

Communications

Readers' comments, ideas, and opinions

The Healing Continues

Editor's Note: When "To Heal A Nation," about the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial, appeared in our November 1985 issue, we encouraged readers to respond. They did, in numbers that far surpassed the response to any previous article. We have devoted these two pages to their comments, and still many others were edited out for lack of space. We offer our appreciation to all those readers who have responded to topics raised in Syracuse University Magazine.

Editor,

This letter is one I hoped I would never have to write. Yet I am compelled to do so.

Your November cover story on Vietnam had a personal impact unlike any other article I've read. Quite frankly, I was expecting another Vietnam retrospective. It was anything but that for me.

As I turned the cover page, I was startled to see a photo and a brief paragraph about a soldier identified as Gary A. Scott, who was killed in action in 1968. Apart from that fact, you said you knew nothing about him.

I knew Gary Scott well. In 1965, during my senior year at Syracuse University, I was captain and commanding officer of the Army ROTC Pershing Rifles Company. I also served as commander of the Armed Precision Trick Drill Team. Gary was one of 12 men I personally selected to be a member of that elite unit. He was an outstanding cadet, in every respect. Beyond that, he was one of the finest men I had the opportunity to work with during my days on campus.

You would think that learning the news of his death 17 years later might lessen the im-



In this photo, submitted by alumnus Erick Celke, Gary A. Scott, one of at least 10 alumni to lose their lives as a result of American military involvement in Vietnam, is shown as a member of the Army ROTC Armed Precision Trick Drill Team. Scott appears in the back row, second from the left; Celke, front row, far left.

pact. But it doesn't. I feel a deep sense of personal loss. . . .

After leaving Syracuse in 1967, I spent two years in active duty in Washington, D.C. I was fortunate. I could have been assigned to Vietnam.

I left Washington in 1970 and haven't returned since then. Having read your article, I've promised myself to make at least one more visit there to pay my own personal tribute to Gary Scott and his fallen comrades.

Erick M. Celke '65
Syracuse, N.Y.

Editor,

As a Vietnam veteran and member of the Class of '67, I want to express my appreciation to you for your concern and to [author] Joel Swerdlow for his two articles, which capture the enormous emotion of The Wall. The ability of so many to finally separate the war from the warrior has been a large part of the healing process.

The SU campus in 1966-67 was just beginning to express grave concern over our increasing involvement in Viet-

nam, but, quite frankly, my concerns were very limited. I always thought it would be somebody else's war. I was a senior at SU and enjoying every minute of it.

I spent September '68 to September '69 in Vietnam.

I have been back to Vietnam twice since then—in 1983, to represent the Vietnam Veterans of America and sign documents with the Vietnamese releasing 79 Amerasian children; and again in 1984, as part of a group of Vietnam veterans seeking answers to the legacies that remain through discussions with Vietnamese officials. I consider these trips a special experience. A closure few have had.

The steps toward healing a nation continue. Many issues need resolution. It is my generation that needs to be a conscience. Present and future generations of SU students need to study the history of Vietnam and our involvement and demand answers that will prevent future Vietnams. If we haven't learned lessons from this part of our history, and we allow history to repeat itself,

then isn't all the pain and aren't all the losses for naught?

Jim Kurtz '67
Rochester, N.Y.

Editor,

This is to express my appreciation to you and your staff for the November issue of the *Syracuse University Magazine*.

As an alumnus with two degrees from Syracuse and as a parent whose oldest son spent two tours in Vietnam, once out on a stretcher, I was particularly moved by this issue.

Again my congratulations.

Palmer D. Pilcher '49, G'56
Fayetteville, Ark.

Editor,

Your fine editorial, "Healing the Wounds," touched me. I'm proud that you selected a College of Forestry graduate for your example.

I would like to mention another, Rollin T. "Ted" Wheat '59, from Clifton Springs, N.Y. Ted was a helicopter pilot and made it through the Vietnam War only to lose his life in a training flight back in the United States. I attended what would have been his 25th re-

union, and Ted was certainly very much alive in the hearts of his classmates. As his roommate at Kappa Phi Delta, it is hard for me still to imagine how a guy so big and strong and full of life could ever leave us. Unfortunately, he has.

Dick Patrick '58
Albany, N.Y.

Editor's note: According to University archives, Capt. Rollin T. Wheat was killed Aug. 11, 1966, at the age of 28, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. He had earned his commission through Air Force ROTC and had received a special certificate of achievement in 1964 for his participation in the Air Force Off-Duty Education Program at Tan Son Nhut.

Editor,

I am a graduate of Syracuse University, having transferred there from a small Midwestern college in 1966. Coming to Syracuse allowed me to team up with my best friend and prep school classmate, David Jon Anderson. . . .

Upon graduation, Dave entered Officers Candidate School and graduated as a lieutenant, junior grade, U.S. Navy. He was assigned to the carrier *U.S.S. Coral Sea*. David was lost during action in the spring of 1970 in the Gulf of Tonkin. The loss of David created a monumental void in the lives of those who knew and loved him. He had a rare personality that brightened the day of anyone he came in contact with. The fond memory of our friendship is one of my most prized possessions.

Dave believed in people, and he believed in his country. As an only son, husband, and soon-to-be father, he could have stepped past military duty. He chose to see his responsibility out with full knowledge of the risks. . . .

We cannot forget these people we have lost. They are a part of each of us. Their memories will go on.

Gerald T. Fassett '68, G'69
Altamont, N.Y.

Editor's note: Lt. David Jon Anderson was an intelligence

officer aboard the U.S.S. Coral Sea when lost overboard on April 12, 1970; he had been scheduled to return to Jacksonville, Fla., for reassignment in June 1970. Anderson was a member of the Class of 1967.

Editor,

Several years ago, the North Vietnamese released the names of 12 missing pilots killed in the war. Among them was Lt. Bruce Ducat '63, a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, who had been missing for 10 years.

Robert B. Martin '60
Erie, Pa.

Editor's note: The body of Bruce Ducat, a business administration major and Air Force pilot commissioned through ROTC, was one of 12 delivered to U.S. officials by the Vietnamese in 1977. His plane had been shot down over North Vietnam in December 1966.

Editor,

I spent five years at Syracuse, two years in the Army, and nine months in Vietnam. I hate to say it, but I sometimes feel those nine months had a greater impact on my life than my five years at SU. Such was the nature of that war.

The one thing I will remember the most of my time at SU occurred in my last year there, the spring of 1970. Four students had been killed at Kent State and the students at SU, like many of those across the country, joined the major protest against the war. Many of the students at SU demonstrated and were successful in getting the University to close five weeks early in order that they might have a chance to work in the antiwar movement at the SU campus during the summer. The day after SU closed early, many of these same students went home for an extended summer vacation.

How did I feel about this? Bitter and cheated. My parents had sacrificed a lot so that I could be the first from my family to attend college.

John J. Cesar '69, '70
Absecon, N.J.

Editor,

I attended Syracuse during 1973-74. Then a Marine Corps major, a veteran of two years in Vietnam, still on active duty, I was sent to the Newhouse School to obtain a graduate degree in public relations. After retiring from the Corps in 1979, I served as legislative director for Senator Robert Packwood and later accepted a White House appointment as deputy assistant secretary of defense (legislative affairs). In sum, most of my adult life has been spent serving this country.

I was a skeptic about the memorial. Originally, I and many like me saw it as a further symbol of the division caused among family and friends. Happily, I can now say that I am a convert. The memorial served a needed and valiant purpose—it did serve to heal.

My feelings upon reading the article were strong and emotional. I guess that's what the memorial evokes. Never since the War Between the States has this country been so divided. As then, the division cut into family and friends, and in some cases made bitter enemies among loved ones. I, for one, never regretted serving in Vietnam; nor was there any shame. . . .

What the memorial has done is allow this nation to cry. We, as an emotional people, have always been able to do that after a serious conflict. Tears of joy and sorrow were always shed. That did not happen after Vietnam. Now it has. The total memorial brought the reality and the finality of the conflict to a proper focus. The faces on the statue gave us the general picture of the sons, brothers, husbands who made the ultimate sacrifice for their fellow man. The names on the wall make the conflict personal. The memorial is now a meeting place where those who fought and those who opposed may meet, share emotions without shame and go forward. We can now put Vietnam behind us, something which had to be done if this country is to move forward as one. Families can again be united, friends may again embrace. For this we can thank God!

I am proud to be a Syracuse

graduate, and your recent edition has rekindled that pride.

Lt. Col. Albert P. Barry (Ret.)
Washington, D.C.

Editor,

Would it be possible for me to have another copy of the November issue?

I let mine go off to Florida with a dear neighbor couple who are Gold Star parents of the only lad from our small town to lose his life in Vietnam. It meant so much to them. They were at the dedication of this great memorial. They would visit it again on their way South this week and again as they drive north in the spring. Their son, Dick, was a medical technician and had only been in Vietnam a few weeks when he was shot.

I knew I wanted them to have this great story, but I hope I may have one to keep also.

Evelyn L. Rowell Monroe '25
Delhi, N.Y.

Editor's note: Limited extra copies of this magazine are always available at no charge.

Editor,

I enjoyed reading Joel Swerdlow's article, "A Personal Remembrance" and Steven Clark's reflections on the death of his college friend in "The Last Word." It revealed to me that in spite of its exaggerated emphasis on sports, Syracuse University is still able to produce sensitive and thoughtful men.

Thomas Fedge '68
Brewster, Mass.

Some Mistake

Editor,

In the November issue of *Syracuse University Magazine*, page 4, it states that Hendricks Chapel opened in 1936.

There must be some mistake, as I sang in the first chapel choir, and I graduated in 1931.

Elenora Lucas Schweizer '31
Schenectady, N.Y.

Editor's note: There was indeed some mistake. Hendricks Chapel was dedicated in June 1930.