

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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REMARKS OF ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT THE 81ST COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ACADEMY, NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT, 11:00 A.M. ON JUNE 7, 1967

Admiral Bender, Admiral Smith, members of the Class of 1967, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I bring greetings from President Johnson, and his warm congratulations to each of the 98 ensigns-to-be.

It is a privilege to participate in this 81st Commencement, and a pleasure--a very great pleasure--to meet the Class of 1967.

You are about to leave the Academy, and I am seeing it for the first time.

I am better able to understand, now, what gives the United States Coast Guard such remarkable unity despite the wide diversity of its assignments. It is the family-like intimacy of this great Academy, which allows men to share in its aspirations as well as its learning.

The aspirations you share are for a Coast Guard capable of greater and ever more meaningful service to our nation and to humanity.

There is no question in my mind that each of you will, in good time and in an individual way, make contributions of significance to both.

For each of you, the present moment is an end and a beginning.

It is the end of four arduous years of study and practice and self-discipline.

It is the beginning of perhaps thirty more years of the same, only now in a wider arena, with more than a personal reputation at stake.

For the Coast Guard, also, this spring has witnessed an end and a beginning. Your Service has amicably severed its century-old ties with the Treasury Department. The Coast Guard is now, at last, part of a Government agency concerned with the totality of American transportation. The American public has long desired that the responsibility

for national transportation policy recommendations be lodged in one Federal agency rather than thirty or more scattered jurisdictions. And that very rational desire was implemented last year by President Johnson and the 89th Congress, with legislation creating a Department of Transportation.

The Coast Guard has undergone no change whatsoever as a result of its transfer to the new Department. It will, however, be involved in policy decisions that affect other means of transportation--highways, railroads, airlines, perhaps even urban mass transit. Obviously, water transportation itself--both inland and deep draft--is receiving a good share of our attention, these days, because water carriers are the continuation of land and air transportation. And the reverse.

All forms of transportation are interdependent. Some modes depend on one another directly; many compete with one another; but all have an effect on one another. Your activities in maritime safety and law enforcement are, in many ways, the counterpart of activities in State highway patrols and airport control towers. Without the Coast Guard, there would be chaos and calamity in a vital segment of U. S. transportation.

I want you all to know that the Coast Guard has played a very constructive role in the formation of the new

Department of Transportation. In terms of manpower, your Service is the second largest organization within the Department. In terms of leadership, your Service was quite active in the transitional planning and setting-up of the new Department. In fact, many of its top officials are Coast Guard officers in mufti. My personal assistant is a Coast Guard officer. And in terms of administrative support, the Coast Guard, typically, has been carrying far more than its share of the Department's day-to-day burdens. What all this means, of course, is that your Service is a major part of a Federal agency that is well aware of your skills and deeply interested in your professional growth.

In months to come, the Department of Transportation will undoubtedly draw deeply upon Coast Guard energy and ingenuity, as we move towards solution of our nation's complex mobility problems.

Your class year--1967--not only coincides with the beginning of the Department of Transportation; this year also marks the 100th anniversary of one of the most important of Coast Guard missions, that of scientific investigation of the ocean. Your Service began its work in oceanography in 1867, when the Revenue Cutter LINCOLN made its historic voyage to explore the waters of the newly purchased Alaska Territory. Now, a century later, the

Coast Guard is supporting oceanographic research in every latitude. Marine science is looked upon as a key to man's future--perhaps even man's survival--on this planet, and the Coast Guard is a major participant in a great national effort to understand the ocean and exploit its almost limitless resources. It is my hope that your Service will be given a much expanded role in oceanography, and that many of you will find special career opportunities in this great field.

But whether you find your opportunities in that field, or the fields of maritime safety and law enforcement, I expect that this Class will soon be giving 1967 the reputation of a vintage year in Coast Guard Academy history.

Speaking of opportunities, I want to take advantage of this present opportunity to reassert the basic truth of some very old ideas, ideas that have been in currency so long that they are like old coins with all the features worn off. They are the cliches we sometimes grow so tired of seeing that we forget their original value.

I am speaking now of ideas such as "You will get out of your career in the Coast Guard exactly what you put into it."

You know, I happen to believe in that old-fashioned notion. I think it is true. I am convinced that your

progress and advancement in the Service will be in direct proportion to your personal effort.

No doubt, there is an element of luck in human affairs, but that is nothing for a rational man to depend on. No doubt, a superior talent or a high natural aptitude is a great asset; but this, too, is beyond the reach of most men. For most of us, for all of us, in fact, who are not struck by lightning of sheer genius, there is only one course to be followed which yields any reasonable probability of success. In my opinion, that is simply a willingness to work longer and harder than the next man.

Yes, there are undoubtedly individuals who follow that course and still fail, or fall substantially short of their goals. I wish it were not so. I wish everyone could win first prize. But taking into consideration all the accidental features of life, all the injustices and inequities, all the circumstances that are beyond prediction and understanding, I remain persuaded that a sustained personal effort, focussed intelligently on attainable objectives, embodies the best hope that a man can have in this or any other life-pursuit.

The second commonplace notion I wish to reaffirm as valid and useful is the idea of excellence.

It sometimes seems to me that men are divided into two groups, one much larger than the other. The larger group is made up of people who feel that any job worth doing is worth doing poorly. The much smaller group consists of those who believe that any job worth doing is worth doing well.

Often, those in the first group actively dislike those in the second group, and perhaps wish they would disappear along with their confounded high standards. It is their folly to believe life could become simpler and happier if only the level of performance-expectations were lowered. We sometimes glimpse these deluded individuals, standing in the debris of societies which have collapsed for want of those standards. We see them muttering and fearful, like a primitive tribe in the midst of natural phenomena beyond their comprehension, blaming the disaster on evil spirits.

There is perhaps a simpler description of the men who refuse to acknowledge the claims of excellence. And that is intellectual laziness. Because, as you men know, the striving for excellence is hard and painful work. And yet you also must know the satisfaction and peace arising from a man's awareness that he has really exerted himself to the limits of his strength and ability in a worthwhile cause.

That, in the opinion of men who have been there, is one of the greatest rewards of a Coast Guard career.

The high standards of this Academy have well prepared you for the struggle to surpass all previous marks of achievement. On the one hand, you have received the finest specialized training which has equipped you with the essential skills, the skills required of an officer in this Service. On the other hand, you have received a superior scientific education which has laid the foundation for your lifelong professional growth.

The first form of preparation has made you immediately useful; the second form insures that you will continue to be useful, not only to the Coast Guard but to yourself and to society at large. For make no mistake about it, men as well as machines grow obsolete.

The machine becomes obsolete when it cannot perform as efficiently as other machinery, or when there is no longer any need for its performance. Men grow obsolete when the skills they possess are no longer in demand, when their training has limited their usefulness to bygone situations.

I'm reminded of the public service advertisement I saw recently in a New York Subway. There was a picture of a computer brain, and underneath it the question, "What will you do when this circuit learns your job?"

Alongside it, a passenger had scrawled the facetious reply: "Become a circuit-breaker."

The remark was witty but the situation is no joke. The men who are left behind with outmoded skills are the men unable (or unwilling) to learn new skills. They feel betrayed, disinherited. They are the unhappy and unstable elements in our society.

Surely, education is not the cure for all evils, but education is one of the advantages that a man has over a machine. A machine cannot improve itself or change its function. A man can, through a lifelong learning process. Educated men can discard the obsolete skills and develop new and better skills.

They not only can; if they want to advance, they must. Our society is not standing still; it is evolving very rapidly. You are all well aware of the pace of technological change in our country, and indeed, all over the world. I can assure you that the skills you now possess, as newly commissioned officers, will be at least 50 percent obsolete and superseded by the time your second promotion is at hand.

That is why the preparation you have been receiving here, at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, is a preparation for the far future. You have been educated to enable you to cope

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intelligently with altered circumstances of our society when you have become its leaders.

And not only to cope with it, but to help make it better, and if necessary, to fight for it.

There is no need for me to remind you gentlemen of the Coast Guard's role in the defense of this nation. Task Force One, off the shores of Vietnam, is a constant reminder of an inspiration to all of us. I have heard from your Commandant that story of dedication and sacrifice and patriotism which has always characterized the performance of the Coast Guard.

Allow me to say that the Department of Transportation takes infinite pride in its association with your vigilant and noble Service.

In these days of crisis and danger, I often think of the motto of your Service,--ALWAYS READY. It is a comfort and a challenge to all Americans.

For readiness is not a passive idea; it is not a mere willingness to wait for something to happen and then react. Readiness is more than contingency planning. It is an active role.

Readiness is prevention. It is a dynamic idea, the idea of knowing where you are going, of being "on top of the situation," anticipating what is required, providing positive leadership.

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That is the Coast Guard style. That will be your style.
Semper Paratus.

And as we look about us at the condition of the world on this memorable day, I am reminded of terse and famous words on the subject by one of the greatest of American leaders. They were contained in a letter to the Governor of Pennsylvania from the President of the United States, written in 1861, about a week before Fort Sumter was fired upon.

Although we all pray there will be no parallel in current international events, that letter could well be addressed to your own class, the Class of 1967. Here is the entire message that the governor received ⁱⁿ that fateful hour from Abraham Lincoln:

"I think the necessity of being ready increases.

Look to it."

Indeed, we must all "look to it." We must look to the preservation of our ancient heritage of freedom. We must look to the present safety of our nation, on which the survival of that heritage so largely depends. And we must look beyond safety and beyond survival, to the future betterment of our way of life.

Above all, we must keep clearly in our mind's eye that radiant image of America which is worth all striving and sacrifice, that great ideal which animates the hearts of the American people, and the hopes of all humanity.