

Personal Essay...

# Thanks go a long way

Many things come and go in life, like seasons, friends fade away into lingering memories. Nothing ever seems to end, there's just another face. Everyone who has come into contact with me has had an impact on my life, whether good or bad, no matter how short a period they stayed, no one is trivial. Teachers are the best example. People have many teachers, but the teachers that count most are the one's that survive memory on a good note.

I'll never forget the day I saw my friend Tim getting off the bus, thumbing through his copy of his yearbook from our high school. I had graduated three years before. I asked to see it, to recall the faces from the past, mainly old teachers. Unfortunately, I opened to the back page first and saw the memorial. George Heywood, my gym teacher, was dead. I stood silent, while Tim talked about everything that was going on with graduation. I sat on my steps and recalled everything.

My freshman year of high school, I was in Mr. Heywood's gym class with a couple of my friends. When you're that age and you're in numbers, there's bound to be trouble. I was always in trouble, but Mr. Heywood took it with a light-heart. He knew that yelling and screaming wasn't the way to teach kids, it took tolerance and patience. He even risked his job one day so we could have a picnic in the soccer fields. He went to a bakery two blocks away from the school to get a cake. The entire class sat around on that gorgeous day, ate cheese cake and talked.

After surviving those few months with me, it is safe to say that we became friends, in the way that students and teachers become friends. He gave me a ride to the bus stop a few times and I would visit him during lunch breaks, while he was teaching class. He would sometimes point at the kids and say, "Remember that. That was you. A royal pain in the ass."

My junior year of high school, I attempted to run indoor track. I ran cross country the previous year, but I had just come back from having mono and was attempting to get in shape. I ran one meet; I can't even recall what it was, but I was in the wrong

heat and came in last by a minute. In embarrassment, I fell to the floor and buried my tears into my arms. Then I felt an arm around my shoulder and whispers of encouragement. Then I began laughing. It was one of the worst moments of my life at the time and I was laughing. That's the way it was with Mr. Heywood. He was always laid back and went with the flow, enjoying every moment. Now I know why.

He was battling stomach cancer the entire time that I knew him, but he never let on. He constantly fought it, but he obviously never gave up what he loved most, teaching. I saw him my freshman year of college. I had to stop by Northeast and fix some bureaucratic stuff when I saw him walking down the hall. "George," I yelled. He didn't care that I used his first name. He waved me over and we talked about things. I apologized for being a pain in his class. He just laughed and said, "You'll make it, Russ. You're a good kid."

And that was the last time I saw him. I stared into the xeroxed copy of his picture and saw the man I remembered with the smile in his eyes. He died during Christmas break, finally succumbing to the cancer.

There just never seemed to be an opportunity to thank him for what he meant to me. I think now, as I look back from the perspective of someone who is graduating college and once again moving on, I regret that I never thanked him, not because I can't play basketball any better or know the ABC's of calisthenics, but because George Heywood taught me a valuable lesson: life is a precious gift to be shared with others. Sometimes I forget this when getting wrapped up in the trivialities of life, but I just need to remember him and his eyes and his smile and I'm reminded.

The point of this article is to say that teachers have a profound affect, if even not noticed until years later. There's many teachers I have now that deserve my thanks for helping me through college (and my thesis). Even if I never properly thank them, they will always survive in my memory which serves as a memorial to those who walked with me and helped me along.

by Russell Carl Campbell III

Do you have a question for Amy and Cathy?

Let them know how you're feeling a drop them a note in *The Collegian* mailbox.

# The forgotten soldiers

--Chad Clouse

In the 1950s the government subject thousands of soldiers to radiation during the testing of the atom bomb. After a nuclear bomb was exploded in the Nevada desert soldier were ordered to march to ground-zero to test man's ability to withstand a nuclear blast. Those soldiers have since suffered from their exposure.

In the seventies the government declared war in Vietnam. The army dumped Agent Orange in combat areas to kill the forest. Army personnel were exposed to this chemical. The chemical caused blisters on the skin filled with fluid, that when drained, caused tremendous pain and left large mangled scars.

Soldiers who recently fought in Desert Storm are ill. The syndrome associated with gulf service has many symptoms, to include chronic fatigue, headaches, nausea, digestive problems, crippling birth defects, etc.

My article is about integrity, honesty, the truth, whatever one chooses to call it. These three instance are mired in deceit. The government denies all of these illnesses and still refuses to treat some of the sick soldiers. The soldiers of the fifties are forgotten, the seventies ignored because of recurring social protest, and the nineties because caring for these soldier is harder then just looking away.

We have been raised in the myth of patriotism that makes us, as good citizens, trust the government. We wave flags on the Fourth of July under the sparks of the fireworks and say, "God, what a great country we live in." We function on blind patriotism. Worst of all, we ignore the signs of corruption in our government. The media has recently exposed some government

officials, to include some in Erie country. Millions of dollars disappear, officials go to jail, and all we do is fill the positions again and go on trusting the new individuals.

If we understand nothing about the government we should understand the men and women that fill the offices. Government officials are not like most of the public they serve. they are from the "good side of the track," so to speak. For example, every Kennedy that ever served in the government is not from the neighborhood. These men are rich, professional politicians. They never came from the middle class; they don't know the middle class. Should we trust them to make decisions for the majority middle class America? Should we trust someone with a reputation as an alcoholic and guilty of adultery? Someone who breaks a promise of fidelity to his wife, someone he loves, will break his promise to the people. He'll smile right into your eyes and say, "I love the people. I could never hurt them." The same promise broken twice.

Something that effects me personally, and the reason I started this article with examples from the military, is the Gulf War Syndrome. I am a Gulf War veteran facing the difficult years after the war when my life is still fractured from the experience. To make it worse, my health has been effected by a disease the government denies.

If someone out there thinks the government is a truthful body, worthy of our devotion, there is proof to the contrary. I urge everyone to pick up the November issue of Life Magazine. On the cover is a photo of a child cripple by his fathers disease, Gulf War Syndrome. Stare at that little child and see if you could possibly deny him.

