

*The Rev. John J. Fitzgerald, C.S.C., the associate director of Campus Ministry and the Class of 1983's Senior Fellow, is leaving Notre Dame in August. In this essay, Fitzgerald shares his memories with his "fellows" among the University's newest group of alumni.*

**by John Fitzgerald '65**

"Preserve your memories," Simon and Garfunkel advise us—"a time of innocence, a time of confidences." I find myself heeding their advice on this lush and lovely campus which is eerie and quiet with all of you gone.

Nostalgia is said to be like a crazy old woman who hoards rags but throws away food. Many of my memories on these sultry July evenings are colored rags of questionable historical significance. Among them:

- A halftime show last fall when the stadium announcer declared, "We are all Hoosiers," and the whole student section turned toward the press box and loudly corrected him;
- A tropical Sunday night when the women of Farley and Breen-Phillips gathered for an outdoor liturgy and the opening hymn was obliterated by a stereo in a Zahm window blasting, "Good girls don't, but bad girls do";
- Rediscovering "good times rock and roll" at a Bruce Springsteen concert I reluctantly attended and didn't want to leave;
- Rejoicing with the men of Sorin after their first hall football victory in four years;
- Dodging eggs launched by outraged Reaganites at a South Quad rally protesting the President's 1981 honorary degree.

But not all the reminiscing is rag-hoarding. Along with the frivolous and whimsical, I have more profound recollections.

I remember an October day, burnished by the sun, when we took Bill Toohey to his rest, and found hope in recalling his eloquent preaching: "Death and hatred and despair will not have the last word."

I remember sharing the giddy excitement of victory in boycott referenda with



*Fitzgerald: "I remember soulful eyes looking for encouragement."*

those who played David to the Goliath of Campbell's, Libby's and Nestle's.

Like a recurring theme, I remember John's Easter gospel story of a fish breakfast on the beach, shared repeatedly with students on Sunday mornings at the conclusion of weekend retreats at Lake Michigan.

At countless Sunday night Masses I remember those eyes—soulful, searching and vulnerable—looking for encouragement for faith still young and fragile.

How often in the confessional at Sacred Heart and in my office at Badin seniors revealed fears about their ability to live with integrity in a compromised world where the towers are made not of ivory but of glass and steel.

And how many times I provided a sympathetic ear (and sometimes an absorbent shoulder) to young men and women struggling to realize their own worth and goodness in a competitive society that delivered harsher assessments. (If the "best and brightest" have such difficulty finding a healthy self-esteem, what must it be like for the disadvantaged?)

Especially I remember the Thursday night before commencement when we gathered for a "last visit" at Sacred Heart and took candles to the Grotto. Standing there in that warm, inviting cave—the rock to which Tom Dooley's heart and many others are "anchored"—I looked out and saw those same gentle eyes once again. As the Glee Club sang

the alma mater, many of those eyes glistened.

I wondered how many of you would be overwhelmed by the seductions of a mercenary and cynical world. I thought of Saint Paul's words to the young church at Rome: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold."

I wondered how many of you might someday be brought home in plastic bags from some foreign war, like too many alumni before you.

And I recalled Robert Kennedy's observation: "Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence; yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to change."

It is beautiful here as I write this. The warmth, the shrubs and the flowers for which we waited in vain throughout spring finally arrived just after you departed. But with all its natural beauty, the campus is strange and spooky without the youthful vitality, the spontaneity and enthusiasm for which it exists.

On this quiet night of remembrance, I recollect with you, from this lovely place, Alyosha's words from the very end of *The Brothers Karamazov*:

"Let us agree that we shall never forget one another. And whatever happens . . . remember how good it felt when we were all here together, united by a good and decent feeling, which made us better people, probably, than we would otherwise have been."