The resulting logo is a masterpiece, shown here on a special-order Beer Jacket President Powers ordered made for sale:



The image was picked up on the 25th Yearbook cover and just about everything else that year. Compare how much 1971's logo and brand evolved between the 1991 and 1996 yearbooks, with WILD called out and Marilynn's name spelled out on the crocodile's tale:



1991's 20th logo on the left



1996's 25th logo on the right

Here it is again, in a "Born to Be WILD" tee-shirt, with Marilynn's role clearly recognized:



Or, compare what has been called “*the holy grail*” beverage cup first introduced at our 10th with its U-Store decal logo (on the left in both photos), with what was to come (here the cups from our 10th, 30th and 25th, in front and rearview):



Here is Joe Cool on a paper “tattoo” that was popular with Class children in 1996:



Why have 1971's Reunions been so special, and recognized by others? Chalk that up mostly to clear vision and advance planning! Beginning with our Tenth, our successive Reunion Chairs sought to get all the "big pieces" in place no later than the first of January (vision; theme; entertainment; headquarters design; food service, for example); sooner if possible. That gave 1971 an unparalleled opportunity to fine-tune or "polish" the weekend with special touches that other classes never quite get to as they sprint to catch up in the final weeks. It paid dividends in 1996 with logo-emblazoned "extras" such as a *Fieldcrest Cannon* bath towel; a *SportsSling* tote bag; and such optional orders as the *1971 Beer Jacket*, *Wind Shirt* or *Vest*, and the *1971 Dance Shirt*. Here's our registration fees, which would include Smokey's unannounced show, 15 other live musical acts, the Class Blazer and gourmet dinners catered by the owner of *The Blue Point Grill* on Nassau Street.

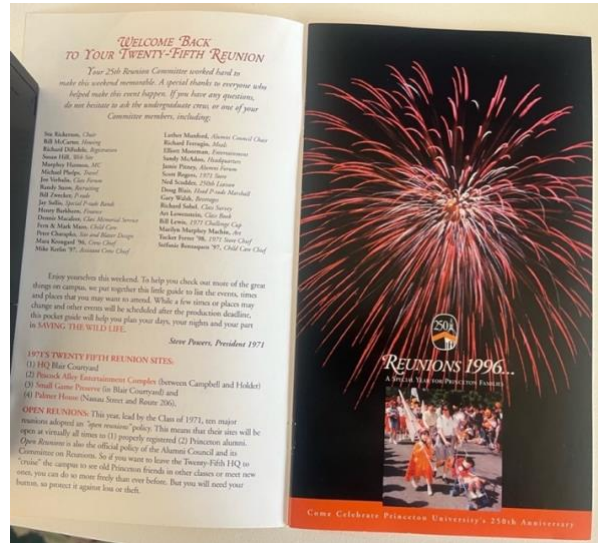
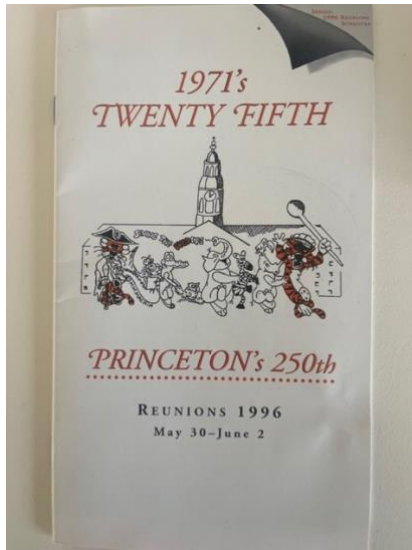
There's a story behind each of these wardrobe additions, though we'll only divert your attention for one: the *Dance Shirt*. Here's how it happened: I went to the PGA annual trade show in Orlando in the Spring 1995. I saw a soccer-style V-neck shirt with no collar in a solid color. What I liked most was that it was a heavy cotton that the salespeople claimed resisted wrinkles. I thought that on black fabric our logo and Class numeral would "pop" and be readily identifiable from afar. I bought a sample, contacted the company in Mexico City that fabricated our exclusive *SportsSling*, and asked if they could replicate it with a few enhancements.

The changes we wanted were to: 1) put a collar on the shirt; 2) add mesh where the body meets the sleeve (to wick away heat when dancing or on a sweltering Jerseyday), and 3) add our logo on the front and Class numerals on the back. For many, it's still a favorite shirt, with minimal degradation after 30 years of wear and tear, at Reunions and innumerable other Class of '71 and Princeton events.



3.

We had our program for the 25th bound around the University's Program. No Class had ever done that before and, now that the University's Program is online and QR coded, no one ever will again.



After listing our Reunions volunteers, we described every event. Note that the only reference to the Smokey Robinson supershow in the run-of-show for Friday at 9pm is the listing of **“Music with The Steel Bandits, Peacock Crossing, The Trend and Surprise Guest”!**

As detailed in Bill Zwecker’s story in our 25th Reunions Yearbook, I met the Motown legend in his over-heated stretch limousine and explained what he was about to experience. Smokey decided to toss aside his Armani tuxedo jacket, and wear our new, Peter Charapko-designed Class Blazer on stage with his formal-wear silk trousers. Here he is on 1971’s Reunions stage before what was estimated at the time to be 6,000 guests. All who were there still have warm memories of the evening. Oh, yes; I can confirm that those eyes really are green!



2001 Thirtieth Reunion: “Still Saving the WILD Life”

The 30th Reunion extended the brand to the “Still Saving” theme. The ’71 conga line weathered rough seas in Marilyn’s colorful “Wild Life” T-shirt and canvas tote bag design. Here, Marilyn has Joe Cool trying his hand at raft surfing, with an image of a big wave. Again, you can see her signature on the curl, while the croc looks seasick! This was prophetic, with torrential rain and flooding in our 1901/Henry Courtyard HQ site. *We all could have used a raft that weekend!*



We added a black polo shirt to the wardrobe. This classy 30th glass was a limited-edition item.



Hittson orchestrated a financial bailout of the Class around this time. It had been operating in the red and owed over \$30,000 in dues to the Alumni Council. I think the glass was a “thank you” for those who stepped up to bail the Class out. Any memories?

2005: Pausing ... for a Celebration of a WILD Life

In May 2005, I “borrowed” the WILD Life logo for what I thought of -- though never announced as such -- a Celebration of Life 3 months after being given six months to live by three sets of oncologists (a long story that has been told elsewhere). In February 2005, from my post-surgical hospital bed, I called the leaders of the 1970 and asked if I could “buy-out” their Reunions site

while they were off-site at their Friday Class Dinner. I offered to hire a band, provide food for all, and arrange for beer, wine, Mount Gay Rum and other refreshments, which 1970 and Satellite Classes could enjoy on its return. The Bug Class agreed, and the Alumni Council signed off. Many Classmates attended, along with grade school and high school friends, teammates, professional colleagues and acquaintances from many Princeton Classes. I was granted forgiveness for this possible trademark misuse. In any event, the statute of limitations has expired. Here are Princeton Rugby Shirts (and knee socks!) The Party Dolls wore as their costume, with *Ed Stanczak* and me dancing (in Dance Shirts!) with the Dolls, *in proper 19 – 7 – 1 formation!*:



The admission badge was similar to the one produced for the Smokey show. The 1996 version was simple and orange, and used as a way to identify VIPs (Classmates, Satellite registrants, University administrators, etc.) so they could go the archway leading from Blair Courtyard into the venue, a courtyard we called “*Peacock Alley*” between Holder, Joline and Campbell Halls, before the show and find a good place to sit or stand. All other guests were let in only after Smokey was onstage, sometime after the first song (so that they would be in the back, in the second, third or fourth tent. Compare the VIP button for Smokey’s show, and the one used for the “*Celebration*”:



2006 Thirty-fifth Reunion: “Savoring the WILD Life”

By our 35th Reunion, the brand morphed again into “*Savoring the Wild Life.*” Here are some images from 2006:



No Kleh or Machin Tigers carry-over this time. We temporarily lost Joe Cool and the motorcycle, or perhaps it was testing free agency. Never fear, he will return. The lapel pin on the right is beside the David Chamberlain-designed logo on the left (note his initials: *DAC 71*).

Another logo developed for this Reunion shows up on a painted glass coaster and the Class umbrella with a different, more generic logo shown (no artist markings; any ideas?), “*Savoring the WILD Life.*” This style of logo is similar to those popular when we were undergrads, possibly designed by University artists, like the circa-1971 Beer Jacket. *Ed & Myrna Stanczak* co-chaired this Reunion. They likely would remember how this came to be. Though some did not think the umbrella was a wise expense, the year again proved especially rainy, so it paid huge dividends for those who held on to them. Next time you see Ed or his wonderful spouse Myrna (sporting her flashy sandals with orange and black toenail polish), just say, “Thank you.”



The great *Darlene Love* performed on 1971's Reunions stage, but not before the tent was cleared for the first time in memory by Public Safety due to lightning storms and heavy rains. In earlier years, this would have brought out the "tent surfers," though now this was banned.

I thought that Smokey and what I would come to call "Big Acts" was a "one and done," until the chance to hire Darlene presented itself (long story), after her former boyfriend *Bill Medley* of the *Righteous Brothers* helped resurrect her career (she had been working in LA as a maid!). As the "voice of the 'Girl Groups' of the 1960s, Darlene survived Phil Spector's toxic work conditions, and in 1993 won a lawsuit to recover royalties he denied her (stole?) from all those sessions as an uncredited backup singer. For instance, she sang lead on "*He's a Rebel*" and "*He's Sure the Boy I Love*," which Spector (and the world) credited to the *Crystals*. She became a sought-after vocalist and worked with many musicians of the 1960s, including *Dionne Warwick*, *Bill Medley*, *The Beach Boys*, *Elvis Presley*, *Sam Cooke* and *Sonny & Cher*. Darlene sang "*Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)*" on the *Letterman Show* for 28-straight years, reprising it as recently as the 2025 *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*. Darlene became a member of the *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame* (2011), played Danny Glover's wife in four "*Lethal Weapon*" movies. She also won an Oscar for "*20 Feet From Stardom*" (Best Documentary Feature, 2013) and Grammy ("*Best Music Film*") in which she was called the "world's most famous backup singer." In that documentary, she was introduced this way: "*Darlene Love is the one that's the cause of all this!*" And, she's our Honorary Classmate! Darlene thrilled the crowd that Friday night once the lightning storm moved away. She is still touring and knocking out crowds -- at 84.

Here I present Darlene a commendation of her Honorary Class membership during the show, and Reunions Chair Stanczak giving her a whirl. Darlene asked for blazer fabric so her seamstress could make a bolero jacket for her performance, joining Smokey with a Class Blazer!



During the storm delay, I chatted with Darlene as she signed her autobiography, "*My Name is Love*" to major donors to SWLF that year, who made her performance possible at no cost to other registrants! Mine reads, "*To Stu Rickerson, Thanks for including me in Princeton's 1971*"

Wild Life Reunions Experience, Lots of Love, Darlene.” One more of the many stories that have not before been told about the SWLF years...

2011 Fortieth Reunion: “Sharing the WILD Life”

By our 40th Reunion, we were “*Sharing the WILD Life*,” with the logo designed once again by Classmate and noted artist *David Chamberlain '71*. Here are the “official” logos:



Joe Cool returns too, in a veiled reference to what would be on show for this Reunion! The 2011 “*Wild Life Productions*” logo and that year’s VIP badge brought back 1971’s “*Joe Tiger on Motorcycle*” logo, with the tiger coming out of what looks like a record album, and the words, “*Be true to your School*,” as a tag line. The “*Sharing...*” logo on the right is paired with the logo of our partner for the show, the *Class of 1961’s 50th*, shown on the left. The tag line was the only clue that there was another Big Act waiting in the wings at the Brown-Art Museum courtyard, and at which President Shirley Tilghman danced the night away with her daughter. Months earlier, the band’s manager he told us that the iconic song “*Be True to Your School*” was not in the band’s normal repertoire, so as a subtle Annual Giving plug, we asked that the song be added. It was! The slogan was also on the entrance banner for everyone to see. Still, no one seemed to pick up on it!!



As everyone now knows, we snagged *The Beach Boys* led by Mike Love for our 40th Reunion. Here's how it happened: When I called the manager a year earlier, I asked if the band was available Reunions weekend 2011. The manager asked, "*What is your class?*" I told him. "*That's funny, as I got a call just yesterday from the Chair of the 50th Reunion. You two should talk.*" Unknown to him, I'd known 1961's *Reunion Chair Jim Blair* since the first day of freshman football practice, as Jim was my position coach while he attended grad school at Princeton.

"*WILD Life Productions*" resulted from the lunch Blair and I had with *The Beach Boys* manager at the Del Mar Country Club in Del Mar, California, that ended in a handshake deal to hire the band. After the deal points were agreed to, the manager asked who would produce the show. I told him that when we hired Smokey, I hired production from *EastCoast Entertainment*, as they assured us that all that was needed would happen, though it was still work as we had to cover hundreds of items in the rider. (Long story; if you haven't already heard it, buy me a Mount Gay some time and I'll share it with you). I told *The Beach Boys* manager that I probably would ask *EastCoast* to produce again. He said, "*Well, you could do it with them again, though that would mean the actual cost will be 15 or 20% higher for you.*" I asked him what the alternative was. He said, "*You could be the Producer; it seems like you two are pretty active anyway.*" On the spot, and always seeking to get top acts at a lower cost, W/L Productions was born.

When we got to the price for the band, the manager also told us that if "*The Beach Boys*" was used in *any* publicity, the gig would cost \$50,000 more. He said that under Mike's settlement with former bandmate the eccentric Brian Wilson, Brian got paid if the name was used, even though he had not performed in years. With Reunions sites open to all registered Alums, publicity was unneeded; word of mouth usually sufficed. There's a recording with me introducing the band, where I carefully avoid naming it. I list some facts (like, "*had the most Top 10 songs of any American band,*" and end by saying, "*You'll know them from the opening beat...here they are; let's welcome what is often called 'America's Band' to Princeton!*" as the band launched into its 90-minute set.



Mike becomes an Honorary Classmate, and proudly wears his Class Blazer in 2011, joining Smokey and Darlene
Mike met SWLF donors in the Library of Prospect before the show, where we presented him with his Class Blazer, recognizing one more member of rock royalty as an Honorary Classmate.



Above: Joan and Al Holmer, Class President Gary Walsh and Bernadette, and Jack Hess and Pat, after chatting with Mike

The show was also notable as Mike invited *Anya Taylor Joy* k61 on stage to play “air guitar”
With the Beach Boys



Anya's British-Argentine father studied abroad as a member of our partnering class, 1961, and brought her to his 50th. As Chris Connell revealed in later a *PAW* feature story, she claims this helped launch her career, most memorably as the chess prodigy in *Queen's Gambit* (2020; Golden Globe Award for best actress and a SAG Award). She's gone on to more, including starring as *Imperator Furiosa* in the apocalyptic film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (2024), a prequel to the 2015 film *Mad Max: Fury Road*. All – or at least partly -- thanks to 1971!

2016 Forty-Fifth: “Still Saving the WILD Life”

By our 45th Reunion (2016), 1971 was all about “*Celebrating the Wild Life*” with yet another brand extension. These banners were created, and became the backdrop for the bandstand.



Here’s the logo for our Crew Shirts that year, and our posted announcement of the times of our Open Reunion. Because of two (!) Big Acts SWLF hired that year, we wanted to allow all Classmates and VIPs to find a spot on the dance floor where they could see, sing, dance or sway to the bands, before we let Alums from other Reunions into our Holder site.



To keep other registrants occupied while waiting, we installed video screens at our entrances so guests could see what was going on, and stay calm since they would know the show had not started yet. We invited the Princeton Fire Marshal, so he could reassure Public Safety that there was no reason to close the site. During the shows, the Fire Marshall and I went to the main gate to make sure no one was waiting. As a result, no one was turned away. This is the VIP badge that

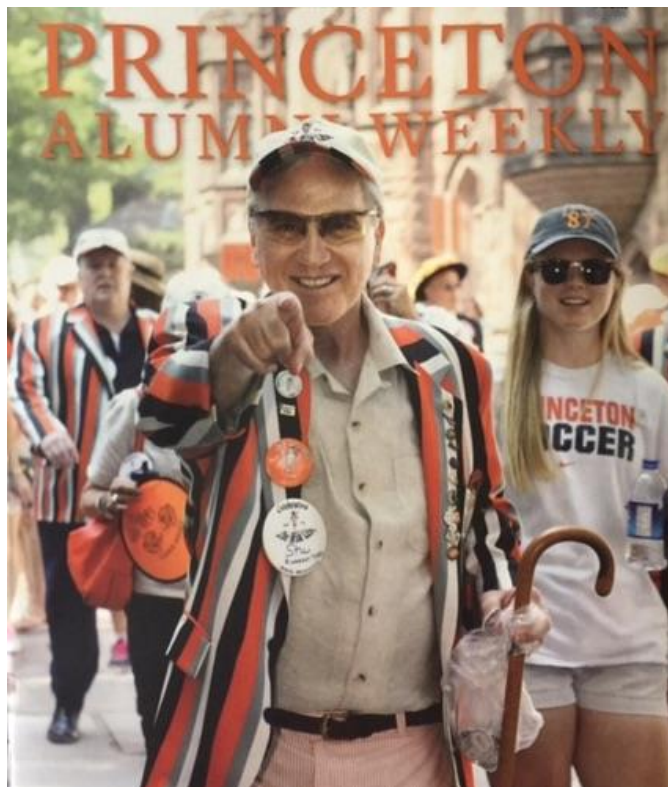
let Classmates into the courtyard before the rest of our guests in 2016 for shows by *Creedence Clearwater* on Thursday (“CC”) and *The Beach Boys* (“BB”) 2nd show on Friday:





Mike once again met with the SWLF supporters who funded his performance before the show in Alexander Hall (I'm holding the 2011 set list for Mike to autograph; the head of Public Safety is applauding in the background). Beneath is a shot from the stage showing the mesmerized audience that evening.



The enthusiasm of the audiences at these two shows landed me and my daughter on the cover of the PAW Reunions 2016 issue (left). On the right are the signed playlists for the 2011 and 2016 shows; note the second show was 30 minutes longer, though cost less thanks to Mike's "Honor Code" pledge, reported on elsewhere!:







PRINCETON CLASS OF 1961

DO IT AGAIN	ROOM
SURF CITY	GOD
CATCH	WIBES
HAWAII	KOKOMO
HONDA	SLOOP
SAFARI	NICE
SURFER GIRL	KISSED HER
	CAL GIRLS
DON'T WORRY	RHONDA
DEUCE COUPE	ROCK ROLL
409	DANCE STREET
SHUT DOWN	SUMMER BLUES
GET AROUND	SAW HER STAND
	WANNA DANCE
BE TRUE	BARBARA ANN
	SURFIN USA
FOOLS	USSR
	JACK FLASH
	FUN FUN FUN

PRINCETON CLASS OF 1961

SAFARI - low 5	GOD-JF
IT'S OK - 379	
CATCH	CAL GIRLS - 6 th and 10 th
HAWAII-5	answer
PARADISE	KISSED HER-DJ-3rd
HONDA	DANCE DANCE 67N
DO IT AGAIN - low 5	SLOOP
SURF CITY-Ab	NICE
SURFIN USA-E	
SURFER GIRL-root	PRETTY WOMAN-A 5T
FARMER'S	SAW HER STANDING-E
GETCHA BACK	DANCING IN STREETS-D
DARLINS	ROCK ROLL-3rd
FOOLS - 1st	SUMMER BLUES-E
GRONK-1st-root	USSR-A
BE TRUE	
	RHONDA-ML
ROOM-2 nd entrance	KOKOMO-root 6 th JF
DON'T WORRY-41 1	WIBES-root 6 th JF
DEUCE COUPE-3	
499-root	BARBARA ANN
SHUT DOWN	JACK FLASH
GET AROUND	FUN FUN FUN-Eb

2017: Honoring Class of '21, 1971's "Mentee Class"

This logo celebrates the special relationship and initiatives of the Class of 1971 as the "Mentor Class" to the Class of 2021. The 71/21 logo was designed by Amy Hepler h71.



We never liked the appellation "grandparent class," that many other classes adopt. After all, my only child is in the Class of 2021 and (except in the movie *Chinatown*) it is unnatural for someone to be both a parent and grandparent. Instead, Podie and her ExComm decided to call ourselves the "Mentor Class," since that's really the role we tried to fill.

On the banner we created for the "Pre-Rade" (another thing that's new since our college days; it is held before the first week of classes to celebrate the next "Great Class" to Princeton. The legend is: "*Mentoring — The Link Between Classes.*" No other class personalized the day like 1971 did: with the logo, banners, hosting a class luncheon afterwards, meeting with class leaders in a lounge that had been a Commons dining rooms in our days (shown), and taking Class leaders to dinner at the Alchemist & Barrister. The Class of 1971 gave every member of the class a custom black water bottle to mark the special relationship, across generations.





2021 Fiftieth Reunion turns virtual: “The WILD Life Class”

In the year and a half running up to what would have been our 50th, a cadre of Classmates took on the planning, including securing a commitment from *Jimmy Buffett & The Coral Reefer Band* to play Reunions. This would be ‘71’s 6th Big Act, and was intended as a swan song for the *Save the WILD Life Fund*. We met with the Alumni Council Reunions heads to make sure that the Big Acts we wanted would comply with the newly issued 2019 “*Reunions Entertainment Policy*.”

This is the logo that Jack and Ronnie developed for our Fiftieth. In my view is the best. It says it all. As we headed into the 50th (before Covid), Podie’s ExComm decided that this brand was all 1971 would ever need. To me, it represents the best branding of any Class in Princeton history.

The WILDLIFE Class

Instead, in early March 2021, the University pulled the plug on classic, in-person Reunions on Campus. As President Podie Lynch told an emergency Executive Committee meeting days after, *“Let’s face: We’re only going to get one 50th. Even though it must be virtual, let’s make this the best one we can. Pull out all the stops!”*

Before falling into line, however, when our 50th was canceled, a small group of classmates held our own rogue, unapproved P-rade along the usual route on what would have been that Reunions Saturday in May 2021. If nothing else, this showed the real “wildlife” spirit.



Still, getting back “in line” and going along with the program, we pivoted and spent hundreds of hours planning, scripting and then putting on the best virtual reunion we could imagine. Credit goes to so many! With no registration fees (and thus no Reunions resources), SWLF filled the financial void and paid for tens of thousands of dollars in extras that 1971 otherwise could not have afforded. (Secretly, Podie soon gave Stu permission to plan an in-person “*Fall Retreat*” when Alums were allowed back on Campus.)

Overcoming significant logistics issues, somehow we managed to get 1971’s California custom-designed Reyn Spooner 50th Reunion Flower shirts, loomed in Japan, to everyone who ordered one in time for Reunions. The shirts were a huge hit, more so because for many this was the one tangible manifestation of the marking of this major life event. The quality of this planning and these events won 1971 The Clancy Award, the most prestigious award of the Alumni Council, given each year to “*The Best Planned and Executed Major Reunion*”



Accepting the Clancy Award, the 50th co-producers: Alan Usas, Stu, Ronnie & Jack Hittson and Podie Lynch

The Fall Retreat, October 2021

Soon after the virtual 50th ended (and ExComm recovered from its efforts), Podie unveiled the outcome of my “*skunk works*” secret planning, and announced 1971’s first-ever “*Fall Retreat*”

to be held during the students Fall Break in October 2021. Since Campus facilities would be closed, we arranged for an eating club to be the base camp, or “*WILD Life Sanctuary*.” This was a *win-win*, since all eating clubs were suffering from the elimination of all revenue, while operating costs (personnel, taxes, and upkeep, etc.) largely continued. We also used contacts to invite college representatives to speak and give tours. We planned lectures, fine dining, hired a Student Crew (rugby players; TI members), and even had a truncated *P-Rade* with a marching band, and an appearance of the *TigerLilies* (founded exactly 50 years earlier) at Nassau Hall.



1971's P-Rade down Prospect Avenue, through 1879 Arch and to Nassau Hall

The *Director of Firestone Library* gave two separate tours of spaces that had been renovated or built since we went to college. The *Director of the Art Museum* gave us a private virtual tour of the construction site for the controversial, greatly expanded museum, which would overwhelm the historic upper Campus. The *VP of Facilities* led a tour of an unoccupied Nassau Hall.

Our Pulitzer Prize-winning Classmate, *A. Scott Berg '71 h02*, gave a talk before a packed dining hall on how he wrote his groundbreaking biographies of *Woodrow Wilson 1879*, *Charles Lindbergh*, and *Maxwell Perkins*. While researching Lindbergh's vast archives in New Haven, he said, Scott visited *Kathryn Hepburn* at her nearby home one day, and she invited him to stay there each weekend until his work was finished. This resulted *Kate Remembered*, which Scott published within days of her death at 75, and it quickly became a best-seller.



Henry Barkhorn organized a video playlist with “*the music of our lives.*” *Rick Ostrow* -- the first sports reporter for USA TODAY -- interviewed Classmates deeply involved in sports: *Dale Neuburger*, a longtime member of the Olympic swimming events on what was being planned for Paris; Dale revealed a plan to clean the Seine, so swimming events could be held in it! *Laird Hayes* served 23 years as a side judge in the NFL and worked three Super Bowls; he explained the key to making the big calls correctly. We held a Class Memorial Service in the Chapel (*Mark Swanson* played the Chapel organ; *Kenny Grayson h71* and *Kathy Maloney* led the choir).

We then took a belated Class 50th Reunion Photo, with all of us in our custom Spooner shirts and some with Class Blazers (the pale orange Spooner shirts are worn by our student Crew):



The quality of the event won 1971 both the *Class of 1926 Trophy*, and the *Class of 1898 Trophy*, for the largest percentage of classmates and the highest number of classmates attending an event on Campus between Reunions.

2022: The “50th Reunion ... continued”

At Reunions 2022, the Alumni Council said ours was *“without doubt the largest 51st Reunion in history.”* With Reunions Chair Jeff Hammond’s support, SWLF lined up one more Big Act, *Pat Benatar*, only to find that there was no Major Reunion Class willing to share their tent and stage with us, even if we paid for the show! The 122 Classmates who attended still had a wonderful time, catching up and thinking of all those we’d lost in the six years since our last full gathering. Here is the lapel button given to those Classmates who attended the Fall Retreat:



2026 Fifty-Fifth Reunion: “Sustaining the WILD Life”

For our upcoming 55th Reunion, our theme has a two-fold meaning, explains *Bill Armiger '71*, who led the logo planning this time around: First, to sustain the “WILD Life” our Class has embodied over the decades. And second, to sustain the world’s wildlife for future generations.



These logos again were designed by *Amy Hepler h'71* and feature the jaunty '71 Tiger, who first appeared for our 20th. The brand continues!

In 2026, 1971 again will have top-notch entertainment, though not of Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame caliber. Our Scully HQ site is just too small to house such an act, and once again no other class would partner with 1971 by “*sharing their stage*” with *The WILD Life Class*, even if we picked up part of the tab, and provided all the Big Act contracting and production know-how.

Instead, SWLF agreed to pay all entertainment costs, what otherwise would be several hundred dollars per registrant, so more of us can attend our first classic, in-person Major Reunion in ten years. At this point, it looks like 1971 will set its 8th Reunions attendance record as a result! In 2026, SWLF presents *Dancing Dream*, a premier ABBA tribute band which rocked both younger (the 5th in 2022) and more “experienced” classes (the 40th in 2025) at Reunions recently in shows I witnessed with friends (Thursday 8:30 p.m.) The band even agreed to sing a special ABBA song to mark all those who can no longer join us at Reunions. Our regular “house band,” the *Liquid Pleasure Supershow* will again join us from Research Triangle, NC; they have played for 1971 at every Major since our 20th and have yet to take their first break (Friday 8:30 p.m.)! In honor of *Jimmy Buffet* who passed during the pandemic, SWLF will present “*Gary Roland and The Landsharks*,” the first house band that Jimmy hired for his first Margaritaville Resort (Saturday no later than 6 p.m.). Be there or Be Square!





After thoughtful consideration, SWLF plans to sunset after the curtain comes down on our 55th Reunion. Remaining SWLF funds, if any, will transfer to 1971's Reunions account to assist Classmates who can still attend future Reunions. It will post an update on the Class website in due course, though it has been a been a wonderful run... Thanks to all for your never-wavering psychic and financial support, as without those all this would have been impossible.



Hope to see you in Princeton! Roaringly...



Stu waiting to join his daughter's class for a second walk in the P-Rade, Reunions 2025 (note the gloves; it was cold!)



Finis