

**General J. H. Binford Peay III**  
**Superintendent**

**Remarks at the Institute Society Dinner**  
**11 November 2015**

Members of the Institute Society, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen... Good evening and welcome to this splendid annual gathering of friends and supporters of the Institute. I am certain that the “forward-looking” men and women who created this body forty-two years ago, principal among them Joe Neikirk, would be delighted to see how the Society has grown. The Institute has a glorious past, and it is due to the generosity and commitment of you and others that we can look with confidence and optimism to an even brighter future.

The Institute Society plays a critical role within the broad VMI family. And VMI is truly that... a family. Perhaps it goes back to the concept of the “Brother Rat Spirit” that has influenced all who have passed through our school. We stand together for one another...and we stand together in support of the Institute and its mission to produce educated and honorable men and women for all walks of life. Tonight represents one of the strongest demonstrations of the unity and commitment of this family... and the occasion is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate all that has been done and is being done to advance the Institute.

A year ago at this event, the public launch of our latest fund-raising effort, “An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past. A Brilliant Future: The Campaign for VMI” was announced. At that time, I talked about VMI’s many strengths in academics, athletics, the military and leadership, but I also posed a challenge by saying that “excellence” costs, and that VMI can no longer rely on state funding to achieve and maintain a high level of excellence.

Last year, under the very able direction of Donny Wilkinson, VMI Class 1961 and the Campaign Chair...he announced the largest campaign goal in the history of VMI: \$225 million. As Hugh Fain stated, you took a stand; you accepted the challenge; and, you put us on a path beyond our expectations. I am very pleased to tell you that as of this evening greater than **\$239** million in gifts and pledges have been received for our Uncommon Purpose Campaign.

As impressive as that accomplishment is, our job is not yet done. Our aim is to encourage everyone in the VMI family to be part of this transformative event. Our work continues... the campaign continues!

You will hear more about the progress and successes of the campaign as time moves on. But achieving a numerical goal is only a means to an end. And the end is the support and advancement of the Institute, and especially the support and advancement of its cadets and those who teach them. So, tonight, we want you to see the dividends of your investment in VMI. We want to put faces to some of the numbers that have been mentioned. We want you to see what your “taking a stand” for VMI has done for the Institute and our country.

Here, then, are a few representatives of hundreds of others I could introduce to you this evening.....

*[Cadets and faculty are recognized:]*

Cadet Derrick Ziglar '15

If you recognize Cadet Ziglar, it is because you have seen him on the football field and in one of our “Got a Minute” videos developed for the Campaign. Derrick would not be here tonight without you. The cost of a VMI education was a stretch for his family, as it is for so many – too many – of our accepted applicants. But your generosity provided him with a football scholarship that has enabled him to afford attendance here. Derrick has taken that opportunity and excelled. He is a biology major and a Platoon Lieutenant in Delta Company. He is also the President of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee. Derrick will be commissioned in the U.S. Army upon graduation.

Cadet Mackenzie Harrmann '16

Cadet Harrmann matriculated from Appleton, Wisconsin, a testimony to how far your influence as alumni and donors has spread across our nation. Mackenzie is a shining example of how donor generosity can recruit and retain the brightest at VMI. She is the recipient of the Francis Smith Award for merit and she has honored your financial support by earning a 4.0 grade point average as a double major in Physics and Applied Mathematics. She has also taken full advantage of your generosity towards faculty support and club sports. Mackenzie prepared herself in the classroom with faculty mentorship and was selected to intern with the Department of Energy. In the Corps, she serves as the Regimental S-2 Captain; she is a member of the Powerlifting Team, and she is a regular in our fitness facilities. She will be commissioned in the U.S. Army upon graduation.

### Cadet Tyler Lighton '15

Tyler has maintained academic stars his entire cadetship, and has done so while competing as a Division 1 NCAA baseball player. An English Major from Chesapeake, Virginia, he is a member of Sigma Tau Delta honor society. He is currently interning with the VMI Foundation under a new program created in collaboration with the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies. Many of you probably read his first published piece in the October edition of the Institute Report. Your generosity has helped Tyler to excel on the field and in the classroom. The private resources that allow VMI to maintain a 11:1 cadet to faculty ratio also allows cadets like Tyler direct access to what I think are some of the best instructor- educators in the nation.

### LTC Tim Moore '97

Although he may not have known it then, donor support played a major role in causing LTC Moore to leave a successful engineering career to return to his alma mater to teach in 2010. Tim recognized at that time the effect that faculty can have on cadets, and he was willing to make the “career change” because of people in this room who have invested in faculty support and academic innovation. With your support, Tim was able to create the “Field to Forum” program, an interdisciplinary program that helps cadets bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of practice as professional engineers. He also created the VMI Clean Energy and Air Resources Program, known as CLEAR, that is noted for developing sustainable bio fuels. The CLEAR Program – with your generous contributions for academic research – gives cadets opportunities to study and create clean burning bio-fuels from soybeans. And Tim didn’t stop there – he also founded the service group “Keydets Without Borders.” Under this program, dozens of cadets have traveled to the mountain village of Pampoyo, in Bolivia, and not only installed a safe water system but also began a project to bring indoor plumbing to each family in the village. If you have supported this group, you have helped make possible a significant drop in infant mortality in Pampoyo. Colonel Moore was the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia’s Outstanding Faculty-“Rising Star” Recipient this year. It is no wonder that cadets have said, “I know I can make a difference in the world now, and Colonel Moore was the one who helped me see that.”

### COL Jim Turner '65

After a successful career in biomedical research, medical education, and administration, Jim returned to VMI full time in 2001. He has served as VMI’s founding director of undergraduate research; he has chaired the Biology Department since 2009; and in 2013 he became the founding chair of the VMI

Service Committee. Donor contributions created the Beverly M. Read '41 Institute Professorship in the Arts and Sciences, and Jim's service has been recognized by naming him to this professorship. The Jackson-Hope Fund and other academic resources made possible by donors have enabled Jim to engage in transformative mentoring of cadets through his teaching and research interests. He is one of the few VMI alumni or faculty who are two-time recipients of the Virginia Military Institute Achievement Medal for exceptional service. He received the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia's "Outstanding Faculty" Award this year, and your generosity has played a key role in the work he has done to earn this prestigious honor.

Please join me in acknowledging the fine work of these "representative" members of the VMI community and recipients of your generous donations.

There are many other achievements of the campaign to date, that could be mentioned, including the establishment of four new professorships, 173 new scholarships (73 athletic), gifts and commitments of \$6.7 million for research and innovation through the Jackson Hope Fund, fully staffing the Chaplain's Office, a \$90 million increase to the overall endowment, and nearly \$1 million to conduct renovations of the Stonewall Jackson House and the Turman House.

At last May's commencement ceremonies, I told the graduating cadets that while higher education institutions around the country can be demanding and challenging, a VMI education tests them on all levels....and that VMI insures a "value-based" education. I reminded them that they succeeded not only because of their determination and self-discipline, but because they had been "helped" by so many others. Along with family, friends, faculty, coaches, and Brother Rats..., that all of you in this room (this evening) had a major hand in their success, too, because of your incredible support.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment and for taking a stand in support of OUR VMI. As I have often said..., "VMI is a "National Treasure!"