

TABLE TALK WITH DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING

WAYNE LOOSIGIAN '41, '51 (HON.); P'99, P'01, P'05 | by Bill Ewing

Wayne Loosigian is equal parts gregarious good neighbor and straight-shooting businessman. As director of the Academy's Annual Giving Fund for the past 17 years, Loosigian has put these traits to good use, building a volunteer-based program that is known as much for its friendliness as for its high-end performance. During that time, Loosigian and his staff have consistently broken secondary school fund-raising records (in 2002, Exeter became the first school to raise over \$5 million in annual gifts) and they are regularly recognized by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) for running a model program. This past fiscal year, Loosigian helped the Annual Fund achieve perhaps its most impressive milestone to date: 20 consecutive years of 50 percent alumni/ae participation or higher and over 80 percent participation from current parents.

So how does he do it? Loosigian says the key to this extraordinary success is relationship building, Exonian to Exonian. By empowering upwards of 1,200 alumni/ae and parent volunteers to connect with one another—and thereby the Academy and its current doings—Loosigian helps maintain a program that is more about people than it is about money. Which seems fitting somehow, since the bulk of the annual fund is used to support student financial aid and faculty and staff salaries. And while many peer institutions are moving away from the volunteer-based fund-raising model because it's so time consuming to maintain, the results at Exeter speak for themselves.

"Once an alumnus, always an alumnus," says Loosigian. "I won't always be here, but George Bain '69 will never lose his connection to the Academy, nor will his dad, Joe '41. They're just two wonderful examples of the dedicated volunteers we work with every day. Our job in annual giving is to make sure they are successful building relationships with their classmates. The staff also builds relationships, but never at the expense of George and Joe."

Finding and cultivating the *right* volunteers is also essential to the process. "These days, people are running faster and jumping higher; they're incredibly busy," explains Loosigian. "But people still raise their hands to volunteer, even when they don't have the time, simply because they love Exeter and feel strongly about the education we provide."

It's at this stage that Loosigian puts on his businessman hat and does a serious time-availability assessment. "If you're a potential volunteer, I'm going to give you a job descrip-

tion and a timetable. I'm going to provide support and do everything I can to make you as successful as possible, but it's definitely a two-way street. You need to be able to devote the necessary time to make things happen." Letting the potential volunteer know up front that it's OK to say "no" to Exeter is also part of the preliminary discussion, an assurance that is sometimes met with a huge sigh of relief.

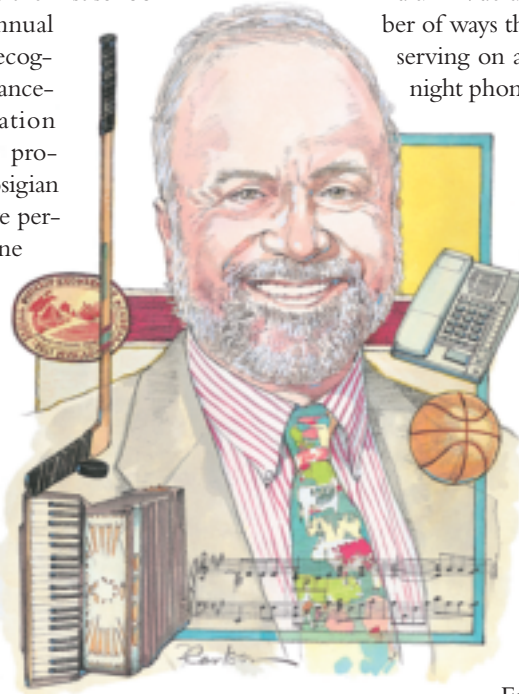
If alumni/ae do indeed have the time, there are a number of ways they can get involved, be it as class agents, serving on a reunion committee or working a one-night phonathon. One character trait Loosigian says is shared by almost all volunteers is a certain dogged persistence. "The difference between so-so volunteers and great volunteers is that great volunteers don't quit," says Loosigian. "Even though they've tried to reach you five times, they'll still pick up the phone that sixth time."

Loosigian also shares this unflagging will to succeed, something he attributes to an influential month-long Outward Bound program he attended after his junior year at Andover High School in Andover, MA. "The Outward Bound motto was 'To serve, to strive and not to yield,' which reflects how I look at the world to this day," he says.

From his native Andover—where his father ran a vegetable farm and one of his schoolmates was "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno (with whom he still keeps in touch and visits whenever in L.A.)—Loosigian went on to graduate with a degree in history from Bates College. He began his professional career in the admissions office at Bradford College in Bradford, MA, before returning to his alma mater to work on the Bates annual fund. He subsequently held fund-raising positions at Maine Public Television and the Waynflete School in Portland, ME, before arriving at Exeter in 1987.

At Exeter, Loosigian is a well-known man about campus. He is a familiar face at the gymnasium, where he and an ad hoc group of employees and alumni/ae known as the "Lunch Bucket Crew" meet to play hockey or basketball every weekday. He is the father of three Exonians—Matthew '99, Megan '01 and Emma, a current senior—and lives in town with his wife, Laurie. A lover of music, Loosigian's whistling, singing and occasional accordion playing provide a steady soundtrack for Gilman House; he's also a member of a local church choir.

"When you're passionate about a place—and there isn't a part of my job I don't like—I think it shows," says Loosigian of his merry disposition. "Alumni/ae know how I feel about the Academy; it's a passion that we share."



FRED CARLSON