Arriving at Proctor as a timid, fourteen year old from Akron, Ohio, Allan Johnson ’78 gained a deep appreciation for the community that welcomed him, a community that has remained an integral part of his life more than forty years later. While the Proctor of the mid-1970s looked vastly different than the Proctor of today, the lessons in independence, self-exploration, and fearless problem solving Allan learned continue to define the adolescent experiences of Proctor students today.

After a recent alumni event he hosted in Ohio, Allan shared with Proctor’s Associate Director of Development Bonny Morris P’06, ’17 his commitment to include Proctor in his estate, joining more than 50 other alumni, parents of alumni and friends of Proctor in The James L. Dunbar ’49 Legacy Society. “During my four years at Proctor, I grew from a small, shy midwestern boy to an outgoing and self-assured adult. This did not happen by accident. Proctor gave me the chance to evolve into the individual I am today, and my hope is that my inclusion of Proctor in my estate will open a door to the transformation I experienced at Proctor for a new generation of students.”

Traveling from the midwest to rural New Hampshire in the fall of 1974, Allan took a leap of faith choosing to spend his high school years at Proctor. During an era with no cell phones, Facetime, texting, or emails, Allan remembers the only communication he had with his family coming in the form of weekly letters. “At 14 years old, my aunt drove me down to campus from South Conway, NH and I was on my own. I had to budget my money, clean my room, and buy my own plane ticket home for vacations. I so clearly remember writing a check my parents had given me for $119 for my flight when I got to the airport. Autonomy and independence were ingrained in me from an early age. I simply had to figure it out.”

Those lessons in independence spanned the entirety of his Proctor experience. Whether it was ending a day skiing at Ragged Mountain with a final run down the backside of the mountain onto campus, playing 3rds soccer for the pure joy of the sport, serving as dorm leader in Smith House his senior year, or walking to Suzie Norris’ house for Latin extra help during evening study hall, Allan came to understand the value in living and learning in a small, tight-knit community where teachers trusted students, and students, in turn, made the most of their Proctor experience. “From the moment I took those first nervous steps into the cold, foggy woods of the White Mountains on Wilderness Orientation with Ken Colburn and Tim Norris as my leaders, I realized teachers at Proctor would offer ceaseless support to their students. It made me want to invest in being a part of the school, and this was such a valuable lesson for me. Had I gone to large public school like my friends in Ohio, I would have never had the sense of place and belonging that I did at Proctor.”

Following his graduation from Proctor in 1978, Allan matriculated to Hillsdale College in Michigan, intentionally choosing to replicate the small school experience after his growth at Proctor. After a short stint working on the Chicago Board of Trade options floor for Merrill Lynch, he returned to his hometown of Akron to start his own travel agency. Those long, solo flights between Akron and New Hampshire in his youth instilled a passion for travel, and Allan recognized he could share his love for new places with others. For the next thirty years, Allan ran a successful travel agency “Running your own business is always full of unforeseen issues, especially in the travel industry, and the lessons I learned in my early years at Proctor, to work through obstacles and never be afraid of challenges, served me well in my career.”

While he spent much of his adult life traveling the world and has called Akron home for all but a handful of years, the sense of place Allan developed at Proctor never left him. Photos of the campus today elicit fond memories of his time in Andover, but Allan acknowledges it is the relationships he developed at Proctor, relationships that sustain to this day that led him to commit a portion of his estate to the school. “It’s the people who make the school special; the students, the faculty, the staff. Even though there is not a single employee from my era that still works there, my commitment to Proctor has never been stronger. It’s our responsibility as alumni to ensure future generations of Proctor students are able to enjoy the same type of experiences we had as students. For this reason, I encourage you to consider a similar estate gift as I’ve made as a way of sustaining Proctor into the future.”

Please feel free to contact me!

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Allan Johnson ’78
Creating a Legacy for the School I Love

Allan and his wife, Sally.