

## Chow-crowd Pleaser

IN 2001, just before the Boston Red Sox franchise sold for \$700 million, an investor group headed by Joe O'Donnell '67, M.B.A. '71, pulled out of the bidding when the previous ownership renewed the Fenway Park concession contract with Aramark a week before final bids were due. That firm competes with O'Donnell's Boston Concessions Group (BCG), which, as owners, had hoped to start selling hot dogs and beer at Fenway. Still, BCG feeds quite a few other fans, including those of the World Series champion Florida Marlins. O'Donnell founded and chairs BCG, a national food-service company whose 10,000 employees slake appetites at sporting and entertainment events, resorts, and conventions in 35 states. In the bleachers, they hawk peanuts; in the luxury skyboxes, they cater Beef Wellington. Says O'Donnell, laughing, "Everything from fine dining to swine dining."

To succeed, "You have to deal with a juxtaposition of extremes—high quality, very fast," he says. Matching food to the crowd is crucial. For example, BCG serves more than 24 ski areas where, besides hot dogs and hamburgers, "You need yogurt and salad—people are slightly more health-conscious." One client asked, "You'll be cooking to order, right?" O'Donnell smiles: "Try cooking for 7,500 people in two hours."

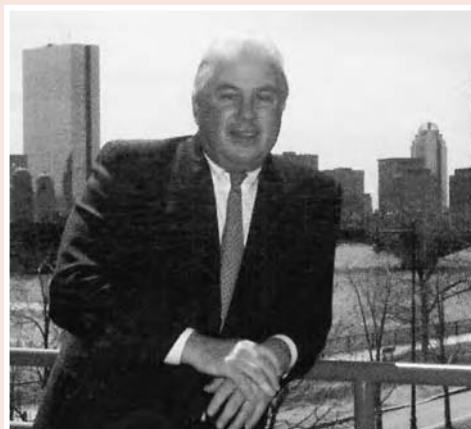
In sports, breaks in the action swell food and beverage revenue. With nine innings and a pause after every half-inning, a ballpark "is a concessionaire's dream—18 time-outs," he says. In contrast, soccer has one break, at halftime, and soccer fans aren't big eaters. Boxing "is tremendous. Beer and hot dogs after every round—you need to be fast." And score matters: a tight game that glues fans to their seats means less spent on food.

Turning to entertainment venues, O'Donnell says of feeding a symphony audience, "You might make two cents per person—it's all black coffee. But with Rodney Dangerfield, \$15 a person." Moviegoers also nosh with individuality. "At a porno film, the audience spends nothing, at a Disney film, more," he reports. "Action films are best—they draw the big eaters."

After graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy, O'Donnell played varsity football and captained the baseball team at Harvard. He taught public school in his hometown of Everett, Massachusetts, and coached the Crimson baseball team before earning his M.B.A.; he then remained at the Business School as associate dean of students from 1971 to 1976.

His career took a new tack when he met then-Boston Bruins president Paul Mooney, who had enrolled in the school's Program for Management Development and who also worked for Sportservice, a major food company. In 1977, O'Donnell went to work for Drive-In Concessions, a small division of Sportservice; he bought that division a year later and changed its name to Boston Concessions Group.

A Harvard Overseer, O'Donnell has served the University on various visiting committees and as a director of the Harvard Alumni Association. And his company sells food at Harvard football games, just as it does at many colleges around the nation. But Harvard Stadium Saturdays are a labor of love. During a football game at the University of Florida, whose field seats nearly 90,000, for example, concessions can rake in more than \$1 million. In contrast, O'Donnell says, Harvard Stadium is "the worst concession opportunity of all time." The trouble, he explains, stems from an old Ivy League tradition: "Tailgating." ~CRAIG LAMBERT



Joe O'Donnell knows a lot about feeding the public.

BOSTON CONCESSIONS GROUP

Lindsey-Kotouc, a daughter, Camille Skye Kotouc, on December 29, 2003. "Better late than never. A love never so precious."

### 1969

Secretary: **Andrew Rudnick**, 172 Rivermist, Buffalo, N.Y. 14202; arudnick@thepartnership.org. Class website: <http://classes.harvard.edu/college/1969>.

### 1970

Secretary: **Gerald S. Savitsky**, 7628 Wheatcroft Ct., Bethesda, Md. 20817; H1970secretary@post.harvard.edu. Class website: <http://classes.harvard.edu/college/1970>. The secretary continues to encourage classmates "to organize pre-thirty-fifth reunion events (coffee hours, pot-luck dinners, etc.) in your home area. Support with mailings will be provided. Please e-mail me at the address above."

**Rod Rovzar's** son Leigh '01 is an analyst at Walton Street Capital in Chicago, and Christopher (Yale '03) is a reporter with the *Daily News* in New York City.

### 1971

Secretary: **Rod Kessler**, 384 Harvard St., Cambridge 02138; rod.kessler@salemstate.edu. Class website: [www.h171.org](http://www.h171.org).

**Ben Beach** reports, "During the past three winters, **Joe Cavanagh** has had the pleasure of watching his son, Tom '05, play more than 100 games for Harvard's hockey team. Skating before a hometown crowd in Providence last March, Tom scored an overtime goal to beat Brown and send the Crimson to the ECAC semifinals. Selected by the San Jose Sharks in the 2001 entry draft, he is the team's top scorer and was All-Ivy honorable mention. Tom will be assistant captain next year."

### 1972

Secretary: **Joseph F.X. Donovan Jr.**, 2 Burnham Rd., Wenham, Mass. 01984-1905; joe\_donovan@harvard.edu.

### 1973

Secretary: **Robert W. Palmer**, P.O. Box 75475, Seattle 98125; HR1973NEWS@Yahoo.com. Class website: <http://classes.harvard.edu/college/1973>.

For news of **Jason Clay**, see page 92G.

In 2003 **Ted Cookson** visited Kosovo, Somalia, and Afghanistan. "I have finally been to every country in the world. In January 2004 I spent a day on the world's most remote inhabited island, the British overseas territory of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic—my 307th of the 317 destinations recognized by the Travelers' Century Club (TCC) of Los Angeles ([www.travelerscen-](http://www.travelerscen-)