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President, Naval War College
"PRESIDENTS HOUR"
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McNiece

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I don't know how I ever got talked into this business of coming out and giving a one man show, inept shy guy that I am. This situation reminds me of one that took place in one of the nearby Rotary Clubs. There was a member much like myself, a hard worker and a big organization man, but never up front. Everybody loved Charlie; they waited for the opportunity to let him get up and take a bow, because he was always the busiest guy on every committee, and he did all of these good things for the group. One day they had the chance; a rather callous loud mouthed guy happened to be emcee at a regular meeting when it was announced that the man scheduled as next week's speaker had to cancel. The emcee said, "Charlie, you are going to give the speech next week." Charlie was thunderstruck, and started making excuses. The man said, "No. We have waited long enough. You are going to give the speech, and I'll give you a subject; you are going to talk about sex."

Well, that just ruined Charlie's whole noon hour. One of his friends came up later and said, "Don't worry about that; it's no trouble in giving a speech on any subject. You always do the same thing, go to the library, go to the card catalogue, and look up the subject. You find some references, take some notes and put together a speech. Don't worry about the sex subject. It doesn't have to be an embarrassing speech. There are a lot of interesting books about sex from Freud and others. You can put together something if you work at it."

Well, Charlie didn't like his predicament very well. He went home that night to his wife. She was also shy and retiring, but tended to be a little bit of a nagger. He didn't want her to know the whole story. He said, "I'm going to give a speech to the Rotary Club next week."

She jumped all over him. "What are you going to talk about?"

He wasn't going to tell her the whole truth. He said, "Oh, I'm to talk about aviation."

She replied, "Aviation? You don't have any experience in aviation."

"It doesn't make any difference, I go down to the library and look up aviation in the card catalogue, read some references, make an outline, and that's all there is to it."

Well he was at the library every evening that week, getting the speech ready. He looked up sex, looked up Freud, all the while worried about making a fool of himself. He came to the big Rotary meeting and stood up with his voluminous notes. The speech went off pretty well; he was relieved to have it over.

That very afternoon all the men started phoning their wives about his talk. The phone started ringing at Charlie's home. His wife was getting all these compliments from the wives about the speech Charlie gave. Well, that was a new experience for her; she was very happy to be in the limelight. That next night they went out to a party where a whole group of members of the Rotary Club gathered around this rather shy woman and were complimenting her on her husband's talk.

She said, "Well, I just can't get over how Charlie came through on this. He knows practically nothing about the subject." The men's jaws dropped. And then she innocently added: "He's only tried it twice. The first time he got sick to his stomach, and the second time his hat blew off."

So, in preparation for today I went to the card catalogue and I looked up War College--I found that there were 195 references, one for every Admiral in the Navy. Each had a different idea of what a War College should do. Should it equip you for the Pentagon? Should it equip you for a Fleet Staff? Should it equip you for a command assignment? Of course, the answer to all these, is, "More or less." Should it teach you to think?--more or less--, I suppose. However, when I was forty years old I was pretty sure I knew how to think, as I am sure most of you do. Should it help assure one's selection for promotion? I suppose it should, but as we all know, that linkage is never going to be assured. Anyway, these are not the kinds of questions that I would expect to have asked about a good educational institution.

I am new here, and do not have perfect knowledge of the curriculum, but I have some firm ideas about what mid-career education should accomplish. It should give you some self-confidence, at least enough to not be hypnotized by procedures. You should learn to scrutinize the assumptions behind formatted procedures. It's always amusing to me to find so many people in the Fleet who are so shackled to their routines that they miss the whole point of the exercise.

I'm not preaching anarchy but I can recall times in prison, after we had had five or more years of organized experience, when a couple of guys would pipe up wondering what our Government's SOP was, what people in Washington would expect us to do vis a vis procedures etc. It seemed so ridiculous even to give a moment's thought to those who were in such a different world than we. Mid-career education should at least give one the

self-confidence to make his own laws, to make his own rules, to improvise as the situation dictates, when that's obviously the thing to do.

Secondly, while here you should gain a new degree of spontaneity to go along with that self-confidence. The ability to improvise should be a dividend that springs from such a period of mental refreshment. This may sound highblown. But, as I talk a little later, I think you will agree with my mentor that inventiveness probably is the defining characteristic of man.

Thirdly, you should gain enough sophistication to be healthily skeptical. I'll close with a poem that frames that virtue.

In addition to all of these, I think that, if you are like myself, the thing you should find in this mid-career education is a more comfortable feeling about where your profession stands in the hierarchy of disciplines. Now this is a tough one. You must gain at least enough historical perspective to realize that we are in no new age -- and that most of the slogans of the times are not really to be taken seriously. There is nothing new under the sun.

If we are doing our job here, those of you who are trying in a thoughtful way to get your stuff together can attain what my friend Dr. Rhineland (of whom I will speak later) might call metaphysical equanimity. I think the course should help you do that. Naturally, I also believe that the course must have some sort of structure and rigor--to give you pride. I think you should be proud to be a part of this community. I say that rather bashfully. I'm going on one input and that I received in the week we had the Presidents of the other War Colleges here, before I took over. Those Presidents, those Generals, envy us in many ways; for our teaching faculty, for our structured curriculum, for our departments and for our grading system. It has been a long bloody road to get here. I never had so clear a signal before to be cautious about change. In many people's eyes we have done something that has never been done quite so well before. I'm talking about my predecessors not myself.

It takes structure and rigor for credentials. I am going to read a paper here now that was presented to me after those conversations. Fred Hartmann wrote it. I'll read it because I didn't memorize it. This is in the nature of an announcement. I hope what he describes will come to pass as quickly as we can work the bugs out:

Cooperative Degree Program. I am happy to announce to you that the CNO has approved a Cooperative Degree Program linking

the work of the Naval War College and the Naval Postgraduate School. The Program will lead to a Master of Arts in Strategic Studies. It is a 44 quarter-hour program which counts your work here with grades of B or above as 18 quarter-hours. The rest of the 26 remaining hours will be completed in 6 after-hour off-campus courses. These courses will be offered this year (we hope) beginning in Washington, D.C., and later in Norfolk and San Diego. It is the PG school who will hire the professors. Costs are expected to be covered by VA benefits. Within the 26 remaining hours there is also an allowance for substitution of 12 quarter-hours of work of appropriate courses taken at third institutions. These are graduate-level courses taken either prior to attendance at Newport or subsequently. The program applies to all resident students regardless of the branch of Service and including civilians who have graduated since the present curriculum was established in 1972, meaning the classes of 73, 74, 75, 76 and 77, plus you and later classes.

Today you will receive in your student mail boxes a blue folder giving some of the details about the program. We cannot tell you all until the Postgraduate School decides exactly when the first classes will be held. Professor Hartmann is handling the remaining details. He is in Monterey now. The CNO has approved it. So much for the announcement. We'll wait for PG School coordination before we print it in any publications.

I think your course should give you some contact with the practitioners in the art of military science, strategy and politics. Again, as an announcement of sorts, Helmut Sonnenfeldt is coming here to spend several two or three-day periods on the campus (maybe, a half dozen) as a Bates Fellow and Lecturer. As you know, he was Henry Kissinger's European expert. He is now on the faculty at Johns Hopkins. He is going to write a formal speech and give another one. He hopes to engage in many face-to-face contacts with small groups of you, including CAR's project people.

There is another announcement of sorts that you may have heard about. The annual Current Strategy Forum this year is scheduled for late March, moved up in time for several reasons, particularly for the convenience of the student body. We will have as speakers, the Secretary of the Navy, either the CNO or one of the Fleet Commanders, hopefully Brzezinski from the administration (we haven't asked him, yet) plus a forum of OPNAV and OSD Seniors. It will last about 2 1/2 days. One of the purposes is for you to meet our guests, some 250 people, depending on how many accept. I hope that you are naturally and seriously enthusiastic about what goes on at CSF. I think it provides a big payoff to the War College, to yourselves, and particularly to the reputation of this Navy. The audience, the guests we invite, are people of substance and experience in the fields we are discussing. They are also people of influence;

like any other College our reputation is formed by what knowledgeable and well known people think of you.

So much for the contact with the practitioners and the rigor. I think the most important transaction that should take place here is between you and your mind. You are giving yourself a mid-career calibration. Are you going to be able to hold the pace? Is the military the place for you? Can you think? Can you write? Can you speak? These are skills that will make or break you in the years ahead. I think you need this time in your lives -- I certainly did -- to face up to this in your own time and in your own way. I hope that the atmosphere here allows you to do that. In my case it was a structured course of departments and curricula; it happened to be a private one, but I was able to shop around to some extent as you are able to shop around in your electives. What I am trying to say is that this should be more akin to a grad school than to a canned program or master lecture course.

Is the place perfect? Of course, it's not. It's always going to be in a state of change. We can't sit and watch yesterday's creative ideas become dogma. We must stay ahead as the world changes. I am blessed with a fine system that I inherited that is "in grind." That allows me to do what I have been so fortunate to be able to do time and again in my career. I don't like to tend the store but to explore tangential areas and make contributions from a unique viewpoint. I liken myself (and this is no joke) to William Tecumseh Sherman as described in a book by Fletcher Pratt, I read years ago. It was about the Civil War; he discussed the relationship between George Thomas and Sherman. George Thomas was the stalwart, the soul of integrity and stability. He was Sherman's junior, but Sherman would always give him tactical command of the main body--while Uncle Billy, in Pratt's words, would skirt the flanks with cavalry, "weaving his arabesques of maneuver." This was the way I always handled air strikes as an Airborne CAG--weaving arabesques with an open switch around a main body under delegated tactical control, commanding by exception. This is what I would like to be able to do here, leaving the Department Heads "in grind," with the main body.

Although a school's job is to look ahead, as an arabesque I want to glance behind. As you may have realized from my Change of Command address, I am a little uneasy about the state of affairs of this profession. In the early sixties, 15 to 20 years ago, the language seemed to change. It was the Defense Economics jargon that, I think, dominated the change, but I am not looking for a scapegoat. There also was a civilianization in the wind. That is to say, we had to adopt a vocabulary which appeared more akin to a successful businessman than to a winner on the battlefield. New utilitarianism sprang up wherein the only thing that counted was future consequences. I wondered,

and do now, how that bounces philosophically against the military profession.

I can recall the old Plato analogy of the brain being the philosopher, the groin being the businessman, and heart being the warrior. I think there's a little bit of truth in that. I see myself principally as a man of the heart, that is, a subjective man, more interested in concepts like will, honor, love, hate, etc. than the pristine rationalism of the brain or the efficient greed of the groin. I think the same is true of some of you. When we are so preoccupied with future consequences and forget the past, what does this do about duty, loyalty and tradition? The DOD fads and cults born of the sixties don't deal with such messy unquantifiable homilies. I resent the cultists for this reason, but I don't believe I hold anything against them so much as the fact that they are losers. Moreover, they have taken our reputations down the tubes with them. I hate to be a loser, and I have spent most of my professional life as one. We are seemingly being asked to ignore this, to join a new team, to get our minds off the unspeakable complexities of war and leapfrog in the garden of increasingly lethal technologies, picking and sorting as we go, and forget. What about blockades? What about bayonets? What about commitment, and what about its actual outgrowth--terror? Let's face it, those are the things that win wars.

Anyone who thinks we have vaulted over the age when blockades and bayonets and commitment and terror win wars, would be in for a real shock if subjected to hours and hours of talks to doctrinaire Communists as I have been. It really would be an eye opener for these naive supermanagers to see how much more traditional the doctrinaire Communist position is than what they evidently imagine--or to fathom how big a kick the commissars get out of our fumbling, our escalation. I can remember a time when a fellow named "Rabbit" said, "Well you needed tactical nukes, didn't you. It's too late now, you have too many soldiers in the field." He thought that was a real real knee-slapper. I think I have told several of your seminars about his response to me one time when I said, "You wouldn't want me to say that when my heart's really not in it?" He said, "Are you kidding me?" He clearly thought it was hilarious for Americans to be so naive as to take them at their word.

But I saw them fearful a couple of times. One of the times I remember was during one of those sinusoidal comings and goings of the fortunes of the war. I had an interrogation, again with Rabbit. He was grouchy and he felt that his whole war effort was set back and he said, "Now they (the Americans) are starting to worry about their honor." You see that's a very old fashioned word, but it was a danger signal to an experienced practitioner of war. They could care less about our escalation, de-escalation, tacit signals, and all the

rest--but when the Western press started to quote American misgivings about failure to uphold National honor, they worried. Unfortunately, our country didn't stick with that very long. As Clausewitz has said, war is at least half subjective. To use the faddish and cultish terms of modern management, I am concerned we are forgetting the bottom line. The bottom line is not technological breakthroughs but Clausewitz's breaking of the enemy's will.

Now I don't intend to say any more about that today, because it is not productive. It's kind of a theological discussion. Furthermore, I certainly don't aim this at Bill Turcotte or anybody in the Management Department. Goodness knows we have to spend our money wisely. But, what they do so well with management, and procurement, and so many other things in our course and in the government, doesn't translate exactly into other fields; that's the distinction I'm making. To give you a trivial example, I had an American acquaintance in Hanoi, a senior officer who was well-schooled in the ways of modern language and modern Pentagon operations. I can remember his framing his arguments in such a clever way as to destroy what I was trying to do. He didn't want to have escapes. The statement he made was, "We've got to balance what we have to gain against what we have to lose." Well it was axiomatic we were going to "lose" a lot more than we were going to "gain." We all were going to get beaten up. The escapees might get killed, and lot of other things. That argument which came right out of an economic model destroyed the issue. The issue was what was the very essence of resistance. It was symbolic; it was a necessary act, demanded by our profession, demanded by our honor. I didn't learn that from Quade. I learned that from Epictetus! In other words, don't mix your disciplines.

I'll not deal with these issues anymore today, but I may try to tinker with that metaphysical equanimity I talked about earlier as being a desired byproduct of this course. I may teach an elective for those in the next class, if I can get it together. It would be for those--quote "lost in an organization gone stale in a complex of bureaucratic interdependencies, with its tedious labyrinth of specializations, each facet of which, is contingent upon the next and each designed to converge in the single totality of meaning." In other words an elective for those in the next class who perhaps feel dehumanized or alienated.

If I teach such a course I know better than to deal with these subjects casually or without adequate expert assistance. And if I do deal with it, I promise you that I will do it with the blessing of the best. I have two good friends both Emeritus Professors of Philosophy with whom I am in touch: a man named Brennan from New York and a man named Rhinelander from California. I just finished a pamphlet by my friend Rhinelander. He would

not tolerate my loose use of those terms dehumanization or alienation, for instance, because in his pamphlet he destroys both of those terms, as they were used in the sixties. He is a very learned man and my inspiration in many ways. I hope with his help, and with Brennan's help, with your help, and with the help of several of the faculty members, that I might gather enough confidence to take the plunge. I don't know what to call this course, but it would be my hope that it could somehow give a viewpoint from classical writings that would support one in a time of need, much as I was able by sheer luck in a time of need to call upon similar material from my previous education. Because, Gentlemen and Ladies, this is a tough life and you do need something to believe in.

As Nietzsche, the old German renegade, said, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.", and don't we all know that. Our wounds to our pride and to our sensibilities and to our heart are so much worse than wounds to the flesh. I'm sure you have all experienced that. Pain is a mere detail when you've got the team, the Corps, the united aim and devotion to contemplate. Now this would not be a religious course; it would not even be an American course. (In so many words, that is.). And it certainly would not be a practical course talking about the symptoms of the age: drugs, and race, etc. It would be something less practical, perhaps, and little more comprehensive, something that would answer what I consider to be hard questions. It is these I would like for you to phrase for me and individually drop me a note about them. I'll have a comprehensive reading list, and a methodology that would address selected hard questions through it. For instance:

Can one rise to the top of an efficient bureaucracy without taint? Is it possible to successfully beat off a good followup system with its reports and feedback and all the rest without losing a little bit of virtue? There is nothing so valuable, at least in an extortion environment, as to know that you can't be had--that you have nothing to hide. Now we don't often enjoy that kind of a luxury. It's particularly difficult when we have to continually cope with an aggressive management feedback system. It is a real trap because you've got to get regular reports out, we all know that sometimes you can't hold the pace, the computer printout of the unvarnished truth will make you look bad, so you start fudging and start the downhill slide. One has to be compassionate and responsible to design a bureaucracy. Is it fair to design a system that is going to taint its participants? Are you issuing orders that can't be obeyed?

What are your obligations to tell the truth? Sounds like a simple question, but we have trouble with it at the very highest level. I'm not pointing my finger at anybody, but I am saying that there is a blurred area in our tradition and laws

about policy making and about when it is unpatriotic, or illegal, or at least in poor taste to disagree with what is or is not policy. What are the obligations of a senior military officer? You know the rest of that.

What about bravery and individual commitment when the national commitment is something less than total? I don't think it can be a partial commitment on the part of any individual.

Hopefully those are the sorts of things that might fall out. A good reading list may not offer solutions, but at least should offer points of discussion, ideas that I hope would bring home a certain nobility of spirit and example: Plato's trilogy is full of lessons for us military guys, as is Epictetus and, of course, some more modern philosophers, too.

My friend Rhinelander, recently told me, "It seems to me what most people call ethics is really a accumulation of often conflicting slogans." His recent writings stress that to find out how a man should behave, one has to have a clear idea (or at least an agreement among those with whom he is talking) about the nature of man himself.

Is he aggressively self-seeking, as Hobbes would say? Is he principally a knowing being, the sort that Plato and Aristotle visualized?

Is he merely a victim of unconscious drives, as Freud would have us believe?

Or a total victim of environment--a deterministic man as seen by Skinner?

Now Rhinelander did a rare thing for him, he came out with an answer in this little pamphlet which he put together for the Stanford Alumni. He thinks the best conception of man is that of the Greek Tragedians, "Man the Inventor". He's concluded that imagination is a defining characteristic of a human being--the ability (again as I stress) to improvise and to imagine. Not only do artists and literary people imagine, but he correctly notes that that is the very essence of Science. There is not all this big a cleavage between technical and the humanistic men.

All this may interest some of the next class. It will be an elective. I'm not going to subject everybody to it.

I'm going to ask for questions in a minute, but I'll read you one little poem that I brought along, which sort of epitomizes the dilemma of the man who wants to live both in this classical world and in the cold, hard reality of the present. This is a poem of some length; I'll just give you the end. It is by a

fellow named Louis MacNeice who is now dead. He was with the BBC as a writer during World War II, and is a man of letters in Britain. He has been described as one of the "sensitive observers of the intellectual scene." He talks about the old guys getting together after their college education and facing the reality of life: . . .

But certainly it was fun while it lasted
And I got my honors degree
And was stamped as a person of intelligence and culture
For ever wherever two or three
Persons of intelligence and culture
Are gathered together in talk
Writing definitions on invisible blackboards
In non-existent chalk
But such sacramental occasions
Are nowadays comparatively rare;
There is always a wife or a boss or a dun or a client
Disturbing the air.
Barbarians always, life in the particular always,
Dozens of men in the street,
And the perennial if unimportant problem
Of getting enough to eat.
So blow the bugles over the metaphysicians,
Let the pure mind return to the Pure Mind;
I must be content to remain in the world of Appearance
And sit on the mere appearance of a behind.
But in case you should think my education was wasted
I hasten to explain
That having once been to the University of Oxford (in this
case)
You can never really again
Believe anything that anyone says and that of course is an
asset
In a world like ours;
Why bother to water a garden
That is planted with paper flowers?
O the Freedom of the Press, the Late Night Final,
To-morrow's pulp;
One should not gulp one's port but as it isn't
Port, I'll gulp it if I want to gulp
But probably I'll just enjoy the color
And pour it down the sink
For I don't call advertisement a statement
Or any quack medicine a drink.
Good-bye now, Plato and Hegel,
The shop is closing down;
They don't want any philosopher-kings in England,
There ain't no universals in this man's town.

As to my course, you may feel I am trying to have you relive my life, which probably can't be done. However, I can't tell you what a boon it was to my predicament (and I don't think my predicament was all that much different from that of any military man with trials, who felt alone as you each will at one time or another, and have nothing but a bleak outlook ahead). It was a boon to have something to rely on. One of the things we did learn was not to tamper with people's value systems. I would be very careful not to do that, but to strive for a good neutral viewpoint. If you are staying out of religion and politics and patriotism (to the extent that it is political) which I would of course necessarily have to do, there is, for me, a real message in the nobility of thought of some of the classic philosophical literature of the past couple thousand years.

I am always willing to give historians a pat on the back, because I do think that historical perspective is a very maturing background and one that lets you see how your life is not unique.

I remember hearing General Weyand who was the former Chief of Staff of the Army, give a talk during the graduation at the Army War College. He's a very interesting guy and mused about computers. He said somebody told him that all computers work on extrapolated data. They assume a set of conditions will continue until the programs modified by current inputs. He said, "Think of how lucky we are. If we had been relying on computers at the Centennial, in 1876, and we had been asked to have a computer predict the transportation situation in the United States at the time of our Bicentennial, we would have been given a very pessimistic outlook, because it would have spewed out the solution that, by the end of another 100 years, there would be so much horse manure on the streets that the wagons couldn't get through!"

Weyand gave a final salute to life at the Pentagon by musing in a way that resembled a Naval War College brochure, lamenting his fate when he's been dismayed or confused with all the complexity of "insoluble problems" that we like to talk about, times when he had to deal with so many variable and unknowns he wished he could get counsel from his predecessor, George Washington. He often wondered during some late hours in the Pentagon what would happen if suddenly George Washington should reappear beside his desk. Weyand, after lamenting to George about his perplexing problems, of his dilemmas, of all the various factors, unknown and complex, the interdependencies, etc., said he didn't know how George Washington would have reacted. But he rather thought that George, in thinking back to Valley Forge, and some of the unknowns he faced would have responded with a wry smile. I think I agree. Well, thank you very much. Merry Christmas!