

**Chairs' Corner – April 2006**  
**Student Public Art**

TO: UW Foundation, Campaign Cabinet, Deans, Development & Alumni Staff  
FROM: William H. Gates, Chair, and Orin C. Smith, Vice Chair, UW Foundation

Dear Friends,

There is now a happy conclusion, we believe, to the recent dust-up about a proposed UW memorial to Col. Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, UW '34, the renowned World War II fighter pilot and Medal of Honor recipient. The UW student senate, having split down the middle on this issue in early February (with a tie-breaking "no" vote cast by the senate president), voted decisively on April 4 to support a memorial to all UW recipients of the Medal of Honor. Between the two votes came a furor of public commentary, much of it outraged, some of it ugly.

As President Mark Emmert has written in the Daily, the episode taught some valuable lessons. But it also spread a lot of acrimony and a fair amount of misinformation. Since you may still be getting questions and comments from friends, we would like to fill in some details.

Late last year, student senator Andrew Everett approached ASUW (Associated Students of the University of Washington) president Lee Dunbar with the idea of a senate resolution requesting a memorial to honor Col. Boyington. The two students had been in classes together, and Dunbar calls Everett "our resident military history buff," who had come to admire Boyington from reading about him. Dunbar helped Everett with the resolution and was a co-sponsor when it came up for a vote on February 7.

A word about the UW student senate. Senators are representatives from residence groups and student organizations, and they perform the valuable democratic function of canvassing, debating, and giving official formulation to student opinion. But senate resolutions are just that: expressions of opinion. They are not binding even on the ASUW's elected board, and they are certainly not official acts of the University of Washington. This distinction sometimes got lost in the ensuing controversy.

If you have read or heard accounts of the February 7 senate meeting, when Everett's resolution came up for a vote, you know two things: that the resolution to honor Col. Boyington was defeated, and that a couple of student senators made clueless, dismissive comments about Marines and "rich white men." (Boyington was in fact part Sioux and did not prosper after the war.) When minutes of the meeting were e-mailed (by another senator) to KVI radio host Kirby Wilbur, the stage was set for the public uproar that followed. The gist of the story, repeated widely in the media and blogs, was that "the UW" had insulted a military hero and had revealed the historical ignorance of its students and the "lefty bias" of its faculty and administration. "Incoherent jerks" and "academic morons" were among the kinder terms we saw in the blogs.

Again, some detail and context are in order. When you actually read the minutes, you see that the two offensive (and therefore highly quotable) remarks are not representative of the debate as a whole. (Those students, by the way, subsequently apologized for the wording of their remarks.) You see questions about the logistics of the memorial and concerns about failing to honor other veterans. You see that the senate rejected an amendment to the resolution that would have deleted the Medal of Honor citation, with its details of Col. Boyington's courageous military exploits. You see one senator reminding his colleagues that World War II was a very different conflict from the controversial war that we are now fighting. You see that, in the end, 45 senators voted for the resolution and 45 against, with 10 abstaining.

Lee Dunbar missed the discussion because of other duties but returned to the senate meeting shortly after the vote. "I tried to find out the reasons people voted as they did," he says, "and what I heard most often, especially from people who had talked about this beforehand with their constituents, was that the resolution was not inclusive enough." So this month's reworked resolution included all 5 UW Medal of Honor recipients, with provision for future recipients as well—and it passed, 61 to 14, with 13 abstentions.

No doubt there were mixed motives among the UW senators--and among those who raised such an outcry about the original vote. We sympathize with men and women who fought for this country and feel that their service and sacrifice have been scorned. (For the record, Bill is a veteran.) We understand that, in this age of instant communication, the most dramatic elements of a story can outrun the more complex reality. We have more trouble with the kind of "gotcha" mentality that seizes on and simplifies events to promote a particular agenda. And the language and attitudes that turn up in some blogs and e-mails are, in our view, simply beyond the pale.

The memorial, we believe, will be built. Lee Dunbar reports that many people want to be involved. The UW also comes out of this with a new Pappy Boyington Scholarship Fund for Marine Corps veterans and their children, suggested by alumni and friends, to which \$18,500 had already been contributed as of April 3. There have also been contributions to our three strong ROTC units. And Dunbar has been hearing from campus veterans and ROTC members who want to be student senators. "One of the things we have learned from all this," he says, "is that a lot of people are paying attention to today's students. What's said here goes beyond campus."

All in all, a surprisingly positive outcome for an episode nobody enjoyed.

Bill and Orin

Looking Back

- As of March 31, 2006, our **total Campaign giving since July 1, 2000, reached \$1,705,765,493** toward our Campaign goal of \$2 billion.
- The March Report of Contributions Notes is attached and contains fundraising details.

Looking Ahead

- **Friday, April 28, 2006**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Washington Weekend** April 27-29, 2006. Visit <http://www.washington.edu/alumni/weekend/> for more details.
- **Friday, September 8, 2006**, Foundation Board Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee, 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, September 8, 2006**, Fifth Annual Recognition Gala, Suzzallo Library.
- **Friday, January 26, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, April 27, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting. Washington Weekend April 26-28, 2007.
- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Foundation Board Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee, 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Sixth Annual Recognition Gala, Suzzallo Library.