

GRADUATION

11 June 1963

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INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

GRADUATION

11 June 1963

ADMIRAL ROSE: Good morning. Let me first welcome all of our guests to our graduation exercises. We know that you share with us the pride and sense of accomplishment that we have in this class.

As you know, this is the largest graduating class in the history of the Industrial College. We expect that our classes will remain at this size.

These graduates are leaving here today much as service people leave any duty station. Any pangs of regret they may feel at leaving are lost in their anticipation of their next assignment. On the other hand, we of the staff and faculty are not leaving--we have worked closely with these graduates, we have traveled with them, and we have also been caught up in their anticipation as they built toward this day. Our job is to retain some of their enthusiasm, and use it next year.

To you members of the Class of 1963--you have been an exciting class to work with, and I hope that you will remember your stay here with as much pleasure and satisfaction as we most certainly shall. In keeping with Navy custom may I wish you all "Fair winds and following seas."

Now, I would like to read to you a letter from General Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

To the graduating Class of 1963, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D. C.

I am happy to have this opportunity to extend to the 1963 graduating class of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces the sincere congratulations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as my personal regards. During the past year you have had a priceless opportunity to

concentrate intensively upon your personal development, and by study and reflection to add to your intellectual and professional readiness for higher tasks. As you go forth to your new assignments, you will carry with you the added training and experience which you have derived from the instruction at this world-renowned institution. You, as individuals, and the service as a whole, will benefit from your having studied here.

My best wishes to you all for continued and increasing contributions to the service of your country.

Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

One feature of this graduation exercise is unusual. The graduates will not be handed diplomas on the platform. Your diplomas are on your desks in your offices, all framed and ready to hang up.

We are exceptionally fortunate today to have as our speaker that rarest of men--a man who has risen to the top in his chosen profession, General Earle G. Wheeler, Chief of Staff, United States Army. In General Wheeler's case, the word "chosen" is most appropriate, for he enlisted and served for four years in the District of Columbia National Guard before his appointment to the Military Academy. You are all well aware of his more recent, and very important, assignments as Director of the Joint Staff, and Deputy Commander of all United States forces in Europe.

General Wheeler.

GENERAL WHEELER: I asked a knowledgeable colleague what he thought I should speak about on this occasion, and he offered the rather unoriginal suggestion that I should speak about 20 minutes. However timeworn this advice may be, it conforms to my own long-held views on graduation addresses, and I shall follow it.

This leaves the subsidiary question of subject matter. I realize that you have had something like maximum academic exposure to the world's political, economic, and military situations, and that your tolerance in these areas is probably low. I understand that in the course of this exposure you have heard 180 lectures on these immensely complex matters. Obviously, the 181st might overload the circuit and I do not intend to deliver it.

Instead, I shall present some personal views on your places and responsibilities in the operational military world to which you are returning after nine months of study and reflection at the Industrial

College of the Armed Forces. It is not necessary to expound on the differences between these two worlds; as senior officers completing the senior school in its field, you have undergone a number of shifts from academic to operational assignments. You recognize the difference in the view obtained by a student from a vantage point above and out of reach of the ebb and flow of events, and that obtained by a commander or staff officer battling these tides and trying to keep his head above water.

The first point that I wish to develop concerns the synthesis of these two viewpoints, for obviously, they have a meeting ground in the positions for which your attendance at this school indicate you are fitted.

It is hardly possible, nor is it desirable, for an officer to take a completely academic view of command or staff problems for which he carries heavy responsibilities. But it is nonetheless necessary that he combine with this highly personal involvement the viewpoint of a student who sees his problems in their broadest context. For example: Recently, I assigned a highly qualified young general officer to organize the provisional air assault division at Fort Benning that is testing the Army's newly developed concepts of battlefield air mobility.

This officer not only has the mission of organizing a new type of division from scratch and of testing new concepts, but he also bears a heavy responsibility in formulating recommendations which will determine the immediate future of Army aviation. He must slug it out each day with the command problems of testing men, materiel, and doctrine in the field. At the same time, he cannot lose the perspective of a student regarding a development that can have a major impact on the force structure and the use of the resources of the Army. In doing this, he can call upon extensive experience as a commander in combat, as a staff officer, and equally important, as a student developed in service schools. Obviously, he was selected for the job because he is judged to have gained from all this experience that attribute described by Clausewitz who wrote:

He who wants to move in an element such as is war should not bring along book knowledge, only a trained mind. If he has fixed ideas not conceived on the spur of the moment from his own flesh and blood his edifice will be torn down by the chain of events before it is completed.

I used this Army example because it is one which I am following with understandable interest. I know that similar assignments are made for like reason in the other services. The posts to which you are going combine degrees and variations of this mission. Within a few days you will start again on the daily collision course with the problems of men and resources. As you do so, I urge that you consciously apply the student's objective view along with the highly personal approach which the stake of your professional reputation will naturally engender. It is my observation that this combination gives direction to effort that yields meaningful results.

From now on, throughout your careers, you will have progressively greater responsibilities in the direction of men and the use of materiel. As you are well aware, in today's military terminology this is called management of resources. My only objection to this term is that it is a rather bloodless one that carries none of the thunder that centuries have given to traditional military usage. I believe that a military pulse is added by calling it command management. The second point I wish to develop concerns only one aspect of your responsibilities in this field. This aspect is overcommand and overmanagement. By this I mean, of course, rigidity of control of the actions of the subordinates and of the functions under your direction.

I call attention to this because I am currently involved in the Army in seeking out unduly restrictive measures that tie commanders' hands in using the resources allotted them for the accomplishment of their missions. This is not a new fault, nor is it one that can ever be completely eradicated. It is perhaps more virulent now because the monetary cost of errors has increased to such an extent that the prospect of being a party to one results in a progressive clamping of tighter controls all down the chain of command. For instance, the loss of an Army mule a few decades ago was a serious business--Lincoln said they were more expensive to replace than generals. But from a fiscal standpoint, the loss of a mule does not compare with the loss of one of today's prime movers. The same ratio applies to every item of equipment throughout the military establishment.

However, for whatever reason they are imposed, overcommand and overmanagement have the same stultifying effect on individual initiative and unit effectiveness today that they have always had. To avoid these faults requires that you be willing to assume responsibility for the honest mistakes of subordinates who show promise in managing resources. To make this forbearance worthwhile requires,

also, a willingness to remove those whose work must be strictly controlled.

It is a common experience to learn more from our mistakes than from our successes, for painful errors sharpen the senses while triumphs can dull them. You would not be in this class if you were not able to profit from your errors, and it is highly possible that you would not be here had not a superior somewhere along the line judged you worth saving, despite at least one real blooper. I ask that as you move into the upper echelons of your services that you do likewise with juniors who are worthy of the effort. Let them learn from mistakes in positions of lesser responsibility so that they will make fewer when they are in the senior councils where the cost of errors is astronomically higher.

I have dwelt on this point because I consider it highly important in the development of the generation of military leadership that is now treading on your heels. As its immediate superior, you have the major responsibility in training this leadership.

The third point which I wish to develop concerns military leadership under the conditions of greatly advanced technology. To call today's technology "greatly advanced" is a recognizable understatement. You are perhaps familiar with the example of compressing the milestones of the 50,000 years of mankind's known history into a 50 year period. On this relative basis, the jet airplane would have been invented since I started this address, and four days ago, the first TV would have become operational. We can also calculate that on this time scale the original TV commercial is perhaps in transit but has not arrived.

The pace and scope of advancing technology--by whatever scale it is measured--presents major problems in military leadership. For example: If the complex machinery of target acquisition fails, whole weapons systems can be seriously hampered. What alternative does the commander adopt under this circumstance?

On a lower scale, we have developed in the Army a very effective front line radar to pick up enemy activity under all conditions of visibility, or lack of it. But radar is subject to breakdown and if the soldier becomes dependent upon it for surveillance of his front, can he revert--if the need arises--to the traditional methods of scouting and patrolling? Or will he be inclined to sit and wait for the repairman? The same problem applies to the use of the computer as an instrument for reaching command decisions.

My point is that military leadership today--and more so in the future--deals with the age-old problems of human fallibility, compounded by the frailty of the machines and instruments that are developed to minimize error and multiply strength.

This is not a new problem. It has been long developing, but it now appears to be reaching full flower. In World War I the field telephone came into wide use. General J. F. G. Fuller, the British military commentator, in a book on the leadership in that war, deplored the "chain of men, starting with the battalion commander and ending with an Army commander, sitting at telephones . . . talking, talking, talking, instead of leading, leading, leading."

This tendency is now accented by radio, radar, TV, and computer. In my opinion, it is the job of my generation of officers, and it will be your job, to see that the indispensable element of personal command and leadership is maintained; we must be the masters and not the slaves of technology.

These are the points that I wish to bring to your attention as you return to the operational environment of your services. To summarize:

You are graduate military students. Do not lose the attributes of the student's broad viewpoint as you become immersed again in the day-to-day battle with the problems of command and staff. Every effort has been made to provide you the opportunity to develop the "trained mind" which Clausewitz said is essential to survive in the element of war. Continue to develop this attribute through its use.

As you advance into the higher echelons of the military establishment, guard against the deadening effects of exercising over-command and overmanagement of subordinates and functions under your direction. Correct, but do not crucify those who make errors--particularly young officers.

Do not make leadership dependent upon technology, for technology can fail, but leadership must not fail.

Finally, a year or so ago, Bob Hope in delivering a college commencement address, told the graduates that as they were about to go out into the world, his advice was "don't." For you, my advice is "do." There is no problem of unemployment for your abilities in the military establishment; much has been given you, and much is expected of you.

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I congratulate you and your families, and the direction and faculty of this school upon your accomplishment. I wish each of you great good fortune and success in the future.

(30 July 1963--7, 600)ekh:dm