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1959-05-28

Address by Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of
Naval Operations before the Naval
Postgraduate School, Monterey California,
Thursday, May 28, 1959, 10:00 AM (PDT) 1:00
PM (EDT)

Burke, Arleigh

Department of Defense Office of Public Affairs, Washington 25, D.C.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/67212>

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ADDRESS BY
ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE, USN, CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
BEFORE THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA
THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1959 -- 10:00 AM (PDT) 1:00 PM (EDT)

It is a pleasure to be in Monterey to participate in the graduation exercises of this fine institution.

It is not only a pleasure but a welcome opportunity for me, an opportunity because you are a very important group, important to your service, important for the future of your country.

You are important because you now combine service experience with advanced knowledge. You are important because you are good, or you wouldn't have been selected to come here in the first place. You have capability for work, and we intend to use it.

This year we mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of this splendid school. In 1909 ten students in Marine Engineering constituted the first class in the Navy's postgraduate school program, a program which has grown and expanded over the years.

The naval leaders of fifty years ago showed great perspective and foresight in seeing the need for advanced technical and scientific knowledge among naval officers. They recognized that ships and naval weapons were becoming more complex, that their proper employment at sea would require officers who were familiar not only with the age-old profession of the sea, but who could also understand and could use effectively the complex weapons of the years to come.

We in the Navy today are the inheritors of that legacy of wisdom, and we can see clear evidence of their foresight all around us. Operating at sea now and ready for combat is a family of guided missiles. The application of nuclear power in our submarines and in our surface ships is well known. The Navy has been in the forefront of development in radar, radio, the gyro compass, and many other complex devices which our predecessors applied in naval weapons systems.

The Navy has been a leader in this rapid technological advance. But this did not come by accident, nor did it come overnight. It has been the result of educating carefully selected officers in each succeeding generation of officers. It has been essential to train officers who could assimilate the education they would receive, who would continue their professional interest, who would be fully qualified for command at sea, and who would combine the scholar's interest in science and technology with the practical man's appreciation of how new discoveries can be applied. All with but one purpose, one objective, to improve the Navy's combat effectiveness, and the security of the United States.

Naval postgraduate education is an added asset of the line officer of the Navy. It helps him to do a better job afloat. It allows him to be in the forefront of development when ashore. Each naval officer who has acquired technical knowledge realizes that this knowledge increases his value to his profession, that he knows it as a stepping stone to greater and broader responsibility. He can expect and should solicit billets in his career that will involve command, planning and national strategy and work. He should solicit the war college training so helpful to these duties.

The start of this school opened a host of opportunities for the advancement of naval and military science previously not available. These opportunities are not restricted to the United States Navy alone. Here today are officers of all United States military forces and from nations who are among our country's closest friends.

It is well that you have studied and learned together. There may be times when we of the services represented here will fight along side of each other in support of the strong beliefs we share. At such times, our common purpose will be supported by the knowledge you hold in common.

My remarks today are directed toward the naval side particularly but I hope you of our sister services will bear with me and interpret these remarks as appropriate to you.

Compared to the first class of ten officers there are some five hundred of you who now complete your studies. It is a wonderful thing that so many of you could be given this coveted opportunity. An opportunity which I am sure was well used or you wouldn't be here on this day.

Today should be a day of pride for you, filled with feelings of accomplishment. You have attained another goal along the route of life. You have succeeded in something worthwhile. So doing, you have strengthened one of the best habits of life, the habit of finishing a hard task you started.

Finishing difficult tasks can become a habit, and like all habits it gains in strength and adds to what you are able to accomplish. It is a habit that thrives on enthusiasm and a consuming interest in what you are doing.

You had to work hard here at this school, very hard. This is something which you will come to value, for not only have you gained an advanced professional knowledge - but also you have gained a confidence in yourself that you can face and thrive on hard work. The ability to stand up under pressures whether they are mental or physical is as great an asset as is your increased professional knowledge, perhaps even greater. This is something you will realize more and more as you assume larger and larger responsibilities.

As you go on in your careers, you will find that both your knowledge and your ability to stand up to the difficult, will be well used. For the more you do, the more you can do. The more you accomplish, the more the world, your seniors, messmates and juniors, will look to you to do. This is, and will be your responsibility. This has long been the responsibility of those with knowledge and stamina. Fortunately for the Navy, the responsibility to act and to accomplish, has been well carried in the past.

Doing and accomplishing provide one of life's greatest satisfactions, self-satisfaction, a knowledge that you have done your best, that you have pulled your weight in the boat. This often brings success. But whether it is recognized or not, there remains your inner satisfaction, your feeling of worth to yourself and your fellow man.

It is pleasant to have the plaudits of the crowd. It is pleasant to receive a "Well done" from the Task Force Commander. But there is even more satisfaction, when others may not have noticed, if you can say to yourself, "I have done my part, and a little extra." To achieve this satisfaction, to gain success, the important thing is to do everything to the best of your ability, regardless of how large or small you think the job is. There is no job in the Navy that is beneath you. Your every assignment is worth your very best.

Each time you do something well, you help your service, you increase your own satisfaction, you enhance your reputation, you strengthen your hold on the habit of hard work, and success is more apt to come your way.

As you continue to seek success for this wonderful Navy of ours, and your own sake, there are major thoughts to be always before you.

First you must continue to enlarge your knowledge, not only in formal schools, but in your own reading. You must continually broaden and exercise what knowledge you have.

Today, man's horizons of knowledge are widening at an ever accelerating rate. Within my lifetime the field of what was once a specialty has developed, divided, subdivided and redivided.

Your quest for knowledge must be broad, it must be spurred by intellectual curiosity, a curiosity which is its own motivating force, and provides its own momentum.

To meet the responsibilities that will fall your way as you advance in seniority, you must know an awful lot. It is not sufficient to merely to continue learning in the particular field of interest to you. You must know that certainly, but more too, what is going on in allied fields, what is going on in the service, what new ideas are being generated, what is going on in the world, what can the United States do about it, what can the service do about it, what can you do about it.

All these bits of knowledge you will need, if you are to be prepared for responsibility, for opportunity. Opportunity often comes when you least expect it. You can take advantage of it, only if you are prepared. Knowledge is the basic element of being prepared.

In expanding your intellectual horizon, I would commend to you readings on the meaning of Communism and its nature. This is singled out, because this is the greatest threat to the Free World today.

We are in cold war and sometimes in limited wars. In both of these, all of us are participants. Unless you know how the communist thinks, what he thinks and what he really means, you will be duped.

Every day the Soviets fight us with ideas, psychology, propaganda. A lot of the propaganda is very competent, so competent in fact, some of it is believed and spread by strongly patriotic Americans. They have been misled because they do not know enough about communism.

If they, and you, understand what the communists are working for, how they go about it, and how they express it, then you, and they, will know fact from communist fiction. You will not be misled.

This is important, because you are leaders of men. You have been chosen for an opportunity not accorded to all men. Your word carries a lot of influence. If you know what is true and real, then you can lead properly.

Even though I have singled it out, communism is but one of the things about which you should learn, if you are to have the knowledge that will be expected of you. You may never be able to learn all that you will need to know, when you move on to positions of greater responsibility. But unless you keep working at it continually, you will never know a fraction of what you should.

The second point to remember is to keep your perspective. Specialize if you will. Understand and be rightfully proud of your particular field of interest. Know the importance of what you are doing. But remember, always remember, where your interest fits into the whole. What you do must advance your specialty, but also it must advance your service, your country.

There are well-sought-after jobs in the Navy, and then there are those nobody wants. Both should fall your way. Take both in stride.

Many naval officers want to lead destroyers in to bombard the enemy shore. Many naval officers want to move wave on wave of troop-laden boats to the beach. Before either of these things could happen, the hard working mine-sweepers had cleared the way.

Many officers want to be building the latest missile, to be building a rocket to challenge outer space. But none of these could happen unless other officers, had not spent a lot of effort and a lot of time, convincing the people who husband the taxpayer's money, convincing the Administration, convincing the Congress, of the worth of the program.

All these tasks are important when seen with perspective, for they are all things that make your service move ahead. If you ever allow yourself to lose perspective, you are apt to let your service down. You are apt to consider your field the only important one, to forget that it is but a part of the whole.

Perspective will help you remember that you are a professional officer first, and a specialist secondarily.

In the Navy, the very uniform you wear should remind you of this. You wear the proud blue and gold of the naval profession. On this uniform, the corps insignia, the dolphins, or the wings are but a small part. Some specialties do not even show on your uniform. They are merely numbers behind your name. All this is as it should be. For you are a professional naval officer first and last.

The third point I would suggest, is to retain your moral and intellectual integrity. These essential, these vital elements of a successful naval officer are always emphasized throughout the Navy, because of their undying importance. You have heard, and you will hear, much said about moral integrity.

However not so much is said about intellectual integrity. Since you are men of intellect, and will soon be called upon to use this wonderful faculty under many and trying circumstances, it is appropriate to consider intellectual integrity.

By intellectual integrity I mean honesty of mind, truthfulness with yourself. It includes mentally calling things as you see them. It means calling red, red and not cerise because that is the fashion of the moment, it means calling black, black, and not dark gray because someone wants you to. It means if something is bad, admit it is bad and don't call it good because you wish it to be so. It means forming your own opinion.

Sometimes in forming your own opinion you must necessarily be critical of things as they are, or of a plan that has been proposed. Criticism is fine but be careful of it. It is very easy, particularly when you have no responsibility, to be critical of somebody else's work. Criticism by itself doesn't help anybody. Criticism can be helpful only if the suggested solution is also put forward.

Even that is frequently not enough. There will be occasions when there are many different views on a subject. For an organization to go forward, decisions must be made, and those decisions must be supported, or else the organization falls apart. This means that you must give weight to other people's views. If your views are not always accepted, you should support the decision made.

Nations have grown weak and ineffective because of divisiveness within the nation. As a matter of fact this is the usual reason why nations disappear, the many factions which exist within a nation. There is truth in the old axiom that in unity there is strength, in common accord there is power. So it is a fine line that you have to follow between being critical and being obstructive with your criticism. It takes judgment, judgment which you are generating as you go through life.

There will be many times when those who lack integrity, seem to fare better than those who have it. There will be times when such apparent success will tempt you to chuck integrity aside, and get on the gravy train. Don't do it, for when you do, you chip away at your greatest moral asset, character, you lessen your self-respect, and ultimately but certainly, the respect others have for you. These are the things that make you a man, an officer, and an effective leader, precious things to be guarded jealously for your country, your service, your men, and yourself.

Since World War II, there have been many spirited discussions on issues of national interest, such issues as national strategy, defense organization, weapon systems concepts. Each service has had very strongly held viewpoints. On these issues the Navy has had to stand up for what it believes. Each time we have had to stand up for our viewpoint, we rested our case on honesty, on integrity. This is as important as the issues themselves. For national security, present readiness, future capabilities, and even economic conditions depended on their outcome.

Because of this, on Capitol Hill today the Navy has a reputation for honesty and integrity. This stands us in good stead. When the very importance of the issues, the strength of the differing viewpoints, confuse even the most conscientious, our reputation provides the much needed support.

A Service reputation is made by many people, so many people in the Navy must have demonstrated integrity for the reputation to have been made.

As long as we continue to keep integrity a hallmark of the United States Navy, we shall always have the respect, and support of staunch friends. If you hold your personal integrity high, you will have respect and support when you need it.

Enlarge your knowledge, keep your perspective, retain your integrity, and we will weather the storm of today's revolution. History teaches us of the Industrial Revolution and its effects on world civilization, effects still felt in many parts of the world. Today, the world is in an even more tremendous and faster moving revolution. It is a revolution of Science and Technology, and its effects are being felt in every nook and cranny of the world.

Science and technology are no longer simply advancing. They are exploding. Think of the changes during your own lifetime, in our knowledge and use of the atom, the electron, automation, outer space, medicine and health. These things affect us all, both in the deepest and simplest ways.

The atom and its nuclear energy already has altered the lives of peoples and their dealings with one another. By some it is viewed as a sword of Damocles, and by others as a potential savior.

The electron allows us to exchange ideas with the remote peoples of the earth. It also distracted you from your studies, when that good television show came on.

Automation gives the engineers among you a calculating tool never available to your fathers. It gives industry a means of quality mass production that can have effects both good and evil.

Outer space comes daily closer and closer to us. Once only in the realm of wild-dreaming authors, it now belongs to the scientist. Tomorrow it will belong to mankind. Today we are probing the depth of the sea and the outer reaches of space.

Medicine advances by leaps and bounds to overcome the most fatal diseases of yesteryear, and lays before us the problem of greatly expanding populations.

No matter where we look, we face new boons, and new problems. This Revolution has reached the very keel of our Navy. It is up to us to master it.

The Industrial Revolution brought steam to the Navy and left sail in its wake. It replaced smooth bore with rifles. It replaced paddle-wheels with propellers. It changed Naval strategy, tactics and logistics. But it took two generations to do all this.

Today we are moving rapidly ahead in nuclear power and missiles. We have evolved the ALBACORE hull, more effective propellers, weapons of devastating destruction, missiles of phenomenal accuracy, and all at a pace that bewilders the soul. This pace causes us to ponder, but does not allow us the time.

Throughout the industrial revolution there were, and throughout this scientific and technological revolution there will be many changes, yet one element of the Navy remains unchanged. It is man, his character and his values, that stands as the most essential element. It is man who controls the machines, man who maintains the machines, and man who must stand up against the new problems created by the machines. Men are, and will remain the soul of the Navy.

Leadership is needed more today than ever before. You are the ones who will push the revolution onward, who will produce the new machines, and who will lead the men. It is you to whom they will turn for guidance, precept, example, inspiration. Your personal philosophy, your inner values, your sense of moral responsibility, and your willingness to work hard will be vital to the efforts of the men.

Your opportunities are unlimited. As officers your responsibilities are great. Your country, your Navy and your shipmates, look to you. With knowledge, with perspective, and with integrity, you will succeed. The opportunity is yours, it's up to you.

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