

Dore Ways

A forum for exchanging ideas

From the Editor

Gift horse

IT SEEMED LIKE SUCH A GREAT IDEA FOR A MAGAZINE STORY: highlight some gifts Vanderbilt has given the world. I'd send out a few broadly targeted e-mails, make three or four phone calls, and—*voilà!*—a mountain of fodder for an engaging feature. “The story would write itself,” I told GayNelle Doll, *Vanderbilt Magazine*'s associate editor.

Well, not quite. I was right in one sense; the response was tremendous—e-mails, phone calls, envelopes piled up in a matter of days. But then what? We simply didn't have space in the magazine to print everything, which begged the question: Where do we draw the line? At 100 gifts, 50 gifts, even fewer? For that matter, who draws that line? So we huddled, we sorted, resorted, and ultimately decided to feature 20 gifts that we believed were representative of the many suggestions we received, and of the significance and sometimes serendipity surrounding events, discoveries and phenomena that help shape the world and our experience of it.

I hope the story, which begins on page 42, will offer some surprises. Who would have thought that Vanderbilt researchers conducted the basic science responsible for Viagra's benefit to thousands of men? Or that Alternative Spring Break, a community-service program that engages students at colleges and universities across the nation, originated at Vanderbilt? For that matter, who would have imagined that fields as diverse as immunology, literature and economics were transformed by “gifts” made by members of the Vanderbilt community?

These gifts are the fruits of our varied labors at Vanderbilt, and they are available to the world. I suppose this makes Vanderbilt a gift horse. We give what we have and what we've learned. Then we build on that knowledge and give again. But that's the nature of a great university and the faculty, students, alumni and staff who make up that institution. We generate new knowledge and we share it—with our students and with our regional, national and global neighbors.

When I came to Vanderbilt a little more than two years ago, I knew about the University's accomplishments—the Fugitives, Nobel laureates, Dr. Shumway, to name a few—and I understood the potential Vanderbilt had to offer the world. Publishing this issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine* has reinforced what I already knew and given fuel to what I imagined. I hope it does so for you.

KEN SCHEXNAYDER

From the Reader

A Question of Ethics

I read with interest the article on Bart Victor, the Cal Turner Professor of Moral Leadership at the Owen School [Spring issue, “In Class: What Doth It Profit a Man?” p. 30]. The article touches on topics covered in his class, such as corporate responsibility, but doesn't tackle the basic problem of “ethics” in business: that there is no such thing as ethics in business. Business is governed by laws. Thus, business activity is either legal or illegal. Ethics, however, are separate from law and are derived from independent rules developed and enforced by a licensing body (e.g., Rules of Professional Conduct promulgated and enforced a state supreme court to create ethics and ethical standards for attorneys in that jurisdiction). No independent licensing body or bodies exist in business that both govern and have the power to take away an individual's right to engage in that business based merely on the individual's “ethical” conduct. Simply, the activity of the business person is either legal or illegal.

For example, a widget salesman may legally engage in a consensual sexual relationship with a customer where that sexual relationship did not exist prior to the business relationship. No independent licensing body will take away the salesman's right to continue to sell widgets because of the sexual relationship. If a doctor engages in the same conduct with a patient, he risks both public sanction and loss of licensure, preventing him from rendering medical services in the future. Businessmen have no license that can be taken away. Rather, only their freedom can be taken if convicted of a violation of law. Even if convicted and imprisoned, after the person serves his sentence, he can start another business. No license required. No ethics governing his conduct.

“Business ethics” are better defined and discussed as morals. The title of Professor Victor's chair, Professor of Moral Leadership, recognizes that “business ethics” are, in fact, mere moral conduct. Teaching morals certainly has value and a place within any business school curriculum. The title of “business ethics,” however, is misplaced. There is no such thing as ethics in business.

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The Search for God

I was intrigued, to say the least, by the articles in our Spring 2003 edition related to spiritual issues: “The Search for God at Vanderbilt” [p. 46] and “Seeking God Against the Grain” [p. 53], both written by Ray Waddle.

In “Against the Grain,” Mr. Waddle uses quotes from the Divinity School dean, the director of development and alumni relations, and a student to pretty much define what the Divinity School hopes to accomplish: “opposition to racism, sexism and homophobia”; a “framework of progressivism”; “the religious conviction to speak out for justice, and the consoling miracle of community.” Along with other kindred souls, the student takes part in anti-war demonstrations and protests against capital punishment. The school is eclectic, ecumenical, answering not to any “Christian” denominational tie since 1914, and for almost 90 years directed by the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. A vast melting pot of religious, social and even political views, swirling around in its diversity and pluralism, trying to produce—what? Ministers, or chaplains, social servants, lawyers, teachers who know a degree-full of “divinity.” Waddle subtitles his piece “... Pluralistic Approach to Theology.” The dean says, “We see our preparations as extraordinarily realistic for the *real world*.” Another student says, “We are prepared here to ask better questions.”

The other article, “The Search for God at Vanderbilt,” outlines another approach and tells me, anyway, that a growing number of Vanderbilt students are joining “communities” dedicated to examining the Bible as God’s written revelation to mankind—communities under the heading “Christian” or “of Christ.” Such groups did not exist when I attended Vanderbilt in 1948–50; or if they did, I certainly was not aware of them, and didn’t care. The world was “real” back then, too, concerning the vital issues of life, but religion was for Sunday. It took a personal tragedy to ring my bell and cause me to search for God, and find Him—not in pluralism, or diversity, or ecumenism, but in His written word, through the words and the person of Jesus.

It isn’t pluralistic, or diverse, and it surely is “narrow” for Jesus of Nazareth to say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.” I didn’t say that. Jesus did. Any argument against it need not be directed my way, but at Him. The question the Divinity School, and the faculty, the students at Vanderbilt, and every living human being need to answer is, Was He truly resurrected? If He was not, Christianity is a gigantic hoax. But if He was, then we search for, approach and meet God through a faith in His Son, not in diversity or community. We meet Him one at a time, all alone, just us and Him.

People at Vanderbilt and all over this planet have an adversary whom scripture calls the prince

of darkness, and as long as he can get us focused on pluralism, diversity, protests against capital punishment (which was instituted by God) and homophobia, etc., we will not examine with intellectual honesty the claims Jesus Christ made for Himself. I’m not referring to denominationalism or some religious “tradition.” Jesus is who He says He is, or He is a liar, a lunatic, or just a legend. Which is He? That is a second question every person should examine and give answer to. If He was resurrected, He is deity. One wonders why a divinity school, teaching about divine things, doesn’t major on those two questions. Could there be any better questions?

Thank the God of scripture for the Vanderbilt students who are delving into these questions now. How I wish I had done so at their ages.

MANNING KIRBY JR., ’52
Knoxville, Tenn.

In the Spring issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine*, Ray Waddle wrote a very interesting article, “The Search for God at Vanderbilt.” In the article Mr. Waddle discusses the breakdown of religions represented at Vanderbilt. He erroneously lists the United Church of Christ under religious minorities. It is a mainline Protestant religion, formed in 1957 when the Congregational Church (the church of the Pilgrims) joined with, among others, the Evangelical and Reformed Church (German Protestant church).

Even though the UCC has been around for only 46 years, the churches under its umbrella have been here for hundreds of years. Therefore, I feel that even though there is a small percentage of UCC students on campus, it is more correct to list it with the Protestant groups instead of “other religious minorities,” which it clearly is not. Thank you for this opportunity to correct this misinformation.

VIRGINIA PLACE MYER, BSN’75
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Thanks

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the *Vanderbilt Magazine* for two excellent articles in the Spring edition.

Paul Kingsbury did a fine job honoring Professor Bart Victor for teaching our students that there is a right and a wrong. Our son is an economics major at Vanderbilt, and it thrilled us to read about a professor who cares more about honesty and ethics than making money at any cost. A man’s character and integrity are his most valuable assets. Our country and corporate offices badly need leaders who are honest, moral and ethical. Vanderbilt is seeking the high road.

We are most grateful our son attends a great university where both business ethics are taught in the classrooms and the “Search for God” is pursued by students and faculty alike. Ray Waddle’s

article was outstanding.

It was a huge factor for our son in deciding which college to attend. Vanderbilt has so many wonderful religious groups that help students grow in their faith. We had heard of the RUF [Reformed University Fellowship] from alumni and parents all over the country, and the positive influence that group made in their lives. We are grateful for the Rev. Brian Habig’s leadership and the time he invests in our students to help them with their spiritual journeys.

Thank you, Vanderbilt, for providing many groups for our students to pursue their spiritual goals and growth. Thank you also for hiring men and women of character, like Bart Victor, to teach our students.

We enjoy your fine magazine.

DR. AND MRS. KENNETH BECKETT II
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More on Lawson

As a Vanderbilt alumnus and as a longtime former Nashville resident, I have always been a strong admirer of James Lawson.

I wish you had devoted more attention to Lawson’s earlier pre-Vanderbilt activism, particularly his refusal to be drafted to fight in the Korean War. When he went to jail in 1951 as a conscientious objector, he put the nonviolent activism he had learned beforehand to good use by forcing President Truman to order the desegregation of the Federal Bureau of Prisons System. By putting his own life and safety to extreme risk in the U.S. prison system to pursue simple justice, he prepared himself for his future struggles in Nashville almost 10 years later during the lunch-counter sit-ins.

The fact that Lawson took on the U.S. Cold War establishment in the early 1950s by challenging the legitimacy of the Korean War is a very important part of the history of U.S. radical pacifism. It is a shame that most histories of U.S. pacifism and of conscientious objection continue to skip from the World War II period to the Vietnam War period, ignoring the Korean War and its opponents altogether. Maybe that is why the prominent East Asian historian at the University of Chicago, Bruce Cumings, refers to Korea as “the unknown war” instead of as “the forgotten war.”

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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 e-mail: ken.schexnayder@vanderbilt.edu.