

Notes from the President

In Appreciation of Our Veterans — Veterans Day 2014

11/10/2014

Veterans Day 2014 is yet another opportunity for a grateful nation to pay homage to our American military veterans, men and women who have played a vital role in our country's history, and who are also a treasured part of Georgia Tech as students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

This holiday was once called Armistice Day, to commemorate the anniversary of the armistice in 1918 that ended World War I. At our ceremony Nov. 11 on Tech Lawn, you'll hear the Honorary Eleven Whistle Blows that commemorate the end of World War I at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

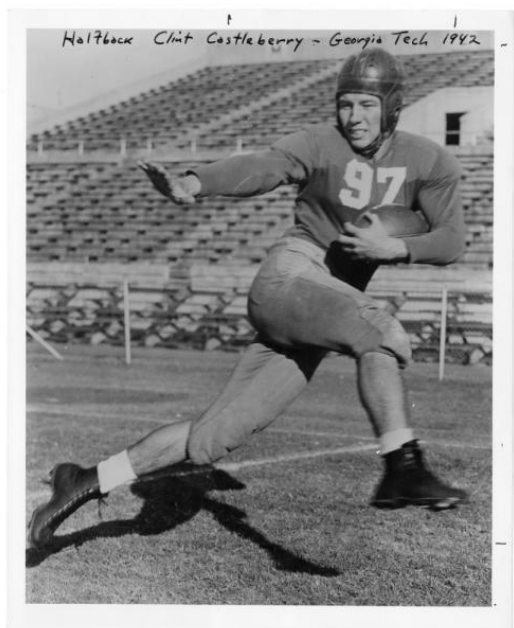
You might have seen some of our veterans out on campus, or maybe in one of your classes. Their numbers aren't large — we have 208 veterans enrolled this fall and another 300 or so on faculty and staff — but their contributions to our country have been huge. They have often been America's first responders when there is danger around the world. Unlike most of us as we go about our daily duties, our veterans can face existential threats, ranging from hostile fire to deadly diseases.



Georgia Tech President Marion L. Brittain (fourth from right) hosted Sir Winston Churchill (third from right), his daughter Diana Churchill, and military dignitaries at Grant Field in 1932.

Georgia Tech's history is intertwined with that of our military. Two Civil War veterans, Major John Fletcher Hanson and Nathaniel Edwin Harris, were driving forces behind the founding of the Institute in 1885. They saw the industrial advances that were being made in the North and believed strongly that technological training was necessary in a society that was primarily agrarian.

In 1916, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or ROTC, was established on campus and produced a steady supply of trained young military personnel not long after the beginning of "The Great War," World War I. In the years that followed, freshmen and sophomores were required to participate. Mandatory ROTC service ended at Georgia Tech in 1965. Today, it provides training for only an elite few, but for those it's a valuable path to a military career.



Halfback Clint Castleberry achieved legendary status in his one season at Georgia Tech, earning All-America honors before losing his life in 1943 as a military pilot during World War II.

On a lighter note, the first football game ever played on Grant Field was a 19-0 Georgia Tech victory over a team from Fort McPherson on Sept. 27, 1913. In 1932, legendary British leader Winston Churchill, himself a British Army combat veteran, addressed students and faculty on that same Grant Field, stressing the importance of military preparedness.

One of the Institute's sports heroes is Clint Castleberry, whose No. 19 is the only football number ever retired by Georgia Tech. Only 5-foot-9 and 155 pounds, he finished third as a freshman in the 1942 Heisman Trophy balloting. One sportswriter wrote that "he ran like a crazed jackrabbit." Freshmen could play because rosters had been depleted by so many young men leaving for military service. Castleberry enlisted in the Army Air Force after his freshman year, intending to return and resume his football career after he'd completed his military service, but a B-26 Marauder he co-piloted took off from Liberia on Nov. 7, 1944, and was never seen again. His number is on prominent display in Bobby Dodd Stadium.



General Philip Breedlove, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), is a 1977 Georgia Tech graduate.

And today, General Philip Breedlove, a Georgia Tech alumnus, is the Supreme Commander of NATO. He has a little influence, so last summer he was able to arrange for 240 Georgia Tech-

Lorraine students from our French campus in Metz to bus to Normandy and participate in the 70th anniversary commemoration of D-Day.

Veterans have had a significant impact on Georgia Tech throughout our history. Our curriculum changed dramatically during World War II, and after the war there was a huge influx of veterans to the campus, largely due to the G.I. Bill. To meet the needs of an expected doubling of enrollment by the late 1940s, we undertook a massive campus expansion.

At the same time, Tech experienced an increase in research, transforming the Engineering Experiment Station. In 1944 Georgia Tech became the first public school in the South to create a Veterans Guidance Center to assist our servicemen and women in everything from entrance exams to counseling.

Diversity is an important tenet here at Tech, and that includes diversity of life experiences. Our veterans contribute to that diversity in many ways. With an average age of 27 for our veteran undergraduates and 34 for veteran graduate students, they are typically a bit older than our traditional students. They bring a rich background of life and work experiences to our campus that can enhance not only their education, but also enrich the educational experience of their fellow students.

At Georgia Tech, we're committed to our veterans and making sure that their on-campus needs are met. One hundred and eighty four of our 208 veterans enrolled are graduate students. Sixty-two of them are active-duty vets. Ninety-four have finished their service, 21 are in the Reserves, and seven are in the National Guard.

They value education, and they seem to like our OMS-CS program. Seventy-three of them, or 35 percent of our student-veteran population, are enrolled in that program. Our College of Business also enrolls a large number of veterans in its various MBA programs.



Third-year Ph.D. candidate Joshua Jarrell, a sergeant first class and senior medic in the Alabama National Guard, is in the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

One of our veterans is Joshua Jarrell, a third-year Ph.D. candidate in applied physiology who's also a sergeant-first class and senior medic in the Alabama National Guard. He's got 16 years of service and two combat tours in Iraq under his belt. Last week, Joshua delivered a keynote speech during the National Science Foundation's annual "Saluting Veterans in STEM" symposium in Arlington, Virginia. We're very proud of him and honored that he's here at Georgia Tech.

We're also proud of our Veterans Education Training and Transition Program (VET2), which we hope will help lower the 13.9 percent unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans in Georgia. It's a four-week program offered by Georgia Tech at no cost to service members. The program is open to Active duty, Reserve or National Guard personnel with at least four years of honorable service and leadership experience. The VET2 program is one of the first in the nation of its kind that ties professional education with experiential learning.

Other points of pride:

- Georgia Tech is the second-biggest recipient of Department of Defense research funds (after Johns Hopkins).
- We have an active Military Affinity Group.
- Our cutting-edge research works on problems such as traumatic brain injury, regenerative medicine/tissue engineering for wounded service members/veterans, prosthetics and orthotics and countless innovations for virtually all parts of the military.
- We will continue to partner in research, education, and community outreach related to veterans' concerns.

Some of you run the Tyler Brown Pi Mile on our campus. Almost everyone who studies or works here at some point travels on it. You might have noticed the navy-blue-and-gold circular plaques that mark it. It's named for former SGA President Tyler Brown (MGT 01, HTS 01), who was killed Sept. 14, 2004, while on active duty in Iraq. The Pi Mile was dedicated to Tyler in April 2005. One of his major goals while in office was to implement a safe, well-lit running trail on Georgia Tech's campus. Tyler was an ROTC member who would run early in the morning. He wanted to make running on campus safe at all hours.

We honor our veterans on this Veterans Day, and that's wonderful and fitting. But when the parades and celebrations have ended, let's remember that every day they represent us here and abroad with a deep sense of duty that binds them together and also inspires them to serve as a shield for all Americans. They are both warriors and peacekeepers. They carry this burden so that we may all pursue our shared values of liberty, justice, and self-determination. This is a debt that can never be fully repaid.

G. P. "Bud" Peterson
President, Georgia Tech