An antique Victrola record player stands unobtrusively in the corner of Thomas J. Boardman’s great room. Cranking the handle, Boardman smiles and says, “This old thing is really only used when the electricity goes out and we invite the neighbors over for a listen.” Usefulness, however quaint and rare, has been the driving force of Boardman’s life and career as a statistician.

Born Feb 8, 1942, Boardman grew up in the northern New Jersey town of Ridgewood. His childhood was defined by the Boy Scouts, and he credits his various counselors and role models in the Scouts for teaching him to “do things the right way rather than get into trouble.” How much trouble could a boy be when his days were filled with camping, hiking, and canoe trips? Boardman became, an Eagle Scout, a chief in the Order of the Arrow, and a counselor.

He knew college was in his future, and while he enjoyed and excelled at math, he admits to “not knowing all that much about college.” Three colleges accepted him, but he was certain about only two things: he wanted to study some form of mathematics, and he didn’t want to go to an all-male college.

Boardman chose Bucknell University in Pennsylvania because of its strong mathematics department. At Bucknell, Tom found his wife Eileen and his other lifelong passion – statistics. Between his junior and senior year, he was advised to take a job in New York City, and was lured by the opportunity to “get real experience in stats. But as it turns out it was purely an accounting thing.” He recalls the job “absolutely convinced me I had no interest working in that kind of corporate environment.” Instead, Boardman committed himself to academia with an emphasis on real world applications of statistics.

The faculty he studied under at Bucknell soon made it clear to him that he “really didn’t know anything [about statistics] and if he wanted to learn he had to go to graduate school.” His Masters degree only took a year and a half to achieve from Rutgers, and by 1968 he finished his Ph.D. dissertation. As a graduate student, he did consulting work for the surrounding community, using his skills and knowledge to help others design experiments and gain knowledge about the world around them.

“A number of corporate groups, (e.g., Kodak and GE), had large statistics departments. Sometimes as many as 30 statisticians!” He confidently expressed the delight and satisfaction of someone who knows how useful his skill are. “The evidence was clear as the companies made great progress thanks to these support groups.” Boardman started searching for a place he could teach and consult, and “that’s what they were looking for here at CSU.”

His consulting work through CSU’s Statistics Laboratory brought him in close contact with many different departments at CSU and beyond. With quiet pride, Boardman remarks that his consulting work “gave the Statistics Lab an image of being a function for the entire university.” He was soon recognized for his outreach to other departments “on what the stat lab can do for you.”

Boardman also consulted with private companies, but the work always circled back to academia, because he was driven by the belief he “could be more valuable in my teaching role if I knew what role stats played outside of academia.” He helped Nabisco figure out how altitude affects their sugar cookie recipe, and the experience left him “more credible as a teacher [because] I could come in and talk about baking sugar cookies as a real example of how stats can affect the world.”

Through teaching and consulting, he illustrated through action that “statistics ... is involved in all aspects of research and all aspects of living, which is why many of us prefer to call it statistical science.” Passion, hard work, and a clear mind have led Tom Boardman to achieve his goal and inspire others across the university to hold statistics in the same high regard.