

VMI Founders Day

11 November 2022

Cameron Hall

Remarks By

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(As Delivered)

Acknowledgements and Introduction: Distinguished Guests, members of the VMI Board of Visitors, the VMI Administration, Staff and Faculty, and Classified Team, Alumni, Friends, and Members of the Corps of Cadets. Thank you for this distinct honor this afternoon -- the award of the prestigious New Market Medal, and all of the activities associated with this Founders Day, VMI's 183<sup>rd</sup> year. I thank the entire VMI family and friends of the Institute for the support and friendship you have given to the Institute and to Pamela and me during our time "on watch"...2003 to 2020.

Senator Norment, Mr. Watjen, General Wins, and Dr. Anthony...thank you for your overly gracious remarks this afternoon. And, Mr. Kyle Keith...my admiration for your talent and diligence as an artist, particularly when you didn't have an attractive model with which to work. I enjoyed our time together and learning so much about your profession and life. Congratulations on your many successes and recognitions.

Colonel Keith Gibson, Mrs. Meg Clement, Dr. & Mrs. Mott Robertson, Mr. & Mrs. Ware Smith...,thank you for your oversight of this portrait effort, your many

recommendations, and its funding by the Class of 1962.

I know many of you have driven long distances in poor weather. The Peays are most appreciative for your attendance. The memories and fondness of our times together are so clear.

The New Market Medal is not mine alone..., for it represents the dedicated work “up and down the Institute ranks” as all worked as a Team to improve the academic, military, and athletic performances, and transform its physical and cultural environment. You accomplished so much..., and your work and results are recognized by all. A heartfelt “thank you”.

I thank the Corps of Cadets. This day, and Convocation, and the New Market Medal are very meaningful to me, more so than words can express. They are honors that I never imagined when I was a VMI Cadet six decades ago. I’ve never tired of being in the company of VMI cadets, and swell with pride this afternoon at what you and Virginia Military Institute represent.

I thank you for the farewell in Barracks (at Taps) two years ago. I have the flags that members of each Class signed...and the warmth of that event and presentation are forever in my memory. The pain of my sudden departure was made easier because of your thoughtfulness, care, maturity, and professionalism. I have reflected on that evening with frequency.., and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

You have taken the long and difficult journey to receive your degree. With graduation, I am confident you will serve our country and its

communities with honor and provide the leadership and example so important to our defense and well-being. The nation will be so fortunate.

The Peay family wishes all of you the very best in the years ahead.

I express my appreciation...not just for being granted this distinction..., but for being given the opportunity to serve our country and the United States Army, this school, to attend, to lead, to participate over so many years in the long tradition of service to Virginia and the nation. Parents set the foundation and begin the formative process through much of early adulthood; I have been so fortunate to have had such wonderful parents and family, and have been given so many opportunities in life...many can be traced, located, and grounded in this school.

Returning to this post, after a sudden departure and two-year absence, is a real joy. Living in Quarters 412, VMI Parade for close to two decades, watching the Institute develop, and cadets mature into leaders, realizing and fulfilling their potential..., that was the “greatest” joy of all! For we observed “them” as Rats, later to receive their ring and diploma, commission or commence their chosen profession in a number of fields...many went to war, returned for their 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> reunions, and now married with

children...taking on major responsibilities for the nation, state, and their communities. The sense of pride and fulfillment I have for these recent graduates...and, particularly for the faculty and staff, professors of military sciences of all services, classified team, coaches, and cadets is “immeasurable”.

Reflections....I was asked to “reflect” on my service in uniform...in the Army...and VMI, and “offer some thoughts going forward”. I confess to some emotions this afternoon, certainly nostalgia, as today unleashes many memories of some fifty-two years in uniform or fifty-six if we include our cadet years. These are just a few:

As a cadet...the rugged, spartan conditions of the Ratline; cadet gray and red/white/yellow of our colors; full-dress parades; the cementing of life long friendships; and pride knowing I was a member of an Institution that was a guardian of the nobler traditions of American society...the ideals of brave, honorable, selfless cadets...the warm familiar feeling of being part of a special Team, one forged and molded in the crucible of the Barracks, on the athletic field, and in the classroom.

Entering the Army in the aftermath of the Berlin crisis...participating

in the build-up of forces in Europe during the Cold War in the early 1960s; conducting massive maneuvers, firing field artillery at Grafenwoehr, and assembling nuclear projectiles under great pressure while undergoing arduous technical proficiency inspections. Standing with the men of our firing battery in the Central Highlands in 1968, as we withstood the onslaught of North Vietnamese assaults, while supporting our 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division brethren in similar contact; deploying on my second tour to Vietnam in 1971 joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, knowing the war was lost, and still all of us...in a conscripted-draft force...doing our duty and engaging in one exhausting battle after another. My regard for the American soldier could not have been higher.

I remember being a member of the Team that rebuilt our Army in the 1970's and 80's following the Vietnam War...inspired by senior leaders and comprised of officers and senior Non-Commissioned Officers who “stayed the course”...confronted by the insidious ills of racial discord, drug abuse and indiscipline...restoring high standards, morale and esprit; rebuilding our invaluable Non-Commissioned Officers Corps, studying the landscape of warfare, and new family, leadership, and values programs. These and more launched our Army on the path to global preeminence among world armies.

I remember those early days in August 1990 when the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was directed to move to the Arabian Gulf...orchestrating the most expansive rapid deployment in the history of the storied Division: flag waving Americans lining the roads through Chattanooga and Atlanta and points south with hundreds of truck drivers volunteering at our front gates to line haul our equipment to Jacksonville ports; anxious spouses and children hugging loved ones goodbye and bravely carrying on throughout the conflict...no email...rudimentary fax...with spouses taking over Boy Scout Troops, coaching soccer teams...with unfailing support by caring communities.

The early morning hours of G-Day — the start of the offensive to retake Kuwait and standing tall with a superb Command Team and the finest subordinate commanders and staff as hundreds and hundreds of helicopters and thousands of soldiers of our Division huddled in small formations ready to strike. The fog lay heavy on the desert floor and weather on flight routes, landing zones, and enemy locations were uncertain. When the order was given, our troops rose up with elan and pride, packed into choppers, loaded vehicles, and attacked deep into the Euphrates Valley.

No one would forget the warm homecomings and tributes to our troops

at Fort Campbell, Washington DC, Chicago, and Nashville. A celebration of military victory of good over evil – and a national homecoming that meant so much to the generation of Vietnam War veterans, who had never experienced the recognition that was owed to them for their sacrifice twenty-five years earlier.

I remember the long days and nights in the Pentagon in the early 1990's as budgets were being slashed, toiling in the staff trenches with talented officers as we worked tirelessly to restructure our post cold-war Army, allocate money for new systems, maintain readiness, and simultaneously deploy troops to Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kuwait, and assist in massive recovery operations required by Hurricane Andrew's destruction in Florida.

And, I remember the faces of the men and women of U.S. Central Command, my final command, dedicated patriots going about the tasks at hand in the harshest environments...overseeing air operations over Southern Iraq, enforcing maritime operations in the Arabian Gulf, working with foreign militaries, and training, planning, preparing and “on-alert” for contingencies in the proudest traditions of our Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. A major accomplishment was quietly establishing a footprint and bases

throughout the Middle East that would deter enemies and in the future support a long eighteen year war. Superb senior staff work, military-civilian diplomacy, and the best of professionalism by capable ambassadors and the military working together carried the day.

These reminisces transcend my individual experience. Rather they represent hundreds of thousands of hearty men and women in uniform, who served our nation for nearly four decades. It is a tapestry depicting military families, who moved children and belongings from one post to another when told to do so and carved out a new home every two to three years. Perhaps more significant, these random reflections tell a tale of military triumph over foes of the Republic.

It is “too early” to list the significant historical events and decisions from the 2003-2020 period, or the immediate years prior, in which I observed the Institute with the attendance of our two sons 1994-2002...or totaling close to three decades. The “long reach” of history and context must be carefully thought through..., particularly in the midst of the current fluid scene...and national and Virginia turmoil. Nevertheless, there have been actions that at a later date may be consolidated or grouped together that I predict will paint a respected, proud and fond mosaic of the Institute. Some thoughts follow:



Framing, flushing out the major objectives of Vision 2039 (its 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary), gaining approval by the Board of Visitors...and then taking it to the field and the discourse with our Alumni. The many financial initiatives and campaigns...completing the final year of Reveille, maturing Jackson-Hope, the highly successful Uncommon Purpose campaign, athletic funding initiatives, and now the Peay Academic Excellence Fund, all of which raised scholarships, provided operational resources, and supplemented infrastructure. Importantly, this resourcing “jump-started” the drive towards “excellence” in all that we would do.

The “enjoyment” of attending spirited Academic Board meetings, listening to hundreds of respected speakers – many giants in their fields – , the maturation of the Center for Leadership and Ethics, superb performance on the difficult, lengthy, and wearing formal accreditations, the hiring of many new faculty that matured under the mentorship of superb department heads...and the excellent instruction and personal care they have for our cadets, and the changing nature of our curriculums.

The pride and excitement of a massive new construction and modernization program – over a billion dollars in new construction, repair,

and maintenance from the State and incredible significant gifts from our alumni and friends. In many ways this provided the “physical foundation” of Vision 2039 – the base that allowed enhanced teaching, improved athletics, elevated commissioning, and formed a changing attitude towards standards, improved civility and professionalism.

The loss “too early” of respected faculty and institutional leaders: Colonels Jim Hentz, Bill Stockwell, Tom Baur, and others. We miss them terribly.

I particularly enjoyed taking guests on tours to the support organizations and their work areas that have major impact on the Corps and the Institute. We would usually start in Old Barracks or the Museum, proceed to the armory, mail room, barber shop, tailor shop, quartermaster and laundry, the Post Hospital, Hinty Hall - the home of the multi-faceted Buildings and Grounds Team, training areas at McKethan Park, leadership valley in north post, the Corps Physical Training Facility in south post, an academic building, and more. It was very time consuming. We were “open and frank” and at the end many visitors had a far different view of this very different education. The results of these visits favorably impacted our reputation and rankings, and improved understanding of where State and

alumni funding were expended. Our superb Classified Team often carried the day. I enjoyed “promoting -- showing off” these outstanding employees, many of whom have devoted their entire lifetime to the Institute.

Inevitably, one cannot resist comparing differences between VMI in the late 1950's and VMI today. As an example:

Late 1950s	Today
Mandatory Commissioning	Optional Commissioning
8 Degree Programs	14 Degree Granting Departments
A Corps absent of African Americans and Females	Full Integration
Saturday Morning Academic Classes	Commandant’s Time & Corps-wide Training
No EMT Program	Massive, terrific EMT Programs
Friday Evening Dress Inspection (FEI) in Ranks on the Bricks Prior to Parade and Sunday Morning Room Inspection in Coatee (SMI) prior to church	Rank and Room Inspections principally during the week
Corps-wide Spring FTX	Service FTX Programs and Non-Commissioning Community Service Events
Mandatory Church, marching in Church detail by faith to Lexington Churches	Optional Church
4-Hour Exams Mandatory	Exams of Less Length
Single Sanction Honor System	Single Sanction Honor System

We tried (constantly) to balance changes to meet the reality of a changing society, while insuring the preservation of the fundamentals and core strengths of the Institute and its education. There were concerning days on our watch as well. Our leader development system entails risk as we place responsibilities and events in young people's hands. Despite change, VMI continues to produce superb graduates and leaders that undergo a demanding experience -- physical and military, and one that is very challenging academically.

Assuming Command: Years earlier, my Father had passed on to me Cooper's 4-volume set "100 Years at VMI". Ryan gave me Jennings Wise's book...the "Military History of VMI". I studied Francis Smith's "History of VMI" that was in draft at his death, and placed in the hands of the BOV; and I read "Drawing out the Man: The VMI Story", by Henry A. Wise. These four were most helpful as I considered preparing a vision and the "operational tenets" to bring the vision to life. I learned from this history that I stood on the shoulders of thirteen Superintendents...and all had challenges. The problems each Superintendent faced were clear: Francis Smith built and re-built the Institute over his 50-year tenure and saw his "entire" Corps march

off to war and elements of it at other times...being absent to train soldiers in Richmond or secure facilities elsewhere across the State. Cadets left VMI and fought in the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War...achieving distinguished records. Their military service resulted in thinned ranks in barracks and thus financial issues and lack of traditional leader and training opportunities. “The reintegration of returning Veterans was very difficult”.

Other times, VMI lacked adequate funding for renovation and construction. General Shell managed to eke-out some construction during the late 1960's. He also led the integration of African-Americans into the Corps...and he faced Corps indiscipline and standard challenges.

My three immediate predecessors (1981-2002), Generals Walker, Knapp, and Bunting, encountered difficult circumstances including little state money, termination of mandatory commissioning by the VMI Board of Visitors, a long debilitating national court case that split the alumni, integration of women, a cheating scandal, and the impact of technological and societal changes presented arduous and new tests. Taken “together”, these events and other changes in a short 20-years were difficult. They would take time to assimilate in the best of academic institutions. The VMI

environment is complex, and has always been difficult to explain to the public, if not a VMI graduate. This trio of Superintendents served an average of seven years. Today, university presidents nationally average just under six years. My tenure was longer at seventeen years...and timing and luck were helpful factors. All Superintendents laid a moral foundation that molded youth: character, leadership, a work ethic, and their methods were “stern and demanding”.

Understanding VMI’s long history was helpful as we set a course for Vision 2039...VMI’s 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

Developing Vision 2039: I never applied for this position. In the Fall of 2002, a select VMI group visited me at my office at Allied Defense in Northern VA, and asked my thoughts on the direction of the Institute and the qualities desired of its leader. Later, at their request, I would travel to Richmond (a hasty call) to explain my views to a group that, unbeknownst to me, turned out to be the Search Committee. As Pamela drove, I wrote down, on a 3x5 card, my thoughts...; that really became the Vision and the objectives or Operational Tenets. The vision would be “lofty” and the tenets would fall under the traditional three categories: Academic, Military, and Athletics. And, I added a fourth called the “Culture and Physical Environment”, which

would become huge in execution and transformational. The hundreds of initiatives and details in each of the four categories would be key to success...and each category would be led by a senior leader at VMI, and would involve many from across the Institute.

As the two-hour plus session was nearing its end, a large, “stately looking” gentleman (whom I came to admire personally and professionally) stared at me and angrily and with frustration said, “General Peay, is there anything you like about VMI and what we BOV members are doing?!”

In my heart, I had hoped to run a quiet reformation, which would be recognized and applauded by VMI alumni, friends of the Institute, and supported by donors when they returned to the Institute. I wanted to keep VMI out of the media after the bruising court case. They would see a rejuvenated VMI with modern facilities, a resplendent Post, and technology aplenty. The centerpiece would be our Corps of Cadets, brimming with confidence, applicable skills, with time-tested principles of leadership and character for the exploding world challenges in this still young 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

After much urging from many, and lengthy family deliberation, I accepted the Superintendency.... It, less staying for a career in the United

States Army, was the “best” decision in my life. Pamela and I would do it all again...; and are thankful to many.

This physical and spiritual remodeling was widely implemented with most objectives completed. It was a vast “overhaul” in the span of seventeen years. More importantly, were the positive changes in civility, Corps professionalism, and superb academics. I was comfortable with where we improved athletically, “winning the VMI way” and on the azimuth we were headed. Proudly, we were a decade ahead of the nation’s growing awareness of this lack of civility issue in our society...and we did not have the magnitude of discrimination in the Corps as recently depicted. Yes, some disappointing individual incidents occurred, but they were not tolerated, and were not representative of the school and Corps as a whole. In fact, cadets of all races and gender were very successful here: Honor Court Presidents, Regimental Commanders, Cadet Captains, a Class President, and all had my greatest admiration. I was, and am today, so proud of this VMI Team...“led” by seven different very respected Board of Visitors Presidents. They were incredibly helpful to me; I bothered them incessantly with updates, issues and proud actions of our Team. How fortunate we were with their time, wisdom, and leadership. A supportive Parents Council with wonderful Co-Chairs each year; ROTC Professors of Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force...that balanced



difficult service requirements with competing VMI programs; and, incredibly helpful and supportive Legislators and State professionals that trusted our stewardship and direction and saw the results in the Corps of Cadets and its graduates.

Thanks & Recognition.....There are far too many to personally recognize (all) today...but a few need mentioning principally at the senior level:

Our Deputy Superintendents for Academics..., Brigadier General (Deans) Brower, Stockwell, Schneider, Smith, and Moreschi. Each brought much initiative, direction, hard work, and structure to our academic program that moved us into the national upper echelons. We passed complex difficult accreditations with excellent results, developed innovative curriculums, established new academic departments, hired many young faculty, and executed formal cadet learning programs. Undergraduate Research broadened the academic program, adding breadth to learning...all of this by a splendid “teaching” faculty led by seasoned faculty and mentors that drew uniformly outstanding marks from the Cadets. All academic buildings along Letcher Avenue, the Library, and others were renovated and modernized. Shortly, major additions to Nichols Engineering Building and the Center for Leadership and Ethics, with architectural plans and resources in place will

expedite achievement of goals in engineering and leadership.

Commandants throughout VMI's history have incredibly challenging jobs. Colonel Eric Hutchings developed a very different new cadet training program that was perfect for the early 2000 years and the times we faced, and Colonels Tom Trumps and Bill Wanovich improved it annually. They broadened Corps programs, club sports, improved appearance and precision at parades, and demanded "civility" and greater professionalism among all cadets. ROTC flourished, and after five to eight years, one could see the serious challenges to female integration diminishing and greater acceptance and Corps professionalism. Men and women so positively impacted all facets of the Institute. With regularity the full Corps, marching in battalion mass formation at Presidential and Governor Inaugural Parades, drew outstanding accolades...and without bias, I thought "by far" the best military marching unit among many. Cadet performances at summer camps and, similarly, on internships improved and received splendid ratings. Third Barracks was constructed over four years in the midst of "Corps living" with its disruption and multiple room relocations....saw strong Ratlines continuing traditions in barracks.

Our Athletic Directors: Coach Donny White and Dr. Dave Diles

ushered us into the Big South in 2003 where we stayed for a decade before returning to the Southern Conference and our historic roots. They hired the best of coaches and staff, with student athletes that exhibited the best of sportsmanship, and were awarded the conference sportsmanship award with regularity. Improving athlete academic performances, reducing athlete attrition, gaining more scholarships in all sports from very supportive alumni..., and the best of new facilities improved our competitiveness. It is not difficult to see the relationship of NCAA athletics and the development of leaders. We have had lean years bolstered with periodic winning records; yet, our record of leaders that competed on the playing fields is more than impressive and most mention that their NCAA experience was instrumental as was Marshall's and Eisenhower's.

Brigadier General Bob Green and later Brigadier General Dallas Clark provided wonderful leadership in their role of Deputy Superintendent, Finance, Administration, & Support...managing a myriad of diversified administration and support activities, stabilizing a budget that significantly grew its reserve balance, while judiciously improving standards and excellence through careful spending. Construction boomed with thoughtful hiring of superb architects and contractors, and construction office oversight. A highlight was VMI's rating by the State Joint Legislative, Audit and

Review Committee (JLARC) that set the tone for state and national recognitions as a school of great value, well managed, with graduates at 5-years receiving high compensation with little debt.

Colonel Kim Parker, our Director of Governmental Relations, is the best in the Commonwealth and was invaluable with her advice, wisdom, and competency. And, I thank Michael Maul, April Kees, and Tony Maggio for their enormous support, guidance, and friendship. These governmental-legislative officials and friends contribution to our success cannot be overstated.

Colonel Dave Gray, Director of the Center for Leadership and Ethics, built on the early structural work of the first Director, Brigadier General Casey Brower..., expanded the programs, and truly enhanced our strategic reputation. The Center's growth, from its physical construction and witnessing their programs mature today, is very rewarding.

We were blessed with a most capable personal and professional staff in Smith Hall. Marvelous Chiefs of Staff...Colonels Walt Chalkley and Jamie Inman, who's duties encompassed "all things" VMI. I lack words to describe their importance to VMI: commitment, duty, and professionalism through

these seventeen years. And the very best Executives to the Superintendent: Colonels Mike Strickler, Jeff Curtis, and Sean Harrington...were also double-hatted in the sensitive position of Secretary to the Board of Visitors. They balanced incredible workloads, provided wisdom to many, and exhibited the best of judgement and steadiness under continuous pressure. Colonel Gary Bissell was invaluable overseeing massive ceremonies. They, and their families, were so enjoyable to be around.

Quet Tyson ran our Quarters as she has for five Superintendents, insuring budgets, bills, and work orders were completed, while maintaining this historic old home insuring its orderliness daily, while coordinating and supporting hundreds of events annually. She and our young grandchildren had a memorable and special relationship as they grew in age over these many years.

Teresa Thompson and Brooke Higgins were superb in Protocol...worked tirelessly, and so respected for their style and professionalism. And, Lori Parrent, as my Administrative Assistant and Secretary managed the Office of the Superintendent with able assistants. She welcomed us to the Office on 3 July 2003...and stayed despite backbreaking hours and pressure filled days throughout my tenure. She was the epitome of the professional...and literally

the “face of the Institute”...beloved and respected by so many here at the Institute and many alumni.

Finally, I learned midway through my tenure that “excellence costs”. The advancement of the Institute was directly related to our donors, engaged volunteer leaders, alumni, and the VMI Agencies (Foundation, Alumni Association, and Keydet Club). Brian Crockett and his Team brought energy, direction, and knowledge. Buddy and Carol Bryan served a lifetime at the Foundation. Vision 2039 would not have been realized without the Agencies and their respected full-time staffs and loyal elected alumni as presidents of each Agency.

Way Ahead...I am often questioned on my views as to the “Way Ahead”. Four suggestions come to mind as I’ve reflected on the sixty years since my graduation:

First: “Stay in your niche”. What does that mean? A military school delivering the best undergraduate degree in the nation whose curriculum and degrees are largely scientific in nature. That produces citizen-soldiers within a 4-year ROTC regimen, participated in by the full Corps. That VMI continues to be categorized as one of the few Senior

Military Colleges in the nation and a leader in the Association of Military Colleges and Schools in the United States (AMCSUS) maintaining its national reputation. That recruits men and women of highest quality, who want this very different and special education (“don’t do ordinary”), which produces leaders for all professions. That all cadets undergo the same regiment that stresses “Commonality of Purpose” and always with honor. That the M in VMI stands for Military and this descriptor should be enforced with pride. My recollection is that every time we diminished the M – the military aspect – we unknowingly introduced undesired challenges that arose years later. That we keep the three legs of the stool “in balance”: academics, military, and athletics...with academics being “first among equals” delivered by the best of instructors in small classroom settings.

Second: Continue VMI’s history of being “well managed” at all levels. Academics is big business and schools and campuses (posts) are cities with all their requirements and complexities. VMI is a small undergraduate college. It is public in nature and operational budgets will always be tight. It has high expenses associated with its 24/7 excellent programs and military training. At all levels, hiring the right people that enjoy being involved in this special education and the VMI and Lexington environments, that know their profession, and have a superb work ethic should be mandatory. A

“broad” span of control with clear responsibilities, tightly controlled budgets, solid benefits, splendid instruction and work areas, and the best retirement system will offset budget and morale issues that by nature will periodically occur. This is VMI’s record over 180 years.

Third: “History and tradition are foundational to performance, morale, and reputation of good military commands”. VMI cannot divorce itself from its long history; rather, it should build on its history, achievements and well deserved reputation in peace and war. By their very nature and structure, military schools across this nation, many modeled after West Point and VMI, embrace their culture and traditions, which are force multipliers to building strong character, values, courage, discipline, leadership, and good citizenship. As Preston, one of our Founders said, “VMI produces citizen-soldiers for the nation in times of “deepest peril”.

Fourth: Institutional Autonomy: Historically, Virginia has been committed to institutional autonomy with distinctive schools and strong Board of Visitors oversight. However, this valued approach, despite the nationally respected reputations of Virginia colleges, is being challenged: not explicitly, but effectively...driven by increased costs, voices calling for sameness with more courses directed by the State as approved for transfer



credit, with students in larger numbers graduating in shorter time. The VMI system does not fit this model with its (principally) 4-year leader and class programs, mandatory ROTC, and demanding degrees requiring the best in its foundational classes. We must watch that over time, such centralization (even if unattended) does not diminish the strengths of the VMI educational experience. We have to get this right...; short term thinking could be tragic.

Farewell: In 2011, the day before graduation, a number of recently commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants, Ensigns, and Class Leaders, as they were completing their cadetships and graduating to new challenges and far different lives than experienced at the Institute, asked me for my description of “best leaders”. After a moment, I stated, “Great leaders have vision, are competent in their daily duty and care deeply about people. They exhibit a style of “quiet excellence” with no ego, a strong work ethic and steadiness under pressure. Character and honor, love of country and service, describe their drive and inner strength.”

I hope the Peay’s were able to impart much of this to the Virginia Military Institute Team and the Corps of Cadets. I’ve always believed that VMI is a national treasure; and, “more than ever” the nation needs VMI graduates. I firmly believe history will judge this period – these past two

decades – and our historic institution most favorably.

Thank you (again) for this distinct honor today, and eternally for your friendship and support over these many years. I wish you well!