

## *Now and Then*

### *Penn football and me*

By Deborah Schmidt Creeden, CW'72



Penn football and I go way back. I grew up in Swarthmore, Pa. My father worked at the University of Pennsylvania, so, as long as I can remember, it has been the Red and the Blue. My father, Rudy Schmidt, was one of the team doctors for Penn Football for 25 years at least. Weekends were always the Swarthmore games in the morning and Penn football games in the afternoon. I knew the words to *Drink a Highball* way before I knew what a highball was.

We always brought the football programs home and I perused the pictures of all the players, memorizing names. We traveled to away games and we knew so well that if someone got injured Dad would be worried and busy that weekend. His love for Penn football swept through the family. There were Penn pennants in our bedrooms and I remember his complete joy when Penn won their first Ivy League Championship in 1959, when I was 9.

My brother, Terry, suffered a serious injury in 1966 when he was 13. He was hospitalized at Penn. To his great excitement and the family's gratitude, a signed football was brought to him by Bill Creeden, Penn's quarterback at the time. That football remained in his bedroom and we took great care of it and made sure we learned the names of the players who had signed it.

Fast forward to my college experience: I transferred to Penn as a junior and joined the Class of 1972. Fortunately, I knew the campus well and I knew the football songs, so I hoped I was all set. I joined the field hockey team and had the opportunity to play games on Franklin Field turf. What an honor for me – this venerable place that held so many memories and here I was. However, I decided field hockey was

meant for grass, not turf fields. Studies took over as well as two jobs, so I didn't have time to meet many new friends, but I know many of the names of fellow classmates.

Senior year found me working in the Franklin Field Athletic Office. Lucky me. One day I walked Bill Creeden, former Penn QB, Wh'68, GEd'72, who was back at Penn in graduate school. I knew instantly who he was from memorizing the pictures and the football in my brother's room. It was September 26, 1971. We were engaged that Thanksgiving, after he proposed on Franklin Field, and we were married the following June. My parents, especially my father, were thrilled. Dad had taken care of Bill and many of his team members, some of whom are still lifelong friends. Needless to say, our wedding was a Penn football party.

Fortunately, Bill and I celebrated 50 years together last year and our ties to Penn remain strong. Unfortunately, we lost my dad, Rudy Schmidt, in 2011. After over 25 years with Penn, he thanked the Penn Football program by saying "thank you for letting me ride on the bus with you".

So, classmates, although you may not know me, I know many of your names, and Phil, Jamie, Don, Dennis and Pete I watched you play and enjoyed all you brought to the game. I missed out on getting to know many of my classmates, but I remain a loyal and proud member of the Class of 1972.

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