

This is a great moment – for the Class of 1968, for West Point, and for future generations of cadets.

Jefferson Hall Library and Learning Center has transformed the look and feel of our academic area. Since the very first day it opened about three weeks ago —it has been teeming with cadets and faculty, creating an incredible positive energy that’s exciting to witness and be a part of.

This moment —in particular— is a great moment, because it ties together a part of our academy history that isn’t well known. The statue we are about to unveil will mark Thomas Jefferson in the memory of every person who enters this Class of 1968 rotunda, and it will indelibly tie Thomas Jefferson to West Point. We call COL Thayer the Father of the Military Academy---- but it was President Jefferson who was the Founder. Jefferson was initially skeptical (some even say opposed) to the idea of a Military Academy. His boss, President George Washington, was in favor. Jefferson’s experience was with the professional armies of Europe, and he feared that a military academy would equal an elite Army—where power was given rather than earned. As a man of a unique vision, he knew that a fledgling nation needed to be embraced by its citizens, and he was cautious that a ruling elite might be swayed to preserve their own status thru military power. I suspect that a man who believed that every man has a right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness could not support elitism or institutions founded on that principle in good conscience either. Jefferson’s eventual support of West Point was born of the idea that the cadets who would be educated and trained as officers would come from and represent every state—thereby strengthening this new experimental nation with an army that came directly from the people. As West Point was conceived, Thomas Jefferson became its champion because he saw the potential that this Academy could give a young country in developing citizen-servants to the nation and its ideals. In the end, Thomas Jefferson became a supporter, adding his official signature and

endorsement to the document to create West Point. James Muir has beautifully sculpted Thomas Jefferson right before the signing of this historical document. It is truly a work of art that includes an incredible level of detail, from the feather pen to the scrolled parchment, and is exactly right for this portal into Jefferson Hall.

As Dutch Hostler noted, it's also a great moment for the members of the class of 1968. I feel a special relationship with this class, who were firsties – the Cadets in the Red Sashes -- when I reported as a new cadet in 1967. I still have occasional flashbacks. That year, I had to memorize many of their names as part of plebe knowledge. And as we look at the amazing accomplishments of the members of the Class of 68, both in and out of armed service, we are all fortunate to know those names and those people. You know, I've been talking to cadets this year about giving back, about using their knowledge and their efforts and incredible energy to give back and make the world better--- as scholars and as warriors. You all have done that and more-- and you set a great example of what's possible with a spirit of giving back. Thanks for what you have given, but thank you so much more for your spirit of giving to your alma mater and to your nation.

It's a great moment in addition for Judge John Charles Thomas, and the Jefferson Foundation. He truly is the personification of the American dream, the ideals that West Point cherishes and is sworn to serve and protect. Born in segregated Tidewater Virginia, through hard work and his own initiative, he graduated from Mr. Jefferson's University, the University of Virginia, and the law school there as well. He later became the first African-American partner in any major law firm south of the Mason Dixon line and the first ever African-American Justice on the Supreme Court of Virginia. He is also a staunch friend of West Point who has taken great steps to strengthen the connections between UVA and our Academy. In fact, when some of faint heart

questioned whether this building should be named for Thomas Jefferson, Judge Thomas worked quietly behind the scenes to ensure that would happen. The historical pieces from Monticello, including the Thomas Jefferson desk, are special gifts to this building and this school, and Judge Thomas was a driving force behind that initiative as well. He is an amazing example of a citizen who loves this country, its dedication to the citizen-soldier, and is also someone who gives back in large and small ways. Thank you for reminding us that big ideas matter—as do the people who breathe life into them.

It's a great moment for a few visionaries whom we should recognize. BG Dan Kaufman, and BG Barney Forsythe----The Former Dean and the Former Vice Dean for Education had a vision for this place. They didn't imagine it fitting into what was already here---- but being a portal to what was to become--- and they got it right. They realized that, although we must retain the links to our past, we must also change and adapt to new worlds of knowledge and new ways of teaching. In Thomas Jefferson's words, "Institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manner and opinions change with the circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times." General Eric Shinseki—former Army Chief of Staff stated it more succinctly if less elegantly—"If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less." Dan Kaufman, Barney Forsythe, and those they led in establishing Jefferson Hall understood the need to keep pace with advancing times.

I recently found a paper written by BG Forsythe in a closet in my office (which is an amazing thing in and of itself, if you aren't into cleaning)... In this paper, Barney Forsythe talked about the vision for this new library and learning center and the translation of that vision into the physical structure we are in right now. The translation of the vision into an actual sketch, and

then into a building with a blueprint and a concrete plan of action --- like many big projects, and much like this gift the Class of 1968 put together--- was a collaborative endeavor. In the end, Barney Forsythe writes.... “Having re-affirmed our beliefs that cadet education in the twenty first century must develop officers who respect the past but are open to the future, who as Army leaders can anticipate and respond effectively to a dynamic and uncertain world, we retained the notion that West Point’s New Library and learning center should both act as a distinctive portal to the world of knowledge and blend with its surroundings. “ It was Dan Kaufman’s and Barney Forsythe’s vision that Thomas Jefferson Hall would say unequivocally that intellect matters in the Army Profession. Thanks—to both of them, and to the teams they led to that vision. Dan Kaufman of course, is a member of the Class of ’68 – my fellow graduate student, my direct predecessor and mentor as Dean, and my friend. Joan and I owe him and Kathryn special thanks for not only for their role and vision for Jefferson Hall but for many other kindnesses over the years.

Because of the vision and efforts of many people, particularly members of this 40<sup>th</sup> Reunion Class, Thomas Jefferson -- our Founder -- will have a fantastic home here in the Class of 1968 Rotunda. So as we are about unveil this new Statue and dedicate this rotunda -- I can’t help but think about the new parts of American History being uncovered and written into the consciousness of our future and current citizen-Soldier-leaders. I imagine cadets will say, “Meet you by Jefferson Statue”...like we have done with other American heroes.

I’d like to close by talking about another historic Virginian, one of my heroes, Justice Lewis Powell. He was a Virginia lawyer, as I am and Judge Thomas is, and I’ve always admired him very much. Late in a very successful career, he was nominated to the United States Supreme Court, a job he never sought. He was one of the most distinguished and influential justices in our

history. A few months ago, I was visiting Charlottesville and came across a letter that Justice Powell wrote to his son Lewis as the younger Powell was beginning college. He wrote:

The really important thing is to be somebody and do something worthwhile in this one life each of us is given by God. This doesn't mean making the headlines or making the most money.

Many who succeed in both are quite contemptible. It does mean using your ability in some profession or calling in a way that contributes something to your generation. It also means being a person of honor, character, patriotism, civic consciousness, and some leadership of your fellow citizens

It's not a bad philosophy of life – and it's one that your class has embodied with their service and generosity. Because of your support of West Point, through this gift and in a thousand other ways, large and small, you are allowing today's and tomorrow's cadets to also pursue that dream and stand on the shoulders of No Task too Great for 68.