
REMARKS AT CLASS OF 2008 FLAG PRESENTATION CEREMONY

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July 9, 2005

General Scaparrotti, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Staff and Faculty, Members of the Class of 2008. It is my very great pleasure to be here today to represent the Class of 1958, and to present the new class flag to the Class of 2008.

Almost a year ago, our two classes, separated by 50 years in time, began their association when some fifty plus of my classmates joined you in the "marchback" from Lake Frederick to West Point at the end of your Cadet Basic Training, better known as "Beast Barracks." You were ready to officially join the Corps of Cadets and the Long Gray Line. Now I am pleased to offer you our congratulations on successfully completing your Plebe Year and achieving the exalted status of "Yearlings."

Project "58-08", as we call it, is intended to create an enduring linkage between our classes. We initiated our support last year, continue it with this presentation today, and will be here to mark each significant passage throughout your cadet careers. We support you all the way, and it is our hope and expectation that the linkage between our classes will continue long after graduation.

While it may seem like a long way away, two years from this summer you will become First Classmen. At that time, '58 will be here to turn over to you the First Class Club. As you probably know, it has been the tradition for most classes to, at some point after graduation, make a significant gift to the Academy. Many of these are brick and mortar facilities, statues, monuments and other facilities that you see on the Academy grounds. All are part of the Association of Graduates' extensive program to provide through its gifts a "Margin of Excellence" that will significantly contribute to every cadet's education, development and enrichment of their overall experience leading up to graduation.

After much deliberation, the Class of 1958 decided that our gift to the Academy would take the form of a new First Class Club, with "first class" meant to be an indicator of the quality of the facilities as well as the identity of the cadets for whom it was intended. Our vision was that the club would serve as an informal place for cadets to gather, socialize, and, most important, to cement the bonds of camaraderie that derive from the West Point classmate experience. (I can tell from the chuckles I am hearing that you are already familiar with what goes on at the club.)

No class has stronger bonds between classmates than the Class of 1958. As we approach our fiftieth reunion which will coincide with your graduation, I can tell you that these bonds have never been stronger, and that they continue to grow even stronger over the years. Douglas MacArthur once said, as you all well know, that "Upon the fields of friendly strife, are sown the seeds that upon other fields, on other days, will bear the fruits of victory." To extend that thought, the bonds of class camaraderie are sown on the playing fields, on the training grounds, in the classrooms and barracks, and everywhere you go throughout your years as a cadet. They will bear the fruits of a lifetime of friendships that will serve you well both professionally and personally and be perhaps the greatest legacy of being part of the Long Gray line. That is our firm wish for each and every one of you.

The flag that I presented to your class today bears your class crest, along with the motto: "2008 – No Mission too great." May that motto guide you through your remaining years as cadets, and on throughout your lifetime of service.

Thank you.