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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF OLD

Lecture by

Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, Editor, The Richmond News Leader

13 May 1948



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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

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12 May 1948

Memorandum for all Officers

Lecturer for Thursday, 13 May, at 1500

Dr. Douglas S. Freeman,
Editor, The Richmond News Leader

Subj: New Leadership in the Light of Old.

Summary of Career

Dr. Freeman was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, on 16 May 1886. He was graduated from Richmond College in 1904 and received a Ph.D. from the same college in 1908. He holds honorary degrees from many United States colleges and universities. His newspaper career began with the Richmond Times-Dispatch in 1909. In 1913 he became an associate editor of the Richmond News Leader and has been editor of that newspaper since 1915.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of Richmond Newspapers, Inc.; a director of the Equitable Life Assurance Society; and a director of the Southern Railway. He was visiting professor of journalism at Columbia University, 1934-35 and professor of journalism at that university from 1936-41. He was a lecturer at the Army War College, 1936-40 and at the Coast Artillery School, 1935-38. He is a member and trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation and General Education Board; a trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; rector and president of the board of trustees of the University of Richmond; member of the advisory board, Dictionary of American History and Atlas of American History; member of the national advisory board, Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation; member of the Council of the Library of Congress; and chairman of the advisory committee, Princeton edition Papers of Thomas Jefferson.

Dr. Freeman is the author of Reports on Virginia Taxation, 1912; Virginia - A Gentle Dominion (in these United States), 1924; The Last Parade, 1932; R.E. Lee, four volumes, 1934 (Pulitzer Prize 1934); The South to Posterity, 1939; Lee's Lieutenants, three volumes, 1942-44. He is editor of Calendar of Confederate Papers, 1908, and Lee's Dispatches, 1915.

Outline of Lecture

No outline of the lecture has been received.

(Signed)
ALLAN E. SMITH
Rear Admiral, USN
Chief of Staff

"NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF OLD."

Lecture by

Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, Editor, The Richmond News Leader

The Admiral, gentlemen, is very kind in welcoming me and very tolerant in not giving me what is, in reality, my familiar name at the various Army and Navy Schools in the nation. Whenever I go to one of the command schools, those who know me and particularly those who through the years have endured my lectures at the National War College, always style me the "Rip Van Winkle of the American Armed Forces" because I have had the great and distinguished honor, through the years, of living for a long, long time with some of the great men of the armed services of the past.

It's no small thing for a man to live for thirty years of his life while he looks into the private correspondence of such men as Robert E. Lee and of George Washington, and Stonewall Jackson. It's no small thing to stand, as it were, and look over the shoulder of those men as they are writing, their most confidential messages to their Chief Executive. It's been a great privilege; it's been a great privilege also for a man to have known, as I have known, some of these great men in the flesh. I can recall, as a little boy, the tottering, bent figure of Jubilee Early, who was commander of the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia during some of the late phases of the war. We little boys, in the old town where General Early lived, shuddered when we saw him because there was a tradition in that town that General

Early ate a little boy every morning for his breakfast. And yet, small as I was, I marvelled at the deference our fathers showed for that old man when he would walk down the street, bent and bowed, but still clad in Confederate grey, carrying in his hand an armed staff, oftentimes chewing tobacco furiously all the while; he would scowl at the men who would stop and take off their hats to him. The most he would do would be to grunt in answer to their greeting. And yet, when they saw him they saw not the man that was, but the man that had been; and as they looked with eyes of maturity they saw again the vision of that man in youth; they saw him and the grey coat of his was covered all over with buttons and with braid; they saw that staff in his hand was a sword of command there on the heights of Fredricksburg or deep in the wilderness of Spotsylvania. Yes, it's been a great privilege to have known those men; I saw Longstreet in the flesh; I saw Pittsfield when he still could ride a horse; I saw John Bigaud, one of the few civilians who ever showed qualities of high command without technical and professional training as a soldier; I knew them all, to my great joy, then, having communed with them and in these later years having had the thrilling experience of dealing with young George Washington, I had the great honor, before, during and after this war, of seeing their young colleagues of America. It was a great thing to go to Vienna and to see Mark Clark for example, when I remembered him as a tall, perhaps the tallest of all men at the War

College in 1936-37. It was a wonderful thing to see Eisenhower abroad in Frankfurt and the last time I had seen him he had been sitting in the outer office of McArthur, who at that time was Chief of Staff. It was interesting, and at the same time it was amusing, because quite often when I would go into the offices of these men, whether it was at Frankfurt or whether it was at Tokio, they somehow would straighten up and become a little self-conscious as if they said to themselves, "My God is that man going to take my historical photograph here and now?"

One remarkable thing about them gentlemen, is that they are all so much alike. I looked not long ago at the magnificent bust of John Paul Jones, and I thought to myself, "That could be the composite picture of the American Naval Commander, the eyes, the head, the line of the mouth, the poise of the shoulders, the courage, the confidence and yet with all the good humor of it--that isn't John Paul Jones but that's the American Naval Commander, that indeed is the American fighting man."

I have seen them, I have seen young George Washington come back at the end of the war, in 1759; he wasn't broken hearted but he was disillusioned; there he had given five years of his life under immense emotional strain to the cause of the country and then he was coming back with exactly the same rank that he had when he entered the service. He had been provisional officer, correspondent of our national guard officer of today, and there when it was all over he had come back, oh there was applause for him,

but there had been abuse for him likewise. Think of it, it had been said of him that when he sent in the report of a great alarm, on the frontier he did it because he wanted reinforcements and a higher command! He had seen the people in the colony of Virginia denounce the officers of his regiment as drunken debauchees. There had actually been a time when the C-in-C of the British forces in America had suspected that George Washington was the man who was communicating secretly with the enemy. All that he had to do with, and yet he came back, typical of hundreds who were to follow him, he came back with wounds of pride and bruises of body and with a reputation far less exalted than he deserved, but he came back in integrity of soul. What's true of him is true of all that long, long company that wore the epaulets and carried the insignia of the American forces. I can say this, I do not know the commanders of the War of 1812 in any detail because I have not studied it. The others, I might say, I am not altogether unacquainted with, and I have not yet seen one great American seaman, one great American soldier, who was not at the same time a great man of character.

That tribute I would like to pay at the very start of my remarks to you gentlemen, as you are here now concluding a year of the most eventful study, of the most fascinating experience you'll ever have, in times of peace; be sure of that, these men who stand out in the annals of our nation, are men, fundamentally of integrity of character above everything else. Oh, you'll find a wastrel and a rascal who

fights a brilliant battle and sometimes wins a chance campaign, but you'll never find one in all the annals of our nation who had the esteem of his country, America, who did not at the same time have self-respect, the justification of an honest character devoted to his nation. Yes, I say these men have many things in common and the history of our nation's wars have many things in common. Nowhere, gentlemen, more than in the history of war do we find the truth more visibly, more surely demonstrated as that great observation of George Adams Smith. He is the author, among other things, of that historical geography of the Holy Land, I beg you, if you have the opportunity, to read it, because it will explain to you the basic physical conditions that determine even now the conflict that seems to be progressing toward this grim climax between Zionist and Arab. He says in that masterful book, one of the most fascinating volumes of our times, George Adams Smith's historical geography of the Holy land, "History never repeats itself without interpreting itself." You'll never read of your second war without understanding better the first war you ever studied. The first campaign that you have mastered will help you by its repetition thereafter to interpret the second campaign. It is true of American history and through the years, generation after generation the same story is recorded, how did they win the wars? By superiority. That's how they won them, by superiority. Of course, superiority has three aspects, by superiority of equipment, by superiority of numbers, by superiority of morale. That Army is invincible which has superiority in all three respects, but mainly may drive its enemy to its last haven of surrender if it has superiority

of numbers, of fire power, and of morale. But oftentimes, in the history of our nation, a nation so slow to prepare for its defense, we are not able, until the final phases of the war, to have superiority in all three of these respects. Wherefore American history and American wars interpret themselves again and again, not in terms only of one superiority, but in terms of a transcendent superiority in one particular which makes up for deficiency in another. The Navy of the revolution, shaped as it was, and yet what it lacked in fire power and in number of vessels it made up in morale. Inferiority was ours in many ways in the great amphibious campaigns of the French and Indian wars, a campaign, a succession of campaigns, but gentlemen, a far greater study than they got at the hands of our public. Read again the history of Cartagena in 1741, if never you've read it. Read of the two descents on Lewisburg; how one failed for lack of cooperation on the part of amphibious forces and the other succeeded primarily because of it. Follow the works of that amazing man John Bradstreet and see how one officer, making his own ships, was able to cut the line of communication of the entire French force in order to make possible the victory of John Forbes in Western Pennsylvania in 1758. Ah, yes, if we have lacked superiority in one particular it has been the great service of American officers that they have made it up as far as men might in the other particulars. Are we numerically inferior? Then in morale we must be superior.

Have we fewer guns? Then fire them more accurately? That's the story.

On superiority of force and superiority of equipment I need not dwell; that is a story known to you, every phase of it. You have followed it here in your course. May I consequently speak to you of old leadership and new in terms primarily of morale--superiority of morale--and what that means to leadership and what that demands of leadership. I take my text primarily from the Army of Northern Virginia, I do so for two reasons, the first that this army was hopelessly inferior in fire power of the artillery arm and it was incredibly inferior in all other forms of equipment; what superiority it had, of necessity was superiority of morale. And I will take it also as the basis of my text for the reason that my good Confederate father once explained to me; he said to me, "My son, as you write of American history, and in particular of the conflict between the states, never depreciate the Army of the Potomac, I fought against it and I want to say that, with the exception of one Army, the name of which modesty forbids me to mention, it was the greatest Army in America." Modesty no longer forbids me to mention that Army of Northern Virginia, indeed my heart beats faster each time I hear its name and if, as an historical writer, I have come to the great divide, it was not when I wrote this book or that one better or worse than those that preceded it, it was when I stood before some General Assembly, I forget actually what, before we reorganized the

National War College, I said to those Admirals and Generals and to younger soldiers, I said, "Gentlemen, I make the great concession, the Army of Northern Virginia has been outdone by the American Army of the second World War," but I said, "You have got to admit that they were good because they had so many descendants of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac in it."

General Lee never set forth his theory of morale, nowhere did he ever write the basic doctrines, but Lee and Jackson with slight variation, and before them Washington, had laid down certain guiding principles of morale that are of infinite value to leadership. They held that morale depended upon four things; Upon the service of supply, upon the nature of discipline, upon the competence of command, and upon the component of victory. The service of supply-the nature of discipline-the quality of command-the component of victory. You may have to fight a great battle as sea again, which God forbid; sometimes you may be compelled to throw out on the line a weary division that has lost half of its numbers; or sometimes, God forbid, you of the Marine Corps will have to fight another Iwo Jima--Iwo Jima-I must pause at that name, and I must say to you, if you ever find a man who would depreciate your comrades of the Marine Corps, you ask that man, "Have you ever seen Iwo Jima, have you ever looked down from Suribachi on that far sounding beach"? and if he says, "No," you then say to him, "Never

speaking of the Marine Corps until you have seen Iwo Jima." You may be compelled to throw out your troops, we have made the mistake oftentimes in keeping them too long in line. I said in 1939, I shall say in 1949, that we have never yet appreciated the factor of fatigue and its effect on men, fatigue of combat. When you throw men out, above everything else let them wash and find for the ragged new uniforms and above everything else, no matter how heavily you have to call on commissary, give them something special to eat. Read if you will in that connection the story of what happened to the Army of Northern Virginia after Sharpsburg, when only through the blunders of an adversary did it escape defeat. When Lee drew his army back into Northern Virginia, the first thing he did was to increase the ration and next to put them in decent uniforms. The result was the morale that showed itself from the heights of Fredricksburg on the 13th of December. Oh we of America, we students of wars, have never appreciated until this conflict what the service of supply meant. You may remember how often in the past we have sneered at the commissary of the old war, and the quartermaster of the new. Let me, as a writer of military history, say to you, "I never see a quartermaster officer who fought in France that I don't take off my hat to him."

I had the privilege of going over General Patton's diary and of deciding whether it should or should not be published. Boy! That document burned the pages it was written on!

Patton did not literally call men by hard names but he came just as close to it as a gentleman could. And when I read that story of the drive, drive, drive of the Third Army I said, "Glorious work, fine command of those tank divisions, superb leadership at the top." But don't forget those men who kept those tanks full of gas and those men's bellies full of food. I remarked that once at the ground Forces Headquarters and some man said to me, "Don't give all the credit to Patton's service of supply, just remember, above other things, that if anybody else's tank cars or anybody else's gasoline or anybody else's trucks ever got down in the Third Army area they never got out again!"

Service of supply, quality of command, what that means to man! Discipline--I spoke a moment ago of the battle of Sharpsburg; I've often marvelled at that fight. It was a segmented battlefield, an incredible battlefield. The attack began on the left, Lee was forced to draw it in. The battle shifted to the center and there came critical operations when it was one little brigade of two regiments that stood out there against a storm of attack, the Twenty-Fourth North Carolina and the Third Arkansas. I said, "How did that command ever stand? How did it ever stand?" During the day when the attack on it was most furious, old Pete Longstreet sent Colonel Surrel to ask the commander, Colonel Cooke, if he wanted any help? Colonel Cooke sent back word "No" and he added among other glorious observations that he

could present his complements to the General and tell him that he and his two regiments were going to stay there until every Yankee in front of them had been so long in hell that General Sumner was calling the devil by his first name. How did they do it? I often wondered until I read the story of that 24th North Carolina and then I found that, whatever else had happened, the commander of that little regiment had inculcated discipline by looking after his men--Looking after his men. Many years ago when Confederate veterans were still quite numerous I made a point of asking them what they thought was the greatness of Lee? They didn't know anything about strategy, they didn't know anything about logistics (the word hadn't even been used in their war). The first use I've ever found of it was in 1866. But they gave with surprising unanimity the same answers, "he looked after his men." That discipline they regarded first: The comfort of the men as the prerequisite of the fighting quality of those men is the soundest discipline of all. That little regiment had been engaged in the battle of Malvern Hill; it had come out in the drenching rain. Its commander had written back to the rear and had called the cooks and had had them build warm fires for the men and had had hot food ready for those men when they came out. And that, I've said a thousand times, was one of the secrets of the discipline of those troops. They were good because they were looked after. They had good quality to start

out with, I could elaborate, I have two long lectures on that very question of the relation of supply to discipline, but I hurry on because I must say to you a word about the place that command has in the morale of troops.

Command, we think of command primarily in terms of the relationship between the officer and the enlisted man, what an absurd definition; what a strange limitation! We must think not merely of the man in the ranks but of the young officer and of what must be done to bring forward the young officer of ability, to make him feel that he is a part of the machine and not merely the mouthpiece of the high command. I often say that no matter how great our Armies may have been, either in the First or the Second World War, we never had invalidated the point of the question that Lee asked at the battle of Mine-Run. All of a sudden, it was December 1863, there was a threat on his flank, it was his right flank, and he was facing East. It looked bad for a moment and the first question he asked was, "What regiment is on that flank, and who commands it?" One regiment, and he knew the value of that one regiment. Woe, to that officer who ever gets so high that he doesn't think of his juniors. No man is fit to command who lacks understanding of those who work with him. You are going to be called on, some of these times to deal with incompetent men. Fortunately now, our Army and Navy schools are large enough for us to

take selected material and training, and while in the Mercy of God, we frequently find those men who have material military sense, MacArthur says it is just as definite as the sense of sight, and of smell. Without having professional training, of course, we are going to rely on professional training throughout, but we are never going to be able to say that because a man was trained at Annapolis or at West Point, or had group schooling here or at Washington, or at Leavenworth or at Norfolk or the Amphibious school or wherever it may be, in Alabama--that he is on that account going to be good. He isn't, he isn't going to be good unless he knows how to make the best of the material he has. He isn't going to be good until he had stood the test of combat; he isn't going to be good unless he shows how he is going to deal with his companions in arms. To get rid of the incompetent man without ruining him for the future is as great a problem of the commander as to see to it that the soldier or sailor has his chance. Command means cooperation, read the story of the two attacks on Fort Fisher and see how in the one instance the lack of cooperation on the part of a political, stupid General denied the Federals victory which was won easily in the renewed attack because there was cooperation, and it means cooperation with your next in command.

How many beautiful stories come to mind as I admonish you to think of the man next below you, not as someone who

is going to outstrip you, but as someone to whom you have an obligation. Someone to whom in the true spirit of comradeship you may expect the largest cooperation. I've seen it, I've seen it at Pearl Harbor. I've seen Nimitz when, knowing that his days as Commander in Chief of the Pacific were ended and ahead of him was the high office of director of Naval Operations, he called to Pearl Harbor the man, the man of all men whom he trusted, the man of all men he wanted to be his successor, and there on the hill looking down on the scene of that great tragedy of December 1941, there on the hill at his headquarters, Nimitz took him in. I was at the house next door and there wasn't a morning when they did not sit down together at the mess table and walk out together, and never was there a more beautiful example of comradeship and mutual confidence, those essentials of command, than were displayed there. As I looked at them, I said to myself, "Ah, the comradeship of David and Jonathan which is the most beautiful of all the brotherly stories of Holy writ is repeated in the relationship of Nimitz and Spruance."

It was forecast in the story of Lee and of Jackson, turn, if you will sometime, to that story of May 1st, 1863, when there at the bivouac, Lee called Jackson to him and said, "Well, how do you plan to get at those people General?" And Jackson, taking out a crude sketch map, said, "I plan to go around here" and he drew it with his finger, and Lee said, "What are you going to make the movement with?" Jackson in his muffled voice answered, "With my whole corps, 28,000 men".

That left Lee only 20,000. Jackson to go on a movement against a flank, that was in the air; Lee with 20,000 to stand there and take the hammering of the whole of the Federal Army. It was an audacious thing. It put a tremendous burden on Lee, and yet what? Such was the trust, such the lofty conception of command, that Lee simply said "Well, go on." Ah, the wilderness of Spotsylvania has lost its terror now. Where was the forest with saplings shattered by the fire, there lies now the cornfields. Where one could hear the sound of the whippoorwill, there now is the laughter of children. The odor of earth mold and of pine has given place now to the scent of gasoline on the highways. Where of old there was the rumble of the caisson now you hear the whirr of the school bus and the honk-honk of the passing motor car. The wilderness has lost its terror; the wilderness again has become a part of civilization and yet I think there are times when in the May noon or in the shadows you hear the voice of Lee saying, "Well, go on."

Go On--Morale, depending largely on command. Morale, creature of supply; creature of discipline; creature of command, Morale means your full regard for your comrade and no jealous measuring of the risks you take or the honor that may come to him. The greatest of all morale perhaps is the morale of victory. I need not enlarge upon it. Oftentimes before the war, I said to classes of the War College, "Gentlemen, don't fool yourselves, you never know what you are until you've come to combat." And I repeated then what I said to you a

few moments ago, when I began; I said "General Marshall, you are a soldier and I'm only a writer on military history but don't you be surprised if twenty-five percent of your corps commanders fail you in the first campaign." He didn't like it; he said that the screening process that we had gave us the assurance of a much higher level of successful command than that. Well maybe he was right. The point is, by reason of superiority in numbers, in morale and, perhaps above all, in equipment we never had to put that quite to the test because an incompetent man (and we had some), a mediocre man (they were not lacking in our command corps or in our divisional command) can get on so long as there is victory. Had we been repulsed on the line of the Rhine or on the line of the Meuse, there might have been a different story. Then we would have realized morale in adversity calls for different qualities from command in victory. We had the morale of victory all the way through. Aye, we were living again those days of the French revolution; the music of the Marseilles were in the eyes of men, their ears rang with it, they saw the light of a new world, the hope of a new day, and one of them quoted volumes when he said of the feeling of the French Army, "We felt as if we were forever marching into the dawn."

Gentlemen, I am done. I have said to you that the story of the American command is a story of integrity, of superiority. I have said that that superiority was of numbers, of equipment, and of morale and I have then tried to explain to you that morale involved adequate service of supply, that with it was

coupled the right sort of discipline, the right type of command, and a great component of victory. I have this only to add for you. You are going out, many of you, on Saturday, wise words will be spoken to you, I have no doubt, by your commencement orator; wise words will be spoken to you by the Secretary for the Navy. Maybe you'll wear your sword, what is going to be on that sword?

Once while I was in Tokio, I happened to be in General Fellers' office waiting for General MacArthur to receive me. There on a desk was a great box and in it, under an exquisite piece of white silk (the very whiteness of the silk was a mockery) was the most beautiful Sumari sword that ever I saw. And I asked Fellers whence it came and he said that as far as he could make out it was the sword of the Ministry of War. I looked at it, I did not have the presumption to touch it, but I thought about my own father's sword and I thought about the swords of those men of whom I'd written and about the swords of great Captains of the past. What would have been the motto on Napoleon's sword? Surely it would have been those words he had taken from a French Statesman, "Audacity, always audacity." What was on Washington's sword? Ah, had he written the motto that described his life it would have been those words he spoke, as a young commanding officer, a young colonel, "Discipline is the life of an Army." And on the other side he would have written no doubt, "Preparation for war is the best guarantee

for peace." On Jackson's sword, what would have been written? Stonewall Jackson's sword? Ah, the words he spoke on that same flank movement at Chancellor's Bend "Push on, Push on!" And on the other side, "Take no council of your fears." I think of Grant's sword as having written on it, one side "I'll fight it out here if it takes all summer." And on the other side "Let us have peace," Lee's sword? "It is history that teaches to hope." That would have been his message and the other side, "I will take the consequences of my acts." Great swords these, some hang on the walls of museums, some are in cases where reverent eyes gaze on them. Some day, your children, your children's children, will take out your sword. Your motto may not be written there, engraved on steel but it will be written in the history of the American Army, and of the Navy of the United States. What will be your motto? What is the ideal that you set for yourselves? Of all the lessons of old leadership, priceless anew, which will apply to you? On your answer depends not only your service to your nation, but likewise your loyalty to God, your self respect, as a man of integrity.