

## USMA, West Point Memorial Service Class of 1970, 2 May 2015

### THE SPIRIT OF INTEGRITY

“Serve with Integrity Class of ‘70”

Next year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; a half century since we stood under that banner.

We have become older. As if to remind us, there was the contrast between what we saw in the mirror this morning and the subsequent display, in the Narthex, as we entered.

Most of us still remember some of where we have been,

We’ve all been different places at different times and sometimes the same place, for a short while, but generally with different perspectives, memories and interpretations of what happened. Some of us come here solely to debate or check the validity of the finer details of those memories or misconceptions.

To varying degrees, we are somewhat aware of where we are.

Where we are; is together again, taking a moment to reflect and share on what we have lost, what we have gained, what we have and who we are collectively as well as individuals. Through this we find our unity, a special kind of integrity, again.

But even as the prospects become increasingly limited, the question of “Where are we going?” can become even more obscure; though it is increasingly vital to what we do next.

In summary:

We do that in the context of having lived 67 years, give or take a few?

That puts us at the beginning of what Erik Erikson, philosopher and father of psycho-social developmental psychology, says is the eighth and final stage of life development, usually beginning around our 65<sup>th</sup> year, “Integrity vs. Despair”.

Although we have been using it as our motto for the past 49 years; it is only just now that we can begin to experience it in its true sense, and so begin to discover, understand, define, refine and live and grow in it.

So what does it mean to have Integrity?

After all if we are going to serve with Integrity, we have an obligation to know what it means, and what it doesn’t mean.

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During our earlier stages of human development, we have been taught and thought of integrity as consistently doing the right thing, as though such a thing were truly possible.

By default, “the right thing” has been defined as “following the lawful orders of those appointed over us”; parents, teachers, superior officers, and the laws of man, and even occasionally the laws of GOD subject to necessity and our interpretation.

And the highest form of integrity has been identified as doing that right thing, out of a personal commitment to and assimilation of that value, regardless of whether or not someone is watching. I don't think that someone survives and leaves a place like this without having made some level of commitment to such a purpose.

And yet, many people reach this stage wondering if it was enough, was it the right thing and was it worth it.

As a result of my career choices, I found myself spending a lot of time with people at the end of their lives, both young and old, who were asking those questions.

At such times, the definitions from our past fail us.

In any consideration of “The Right Thing”, there is a distinction between what is legal, what is ethical, and what is moral.

In the first case, legal right and wrong is a question of Jurisprudence. What does the law say, or what does the court say that the law requires, and am I in concert with that, or not? Is it legal? And, for some people this is enough. Anyone who has ever raised a teen knows how that goes.

But you said... But Mom said... But teacher said..., but the law says... But you didn't say that I couldn't....

We called it quibbling which is at the heart of practical law and at the heart of every successful law practice and politician, and it is the mindset of an adolescent. Psychologist, Robert Peck referred to it as the “Irrational-Conscientious” Stage of Moral Development.

But, is keeping the law enough? There is the story of the two lawyers standing at the window of the high rise office looking over the great city, when suddenly a loud voice like thunder roars “It is finished”, and the skies roll back and the throne of the creator suddenly appears. One stands in shock while the other runs to the office library next door and returns with a Bible. As he begins to feverishly skim through the pages the other looks at him and says, “a little late for that isn't it.” Without looking up he replies, “Just looking for loopholes...”

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Those who are uneasy with looking for last minute loopholes, or frustrated with trying to keep the law, all of it, all of the time, they move on to the exploration of ethics as the basis for doing right.

In ethics, the premise is that there is a social ethos which lies at the heart of even the interpretation and application of the law. It assumes that there is good and that the good is identified within the culture and society. "We the people of the United States... because... We hold these truths to be self-evident..." We often speak of our country as being a nation of law, but in fact we were founded on the principle that we are a Nation based on the Ethics from which the laws were derived.

What we learned here at West Point was enabled by laws passed in Congress, but based on the Ethical Principles of Duty, Honor and Country. This is the true heritage that each of us carried out into the world and into each venue and circumstance of life in which we were led and led others.

But at some point, even ethics fail us and degrade into a controversy over which culture, group or society is right and justified. Which perspective, interpretation, philosophy and practice should be the basis for law and action? Democrat or Republican? Shi'ah or Sunni? Catholic or Protestant? Army or Navy?

You see all Philosophy and philosophies seek to answer three basic questions:

What is real?

What can be known?

And, out of that,

What is good?

So if the legal and ethical approaches leave us somewhat confused or inconsistent, what about morality as a basis for understanding in our quest for Integrity?

Indeed, in the past, Integrity has been defined as:

1. the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.

And,

2. centered on those moral pillars, to exist in a state of being whole and undivided in how we make our choices and put them into action.

But what are those moral pillars? Where do we find them and how do we teach, model and share them with others, especially today, when we find ourselves sailing upon the

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seas of moral confusion which, increasingly, seems to be our experience as a nation, culture and world today. Forgive me my brothers, a reference from my years as a squid.

It is easy to succumb to moral sea sickness and lose sight of our calling, our purpose and our destination; even hope that we will arrive. At such times we strive to catch a glimpse of light on the horizon, something to calm the stomach, give direction and hope to enable us to set a course that will get us to that harbor.

That light does exist.

Yet, it is so easy in this world, to get so caught up in the moment and Matrix of our lives, that we forget that there is anything else until it is too late.

So when I was called upon to speak at command orientations for new soldiers, sailors and marines. I would always make it an occasion to refocus on the calling and our purpose within it. I would begin with a simple question.

“Why are you here today? What is your primary purpose or job here?”

Invariably I would get answers like:

“Pick up cigarette butts”

“Kill the enemy”

“Shoot straight”

“Fire the Torpedoes”

“Adjust the Artillery”

“Do what the 1SG says”

And on special (albeit rare) occasions, “Beat Navy.”

And as practical and pertinent as those answers seem, they miss the mark.

I would remind everyone that there is a Prime Directive (apologies to Star Trek) that we give voice to every time we take or renew our Commissions, Enlistments, or Oath of Office.

That is to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

So my next question was; “so tell me, what does the Constitution say?”

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And that is the bottom line of anything else that a soldier, sailor, marine or airman may do. If they move, shoot, and communicate well but are unsuccessful in defending the Constitution of the United States, they have failed in their primary function, and most strategic objective. Good tactics are meaningless if they fail to accomplish the Strategic objective.

And so I followed with the next question.

And tell me, this Constitution that you are sworn to defend, even to death or the taking of life; "What does it say, what is its purpose?"

At this point, I was usually looking on a sea of blank stares but often someone would cautiously begin:

"We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

But then I asked,

And what are these Blessings of Liberty, and where do they come from?

Too often there was silence but once in a while, rarely, I would hear someone start and then others begin to join them where they could ...

*"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,"*

Ah, a belief in a single, common Creator who has endowed each person with a Life giving Spirit to guide them individually and hold them accountable, collectively, for the benefit of all.

And herein lies the key to growing in our understanding of and comprehending what it means to "Serve with Integrity."

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It is interesting that among these rights... is the right to not believe in a Creator of all mankind. But even that right only stands, because we believe that there is a Creator who endows you with the right to not believe. Take away the Creator and you have no legal, ethical or moral basis for unalienable rights, for our constitution, for our government, for our nation and for us. It is legal, ethical, moral, national and personal suicide, ...something with which I become too well acquainted in recent years.

We can debate anything around that core “self-evident, truth”, but belief and trust in our common Creator is the cap and cornerstone of our Integrity. It is the only hope of discovering any truth that follows, and finding and building the unity and integrity that we seek as Americans, and indeed humankind.

It is the light on the horizon that calls us to our hope and destiny; across the troubled seas.

It called Dave and Toby, at different times to a new direction.

It led Pat Sculley into Iran and back.

At the last moment, it led me into Vietnam, and back out with two sons and a new calling.

It is the reason that you sit here this morning.

True Integrity, in the very final analysis can only be found in the presence of, and in relationship with, this same Creator. It is first and foremost a Spiritual reality that may not be seen or touched but can be lived, experienced and shared.

It is in this Spirit of this Integrity that we truly “Grip hands with those who we see not.”

It is in that Spirit of Integrity that we find our true place, calling, purpose and fulfillment within the Long Grey Line and continue to provide leadership for those who follow and take up the cause, and in so doing, honor the memory of those who have gone before.

It is in that Spirit of Integrity that we find our true place, calling, purpose, fulfillment, destiny and joy among humankind and in the creation.

It is in that Spirit of Integrity, only, that we can hope to hear, and indeed hear faintly even now in our spirits, that single, significant voice say, “Well Done, Be thou at peace.”

It is in that Spirit of Integrity alone, that we will one day stand together again, with each other, before our Creator.

We can debate who speaks for the Creator and what they Creator says. But without the creator God of Nature who made us for integrity with himself and ourselves, there is no

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basis for the Integrity we seek with the Creator, the Creation, ourselves and humankind. It is this quest which is the work of a lifetime and the goal of an eternity.

And, if indeed, this provides a glimpse of that light on the horizon, then what path, what course do we march through the swamps of life to get there. What map, what compass, what guide?

I can only share from my experience that, in recent years, I have found the practice of Mindfulness, as outlined in the book by Danny Penman and Mark Williams a great tactical aid, a field manual if you will. And more importantly the book, "Jesus Calling" by Sarah Young, clarifies, focuses and helps discern the directions of the guide, like a pair of premium binoculars. The writings of Ravi Zacharias serve to sharpen and challenge the sword of the mind and spirit.

But the map, I submit, was given to us here as a gift from the moment we arrived.

It begins with the words:

"O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of Men's hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth."

It begins with recognition that we cannot walk the course without the one who made us and promised to be with us, even to the end of the age, if we approach in openness, sincerity and truth.

"May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship of Thee be natural."

We can only find the strength to walk through the difficulties and challenges of life with the joy of hope that lifts our own burdens and helps us to bear the burdens of one another in an uncontrived, free and natural expression that flows from our being, who and what we were truly made to be.

"Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish."

This plea for Spiritual help speaks for itself and compels us to stand strong for the truth if we hope to grow in the truth.

"Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life."

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Here again we look to our Creator for help, this time for encouragement to rise up again from failure and have courage to try again in our quest for Integrity.

“Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service. Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance, and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer.”

And,

in this effort to enter into a partnership with the Creator of all who sends his Spirit to help us live such a life of service, warmth, kindness and sympathy;

we ask for opportunities to put that partnership into practice with those of a similar Spirit.

We may fail and fall, but each time we will stand and walk again, and lift up others along the way.

In this we fulfill every legal, ethical and moral requirement:

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

As we do that, we cannot help but

“maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished and unsullied and to show forth in our lives the ideals of West Point in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country.”

49 years ago, we stood on the Plain; wearing tee shirts, shorts, combat boots and in some cases our new issue Birth Control Device eyewear. We held aloft our new mate, an M-14 with bayonet attached, while we proclaimed, the Spirit of the Bayonet is to Kill Sir.”

But now, even as our physical abilities may diminish, we have become wiser to realize that “the Spirit of Integrity is to Live, Sir.” It is to walk together in the Spirit with our brothers our Creator and all who will respond to the call.

It is to continue to grow in that way, that truth and that light. It is to defend them and represent them from the very heart of who and what we are and were made to be.

It is to use what we have learned and experienced to serve our Creator for the benefit of all humankind and beyond.

And so, brothers and Sisters of the class of '70,



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There remains for us a Call to “Serve with Integrity”,

There remains for us an opportunity and a way to “Serve with Integrity”,

There remains for us an eternal destiny to “Serve in Integrity”.

So help us God.

Let each of us take this moment to recommit ourselves to do so as Toby leads us in the Cadet Prayer.

Guy Wm Drab  
Class of 1970