

A proud Boston College widow honors quiet heroism of George Nicholson '32

On May 9, 1945, Major George Humphrey Nicholson '32, was stationed in New Guinea. While his friends were at the Officers' Club celebrating VE Day, an exhilarated Major Nicholson expressed his joy, pride and relief in a 15-page handwritten letter to Alice, his wife.

After reviewing the history of the European campaign, he concluded that: "More than the strategic and tactical victories, I value the triumph of the human element in the face of physical and psychological adversity. The unmilitary, ice-cream-eating, automobile-soft Americans waged war on a scale never equaled in this world. Green, scared, they went into battle and quickly became hardened veterans. They saved our nation." He closed with love and a promise to write her soon with his thoughts on the war still raging in the Pacific.

He never got the chance. Four days later, Major Nicholson was dead, killed in an airplane crash.

Alice Nicholson has always treasured that last letter, and her husband's deep commitment to Boston College. Over the years, she has honored both.

In 1946, she included a bequest in her will endowing a scholarship in her husband's name, to go to an undergraduate taking a major or minor in theology, and who hopefully would continue to be involved in Catholic lay activity. Most recently, as a member of the Philomatheia Society for the spouses of deceased alumni, she decided to use a portion of her bequest to establish a charitable gift annuity which will further honor the memory of George Nicholson, and provide her with a source of income for life. She has also donated her

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Nicholson: "triumph of the human element"

husband's last letter to the Boston College archives.

"It was important for me to do this, because Boston College was important to George," she says. Although he earned graduate degrees from Harvard and Boston University, Alice Nicholson credits his four years as a scholarship student at Boston College High School and four years on the Heights with honing his mind and shaping his character. In return, his contemporaries and teachers remembered him fondly. At a campus me-

morial service for fallen classmates held after the war, George Nicholson was singled out as "Mr. BC Himself."

He merited the accolade because he represented Boston College so well, says Alice Nicholson. She recalls the early days of their marriage when George was stationed at a military base in Georgia. The few Catholics in the area had lived under the cloud of Ku Klux Klan harassment. Even on the base, Catholics were a novelty.

George "never wore his religion on his sleeve," she says, but he was always ready and willing to respond to the questions posed by fellow officers curious about Catholic beliefs and practices. "He answered gently and was quietly persuasive, as was his nature. The training he received from the Jesuits at Boston College and BC High School served him well."

ADVANCE

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