

Action and Reaction

BY JAYNE M. IAFRATE, EDITOR

Today is Veteran’s Day and the sounds of sirens and marching bands float above the Norton landscape. The turnout at this year’s parade looks larger than usual, despite temperatures in the 30s and the news that a commercial jet has crashed in Queens, New York. It’s as if the spectators are seeking some comfort in the familiar procession of local heroes—military and civilian—Cub Scouts and twirlers in all their sequined glory. It all seems very normal.

Of course, “normal” is too subjective a modifier to apply to anything, even a hometown parade. Regardless, we all seem to be in search of it, as if our lives were normal before Sept. 11. “Normal” feels like some vague, unattainable ideal that fits too tightly around the collar and chokes creativity and diversity. Perhaps it’s more accurate to say that we’ve been shaken from the status quo, each of us forced to act and react to turmoil at home and around the world in ways few imagined before. Life hasn’t changed; we have.

Throughout the pages of this magazine, you’ll find the stories of action and reaction that have been emblematic of Wheaton students and graduates since the seminary’s inception in 1834. Most notable among these stories are the first-person accounts of Sept. 11 written by Renée L. Mangalo ’91, Elizabeth S. Morton ’91 and Ret Talbot ’93, starting on page 10. These young alums, along with the many others who penned eyewitness accounts for the college’s Web site (excerpted in Class Notes), remind us how far we’ve traveled during the past few months. Here’s wishing you a safe journey.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COEDUCATION

I enjoyed the *Quarterly* and hope others did as well. Straightforward, honest, unapologetic, clear—well done.

Michele M. Norman ’85

I read the *Quarterly* this morning over coffee and toast and think that it’s really excellent. I’m enjoying the reflections on Wheaton’s switch in 1988. I think the timing, in retrospect, was quite good in relation to the evolution of the feminist movement. It was time for institutions like Wheaton to take the next step and involve men—diversify. I think, rather than the timing of the switch, it was the delivery of the news that traumatized students, in addition to the lack of student/faculty involvement in the process. Yet, [administrators] did such a great job. What a tough time that was! People couldn’t even joke about it. I remember a guy from some paper interviewed Dennis Leary the first week of coeducation at Wheaton. The journalist asked Dennis, “Why did you come here?” As a joke, Dennis replied, “For the chicks, man.” That added fuel to the fire, but it was intended as a joke. We’re still in



the process, though. While our standards have totally gone through the roof (it seems to me), it will be interesting to see how Wheaton maintains its historical legacy. I know I have a particular perspective because I was there during the transition and the “former” Wheaton is still fresh in my memory. This *Quarterly* is doing a nice job representing all the different class perspectives. I think Dale Marshall is doing a terrific job, and Communications is doing a stellar job at keeping alums engaged and informed.

Jessie Dill Cousins ’92

As I said at the time of the decision—as the mother of a 4-year-old daughter—I did not see that her future would include a woman’s college in 2001. I felt very strongly that the decision was a wise one if the future was an important factor. I wonder how many of the still-angry alums have encouraged their daughters to consider single-sex colleges. My daughter had visited Wheaton often and I dragged her to look at Barnard on a trip to New York City, but when the

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