

THE CITADEL

ARCHIVES AND MUSEUM

THE CITADEL COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
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It is with pride that I address you Citadel men -- and with pride that I contemplate joining The Citadel family as your President in a few months. I know what has gone on here for 137 years. Every Board of Visitors since 1842 has aimed the curriculum at preparing gentlemen for honorable citizenship in the finest sense of the term. A 17th century John Milton quotation describes The Citadel's aim -- to provide "a complete and generous education: that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously, all the offices of a citizen, both private and public, in peace or war." Moreover, I know how academic excellence, order, self-respect and rigor have been maintained through national conflicts and crises, through vacillations of popular moods, and how more than once the line of self-discipline has been held against a sea of permissiveness beyond these gates. I want to assure you graduates, you undergraduates, you alumni and friends, that I aspire to follow in the footsteps of Coward, Bond, Summerall and Clark, and those before and subsequent, maintaining the educational and moral philosophy that has kept this school at the top -- the finest, toughest all-male military college in America.

This past week I've been doing my evening reading in Colonel Oliver James Bond's story of The Citadel written nearly 50 years ago. (As most of you know, this hall behind me was named for him. He was Class of '86, a faculty member for 22 years, then Superintendent for 23 years and after that, Dean.) I was fascinated by much in the book, including the James Bond part of his name, because, of course, that is part of my name. My genealogy study is not complete but I am reasonably sure after reading about his ancestry in the book History of South Carolina, and studying entries in my Bond family bible (my mother's family name) that my great grandfather Walter Bond and Oliver's grandfather Henry Bond were cousins who emigrated from the family settlement in Maryland about 1810. Henry came to South Carolina, we know that from the history. Walter went west and became a farmer. I know that because I own the farm he first carved out of the prairie. So as I contemplate sitting at my desk inside Bond Hall, I feel at home here at The Citadel already.

I also feel very much at home in your company for other reasons. You seniors have been through an intense experience

with men, with classmates, you'll never forget. You've studied together, fought together and against one another, laughed together, if you were like me in some of my intense experiences, even cried together. You leave this place with more than a diploma. You leave it with what some would call emotional baggage, but what I call a highly developed conscience. It's almost impossible to graduate from an institution like this without it. You've undergone an irreversible process which will never again allow you the comfort of self-satisfaction while being glib or shallow. You will likely forever carry the burdens, and they are burdens, of loyalty, commitment, passion and idealism. You have undergone an education of the sort people refer to when they say that education is what's left over after you've forgotten all the facts you learned. And that which is left over, that conscience, that sentiment, is indispensable to that capability for which the graduates of this institution are known. And that capability is leadership.

Cool, glib, cerebral, detached guys can get by in positions of authority until the pressure is on. But when the crunch develops, whether in the courtroom, at the negotiating table, in the operating room, or on the battlefield, people cling to those they know they can trust -- those who are not detached, but involved -- those who have consciences, those who can repent, those who do not dodge unpleasantness, yes, those who can mete out just punishment and look their charges in the eye as they do it. When the chips are down, the man with the heart, not the soft heart, not the bleeding heart -- but the Old Testament heart -- the hard heart -- comes into his own, and that's what education in a structured, disciplined environment is all about.

But don't forget, Class of '79 on your graduation day, some of what is structured for you here in the corps of cadets will have to be improvised on a "do it yourself" basis in the new decision making territory which lies ahead. The Citadel has given you a basic survival kit that will allow you to thrive, but don't be surprised when you find that leadership entails more than professional competence. Leadership under pressure will often entail being a moralist, jurist, teacher, steward and philosopher.

First the moralist. I define the moralist as not one who mindlessly exhorts men to be good, but one who elucidates what the good is. (Under the press of circumstance this sometimes becomes unclear -- as in a prison camp, for instance.) The disciplined life here at The Citadel has encouraged you to be men of integrity committed to a code of conduct and from these good habits a strength of character and resolve have

grown. This is the solid foundation from which you elucidate the good, by your example, your actions and your proud tradition. A moralist can make conscious what lies unconscious among his followers, lifting them out of their everyday selves, into their better selves. The German poet Goethe once said that you limit a man's potential by appealing to what he is; rather you must appeal to what he might be. All great men in history have relied on some measure of ethical resolution in their lives and it's been perfected in their work and heritage. The Citadel's great men are no exception.

Next, there are times when you'll act as a jurist, when the decisions you make will be based solely on your ideas of right and wrong, your knowledge of the people who will be affected, and your strength of conviction. There won't be a textbook or school solution to rely on. I'm not talking about petty legalistic arbitrations or controls, but about hard decisions where you'll be the one with a problem that has seemingly endless complications -- when you'll have to think it through on your own. As a jurist, you're writing law and that's a weighty responsibility. When in the hot seat, you'll need the courage to withstand the inclination to duck a problem or hand it off; you've got to take it head on.

One word of caution: many of your laws will be unpopular. That's OK. But they should never be unjust. Moreover, you must never cross that fatal line of writing a law that can't be obeyed. (This is a great temptation under pressure -- in prison camp we called them "CYA" directives.) Your job as a jurist is to guide others, not to put them in a "Catch-22" position where they are forced to choose between conflicting alternatives. You must be positive and clear and not lapse into a bureaucratic welter of relativism that will have others asking what you really mean or trying to respond in the most politically acceptable way.

You elucidate the good as a moralist.

You write the laws as a jurist.

Number three is being a teacher. Every great leader I've known has been a great teacher, able to give those around him a sense of perspective and to set the moral, social and particularly the motivational climate among them. This is not an easy task -- it takes wisdom and discipline -- you must have the sensitivity to perceive philosophic disarray in your charges and to put things in order. The best starting place for any teacher is to "know yourself", as I think you seniors probably do.

Here at The Citadel you've followed in the footsteps of greatness. I challenge you to leave those same clear footprints for future generations to follow. In John Ruskin's words such a process is "painful, continual, and difficult... to be done by kindness, by waiting, by warning, by precept, by praise but above all by example." Teachership is indispensable to leadership.

Another test of leadership is that you must be willing to be a steward. By that I mean you must tend the flock, even "wash their feet," as well as crack the whip; you have to be compassionate and realize that all men are not products of the same mold. (They are not all Citadel men out there.) There is much more to stewardship than the carrot and stick enticements that some of the vaunted motivational experts would prescribe. It requires knowledge and character and heart to boost others to a tall ship and give them a star to steer her by. The old Civil War historian Douglas Southall Freeman described his formula for stewardship at my Naval War College thirty years ago this month. He said that you had to know your stuff, to be a man and take care of your men. There are flocks outside these grounds that will require your attention and test your stewardship.

The final test is that you must be able to act as philosophers in order to explain and understand the lack of a moral economy in the universe, for many people have a great deal of difficulty with the fact that virtue is not always rewarded and evil punished. To handle tragedy may indeed be the mark of an educated man; for one of the principal goals of education is to prepare us for failure. Stoic philosophy is a crutch. In Hanoi's prisons when military virtue seemed at the point of irrelevance I was comforted and strengthened by remembering Epictetus' admonition: "You are but an actor in a drama of such sort as the author chooses -- if short, then a short one; if long, then a long one. If it be his pleasure that you should enact a poor man, see that you act it well; or a cripple, or a ruler, or a private citizen. For this is your business -- to act well the given part; but to choose it belongs to another." My part in that case was of course that of a soldier, but the author will have parts for you to play in every profession.

A still better inspiration in times of hopelessness is often history. The Citadel history of 1864-1865 gives the ultimate example of performance of duty with poise and dedication in the face of dismal prospects. The test of character is not "hanging in" when you expect light at the end of the tunnel, but performance of duty and persistence of example when you know no light is coming. Believe me, I've been there myself.

Most of us rely on faith when all else fails. Perhaps we can all benefit from a little-known relic, a poem left on a Virginia battlefield in 1865. A soldier had written:

I asked for strength that I might achieve
God made me weak that I might obey
I asked for health that I might do greater things
He gave me infirmity that I might do better things
I asked for riches that I might be happy
I was given poverty that I might be wise
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men
I was given weakness that I might feel the need for God
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life
I was given life that I might enjoy all things
I received nothing that I asked for
All that I hoped for
And my prayer was answered. I am most blessed.

Men of The Citadel, Class of 1979, may you all be blessed.