

## REMINISCENCES ABOUT HAROLD EDWARDS '33

By Selden Edwards '63

*My father, Harold Edwards, (Hal to his classmates) suffered a stroke four years ago and has been house-bound in a bed and wheelchair ever since. His mental faculties are sharp, and he now lives in memories, visits from his old friends, his children and grandchildren. When Curly Marsh approached him to write a piece about his life for the 1933 Summer Newsletter, he asked me if I'd take on the project, and I agreed willingly.*

Hal grew up in Dedham, Massachusetts, across the Charles River from Noble and Greenough School, but in many ways he was also a westerner. His grandfather, Samuel Edwards, immigrated from Wales to farm country in Ventura County, California in the 1850's, and his father, Harold Sr., was born in Santa Barbara in the 1880's. After a boyhood in California which included running the family farm at the age of sixteen, Harold Sr. went east to Phillips Academy Andover and Princeton, graduating in 1906. A family connection in the wool business drew him to Boston where Hal was born and raised. In 1923 Hal enrolled in Thacher School, in the beautiful Ojai Valley in California, where he spent four years that greatly influenced his values and the course of his life. He graduated in 1927.

For Hal, becoming a member of Princeton '33 was no simple or easy feat. Wanting to follow in his father's footsteps, Hal first took a post-graduate year at Andover, graduating in 1928 and joining the Princeton Class of 1932. But in his freshman year a fall from a climbing wall during the freshman fitness exam dislocated his elbow and set back his health. He dropped out to travel through Europe, Greece and Egypt. In the fall of 1929, he became a freshman again at Princeton forming his affectionate bond with the Class of 1933.

At Princeton Hal was an enthusiast for history and cross country running. During a nasty spill on the Palmer Stadium track, he picked up a proud badge of honor - cinder marks on his knees - which he still shows off today. But in the winter of 1932, midway through junior year, he left college and joined the family farming business in Ventura County. His younger brother, Bill, followed him to Princeton, graduating in 1936. After serving as an American Field Service ambulance driver in World War II, Bill Edwards returned to Princeton where he became Director of Admissions from 1948 until 1963.

In 1936, Hal married Margaret Spaulding in Santa Barbara,



*Hal with his indomitable spirit, and grandchildren - Thanksgiving 1992.*

and in 1939, they moved to Marysville, a small farming town in the Sacramento Valley, where he took over the management of La Finca Orchards Company, a family-owned 800 acre prune, almond, walnut and fig ranch on the Feather River. La Finca was an idyllic spot, like a medieval fief, with its own resident work force - "the men" as Hal called them - its inner compound of barns and corrals, and a beautiful spacious "bottomland" by the river. Hal managed the property until 1972, when it was sold and he retired. (*Ed: In the '91 Summer Newsletter, Ralph Bard tells of moving to southern California in 1937 to manage a division of Samuel Edwards Associates. The Edwards and Bard families were close friends.*)

Farming was Hal's profession, and it provided him with a wonderful life, though a little unusual for a Princetonian. With his characteristic khaki shirt and pants and felt hat, he believed in walking the land. He oversaw the operation that involved harvesting and processing the fruits, nuts and row crops. Being a member of professional cooperatives such as Sunsweet Prunes, Diamond Walnuts and Blue Diamond Almonds, all California originals, provided a chance for much travel and many board meetings.

It was on this ranch that he raised his four children. Because of his deep affection for Thacher and Princeton, Hal and Margaret put education first, sending their children to the local public schools, and then to boarding school. Their son Sam graduated from Harvard in 1960, sons Blair and Selden from Princeton in 1961 and 1963, and Hannah from Smith College in 1969.

## GLIMPSES OF CLASSMATES

Wishing to live a life of service, Hal was extremely active in his community. A long-time leader of the local school board, he also was deeply involved with Boy Scouts, the Rotary Club (where he became famous as a song leader), the United Way and the American Cancer Society.

After the nest emptied, he and Margaret traveled every year to Europe and Greece, and every summer they spent time at the family cabin at Lake Tahoe. This spot was a favorite rendezvous where with children and grandchildren, they would hike the back country. Sometimes Hal and Margaret would go in by horseback to a special remote place called Diamond Crossing, with the children and their children hiking in. He was an intrepid camper, at home in the woods. He loved flyfishing and taught his children, and grandchildren in turn, the joys of this wonderful sport. His annual climb 3000 feet to the top of Rubicon Peak above Lake Tahoe became a Hal trademark and a legend.

Princeton has always been dear to Hal, and he has returned for each of his major reunions, until illness kept him from the 55th. Whenever he was at a Princeton gathering anywhere in the country, he usually ended up leading the singing of "Old Nassau". His many Princeton friendships continue to this day, the closest being George Constable. Through George, Hal also kept close to Baltimore classmates Walter Buck, Ben Griswold, Harry Garrett, Jim Whedbee and Fife Symington, among others.

At 33's 50th reunion in 1983, President Bill Bowen invited Hal and a collection of grandchildren to his office and read

them a letter that pointed out that although Hal had not graduated from Princeton he had lived an exemplary life. To this day Hal calls that letter "my diploma". Also at his 50th Hal was asked to lead the singing of "Old Nassau" at the end of the P-rade, an unforgettable honor for an inveterate leader of songs.

Of course, his greatest test has come with his stroke. Shortly before his 55th Reunion, a virus of some sort threw his heart out of rhythm, which put him in intensive care. The arrhythmia, which finally cured itself, caused clotting problems, which eventually caused the stroke and paralysis of his left side. Hal, renowned for his enthusiasm and vigor, was determined to remain cheerful in the face of the new challenge. And Margaret's work was immediately cut out for her, as they were both determined to keep up the life in their lovely country home. He entertains himself now with visits from children and grandchildren, recordings of old musicals, the books read to him by Margaret, and a lifetime of rich memories.

Many of those memories are his happy associations with Princeton and the Class of 1933.

*Editors: Both George Constable and Walter Buck are in frequent contact with Hal by phone and letter. They confirm his cheerfulness and determination to carry on with a happy spirit. We're sure that a visit from any traveling classmate would be a big shot in the arm for Hal.*



*Cox Ficke; Stroke Lafean; No. 3 David Bivins (Lafean's grandson); No. 2 Meigs, Bow (!) Paul Campbell.*