

## West Stands Memorial Dedication Veterans Day 2015

On November 2, 1923, a pleasant fall night, some 1,000 Dartmouth alumni came to Hanover for Dartmouth night. It was a special gathering that year, the occasion for dedicating the newly-constructed Memorial Field.

Marching around campus with torches, gathering undergraduates in the parade as they passed by the dormitories, they assembled over here by Alumni Gym. An estimated 4,000 people attended.

Constructed partially on the site of the fields where just a few years earlier Dartmouth students trained and practiced for World War I, fields marked by trenches and rolls of barbed wire, now there was a sparkling new stadium. The Memorial Field was part of a national movement following the First World War—to construct “Living Memorials.” These efforts led to memorial parks and stadiums and fields and concert halls and civic centers in any number of American cities. And to this field here.

There were a number of speakers that night and then the next day, at the beginning of the football game, coincidentally with Cornell, President Ernest Martin Hopkins formally accepted the new stadium on behalf of the College, saying, “In grateful appreciation of the efforts of the living which have made this Memorial possible, and in reverent memory of the dead whom it commemorates.”

A tablet sat inside the main entrance to the stands, then called the Memorial Arch in Jens Larsen’s design, listing the names of the 112 Dartmouth men from 20 college classes and four medical school classes who died while serving in the Great War. Classes from 1883 to 1922.

These names joined the 73 Dartmouth men who died in service in the Civil War, ten of these while serving in the Confederacy, whose names were enshrined on the front entrance to Webster Hall, and they in turn would be joined by the names of 310 men from 31 classes who died in WW II. And the 12 from the Korean War. These had earlier been over in the Zahm Courtyard. Now those special plaques are joined together here.

Remaining over in Zahm Courtyard is the memorial statue and duplicated here is the plaque honoring those 21 men who died during the Vietnam War.

That plaque reads “In memory of those Dartmouth men who gave their lives in the Armed Forces, 1965-1972.” As my late colleague Charles Wood pointed out, this language “transforms Vietnam into a war that dares not speak its name.”

So we gather here tonight to rededicate these stands, and remind all who pass through, that this structure is designed to do more than provide seating for an athletic contest; it also stands as a memorial to Dartmouth men who sacrificed all while serving their country. If it remains a “living memorial,” it also bears the burden of reminding us of those whose lives ended too early.

Look at these names. I count 455 of them from four wars in this facility. Each has a story to be told. Each one was a student who walked these pathways and experienced this place and planned the lives and dreamed the dreams of all Dartmouth students. Yet at places like Belleau Woods or Normandy or Iwo Jima or Dong Ha, these lives and these dreams abruptly ended.

Over there to the right of the Memorial Arch on the World War I wall is the name of Richard Hall of the Class of 2015. A native of Michigan, he graduated a century ago and even though the United States was not yet in the Great War, he left for France. He and a number of Dartmouth men drove ambulances for the American Field Service. And on Christmas morning 1915 he was killed by a German shell that struck his vehicle right before daybreak. He planned after the war to go to graduate school and perhaps become an academic. In his last letter home he wrote his mother and urged her to “Make a big fire in the fireplace for me!”

On the World War II wall, to the left of the Arch, is the name of Charles Milton Pearson, called “Stubbie” by family and friends. A Minnesotan, he was a member of the Class of 1942, was the captain of both football and basketball teams and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He was class valedictorian. Speaking at his commencement he told the assembled crowd not to feel sorry for his generation – they had a duty to perform and they would do it. He told his classmates that they must work to end the war and then make the world better. They were responsible for “A tomorrow with a ray of sunshine more bright than we have ever seen before....”

A Navy pilot, Pearson died in 1944 when the Dauntless Dive Bomber he was flying was shot down by anti-aircraft fire while attacking a Japanese destroyer in the battle at Palau. After the war Stubbie Pearson planned to become a teacher, to teach children. Ninety-one percent of his class served in the war. Thirty-three of them join him on this wall. Five per cent of those who matriculated in the fall of 1938.

And finally, to the left of the WW II and Korean War tablet, there is the Vietnam War plaque, even if not called that. Here you can find the name of Duncan Sleigh, a member of the class of 1967. I mention him because Duncan died 47 years ago today, on November 6, 1968. A Marblehead, Massachusetts native and a Latin major and a member of Phi Kap, a young man who loved cars. Duncan Sleigh received the Navy Cross on that November day. When his platoon was ambushed crossing a field and a marine was seriously wounded, Duncan covered his body with his own. He saved the young man but died himself. Duncan Sleigh used to dream of opening a restaurant and bar in Boston.

And just last year I remembered him when I was in Vietnam. I found the field, now rice paddies, between Hill 55 and Liberty Bridge, an area the Marines called Dodge City, where Duncan died. Less than two miles from where his classmate Billy Smoyer died less than 4 months earlier. I buried in Duncan's field a small token cut-out of New Hampshire with Dartmouth starred. I placed on it a small Semper Fidelis sticker—the Marine Corps slogan, “Always Faithful. “ I covered the spot with dirt I had taken with me from the Dartmouth Green. I did the same thing in the rice paddy where Billy died, placing there a Dartmouth hockey puck.

This past September Coach Teevens asked me to speak to the football team before they went down to Washington for the Georgetown game. They were going to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I told them about the Dartmouth men on the Wall and gave them a sheet with the location of each name.

I also said to them that sometimes people say football is like war. I urged them never ever to think that. War is *never* a game and football must *always* be a game. And anyone who ever doubts this need only stand in this stadium tonight and watch the young men at play, hard and aggressively, but at play, in the same space where 74 years ago Stubbie Pearson played. And then come down the steps and look over the names here. Think of each as a

student. Find Charles Pearson of the Class of 1942. These were young men who went to war and never again would play any game. War is not a game.

Here in this facility we have the wonderful sculpture of Dimitri Gerakaris and I commend him for his evocative art. A wonderful addition to this Memorial. This sculpture down to the right of the Memorial Arch, echoes Richard Hovey's line, "The Hill Wind Knows their Names." We of Dartmouth hope so. Knowing and remembering these names is our task as well. Think of them and remember them.

In 2009 on Veterans Day I spoke at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall. I concluded my remarks with a call to join in what is a commitment of mine:

*Casualties of war cry out to be known—as persons, not as abstractions called casualties nor as numbers entered into the books, and not only as names chiseled into marble or granite. ...*

*... We need to ensure that here, in this place of memory, lives as well as names are recorded. Lives with smiling human faces, remarkable accomplishments, engaging personalities, and with dreams to pursue. We do this for them, for history, and for those in the future who will send the young to war.*

Our task is to continue to do this.  
Thank you

*James Wright  
Memorial Field Rededication  
November 6, 2015*