

Dan Abramowicz: Hello, Arlene.

Arlene Pedovitch: Hello. Nice to meet you.

Dan Abramowicz: Nice to meet you as well. Thank you so much for making the time today to talk with me about your experiences as a Marshal and a Grand Marshal.

Arlene Pedovitch: My pleasure.

Dan Abramowicz: Great. Let's begin. I'll start by just introducing myself. I'm Dan Abramowicz, the Graduate School Class of 1984 (*84) and I was a chemistry graduate student. Some of the things I've been most involved with at Princeton since my time there has been, well, certainly the Marshals, and I've been a Marshal for many years. I was also very involved in the APGA, the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni, working on their Board and I became President of that group for a while. And now I'm working on the Princetoniana Committee, and I'm now working on this project on the history of the Marshals. And thank you again for taking the time to do this. Would you please now briefly introduce yourself for the audience?

Arlene Pedovitch: Certainly. I'm Arlene Pedovitch, Class of '80. I do all Princeton all the time. I became a member of my 1980 Class Executive Committee. We were then, and I think still now, one of the few classes that instead of just having a simplified officer structure, set up a large Executive Committee. And so I was a member of that organization from graduation until today, even though the intent was meant for five years. Then a couple of years into that role, I became Class Secretary. I was not an existing Class Officer, and one of the Class Officers who was supposed to become the Class Secretary was unavailable. I think she went overseas. And so I was asked to pitch in and become the Class Secretary for a period of time. Then she came back and assumed the Class Secretary role. And in a similar way, one of my classmates, who was slated to become the Reunions Chair for our 5th reunion, decided that he couldn't do the job about a year before the reunion. And so I volunteered to take that on. And I guess some of my classmates might say, "the rest was history".

Dan Abramowicz: It's amazing that you were willing to step "into the breach" and take on large, unexpected roles twice!

Arlene Pedovitch: Yes. So I ran a pretty successful reunion without really having any kind of knowledge or background for the role, like perhaps many of my classmates who were sons or daughters of alumni and therefore had a lot more experience with reunions. Then after that experience, I became Class President. I then I went back to being Reunion Chair for my 15th and I think my 20th reunion, I'm not certain. Then for our 25th reunion I was the Reunions Treasurer, which was a huge responsibility. And I've continued on over time as either Co-President or Co-Reunions Chair, up until this time. But now I think I'm getting ready to retire!

Dan Abramowicz: Wow! Thank you for that impressive summary. And like many of the Grand Marshals, you have been very active in the university in many ways. And I just wanted to thank you for your service to both the university and to the alumni body, since you've been so involved in so many different ways over the years. Now, let's begin by talking a little bit more about your role as a Grand Marshal. What years were you in that role? Do you recall?

Arlene Pedovitch: Yes, I served as Grand Marshal for 7 years, from 1996 – 2002. And I also served on the Alumni Council Executive Committee for two years as an elected Class President. Then I served on the Alumni Council Committee on Reunions for two years, and then served as Chairman of the Alumni Committee on Reunions. And, at the point in time when I was asked to be Grand Marshal of the P-rade, I had never served as a Marshal. I'd clearly been very involved as a Reunion Chair, but I hadn't been involved as a Marshal. And to be perfectly frank, I think at that point in time, the University wanted to make a statement and have a woman become Grand Marshal of the P-rade. And I guess I was an obvious candidate, given the fact that I think I was very well known throughout the Alumni Council and the University body as someone who had provided a lot of service to the University over time, from the reunion's perspective, and therefore really understood reunions. Obviously, no one ever said that to me that they were looking for a woman, but I think that may have factored into their thinking. And I was, so to speak, an obvious suspect.

Dan Abramowicz: And I have noticed that during this period in time, Grand Marshals were selected after serving time as Chair of the Committee on Reunions. That seemed to be one of the factors used to select an individual as a Grand Marshal. And it seems like that may have played a role in your case. I'm curious, what was it like being the first female Grand Marshal? Was there anything unusual, or no real difference at all, from your perspective?

Arlene Pedovitch: No, not really. I mean, from my perspective, I believe it played a role in why I was selected. And there was a little bit of a learning experience, from the Marshal perspective, as I had never been a Marshal. But as Chairman of the Committee on Reunions, I had already spent a few years marching at the head of the P-rade. So, I understood what was involved being at the leading edge of the P-rade, as opposed to being 'one of the many' in the back. You will recall that I sent you a picture of me standing on the podium next to the Shapiros.

Dan Abramowicz: Yes.

Arlene Pedovitch: I had spent many years standing on the podium, in the role as Chairman of the Committee on Reunions, and then again as the P-rade Grand Marshal. And so I really was much more familiar with the A to Z processes than I would say the average alum, for sure.

Dan Abramowicz: Right, absolutely! And I think that says something very positive about Princeton, that it really wasn't very different for you in terms of you being a Grand Marshal, as in this case being the first female. I think that says something

good about the University and its progressive nature. Thank you for that summary and perspective.

Arlene Pedovitch: One other thing I would like to add, that isn't usually discussed, but I'm reasonably sure I was the first and probably still the only Jewish alum who served in that role. And I think that was also meaningful to my many Jewish classmates, as well as the large number of friends in surrounding classes, from the years at Stevenson Hall.

Dan Abramowicz: Very good. And as you know, I had an association with Stevenson Hall as an Assistant Master there for a couple of years. I was working with Ken Deffeyes, a professor in the geology department, who was the Master of Stevenson Hall at that time. That was a great, great experience. But I don't want to take us on too much of a tangent. With that in mind, could you please share your thoughts on the role of the Grand Marshal, from your perspective.

Arlene Pedovitch: I think as an alum, even before I was involved in it, you probably think you just show up at the P-rade and everything just kind of works. But Dan, as you well know, there's quite a lot involved with getting everything ready for the P-rade, in spite the fact that I was often up, as most of us were, late at night on Friday nights with parties and friends, et cetera. During the years that I served as Grand Marshal, I would show up, as I seem to recall, at 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning to stand with the facilities people. Charlie Krank from the class of '74 was always just wonderful to work with when he was employed by the university. And we would check through the route of the P-rade and make sure everything was set up correctly. And I think that yes, eventually once it gets started, it works well, but there's a lot of work that goes into it to make sure that it does move as smoothly as possible through the route.

Dan Abramowicz: Well, no doubt, so much is involved! And in my discussions with the other Grand Marshals, it became even more obvious to me the amount of preparation and work that goes into pulling off this extravaganza, if I can use that term. Were there any changes in the P-rade itself during your tenure that you can recall, or anything like that you would like to mention?

Arlene Pedovitch: Yes, we did have a significant issue one year, and I don't remember which year it was. Basically, despite our best efforts, the area at the beginning of the route was just filled with alumni, as opposed to being on the side of the route. It became difficult in the early part of the P-rade to get through the route and as a result, we missed passing by several classes. The following year we added the role of Flanking Marshals, who essentially were positioned almost in front of the Grand Marshal to literally clear the route. I mean, it's surprising that it can it go wrong, given all the preparation. But it went wrong, and there was no one there to keep people off the path. Indeed, there were so many people in the way that almost couldn't see which way to go. So I think that was something that we changed. Also, I think it was during my years as a Grand Marshal, but I'm not certain, that we specifically reached out to every class and asked them to assign two people to become Marshals. I believe that happened during my

tenure. I think there was a point in time, when there was a core group of people who served as Marshals, but it became increasingly difficult to get alumni to serve as Marshals. And as you probably know, there are also staff members who serve as Marshals, which was not the case 30 years ago. It was hard to recruit as people actually give up a lot by serving as Marshals.

Dan Abramowicz: That's a great point. And it's something that another Grad Marshal emphasized, that you don't get to march with your class if you are serving as a Marshal. You are giving something up for the greater good of trying to manage or "marshal" this parade. Well, thank you for that. And yes, that was a clever idea to begin to get the classes to proactively bring names forward to serve as Marshals. As you think about the P-rade, are there any events that come to mind where the Marshals played a particularly important role in addressing an issue, or anything like that? I'm just curious.

Arlene Pedovitch: No, nothing that I recall. And I think that's the irony of leading from the front, that you don't see all the problems that are going on in the back. You can't problem solve from the front. It's just like with business, you are always hoping that you have all the right people in place to deal with the issues. I mean, certainly long after my time, in I think 2018, the year of the lightning strikes ...

Dan Abramowicz: Oh, yes. Yes.

Arlene Pedovitch: In that year, the P-rade was called off, but I'm sure glad I wasn't involved in having to make that decision.

Dan Abramowicz: I see your point; thank you for that excellent perspective on leadership. Now, if I could, perhaps ask you to think broadly about some of your fondest or strongest memories of the P-rade. Are there any particular things that come to mind? I saw that one year when you were a Grand Marshal, your daughter was with you, and she ends up going to Princeton and graduating, which is pretty exciting. But are there any particular memories of the P-rade that you'd like to share, or memories of being a Marshal?

Arlene Pedovitch: Well, I have two children. Especially because my children were young during my years as Marshal, I think they were very enthusiastic about the idea that their mother was doing this. That's true even though those years I served as Marshal, they couldn't march with me in the P-rade. They had to march instead with their father, who's also a member of the class of '80. And so I think that my kids were thrilled about it. I think all my friends and family were thrilled as well, those who only in the normal course of events would see the P-rade. Everyone was remarkably surprised about how heavy that cane is. It's not obvious from seeing the Grand Marshal march how very heavy that cane is. So that was something that we all learned that I'd say the average alum doesn't know. I was certainly thrilled to be able to be in that role for the honor that accrued to the class of '80.

Dan Abramowicz: Anything else?

Arlene Pedovitch: And it was really special through the years, getting to know the Shapiros very well by spending time standing with them for what could be three hours plus on the reviewing stand. And Vivian (Mrs. Shapiro) would always ask about my children every year, and was always eager to see them grow through the years.

Dan Abramowicz: That's wonderful, really wonderful. That story reminds me of the picture you provided with you on the reviewing stand holding the mace next to the Shapiros. I see you are wearing the 250th anniversary pin in that photograph. So that was a very special year, as you know. In fact, I was lucky enough to come back for the 250th celebration. Each department had symposia, and I was able to come back and speak at the Chemistry Department's 250th Symposium. It was quite an honor. Was there anything unique about that reunion that you can recall?

Arlene Pedovitch: Well, the pin that I was wearing, I believe, was something that was made by my class. All the classes were encouraged to do something to commemorate the 250th. It was not my class's major reunion during what I think were the two years that spanned the 250th celebration. So I believe that we made those pins, but again, I could be misremembering. Maybe the Alumni Council would know for certain.

Dan Abramowicz: I have the same pin, so I think it's use might have been broader. That's why I recognized it.

Arlene Pedovitch: Oh, I see.

Dan Abramowicz: But was there anything about the P-rade itself that you can remember, regarding that remarkable anniversary? I'm just curious if there was anything unique that happened.

Arlene Pedovitch: Well, I know that my class made a special banner with the 250th celebration. And we also made T-shirts, even though, as I said, it was not a major reunion. I think it was 1996 through 1998. Does that sound right?

Dan Abramowicz: Yes, that seems right to me.

Arlene Pedovitch: Yes, I think that's what it, '96 and '97. So obviously it wasn't a major reunion for me. But it was a big honor to be asked to be Grand Marshal of the P-rade in particular, because of the fact that it was our 250th celebration. So it really was an enormous honor, for me, my family, and the work that I had done up until then on behalf of the class and the university.

Dan Abramowicz: Yes, I agree. A great honor. Now is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you would like to share or mention?

Arlene Pedovitch: No. I would like to add that it's been gratifying to see that the university has continued to make efforts to acknowledge not only the work of people, for example, like my friend, Charlie Plohn, who's been involved as a Marshal for many years. And I mentioned to you that Charlie Rose succeeded me as Grand Marshal, and I do recall a wonderful photo, which I wasn't able to find, of me handing the mace to Charlie, sort of "passing the torch", so to speak. And so I think it's been wonderful to see that the university has acknowledged long serving Marshals like Charlie Plohn and Charlie Rose, and as well as understanding and recognizing the importance of having a diverse core of leaders for reunions. So I appreciate the fact that they recognize the diversity issues as well as recognizing people who served for many years in those roles.

Dan Abramowicz: Arlene, I think that's another great point, and I think it's something at which the university excels. They go out of their way to make sure alumni know they're appreciated for their efforts to help support the university community. I think that's a something that they do extremely well. And I think you're right to point it out.

Dan Abramowicz: If that's all, I'm going to thank you again for your time.

Arlene Pedovitch: Great. And Dan, I hope one of these days we can meet in person. It would be lovely to catch up about Stevenson Hall.

Dan Abramowicz: I agree. It was great to meet you and thank you again.