



**ADDRESS AT VALLEY FORGE MILITARY ACADEMY**

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I am glad to be back, once again, at the Forge.

As I come before you, my thoughts go back to my years at the Academy. When I came in as a plebe in 1949, chapel service was held in the basement of Washington Hall. At that time we cadets looked forward with expectation to the edification of this inspiring Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurión on this site the highest of the academy's grounds. We saw it rise brick by brick towards the heavens.

In the fall of 1951 we had the privilege to attend its dedication to the men of Valley Forge who in World War II paid the highest price for the right to be called Americans. A fitting tribute to the dead nurtured on these grounds which two centuries and twenty years ago witnessed the momentous events that gave birth to this nation:

The Declaration of Independence only 18 miles from here, a proclamation of freedom and principle that echoed throught the world;

the decisive battle, held only three miles from here, during the freezing winter of 1777 when the continental army held its ground against the advancing British;

the unrelenting efforts within these grounds to train young patriots into soldiers part of a well coordinated military machine.

The very same grounds where General Washington knelt humbly in prayer requesting the assistance of the Almighty in the face of adversity. This image, so dear to us, embeded in our Academy Crest portrays our

vision of the men who built America, and their courage and determination under God in order to bring forth a nation conceived in freedom. These men well knew that freedom only acquires its full meaning for man when it is freedom under God. That freedom only acquires its full richness for a nation when it is freedom under God.

At the dedication of this Chapel, to our dead of World War II, the corps of which I was a part, felt the deep meaning of the statement that embellished one of the external walls of the Old Gym: "From the embattled fields of Valley Forge went men who built America, from the training fields of Valley Forge go men that will preserve America".

The world has changed dramatically from the days when I trained in these fields and exercised in that Old Gym. The traumatizing experiences of the holocaust and of war against facism are way in the past. The nuclear threat and the cold war have come to an end.

When I attended the Academy, it took 8 hours to reach New York from Puerto Rico and another two by train to reach Philadelphia. Today there are direct flights from San Juan to Phily that only take three hours. In those days we communicated with our parents by mail, using the phone only for emergencies. Today the telephone has replaced the mails as the means of communication, and the internet is expanding our horizons in ways unthought of when I attended classes in Shannon Hall. Intercommunicated the world has become a global village.

The smoke stack industrial economy so characteristic of this state of Pennsylvania in the 50's when I graduated, has evolved into the modern

post industrial economy where capital and labor are no longer the driving factors but rather knowledge, and creativity.

You are indeed preparing to enter a much different world than the one which was ahead of us in the 50's. A more secure world in a strategic sense but a more complex world of interdependent nations. A world with a greater content of freedom and democracy but a world with enormous problems of governance witnessed daily in our television screens not only through the problems in areas such as Bosnia, Chechenia, or in the Middle East, but also right here in the United States where problems such as drugs, crime, family desintegration, institutionalized poverty, an aging population pose a continuing challenge.

Your mission as the Corps of 1996-1997 remains the same as that of the Corps of 1952-1953 of which I was a part. From the training fields of Valley Forge must go the men who will preserve America.

But in this complex world the mission to preserve America is more demanding. It requires a deeper conciousness, for which your training which combines physical, academic, moral and spiritual development enables you. For you will be met by a more forceful enemy than the Wehrmacht or the Red Army, a spiritual enemy deeply embeded within todays post industrialized societies which offer its best and brightest the comforts of wealth and technological advances, the lure of a pleasant existence in a contented society.

And what is so bad about that you might ask?

So we have come to discover something the Founders knew full well. That the pursuit of happiness can not occur only along the road of material wellbeing alone. It must also take the higher road of moral and spiritual wellbeing.

The realization of the American dream which must be a shared realization lies along this broader thoroughfare. That realization includes all Americans and goes beyond America. In its core values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness the dream is universal.

America's dream is the dream of all mankind. And America's leadership is particularly necessary at the moral crossroads as mankind approaches the next century and the third millenium after the birth of Christ.

You will be amongst the CEO'S, the engineers, the doctors, the teachers, the lawyers, the military officers, the public servants of the 21st. century. In every walk of life you will be called upon to inspire others towards higher values than those of consumption and self-gratification at the individual and national levels which are characteristic of post industrial societies such as America's or Western Europe's or Japan's.

Self-indulgent, hedonistic, consumption oriented countries do not project the moral imperative the world requires to surmount the obstacles of the survival of mankind in a shrinking planet with limited resources. On such moral imperative, however, leadership must rest to face the challenges of the next century. A moral imperative anchored in God.

George Washington knew this well when he wrote:

"... and let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle".

So it is with our conscience and our consciousness where we must start. With what we are doing in this Chapel today, and what you are doing in your classes, or what you are doing in your drills or recreation. Moral consciousness must encompass life as a whole. So that from these training fields there will go men tempered in an ethos of self-restraint rather than of self-indulgence who will preserve, the America that Anthony Wayne fought for and Benjamin Franklin envisaged. The America defended in World War II by the members of the long line of gray to whom this Chapel is dedicated.

World War II was for me America's finest hour. But not the way Winston Churchill saw it for England. Because Churchill saw that finest hour in the past looking back a thousand years in from future. To me World War II was America's finest hour, so far.

It was a moment when this country pulled together as one, to confront those who would deny the very principles of human dignity upon which civilization rests. And it united to preserve them, not only for Americans but for all mankind. It was in this struggle that John D. McCloskey, Eric Fisher Wood and many other Valley Forge cadets paid the highest price for the right to be called Americans.

But as you go forward from the Forge in to the world of today you will not be called upon to face Adolph Hitler or Nikita Kruschef and very few, if any, will get the call which our fellow cadet Norman Schwarzkopf received to face Sadam Hussein. Your battles will not be so dramatic, but they will be just as intense and longer lasting.

For you will be called upon to preserve and enhance America's moral stature before the world. A hard and conscious struggle, day in and day out.

But, you who have been trained in these fields understand that America is something bigger than what it means to yourself alone. You understand that the American dream is not impossible when you reach for that star with the conviction that America's finest hour is still ahead.

So, march on, march on, march on, in honor, every man.

All soldiers of today.

You carry on a priceless banner, in every line of gray.