

# Loyalty: Affirmation Out of Pride and Love

By Judy Brennan

## **Loyalty.**

What does the word mean in the lingo of 1979, in the common vernacular, in the mind of the reasonable man? The word has become so overused that it has acquired a panoply of meanings: there is "product loyalty" and "loyalty" to a favorite sports team. But does this word, this concept, encompass nothing else?

Perhaps the concept became tarnished in the early 1950's. Most people knew within their hearts and minds that their loyalties were and would be to their nation, this "land of the free." Yet suddenly, without much freedom, they were required to take a loyalty oath and--deep within their souls--they realized that affirmation out of fear is a far different thing from affirmation out of pride and love.

**Is the idea of loyalty, so besmirched that it has become meaningless or trite? The answer must be no, but the answer is not resounding and not without qualifications.**

One loyalty not yet mentioned is loyalty to one's *alma mater*. In whom is this posited and how defined must it be temporally?

On a general level, one might say it should be present in the graduates and present students of a school. On a specific level, I contend it is indeed present in the graduates and students of Marshall-Wythe, but all too often it is hidden or suppressed. This school has given and continues to give us opportunities--through education and association--that we might not have had otherwise. If one feels compelled to comparisons, why not compare all those whose wishes to attend went

unfulfilled? Perhaps in them lay the core of our problem in definition, the trait of negativism that seems so pervasive. Nothing is accomplished but regrets, and regrets only serve to impede movement, progress, and dreams.

**Another group has the potential of loyalty: the students yet to be.** On their behalf, perhaps it is time to stimulate another plateau of loyalty, that posited in our legislature. We, as a state school, derive benefits from the legislature's actions, but are these benefits sufficient to fulfill the remarkable potential this institution had, has, and will have?

The tense of the previous verb provide the scope of time: loyalty is not momentary, but constant; not occasional, but consistent; not a matter of lip service, but one of commitment.

And how might this commitment be expressed? Surely money is one sign, but not the only sign. Contributions can come through the offer of time, the willingness to both voice one's own pride and compel others to feel and act similarly, the offering of services, the investment of creative thought. All are indicative of the loyalty germinating within each of us and waiting to flourish.

**To those who have already made such commitments, we thank you for your example.** To those who have wished for more, work to make your wishes into realities. For each of us, in this our bicentennial, let us strive to realize the loyalty we have and will have for Marshall-Wythe. Let this become an affirmation out of pride and love.