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On the Vietnam War, Setting the Record Straight—Again

Colby and the College should probably be praised for the willingness to revisit, through republishing parts of a letter I wrote in October 1987, the troublesome lapse of institutional memory about Colby men killed in action in the Vietnam War that was manifested through Colby's collaboration with that year's commencement speaker. To help him make his somewhat valid point about the unevenness of privilege and sacrifice in the late 1960s, journalist Mike Barnicle had been incompletely and incorrectly told that there had been no such casualties from Colby. There are some institutions of higher education where all that followed would have been strategically skipped in an alumni magazine review of college history. That Colby is not one of those is commendable.

That stated, it is unfortunate that, in revisiting those events of 25 years ago, an incorrect and incomplete picture was once again provided. At the time that I wrote my admittedly angry letter, I was aware of three men from Colby who had been Vietnam casualties—Les Dickinson, Dave Barnes, and Mike Ransom. All had attended Colby for part of the time that I was there—1965-1968. As the events that led to the June 1988 dedication of the Korean and Vietnam War Memorial in the center of the cam-



David T. Barnes '68



Leslie A. Dickinson Jr. '67



Robert C. "Mike" Ransom Jr. '66

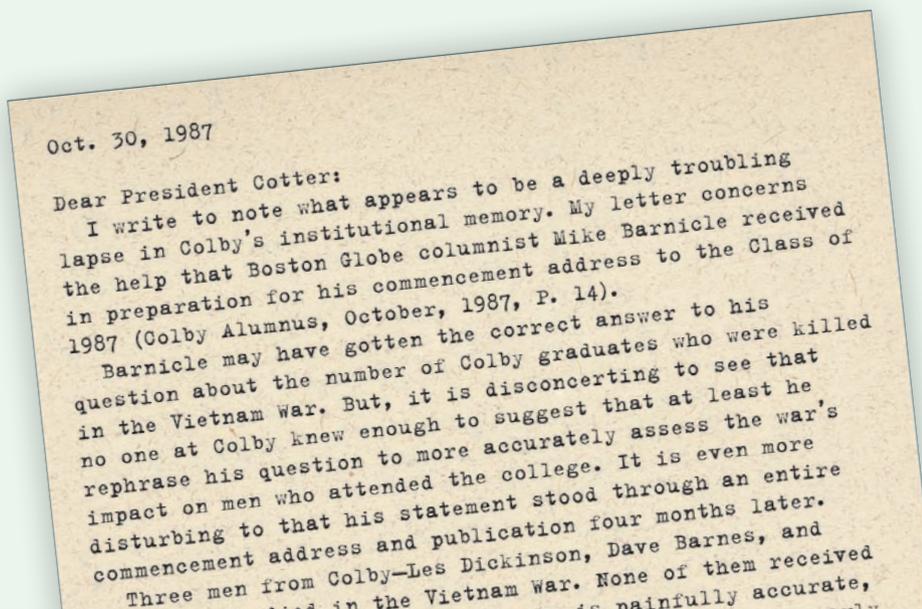


James Hunter Shotwell '62

pus unfolded, however, I became aware of another man who had attended Colby in 1958-59 and who had then accepted an appointment to West Point—James Hunter Shotwell. The *Colby* article that I was privileged to write in connection with the subsequent memorial dedication documented the journeys that all four took from Mayflower Hill to Southeast Asia. In the course of preparing that article, I was able to speak about Hunter Shotwell with his brother-in-law, Bruce Barker '66 and his uncle, the late Colonel James Hunter Drum (West Point '37). What I heard from them and what I later learned by reading things like a lengthy specific excerpt about him in Al Santoli's Vietnam chronicle, *Everything We Had*, made me realize anew what kinds of tragic losses were sustained in that war.

So now comes another appeal to set the record straight. The portrait photos accompanying the letter excerpt that you published left Hunter Shotwell out. That is particularly ironic since a picture of him in his Green Beret and Ranger tab was used to introduce the aforementioned article in the spring 1988 edition of *Colby*. The captions below the photos that were published this year also mistakenly indicated that Dickinson, Barnes, and Ransom were from Colby's Class of 1968. Actually, only Dave Barnes was from that class; Mike Ransom entered with the Class of 1966 and Les Dickinson with the Class of 1967. All four men were killed in 1968. I suggest that you republish all four pictures with the correct information and that you provide internet links or other references so that interested alumni can read about the citations for bravery written about Dave Barnes, the anti-war crusades of Mike Ransom's mother, the sense of duty shown by Hunter Shotwell, and the outpouring of campus grief occasioned by the news of Les Dickinson's death.

I'm also tempted to suggest, after all this and in the aftermath of Professor G. Calvin Mackenzie's retrospective on his own return to Vietnam (*Colby*, winter 2013) and the somewhat pointed letters that appeared in response, that the magazine refrain from publishing future pieces about Vietnam. That might preclude continuing to pull scabs off unhealed wounds. But that would be contrary to the kind of open dialogue that a place like Colby is supposed to



foster. So, my alternative is to remind alumni from that period of the emotionally charged and cynical words uttered by Jan Scruggs, the moving force behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, at the conclusion of his remarks dedicating that monument in November 1982. After recounting the long, nasty struggles that it took to bring the memorial to fruition, he said, "Well, I guess it was just that kind of war."

Bob Lloyd '68
Greenville, S.C.

What Would Gardner Colby Think?

While I enjoyed reading the history of Colby in the winter bicentennial issue, I could not help but wonder what



Gardner Colby

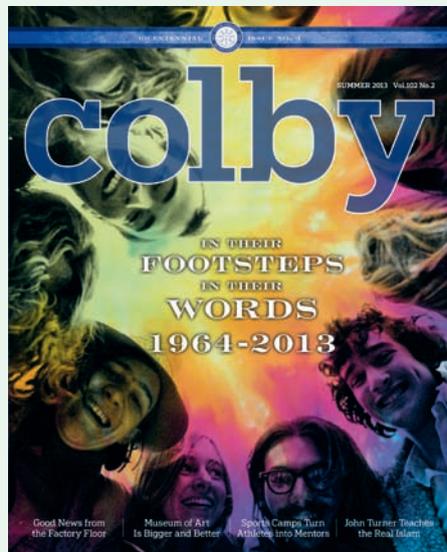
Gardner Colby would think of his namesake today. On one page I read that he rescued the school financially, with one of his conditions being that its president and a majority of the

faculty be members in good standing in regular Baptist churches. On another page I read of discrimination against a Christian group on campus for upholding their belief in the principles of the God of the Bible—a belief that Gardner Colby in all likelihood also held. Normally, if someone objects to the rules and beliefs of a campus group, they look for a different group to join. With all of Colby's outstanding achievements, could it not have risen above other institutions in this area too, and maintained an objective, balanced stance?

Susan Baird Hilario '70
Guatemala City, Guatemala

Bicentennial Issue Was Memory Lane

I want to thank the *Colby* staff for doing in the Bicentennial Issue No. 4 (*Colby*, summer 2013) what alumni



magazines are intended to do: communicate with, engage, connect to, and, in many cases, reconnect alumni with their college and college experience. The special section 1964-2013 took me back to 1965 in your opening comments about women's midnight curfews. I certainly can relate to that experience as I started dating my now spouse Dorcas "Dee" Thompson '69 that year.

Next I flipped the page and saw April Nelson's article on Janis Joplin's January 1969 concert. Having just received my military orders to go overseas, I was visiting Dee at Colby at that time and we attended that concert in Waterville.

On another page you reprinted a Honeywell Corporation ad that appeared in the October 31, 1969, *Colby Echo*. That ad solicited graduates to take classes to teach them about computers. When I finished graduate school in 1972, I joined Raytheon Data Systems in Norwood, Mass. Raytheon bought out the remnants of Honeywell's small computer business. RDS was one of Raytheon's few nongovernment commercial businesses. In the two years I was with them they made computers about the size of a small refrigerator. One of those applications was airline reservation systems. Twenty-five years later I was in the Madrid airport and looked over Iberia's ticket counter and saw one of RDS's PTS100 terminals still at work.

A few pages later I saw the picture of three Vietnam war dead who at-

tended Colby, including Les Dickson Jr. '67. He influenced me to join Kappa Delta Rho. He was an English major with good grades. I remember him telling me that he wanted to be a journalist and he was dropping out of school because he did not want to miss the experience that the Vietnam War offered a future journalist. He is listed on the Vietnam War memorial along with my high school class president and the tactical officer I had when I was in OCS. All fine, upstanding people with bright futures who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I had never seen Bob Lloyd '68's letter to President William Cotter. Thank you for reprinting it as well.

Keep up the good work!
Don Jepson '67
Northampton, Mass.

That's Her Sweater

Thank you for the Bicentennial Issue No. 4 (*Colby*, summer 2013), which arrived by snail mail last month. I had a laugh when I recognized the sweater on the inside cover as mine.

Susi Schneider '82
Richfield Springs, N.Y.

Please Note Holsten's Colby Career

I am working my way through the most recent *Colby*, and as always I love reading all of it. I have especially enjoyed the

historical retrospective pieces of the last few issues: the series is a brilliant tribute to the 200th anniversary of the school.

I am writing to note another worthwhile moment in Colby's history, though. This fall will mark the 20th



Jennifer Holsten '90

year of Jennifer Holsten's tenure as the women's soccer coach at Colby. Dick Whitmore and Mark Serdjenian are both legends, of course, but I imagine that at this point, Jen must be one of

the longest-serving head coaches on the Colby staff. She is coaching her 20th season this fall, having arrived in the fall of 1994. She is a graduate of Colby (1990) and of the soccer program, and achieved the rare status of the three-sport collegiate athlete (with ice hockey and softball).

When she arrived in the fall of 1994 she quickly electrified the program,

getting us (yes, I'm a former player) to the ECAC finals within two years and the NCAA Sweet 16 within four. Since then she has routinely put together strong teams; as of this writing her 139 win total and 12 trips to the postseason make her the most winning coach in the history of the program. Jen has done this while the competitive nature of NES-CAC and Division III sports has evolved tremendously, and her program has kept up with these changes. It's also worth noting that in those early years, she was simultaneously coaching the varsity women's ice hockey team as well.

Coach Holsten has put together a program that her players respect and stay loyal to. And for anyone who has played for Jen, you will smile to know that the legendary Cooper run is still in effect.

Kara Marchant Hooper '97
Ojai, Calif.

Mountain Rescue is Model for Others

I coordinate a cocurricular outdoor program at Loyola University Chicago. While at Colby I was heavily involved



with COC, COOT, and worked for Jonathan Milne, the first outdoor administrator.

I just read the write-up on the Mahoosuc incident in the online *Colby* (P. 36 in this issue). Sounds like students are continuing to receive stellar training and preparation from you and your staff.

We're going to use the article with our leaders here as a case study of sorts. I have to admit I'm glad to be able to use Colby student leaders as an example of emergency response, backcountry risk management, and simple perseverance.

Great to hear outdoor programming at Colby is in good hands.

Chris Zajchowski '07
Chicago, Ill.

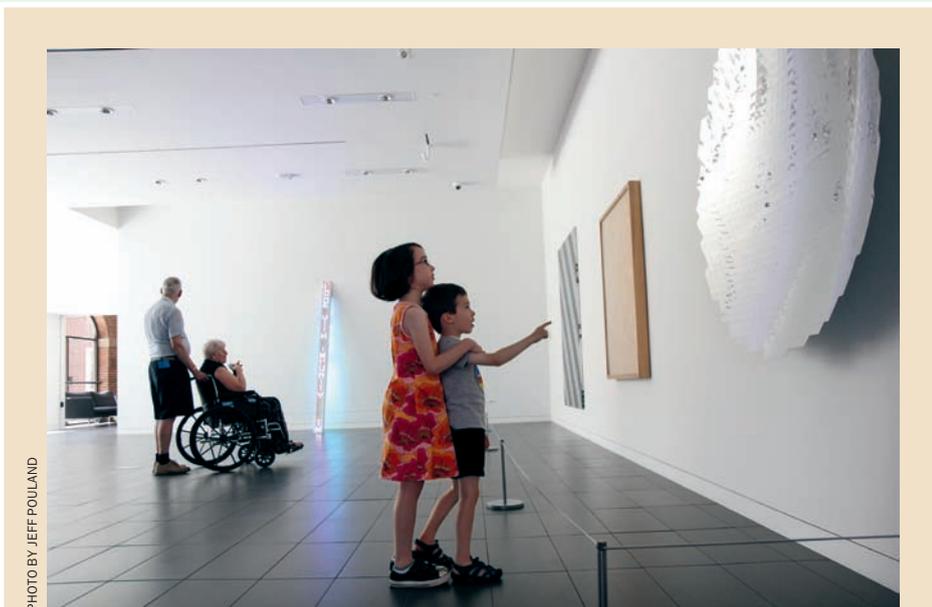


PHOTO BY JEFF POULAND

Museum Correction

A photo in the summer 2013 issue of Colby incorrectly identified a work of art exhibited in the lobby of the newly expanded Colby College Museum of Art. The work, shown here with Leila and Alex Turner, is Untitled by Anish Kapoor.

Letters Welcome



Colby welcomes your letters. Send them to Gerry Boyle '78, editor, via e-mail (geboyle@colby.edu), or by mail to *Colby* magazine; Office of Communications; 4354 Mayflower Hill; Waterville, ME 04901. Colby reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity.