



JOHN JACKSON SUTTON JR. “SPIRIT OF '51” AWARD

Jack, looking back on your psychology major studies here on the Hanover Plain 50 years ago, one wonders who was teaching whom. From the day you first set foot on the Dartmouth Green — and fell in love with the place — you stood out for your extraordinary ability to ingratiate yourself to everyone with easy-going conversation and sincere friendliness. You were an excellent pitcher on a struggling Big Green baseball team; your unique physique earned you the nickname “Moon” — but your exceptional popularity stemmed more from personality than from your earned-run average.

Indeed, you'd soon need all the blarney you could muster, as Army counterintelligence sent you to do background checks in the North Carolina moonshine country, where the arrival of a stranger in a government car made the good ole boys apt to draw shooting irons first and ask questions later. Those close shaves were worth it though, for your time in Tarheelia brought a blind date with a pretty teacher named Betty Belk Pratt. Your subsequent nuptials in her hometown (Union Mills, NC) are wryly remembered by your groomsmen as “a dry wedding in a dry church in a dry town,” but your exemplary marriage has flourished for 46 years, with children — Jack III, Betsy and Jim — to be proud of.

In civilian life, you went back to the North Carolina hills as a prime executive trainee for Lowes Companies Inc. That apparent golden opportunity soured when warehouse theft led Lowes to require all hands to take a lie detector test. Highly insulted, you took it, passed it and promptly resigned. Then you made lemonade out of the lemons, establishing your own one-man company as a manufacturer's rep, and eventually turning the fast-growing Lowes empire into one of your best customers. That was a gutsy move — your first year's net was a princely \$150. But Betty held things together with her teacher's salary and keen money management. And you became a super salesman, marketing untold carload quantities of lawnmowers and garden supplies to retailers across three states. Ultimately, John J. Sutton and Co. — yourself, two other salesmen, a part-time secretary, a telephone and a fax machine — had an annual revenue of \$20 million! You moved the family down to Winston Salem, became a pillar in the First Presbyterian Church (Sunday school class president and a deacon) and honed your crack golf game to become Forsyth Country Club champion.

Through all the years, the other great focus of your rich and full life has been your profound love of Dartmouth and your unceasing service to the College. Betty can't remember the name of the movie on your first date, but she clearly recalls your bragging that the film's producer had gone to Dartmouth. You've missed only one of our ten formal class reunions and, no matter how poor the team, wild horses couldn't keep you away from our annual football weekend. You've raised money for Dartmouth — Alumni Fund, Capital Campaign — without a break for at least the past 40 years, and chaired the 30th reunion gift drive. Having sold your business, you poured all your dynamic salesmanship into being 51's head agent for the past five years, bringing the Dartmouth College Fund a total of \$2.1 million — including \$1.3 million of our fantastic \$6.4 million 50th reunion gift. Now, as our class vice president, you're the same old friendly “Moon,” the straight arrow guy who refuses to take himself very seriously. And so, Jack, for your admirable career and family life, your unfailing goodwill to your fellow men and your undying devotion to Dartmouth, it is our honor and privilege to present to you the 2001 “Spirit of '51” Award.