

# Dore Ways

A forum for exchanging ideas

## From the Editor

*What we were and what we have become.*

**T**HE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY IS ACCUSTOMED TO STABILITY. With only seven chancellors in its 129-year history, change occurs, but it does so slowly, over time, graciously.

Of course that's not always the case. I was reminded of one such period recently while walking across campus with Rev. James Lawson, who is featured on this issue's cover. As we walked, he pointed out differences on the campus from when he was a student more than 40 years ago: A new building here. Dramatic public artwork there. Groups of students everywhere we turned. He liked what he saw, especially the number of students of color. Lawson, in his day at Vanderbilt, stood at the center of the desegregation controversy—in fact, he was forced from the University because of his work for desegregation.

I didn't ask Rev. Lawson if he was surprised that *Vanderbilt Magazine* was telling his story after all these years. But it's a story worth telling; it stands at the heart of what we were as an institution and what we have become. And it's a testament to change, even when the value of that change was lost in the controversy of the moment.

With this issue, change has come to *Vanderbilt Magazine*. We live in a world saturated with media, a world that demands your attention and that places demands on your time. In spite of this, we're still delivering this magazine to your mailbox; in fact, we've increased our circulation to more than 100,000 so that all alumni of Vanderbilt receive *Vanderbilt Magazine*. That's because we believe it is important for you to know the faculty and students of Vanderbilt University, to understand the research, scholarship, and patient care that have earned this institution an international reputation.

We want to offer you something different from the alumni magazine many of you have received over the years, something that justifies spending an evening with us. So we've rethought *Vanderbilt Magazine*. Editorially, we've added departments and commissioned more ambitious feature stories. Graphically, we've partnered with J Porter, one of the best magazine designers in the business, to create a contemporary, lively design. We want to give you more in each issue—better writers, photographers and illustrators and more engaging stories—maybe provoke and surprise you too.

We're proud of our redesign, the first step in what the new *Vanderbilt Magazine* can be. Now we need to hear from you. Tell us what you think—what you like and what you don't like. You can write us at the editorial offices or e-mail me directly at [ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu).

KEN SCHEXNAYDER

## From the Reader

### Yellow Leaves

YOU ARE TO BE COMMENDED for recognizing the brilliance and insightful truths found in Wayne Christenson's observations ["Yellow Leaves," fall, 2001] on the nature of our support and love for a team that seldom wins. Mr. Christenson is to be congratulated for writing a piece that made me really look forward to Reunion 2003.

Over the past 28 years, my career in film and TV has kept me away from Nashville and the possibility of attending Vanderbilt sporting events. Still every Sunday morning found me weeding my way through page after page on the ACC, to look for the Saturday results of the Vanderbilt football or basketball games. "Why have I done this?" I've often mused to myself. Now, I know why.

There is simply a sense of satisfaction to be realized from trying, or watching other kin try, to succeed against seemingly insurmountable odds. Occasionally, the joyful miracle does occur. It was this basic motivator that kept me running, while being left in the dust by UT's semipro tracksters. It's just part of life. We deal with it, love it for what it is, and move on.

Please convey my regards and thanks to Mr. Christenson, and tell him to please keep on writing.

JOHN WADE, BA'73  
(VU TRACK, '69 & '70)  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

### Cannibalism

THE ARTICLE "CANNIBALISM REVISITED" in the spring 2002 issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine* is an eye-opening look at what is being taught and written by Vanderbilt professors today.

As a loyal alumna, I had trusted Vanderbilt to uphold high academic standards and quality scholarship that would stand firm against the prevailing atmosphere of polit-



ical correctness that has crept into other universities. Unfortunately, Professor Beth Conklin's statement that "cannibalism can have positive meanings and motives" is moral and cultural relativism at its worst. I am very disappointed to see that it has infiltrated the teaching there.

Through the ages, cannibalism has been universally and rightly condemned as a pagan and barbaric practice by western civilization. Vanderbilt has historically held to its founding as a Judeo-Christian, western civilization based university, and it is very sad to see it descend into a values-neutral curriculum, which is antithetical to the true liberal arts education that Vanderbilt has always been known for.

Thank you for the glimpse into the "new" Vanderbilt.

LUCY HUNTER WASHBURN, BA'76  
Dallas, Texas

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SPLENDID SPRING ISSUE. It is hard to put down, especially the conflicting views of capital punishment that I have never seen presented so clearly and forcefully.

I want to raise a question about the shorter piece, "Cannibalism Revisited." Professor Conklin describes how the Amazonian Wari' tribe continued "participating in funerals in which cannibalism was practiced." She could have looked much closer to home to the regular and frequent participation of Christians in the ritual cannibalism of eating their founder—for Protestants in their symbolic communion service, for Roman Catholics in their more literal eucharist. We are told, "Take, eat: this is my body" and "Drink: this is my blood poured out for you." I should like to know how our Divinity School explains such important cannibalistic practices. Do we really differ very much from the Wari'?

WILLIAM B. HUNTER, MA'39, PhD'46  
Greensboro, North Carolina

## Capital Punishment

I THINK THAT YOU ARE ADDRESSING the wrong question in your article "A Question of Justice."

The question should be, "Are prisons an appropriate punishment for anything?" or "Prisons are cruel and unusual punishment!"

We take people and isolate them from all of the positive influences of society such as family, friends, churches, social events, etc. These people we place with the worst of society such as thieves, addicts, rapists, murderers, child abusers, etc., and we expect them to get a positive set of values. How can this be when they live in fear for their lives?

What message does this give to children who visit a parent in prison? How do we explain to a child how their parent being in prison is for the betterment of society and then expect that child to openly accept their parent back into society? What stigmatism is placed upon a child who has a parent that is a convict?

Nor does the release from prison on parole release them from the effect of the system. The parolee enters into a voluntary servitude. Few people will employ a convicted felon for a responsible position. Most are reduced to working at minimum wage (poverty level) and menial tasks. Many resort to crime to make a living wage (over 50 percent of people released on parole are back in the system within three years). In addition, a parole officer visits periodically and everybody knows the parole officer.

It is my belief that if we did away with prisons and jails, the death penalty would not be a question. The Jewish code in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy did not have prison as a choice. There were cities of refuge for an accused to flee to for safety. This was also a city where the judicial and the clergy (they were one) lived. I doubt there was much delay in a trial or in implementing the sentence.

It has long been known that a questionnaire can get the answer that is wanted if it is worded in the correct manner. The question should be: When are we going to take the information we learned from Pavlov's dogs and apply them in a meaningful way to humans? Or: When are we going to stop treating humans like dangerous animals?

The only group that wants to see its clientele dead is the undertakers!

JAMES M. JOHNSON  
Columbus, Georgia

USUALLY IT IS A JOY TO FIND the Vanderbilt magazine in my mailbox. Not today. Not with its cover, not with the articles inside that attempt to politically correct preceding graduates.

For over a dozen years I have taught criminal justice in high school. One requirement of all the students is an essay fully presenting the pros and cons of the death penalty. Then they are to express their personal opinions and the reasons they hold them. Girl or boy, black or white, they all support the death penalty. (The "Electric Chair Quilt" is not art.)

Yes, it should be our legacy, but not only that of Vanderbilt, but of the United States.

So we do not "decline and fall" as did the Roman Empire from rot within.

The article on "Terrorism in America" is answered by the concluding paragraph of "Are Civil Liberties at Risk?" The government's response is appropriate to the threat.

In another article, a reference was made to the female student

who in 1994 was offended by images in Don Evans's class. The article mentioned the pain inflicted on him and his family. I hope she was able to transfer her credits at Vanderbilt's expense to a university where decency prevailed.

Vanderbilt has grown in endowment, and in number of buildings and students. However, it appears to have lost the way down which Mims, Davidson, and Chaffin led their students.

All change is not for the better.

MARY W. DAVIS, BA'50  
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**Letters are always welcome** in response to contents of the magazine. We reserve the right to edit for length, style and clarity. Send signed letters to the Editor, VANDERBILT MAGAZINE, VU Station B 357703, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37235-7703, or via e-mail to [ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu).