



*“We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.”*

*University Distinguished Professor Nikki Giovanni*

JOHN MCCORMICK

by Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger '69

On the morning of April 16, 2007, this campus experienced acts of horror so unspeakable and unimaginable that, even now, our minds cannot fully grasp them. The shooting tragedy that occurred has nonetheless irrevocably changed both our university and our nation.

Equally hard to imagine are the depths of profound and limitless sorrow felt by all members of the university community, particularly the families, friends, colleagues, and classmates of those who died here that day. They have lost sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, classmates, and professors in a sudden and senseless act of horrific violence, and they must learn to live with agonizing absences that will never be filled.

As a part of the larger Hokie family, we grieve alongside them, our hearts filled with sadness and sympathy. But no matter how painful our memories, we must forget neither those lost innocents nor the loved ones they left behind. This issue of *Virginia Tech Magazine* is dedicated to the victims of April 16.

In the aftermath of such tragedy, it is difficult to determine when it will be time to move ahead and how we will do so. Yet even as I write, I see that our campus sidewalks are crowded with those who have come to mourn and those who are here to learn. Students and faculty are back in their classrooms and their studies are important because teaching and learning are at the heart of this university and will be the foundation of its recovery.

My hope is that we will all learn much in the days and

months ahead as we undertake an open, sincere, and thorough analysis of all that has happened. We must learn from our experience and share our findings with the world to benefit the national discourse sparked by this tragedy—dialogue about laws, policies, protocols, and privacy and other issues. I have confidence that our review, as well as the commissions formed by both Gov. Tim Kaine and President George W. Bush, will yield answers that will benefit both Virginia Tech and society at large.

How will we move ahead? By relying on the spirit that the world has seen so clearly in the weeks since the tragedy, a sense of family that is virtually unheard of on other large campuses, a tie that binds Hokies new and old, here in Blacksburg or around the globe. That intangible Hokie spirit holds us together and will help us to survive and, in time, surmount this terrible tragedy. In the shelter of that spirit, we have found solace in one another's company, and even in the dark days that have followed April 16, we have rallied around our shared need to heal and have taken our first tentative steps together on the road to recovery and our path toward the future.

We at Virginia Tech form a special family, one defined not by a single tragic event but by our storied past, a community not frozen in the present but poised to invent our future. The events of April 16 have changed us, to be sure, but they have not—and will not—set us back. Today, we are pressing ahead with a renewed commitment to the university, a deeper understanding of the quality and depth of its character, and a steadfast resolve to excel so that we may honor the memory of those we have lost.

We will prevail. We are Virginia Tech. □