

February 23, 1971

Mr. Jack Clark
Sports Editor
Alameda Times Star
Alameda, California

Dear Jack:

I recently received the heart-breaking news that Bob De Celle, Jr., former Alameda High track star, was killed while fighting for his country in the Indo-China War.

I got to know Bob well when I was the track and cross country coach at Alameda High in the early sixties. Bob was just starting to make a name for himself as an outstanding athlete and citizen. I would like to take a few minutes of your time to talk about Bob Jr., for in my thirteen years of coaching Bob stands out above the hundreds of boys with whom I have been associated.

Bob, or "Roberto," as his friends called him, was the epitome of American manhood. He respected authority, was selfless, and loved God and his fellow man. He was gentle, courteous, and had a zest for living. He was devoted to his team, his school, his country.

I think I can best illustrate what kind of person Bob was by citing a single episode from his past. It happened in Bob's junior year, 1962, against a favored San Leandro track team. Because of injuries to two key sprinters on the Alameda team, Bob was asked to forsake his role as a miler and fill in for the sprints, broad jump, and relay...events he had never competed in before. Bob went on that day to almost single-handedly defeat San Leandro 57 to 36, by winning the 440 in 53.0, the long jump in 19'0, taking second in the 220, and running the key leg in deciding event of the day--the relay.

Bob went on to win many honors: school record holder in the 880, mile, and 2 mile; ACAL mile champion, All Northern California twice in cross country; Northern California Junior College champion in the mile, etc.

Bob won many honors in his 26 years, but what stands out in my mind is his willingness to give. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the good of the team in the close win over San Leandro in 1962. He was willing to sacrifice his life for his country when he volunteered for combat duty in 1971.

His life was short, but full and profound. He was a credit to his family, to the city of Alameda, and to America. I would have been proud to have had him as my own son.

Sincerely,

Plato Yanicks, Track Coach
Menlo-Atherton High
Atherton, California