



JOSIAH H. WELCH

"Spirit of '51" Award

Joe, it was Henry Thoreau, who, after spending a day observing a Concord neighbor's field, came away thinking that until then he had never realized how much was going on there. Though you share with Thoreau a long Massachusetts heritage, you are no mere observer of your local scene; indeed, you are what is going on in Newburyport, and you have been ever since you returned there to settle into the independent insurance business after college and a stint in the army.

The complete list of your business, civic, and academic contributions is far too long to recite here, but the following will provide some idea of the generosity you have bestowed on the community of your birth: You are or have been the president, trustee, director, or chairman of your local hospital, bank, chamber of commerce, Rotary Club, city library, home for the aged, foundations for schools and social services, and Maritime Society; furthermore, you have filled or are filling similar positions for a commercial insurance company, for the Independent Insurance Agents of Massachusetts, and for Governor Dummer Academy. For such contributions you have been recognized by the insurance industry as its Best Independent Agent, by your Rotary Club as its Man of the Year, and by your prep school as its Most Distinguished Alumnus. Together with your wife, Donna, who has recently been honored with Newburyport's Distinguished Service Award, you are models of the maxim that in looking for someone to do a job for the community, find a busy person. Now that you have retired from 37 years of boosting 60-fold the fortunes of the Chase and Lunt Insurance Agency, perhaps you and Donna will have even more time to devote to your community.

It was not always thus, however, for at Dartmouth, Joe, you were a racketeer — which is to say that you excelled in tennis, squash, and Kappa Sig ping-pong. Rumor has it your competitiveness was so intense in those fraternity house matches that you once injured your leg and had to be taken to Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital. We also have heard that a certain libation treatment has, over the years, proven to be a sovereign cure for a locked-up knee.

Be that as it may, you came to Dartmouth from Governor Dummer along with several others in 1947; you chose a major in psychology, in which you excelled, and played tennis so well that in our senior year you became our varsity tennis captain. Dartmouth has long been an important part of your life as it was nurtured by your father, class of '20, and your brother, class of '45. Today your daughter, Amy, class of '87, carries on the Welch tradition. For years your New England autumns have been structured around the Dartmouth football schedule. Your foresight in this regard is legendary, as you have never failed to have your room at the Hanover Inn, while the rest of us are languishing at the Sunset or Chieftain motels.

Your devotion to Dartmouth does not end with football, of course, for you have served the College as a long-time member of the North Shore Dartmouth Club, through which you have often interviewed prospective students of the College. In addition, you have been a tireless fund raiser for the College for many years as a class agent, a fraternity agent, and as a Special Gifts agent. And just last May, at Class Officers Weekend, you were named Class President of the Year from among the many alumni classes.

We marvel that a man with so many affiliations — community, business, school, college — can exemplify independence as you do; and yet in the very core of your being, Joe, is a commitment to help others keep their independence: As an insurance agent, you have sought the best protection for the clients; as a bank trustee, you have sought to avoid merging with larger non-local entities; as a fund raiser for various institutions, you have sought to maintain their financial independence.

Your ability to work both for and with others has served your College class well, too; for during your several years on our executive committee and as our class president since 1991, we have been the beneficiaries of your gracious leadership, your never-failing wit, your ready smile, and your mellifluous Yankee accent. Our class has been truly blessed by a succession of officers such as you, men whose loyalties urge them on to further commitments in their already busy lives, men who lead by the quiet example of their devotion to the enduring principles by which they live.

And so, once again, and, as always, with our deepest gratitude, we classmates honor one of our own who has served us, his community, and his college so well: To you, Joe Welch, we present the 1996 Spirit of '51 Award.