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Editorial

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From the Editor's Desk

The intent was simple enough: to revisit the years when the Vietnam War turned the Colby campus from a bucolic hideaway to a stage for vociferous, if not truly violent, protest.

Published in the spring 2000 issue of *Colby*, the story had some effect. For some alumni in the protest ranks, it documented and perhaps dignified a movement that, in their view, had been disparaged and subsequently ignored. For both alumni and administrators of that time, the story offered a chance to recollect and reconsider. And as the letters in this issue show, the story reopened an unhealed wound.

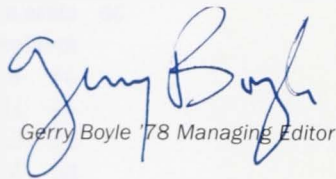
If Colby was a microcosm of the nation in 1970, its alumni are a sort of microcosm of the nation today. Some Americans feel the war was ill conceived; some feel it was merely poorly executed. Some felt it was their duty to serve; others felt it was their duty to object. Some feel that today the reasons for the war are grossly misunderstood; others feel that only in hindsight are the reasons for the war becoming clear.

There was no consensus in 1970; there is no consensus now. Nor should one be expected.

That said, I must admit that I was chagrined to hear and read that some felt the story did a disservice to Colby alumni who served in the Vietnam War, and, in some cases, died there. Many years ago, I had written as a newspaper columnist about the four who died; I did not write as eloquently as Robert M. Lloyd '68 did in an article published in *Colby* in the spring of 1988. I invite readers to go to that story at www.colby.edu/colby.mag/issues/fall00/vietnam and consider the sacrifice made by Leslie A. Dickinson Jr. '67, David T. Barnes '68, Robert C. Ransom Jr. '66 and James H. Shotwell '62. The story of the protest movement was not intended to show disrespect for these or other Vietnam veterans. In my view, the story of those who served had been written before; the story of the protest movement had not.

I don't think that reading either story would prompt readers to drastically change their views of the Vietnam War. Those views are continually evolving. Consider the words of one Vietnam combat veteran who, when a spate of Vietnam War movies was released, found himself being asked, "Was the war really like that?" The veteran said he never found an answer because what really happened had been so mixed up with what had been said about what happened.

"The Vietnam War is no longer a definite event so much as it is a collective and mobile script in which we continue to scrawl, erase, rewrite our conflicting and changing views of ourselves," wrote William "Bro" Adams, Colby's new president, in *Mother Jones* magazine in 1988.



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