

Barbara B., Speech Office  
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This is the latest  
version I have of  
the Secretary's CG  
Commencement speech -  
I believe it's the one  
he spoke from.

Graley

Pete  
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version

"YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT"

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ANDREW H. CARD, JR.  
U.S. COAST GUARD GRADUATION - COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS  
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

Admiral Kime, Rear Admiral Matteson, distinguished guests, proud family and friends of the Class of 1992 - and worthy graduates...

Though there is very little I remember in specific about my own graduation experience I can remember clearly the sense of excitement mixed with apprehension that accompanied it. The future was knocking - and I wasn't sure whether I should open the door, or shut out the lights and pretend I wasn't home.

One thing I've learned about the future, is that it's got tough knuckles - it just keeps knocking, year after year. Except each year the knocking becomes more urgent - and the apprehension and excitement become more pronounced.

This year I accepted a challenge - the biggest one of my life. Lo and behold, it is the same challenge that each of you graduating here today have accepted. All of us, as newly minted members of the Department of Transportation, have committed ourselves to making America safer, stronger and more productive through guarding and improving America's transportation systems.

Looking out over this sea of (white uniforms) and bright faces -, I'm very glad we will be facing the future together. I am honored to be part of your team. I have seen the future of transportation excellence in America - and it is you.

While we share the same challenge, unlike me, you are able to draw strength from four words that you can count on to sustain you long after you leave the Academy. It was suggested that I repeat them one more time. Those four words are full of great meaning for you. They are full of hope. Those four words are: **YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.**



### A FULL PLATE

The future that we face promises to be more hectic than ever. There's a maxim that says if you want to get a job done - give it to the busiest person. You are part of an extremely busy organization - and because of its history of doing things well, the Coast Guard has been on the receiving end of more and more jobs that need to be done.

From drug interdiction, to environmental protection, to ensuring the public safety and defending our Democracy - the Coast Guard's plate is full - and the responsibilities keep coming.

What I'm really saying is that all those lessons you learned across a broad spectrum of disciplines will serve you well in today's and tomorrow's Coast Guard.

The exposure you had to Total Quality Management will prove invaluable. Most important, the ability to work as a team - which I'm told is THE distinguishing characteristic of the Class of '92 - will be your life preserver. We live in a post-Rambo world in which success is almost always linked to cooperative effort. In this kind of world, Team '92 - that's you - has a decided edge.

### SNAPSHOTS OF LEADERSHIP

I thought about what advice I might pass along to you that would add to the lessons and skills you have acquired over the past four years.

Your destiny as graduates of this Academy is to lead. Therefore, I would like to provide you with some personal reflections on leadership - snapshots, really, of qualities that I have witnessed that seem to define a leader. They are character traits that, whenever they show up, cause me to respect and admire those who exhibit them.



The first quality is an ethical character. I'm no philosopher, and I'm not here to debate the concept of ethics. My definition is not complicated. An ethical person is someone who sincerely tries to do the right thing. An ethical person is somebody who objects when presented with something that is wrong - or even might be wrong. It's someone who operates according to the maxim: when in doubt - don't. It's not a character trait that deters action. It's a trait that results in the kind of actions that win the trust and admiration of others.

The second quality is the courage to act. Leaders do not shy away from the tough decision.

It is a trait that your Commander and Chief has exhibited on many occasions. When I was with the White House staff, I watched the President agonize about sending precious lives to war.

In the end, Americans did go to war. They fought and won in Panama...and they fought and won in the Persian Gulf. The right decision had been made. Yet in each engagement, the President's highest hopes and worst fears were confirmed. America was victorious - but American lives were lost.

The President did not shirk the responsibility that went with his decision. When he made a visit to Columbus, Ohio he received a note from a mother who had lost a son in Panama. She wanted to talk to the man who was responsible.

The President could have taken the easy way out. He could have written a nice letter. He could have had someone write a nice letter for him. He chose the direct and difficult route. He met with the mother. He met with the entire family of the soldier who had given his life. I'm sure that neither the President nor that family will ever forget - or regret - the decision that was made.



Good leaders make courageous decisions.

Related to this is another trait: leaders take risks. A leader is more comfortable out on a limb than sitting on the fence. As you wrestle, as all of you will, with doing things the way they've always been done or attempting to break the mold, remember the advice of Robert Kennedy, who said, "Only those who dare to fail greatly, ever succeed greatly."

Leaders also have a way of turning negatives into positives. When an organization is full of this kind of attitude, great things happen. The wreck of the Valdez was a dark event. It placed enormous burdens of the Coast Guard, both through the clean-up effort itself, and through the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the largest piece of tasking legislation ever directed to the Coast Guard.



Yet out of the Valdez catastrophe has emerged a new international treaty. [The International Convention on Oil Pollution, Preparedness, Response and Cooperation]. It is a treaty unprecedented in vision and scope. It involves 94 countries and dramatically improves the world's ability to respond not only to oil spills but accidents involving hazardous chemicals of all kinds. It will have a measurable effect on the world's ability to preserve the environment.

And it was drafted and marshalled through the negotiation process by the U.S. Coast Guard. It was adopted by the International Maritime Organization in November of 1990.

I think you'll take pride in hearing that among the five U.S. Coast Guard names that appear on that historic treaty can be found the signatures of two cadets, Nolan and Blood - a young man and a young woman who saw the light of opportunity through the clouds of adversity.

Trait number five is that good leaders admit bad judgment. If they're wrong, they'll own up to it themselves. If they're right - they tend to share credit with others.

As great as my admiration already was for General Schwartzkopf, it went up a few notches when I heard him admit - after the war when national security wouldn't suffer from his candor - that mistakes had been made in the Gulf. To the extent that he blamed anyone - he blamed himself. And as is his style, in blaming himself, he gave even higher praise to those who served under him.

A final trait that seems to spring up in leaders of all kinds is a concern for others. Good leaders have good hearts. This tends to allow them to work very well with others. It tends to make them good listeners and concerned managers.



Compassion among Coast Guard members runs deep. The story was told to me of the crews of the Steadfast and Confidence - the two vessels that provided a crowded place of safety to hundreds of Haitian migrants. These were families for the most part that left Haiti with next to nothing. The ones that suffered the most were the children. When they were first transferred to the U.S. ships, they were hungry...they were scared...although it was crowded, many felt all alone.

When the boats docked at Guantanamo Bay, scores of seaman, as you might expect, made a beeline for the Exchange. Except they didn't spend their paychecks on themselves. Almost to a person, they loaded up with toys, with candy and gum, with Coast Guard t-shirts - and with any other gifts they thought might make the lives of the children they had just met a little more comfortable. Then they returned to the boats immediately - not wanting to let the children spend another moment without something that might bring them a little happiness.



In their actions, the message that was conveyed to those children was clear. By their generosity and compassion, they were saying: Things will get better. **YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.**

There you have my thoughts on leadership. If you strive to do what is right...if you have the courage to take action and take risks...if you have the character to admit you're wrong...if you see promise where most see only problems... and if you remember that as important as it is to get the job done efficiently, it is also important to be kind - then you will be called a leader, and justifiable so.

As graduates of this Academy - you are ready to assume the mantle of greater responsibility. Much is expected of you. You expect much of yourselves. You enter the field at a time when the challenges have never been greater. Then again, you have been prepared more completely than any other class in the Academy's history.

You are ready to work...to serve...and to lead. If you go forward with your sights set on improving this world - not all at once, but a little bit each day - you will serve your country well. More than that, beyond a shadow of a doubt - **YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.**