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Colby, Too, Should “Be Ever So Proud of Mike”

As one of those who wrote a “somewhat pointed letter” in response to Professor Cal Mackenzie’s retrospective on his return to Vietnam, I commend Bob Lloyd ’68 for his thorough and appropriate revisiting of Colby’s losses during the Vietnam War (“On the Vietnam War, Setting the Record Straight—Again,” *Colby*, fall 2013), and recommend to the Colby community the article he referenced, which can be found online here: colby.edu/colby.mag/issues/fall00/vietnam/

Certainly Vietnam was, as Jan Scruggs, founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, noted, “that kind of war”—a war where ambivalence about the war and the men and women who served in it dominated. Mike Ransom ’66, one of those Colby men at war, expressed this feeling himself in one of his letters home, which his parents had published after he was killed in May 1968:

I did hear Johnson’s speech of de-escalation and non-candidacy and thought it the best of his career, not just the way he said it. It created in me a great sense of hope that this foolishness over here will end fairly shortly. There is not a man over here that wants to see this war go on any longer. That is not to say that anybody shrinks from doing a job. But everyone is as confused as I as to exactly what, if anything, we’re accomplishing and wants the war over ASAP.

Certainly during that terrible year of 1968 the country as a whole lost whatever sense it might have previously had that the war was somehow worthy of the loss of those fine young men. President Johnson’s decision to forego a second term, which was made only a few short weeks before Mike Ransom’s death, was perhaps—if unintentionally—the most public acknowledgement of this sense of loss.

As Lloyd so eloquently suggests, it is important that Colby not shy away

from continuing to explore the unhealed wounds of Vietnam. I think it is worth note that in recent years the men and women who served in Vietnam are now honored for their service in Memorial Day parades and other events, even if the war in which they served continues to engender deep and troubling emotions. David Barnes ’68, Leslie Dickinson ’67, James Hunter Shotwell ’62, and Ransom deserve such recognition and honor, not just on the Wall, but in the history of Colby. How their deaths, and how the legacy of Vietnam may have shaped those of us who lived through it, is a

to their dedication to themselves and to the men and women with whom they served and whom they led. The political machinations that led to the war mattered little to them. What mattered was living through it as best they could.

As the discussion continues among Colby men and women, it may benefit the dialogue to recall the sentiments expressed in a letter to Mike Ransom’s parents from Army Nurse Captain Connie Schlosser after his death in a San Francisco military hospital on May 11, 1968. She spent Ransom’s last hours with him and was heartbroken by his death.



A helicopter hovers over a U.S. Army encampment at the height of the Vietnam War.

PHOTO BY CAL MACKENZIE

subject worthy of continued discussion.

Perhaps, if we can separate the war itself from the warriors who fought in it—those who lived, like Lloyd and Mackenzie, and those who died—we can better come to grips with its legacy and meaning. Most of the young men on the front lines, I daresay, wished to be anywhere else than in combat. That they did their duty is a tribute

“I’ve never written a letter like this,” she wrote, “but in my six years of nursing I have never met so courageous an individual as your son. ... I guess I really wanted you to know that Mike did not die alone, with no one caring. I cared, we all cared. ... we all share your sorrow. Be ever so proud of Mike!” Indeed.

Robert Kinney ’79
Doylestown, Pa.

PHOTO BY SEAN ALONZO HARRIS



Rabbi Rachel Isaacs with area resident David Gulak.

In Awe of Rabbi Rachel Isaacs

Yashev co-ach (job well done) to Rabbi Rachel Isaacs (“Bridge Builder,” *Colby*, fall 2013). Beth Israel Synagogue and Colby College are so very fortunate. I am in awe of the incredible community she is building, face to face and soul to soul. The spirit and energy she instills is inspiring, and I am heartened that Jewish cultural and religious life is blossoming on and off the Hill!

Rabbi Zachary R. Shapiro '92
Temple Akiba
Culver City, Calif.

Ice-Fishing, Tony Marin Style

Regarding the piece about Tony Marin (Editor’s Desk, *Colby*, fall 2013), teaching at Lawrence High School in Fairfield for 35 years I was fortunate to know many kids from the SAD 49 community, where Tony lived. Tony, as we said, “was a piece of work!”

I went ice-fishing with him on Moosehead Lake with his good friends the Watson family from Clinton more than once. Ice-fishing “Tony style” involved a tent at the fishing site, a propane stove, several dozen eggs, pounds of bacon, two or three tubs of baked beans, a couple of loaves of bread, pots of coffee, fry pans, pots, silverware, and camp stools. There were also

sleeping bags and extra clothes, all in addition to what was back at camp.

Unfortunately, Julie and I were away from Maine during Tony’s memorial service at Lorimer Chapel but I’m sure our thoughts were well represented.

Bill Alexander '62
Albion, Maine

Genuine and Generous Tony Marin

Thank you kindly for paying tribute to Tony Marin (Editor’s Desk, *Colby*, fall 2013). I worked in the Eustis Service Center mailroom during my four years as a student, and as such, I came to know many of the figures “behind the scenes” at Colby. Tony Marin was one such figure and my friend. His character was just as described in the editor’s note:



Tony Marin

genuine and generous.

As soon as Tony learned that I was one of the student managers of Colby’s organic garden on Runnals Hill, he was scurrying around helping fix our spigot and irrigation system. One day he brought his walk-behind rototiller to the garden and instructed my fellow

gardeners and me how to wield the machine to break up some particularly troublesome earthy clay.

In the mailroom on doughnut day (every Friday) or around campus, Tony always waved hello and, with that cryptic Tony smile you described, wished me well on my way. Thank you for honoring him in *Colby*.

Meg Kruthoff '12
Biddeford Pool, Maine

Last Page: Gerry Hadden '89

A BRIDGE NOT BURNED

In the spring of 2006 my classmates Dan Hoffman and Lawrence Colby and I found down a bridge north of in West Germany, got arrested for it, then shipped the country before we could confess our presence. We had no other choice, really, since we didn't enjoy a momentary detention in the prison at Colby College. At least that's what our parents professed. Harvey Kantor, had told us we were to be let off on the grounds that we didn't intend to harm anyone. He said we were to be let off on the grounds that we didn't intend to harm anyone, but that we had better believe...



home and started reading things before to make sense. Hoffman is more out, around World War II as a young boy for the crossing, his willingness to lead the rules and the rules, and his openness to adventure. He was an expert navigator, a swimmer—like, and a really hardy swimmer. Everything he did he did to keep his family safe. By some miracle he worked. He said he never expected American people and made it to America. A lifetime later he gave up. It's like German police. There's his mother, calling it a day from studying German language and grammar. There's just been around. But what if someone gave of a woman's bridge into forward of an American's bridge party on the nearby Berlin wall.

Something about our rule-breaking—although I'll maintain to a degree to see anyone from here, but to see someone have never before had that tough sort of his, cultured during his early years of hardship. He checked it out and the rest was over the hill. And I realized that, at last, was my homecoming. The one I'd been missing every year, without fail, for two and a half decades. In some ways the capital of it and over the official world, but what did it matter? I was well off financially and working, moving when we were bonded together. We had well earned from each other. And everything we had had had in time.

Let's just say we had some to tell. In their eyes a thousand questions. We had a little more life than had ever lived! Mission accomplished, I thought. They'll never forget Colby again.

But just to make sure, I thought about such a Colby connection. Gerry Hadden '89 is a writer and reporter from Brunswick, Maine. He spent four years at Colby. The World, the NYC, and other. His column "New York Bridge" was published in 2011.

A Disappointing Essay

I generally enjoy *Colby* and especially the Last Page articles. The magazine helps me feel a little bit connected to the school, though I have lived on the other side of the country since graduation.

The most recent Last Page, “A Bridge Not Burned,” (*Colby*, fall 2013) was disappointing. I suspect that many of us did some pretty stupid things back in our Colby days. And then we moved on. It seems that Gerry Hadden '89 still thinks it's funny that he and his buddies defaced public property in a foreign country, and even gloats about how they got away with it. His 7- and 9-year old children sat around the lake with them, hearing about the vandalism. Is this a legacy he wants to leave? I am curious about why this got published at all. It's astonishing that this is the most poignant story *Colby* could come up with.

Alix Land '78
Portland, Ore.