

# Colby



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### From the Editor

Gerry Boyle  
*Colby College*

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# Colby

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## A Colby Hero, but Just One of Many

The stack of manila folders was placed on a table in Colby's Special Collections, each folder labeled with an alum's name and class year. Affixed to some of the class years was the letter n, lower case. This denotes a nongrad. In this group many didn't live to see commencement.

These are the casualties of World War II, including students who left Mayflower Hill to be transformed into soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines. Each was a story so mesmerizing that I found myself poring over letters, news clippings, photographs. I'll pick just one alumnus, not because he is extraordinary in this group, but because, in this group, he is not.

Fred Blumenthal '40 did make it to graduation. He was from New York City, West End Avenue on the Upper West Side. He had a younger brother, Edwin. His dad was Milton M. Blumenthal and his mother, in Colby correspondence, is referred to as Mrs. Milton M. Blumenthal. Ellsworth Millett '25, acting alumni secretary, wrote to Mr. Blumenthal in spring 1945. Mrs. Blumenthal wrote back.

*My dear Mr. Millett:*

*I received your letter on Monday. You had it addressed to Mr. Milton M. Blumenthal. Mr. B. passed away 10 months before Fred was taken from me so he never knew the great sacrifice our dear son made and was spared all these heartaches.*

Army Cpl. Fred Blumenthal was killed in June 1943 in Sicily. A studious-looking, bespectacled fellow, even in uniform, the Tau Delta Phi brother and assistant manager of the Colby football team was also extremely brave. Blumie, as he was known, volunteered to lead a patrol in enemy territory to retrieve wounded American soldiers. Hit in the legs in an attack, he crawled, not to cover, but to the aid of another fallen soldier. A bomb fell and Blumenthal was killed. He was awarded a Purple

Heart. It was delivered to his mother.

In her letter, Mrs. Blumenthal thanked Millett for sending her a copy of *The Oracle* for her son's class. *You referred to Fred as a "mighty fine boy" and that is how everyone speaks of him. He was so sincere and loyal. I could go on but I'll not bore you.*

She enclosed a photo of Fred. Millett wrote back, saying he had it on his desk.

His desk must have been full of photos in those days. Sixty-three Colbians died in the war, including two women and missionaries Francis (1909) and Gertrude (1911) Rose, namesakes of the Rose Chapel. Each has a folder in Special Collections, where such memories are preserved.

After reading about Fred Blumenthal, I came out to a brilliant sunny spring afternoon.

Students were basking on the library lawn, and it seemed Blumie would have liked the scene. In fact, six weeks before his death he wrote from Sicily to the Colby Alumni Office. "Hope soon I will be able to get back and renew old acquaintances and make new ones at Colby," Blumenthal wrote.

Colby, meet Fred Blumenthal. Gone but now, I hope, not forgotten.



Gerry Boyle '78, P'06  
Managing Editor

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Kayla Lewkowicz '14** ("Let's Get Dinner Sometime," P. 44) is from Hopkinton, Mass. In addition to being a contributing writer for InsideColby, the admissions online publication, Lewkowicz is a member of the varsity swim and track teams. She also can be found walking backwards on campus as a tour guide.



**Mira Ptacin** ("Paradox or Paragon," P. 49) is a creative nonfiction author and bestselling ghostwriter. She's the founder of the Freerange Nonfiction Reading Series & Storytelling Collective, and she leads the writing program at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies. She resides on Peaks Island, Maine.

