

**Remarks by The Rev. Richard P. Camp, Jr, (Asst. CH, USMA, '73-'79, Chaplain, USMA 1979-1996,) on the occasion of the Memorial Service for the Class of 1979 on 18 September, 2009.**

Welcome to the historic Cadet Chapel, a rally point for worship since 1910. Some of you attended chapel in a different facility, but the Cadet chapel, standing high above the Plain, continues to be a conspicuous reminder to all cadets of a point of reference beyond West Point, beyond the Army, to God, the source of hope and wholeness for all people.

I came to West Point as Chaplain when most of you were finishing high school. I had the responsibility to be the chaplain during your four years at the Academy. I had the honor of leading the memorial service at your 15<sup>th</sup> reunion, and I am happy to be back with you for your 30<sup>th</sup>.

Class reunions are always special at West Point, and they become more meaningful as the years move on. Class Memorial Services are an important part of each reunion because they enable us to pay tribute to classmates who have died. Their names trigger memories – memories of tough days as you developed in mind, body, and spirit; memories of fun times as you matured together; and memories of serving together in places near and far in the service of our country. Memorial Services should do more than call us to look back! They ought to serve as a time for reflection and recommitment to the values of West Point and to the highest purposes of life.

In my 22 years as Chaplain I came to recognize that West Point classes, more than that of colleges around the country, grow tighter through the years. This happens because you struggle together from day one in this tough place of discipline and learning; you graduated with men & women who would serve in the same profession and you would frequently serve together on Army posts or distant fields of battle. Now, years later, you return to touch those memories--to touch the hand or the embrace of friends. But just for a moment today we reach out to touch, in ghostly assemblage, those who have died. Make it a time to renew your priorities in life, those which Steve Covey called “first things”: to live, to love, to learn, and to leave a legacy.”

Many of your classmates never got to think much about a legacy. Their legacy is a commitment to duty; to being a good officer. Their honor was in accepting an incredibly tough task, and most of them died young. Today we think about them. Each of them is different. Heroes and non-heroes, but for them their work on earth is done.

What will your legacy be? What do you want to be remembered for? Am I living a balanced life? What are the important elements in my life that deserve more time? Where do I look for inspiration, mentors, and working models for this next phase of my life?

Some time ago I read Half Time, a book by Bob Buford. He likens this period in life to a football half-time. “You played a hard-fought first half. But sooner or later you begin to wonder if this really is good as it gets. Somehow, keeping score does not offer the thrill it once did.”

*You may have taken some vicious hits. Serious pain. Divorce. Too much alcohol. Not enough time for kids. Guilt. Loneliness. Even if your pain was slight, you’re smart enough to see that you can’t play the second half as you did the first. And now you yearn for something more than success.”*

Buford concludes: “*Then there is the reality of the game itself; the clock is running. What once looked like an eternity ahead of you is now within reach. And while you do not fear the end of the game, you want to be sure that you finish well, and that you leave behind something no one can take away from you. If the first half is a quest for success, the second half is a journey to significance.*

*The quest, not to be a hero, but to be heroic!*

My plea to you, the Top of the Line, is to live heroically. America – the whole world, for that matter – needs women and men who will stand courageously for justice, truth, and righteousness. Who knows, but your greatest contribution may still be ahead!

In a moment you will hear the names of classmates who have died. One may have been a roommate, or a teammate, or a friend. As you give thanks for them, pray for their families, and determine that your life will be better because you were here today.