

As of 18 April 2016 REDUCED
GENERAL J. H. BINFORD PEAY, III
SUPERINTENDENT

**Remarks to the joint dinner of Classes of 1936, 1941, 1946, 1951, 1956,
1961
18-19 April 2016**

Members of the Classes of 1936, 1941, 1946, 1951, 1956, and 1961, spouses, children, grandchildren, and friends. Good evening and welcome back to the Institute. It is a pleasure to be with you at this “combined dinner” in honor of six great VMI classes. Represented here tonight are graduates from two of the most critical decades in recent American history, a period that spanned the post-WWII world and the difficult years of the Cold War. You experienced challenges that tested the strength and resolve of our nation through service in the military and the varied work of civil life. Among you are veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the early years of the global war on terrorism. Among you are men who contributed significantly to business, industry, medicine, the law, education, and government. VMI and the nation owe you a deep debt of thanks.

Because my time is limited this evening, I won’t attempt an in-depth review of the history of each class represented, as interesting and inspiring as those stories are. But a few details are worth reporting.

Your years as cadets coincided with the administrations of four presidents: Franklin Delano Roosevelt; Harry S. Truman; Dwight D. Eisenhower; and, John F. Kennedy. You served under five superintendents: MG John A. LeJeune; LTG Charles E. Kilbourne; LTG Richard J. Marshall; MG William H. Milton, Jr.; and, LTG George R. E. Shell. And your classes served under nine commandants: COL Burrell; COL Holmes, Jr.; COL Fray; COL Bucher; COL Pancake; LTC Kerlin; LTC Butler; COL Johns; and, COL Smith.

The Class of 1936 matriculated with 180 cadets and graduated 93. There were only four academic departments at VMI then: Civil Engineering; Electrical and Mechanical Engineering; Liberal Arts, and Chemistry vice the fifteen we have today. Horses were an active part of drill and ceremonies. The Ratline, which had been abolished in 1934, was revived and reformed by this 1936 Class. And, the first Broadway performance of the play “Brother Rat” was also performed in 1936. Cadet John August Gialanella, from Newark, New Jersey was known for: wearing stripes and his high academic standards; for being seen at all the dances, and for a few horrible puns. Sir..., what a thrill to

have you back at the Institute for these reunions....still going strong at over 101 years.

The Class of 1941 entered in 1937 with 257 Rats, in a Corps that only numbered 698 in all. These were momentous days for VMI, and for the country. In May of 1939, you honored William Morrison Wood, Class of 1867, sole living participant of the charge of the cadets at New Market. On Saturday, 11 November, 1939, you celebrated the Centennial of the Institute. As is often the case at VMI, a new building was to be dedicated on the occasion of the Centennial: the new Preston Library. President Roosevelt was to be the speaker that day. As it turned out, the situation in Europe caused the President to cancel his appearance, but you will remember that he spoke to the estimated crowd of 7000 at the Institute by a telephone hook-up. By the time 135 of you graduated in 1941, the war in Europe was having a serious effect on VMI. Many faculty members were called up as part of what was called the "mobilization of the Army," and many cadets were soon to follow. Exciting news also arrived that General George C. Marshall had been promoted to Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

A few days after the Centennial Celebration, VMI defeated VPI, the first win over this rival since 1929. Sports were very important then, as now. Those were the days of the all-time greats such as Trzeciak, Strickler, Koval, Shu, Echols, Walker, Timplon, and Sexton, to name but a few. The team had taken on a new name: "The Fighting Squadron,"later renamed the "Flying Squadron"....and lived up to its name.

The Class of 1946, in which 222 matriculated in 1942, was drastically reduced by the war effort, graduating only 22 members "on time" after four years. But from that time on, the number of cadets steadily increased as the Institute and the nation recovered and faced the future. At one time there were seven classes in Barracks: including 1948, 1948 A, B, and C, and 1950, 1950 A and B. These classes contained cadets, war veterans, and some commissioned officers originally from the Classes of 1944, 1945, 1946, and 1947. The presence of veterans, including commissioned officers, as members of the Corps led to the creation of Company G, a "home" for ex-officers who were ineligible for ROTC. Returning veterans who were married were allowed to live in town.

The Class of 1951, which matriculated 263 members in 1947, graduated 152 four years later, just as the war in Korea was escalating with the intervention of China. Many awards and decorations for service in that war were won by members of your Class, but none higher than the Medal of Honor awarded to 1st LT, later Colonel, Edward R. Schowalter, Jr.

An expansion of the Corps during these four years was made possible by the addition of New Barracks in 1949. In 1951, Marshall Arch was dedicated in honor of GEN George C. Marshall. This period also saw some renovation of the post, including the conversion of the old riding hall into a field house, thereafter known as "The Pit." Horses made their last appearance at VMI during the final garrison review in June of 1948. Also constructed at that time was Mallory Hall, which ushered the Institute into the atomic age with its sub-critical reactor.

The organization of VMI and the Corps changed "often" during these years. During the war years, extracurricular activities had been severely reduced. The BOMB and the CADET also ceased to be published for two years. Major changes were made to the ROTC program, and the Rat Line was almost abolished. The Honor System, however, remained a key part of life at VMI. These systems and features of Cadet life had to be reestablished and rebuilt in the late 1940s and early 50s. The Rat Line was "reformed" and was known as "the new rat system." Another new feature was the appointment of a "New Cadet Cadre" with specific responsibility for the orientation and training of Rats in a separate battalion.

Two hundred and eighty-two signed the VMI Matriculation Book on 3 September 1952 in the Class of 1956. The Institute had a new superintendent, drawn from the civilian world: GEN William H. Milton, Jr. '20. Reflecting the increasing importance of science in our country, GEN Milton came from the General Electric Corporation where he had been a vice president specializing in nuclear power.

As the new year got underway, things apparently became lively in Barracks: your BOMB speaks of a Halloween Step-Off. Later, 700 members of the Corps marched in the January 1953 inaugural parade of President Eisenhower. In January, Coach John McKenna was selected as Head Coach. Later that year, VMI won the Virginia Big-6 Football Championship.

All across the Institute, important changes were taking place. In addition to the new Science Building (Mallory Hall), Scott Shipp Hall was completely gutted, rebuilt on the inside, and a five story extension was added. The Mess Hall underwent renovation, and because of shortages in the number of employees working there, 31 cadet waiters were appointed to wait on the 120 tables. This was the first time cadets had been used for this purpose. This assignment was a First Class privilege and it carried with it a reduction in the fee for board.

Social life at the Institute – always somewhat limited in those days – was nevertheless punctuated with memorable events. There was the fall Monogram Minstrel Show, “Turkey Day,” Ring Figure, Mid-Winter Hops, Easter Hops. And, then, there was always “L.A. Beach,” “the Liquid Lunch,” and “Stevesville.” The spring hike was brought back – a 10 to 15 mile hike toward Goshen -- with two nights spent in pup-tents along the banks of the Maury River among swarms of chiggers and other insects.

September 1957 saw the Class of 1961 matriculate, with 341 cadets signing The Book. This was the year that saw the beginning of a new training program that intensified the military and physical training, thanks to Commandant, COL Glover S. Johns. There was also a greater emphasis on the academic preparation of New Cadets.

In the winter of 1957, the VMI football team went undefeated with nine victories, no defeats, and one tie. It was the first undefeated season for VMI in 37 years, and the team, under the guidance of Coach McKenna, won the Southern Conference Championship. The Institute was the focus of the Hollywood crowd as stars Pat Boone, Gary Crosby, Tommy Sands, and Christine Carere came here in 1958 to film portions of the movie “Mardi Gras.” The three-days and nights Spring Hike became a fixture on the calendar, accompanied by intensive field work.

Skipping to your First Class year, VMI welcomed a new Superintendent on the 1st of September, 1960: MG George R. E. Shell..., and a new Commandant, LTC Jeffrey G. Smith. Things began to change. Late study was banned, some club sports teams were disbanded, hop privileges were shortened, demerit sheets were lengthened. Things became tense. But your class held the Corps in check ... until Spring Furlough was shortened. Then VMI experience a step-off of proportions previously unknown, which led to the ending of the Rat Line for the year... and a year filled with restrictions.

In your final year, VMI won its 3rd Southern Conference Championship in four years.... and the Corps marched in the inaugural parade of a new young president, John F. Kennedy, on 20 January 1961 and won the trophy for being the best marching unit in the parade.

Much more could be said about the history of these classes, and certainly many individual members of these classes could be singled out for commendation, but time doesn't allow. Scores of you have made your mark on our communities, the nation, and the world, and thereby have expanded and enhanced the reputation of the Virginia Military Institute. One graduate, perhaps, deserves special mention. The Institute will never forget the courage

and sacrifice of Jonathan M. Daniels, VMI Class of 1961, for whom an arch and a courtyard at the Institute are named.

As a result of your record..., Suffice it to say: "THE INSTITUTE IS BEING HEARD FROM TODAY."

Let me turn now to the present -- VMI today. This is an exciting time for the Institute, whose reputation as an institution of higher education has reached new heights across the Commonwealth and the nation..., and it is a time when many of our young graduates are rendering important service to the country in time of war. We are in the "midst" of a comprehensive campaign titled, "The Campaign for VMI: An Uncommon Purpose – A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future"...and the Foundation and the Alumni Association have asked me to more "formally" talk to you this evening about the "State of the Institute"...so important to the campaign's success and our future.

I believe there are, perhaps, three (3) statements that you would want me to make and "build-upon" this evening: One is that VMI is changing... but at the same time, has not changed. What hasn't changed is our commitment to produce leaders of character who are imbued with a love of learning and a deep commitment to service. These outcomes are accomplished in a unique, disciplined, military setting, built on a splendid honor system. My second statement, is that the VMI degree continues to be one of distinction, considered highly by employers and the best graduate schools. And three, that in the crowded and competitive marketplace today of higher education, VMI attracts and enrolls highly qualified young men and women to its ranks.

The Institute's future depends heavily, as it always has, upon the quality of its cadets. I am pleased to report that the August 2015 entering class of New Cadets – the Class of 2019 – consisted of 495 outstanding men and women. Of this number, 302 were in-state matriculants and 193 were from out-of-state and from foreign countries. Men numbered 442 and women numbered 53. Forty-four percent (44%) of the entering class ranked in the top quarter of their high school classes and this new Class's mean SAT composite score was 1151. Of curriculum choices, 155 selected engineering, 115 selected math and science, and the rest selected liberal arts, with International Studies leading with 74. In sum, approximately 60% Virginians – 40% out-of-state, with greater than 50% in the STEM degrees and a GPA of 3.6. While early, the new Class to matriculate next August 2016 appears to be of equal or greater quality. Applications continue to rise.

VMI continues to send educated and honorable graduates into the ranks of the alumni, into the military, and into the varied work of civilian life. VMI's achievement is enviable: on average over the past five years, 98 percent of cadets at graduation secured jobs..., unheard of during this deep recession. Last May, 303 members of the Class of 2015 graduated. Adding graduates from other classes, the ceremony saw 324 cross the stage and receive a VMI diploma. Greater than 50% (now nearing 54% for this May 2016 ceremony) were commissioned in the Armed Forces. That number is especially commendable in time of war...and reinforces VMI's historic mission of producing Citizen-Soldiers.

Some of the most exciting developments at the Institute today are taking place in the academic program. Initiatives are currently being implemented to promote greater vitality in the core curriculum and to meet "right-sizing" objectives among the different disciplines and departments. The overall goal is to better balance the cadet/faculty ratio. This includes strengthening the writing and fine arts programs, and much more, in the Department of English and Fine Arts -- now known as the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies -- and incorporating into that department the current philosophy curriculum. Other initiatives include adding Mandarin Chinese in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, resulting now in foreign language offerings of Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and French; the renaming and focus of our Math degree to Applied Math; and, the creation of a new Department of Computer and Information Sciences. Just as we introduced in 2005 a Corps-wide required "theory course on leadership", to compliment the cadets various leadership experiential opportunities, we are now introducing "programming" as a science mandate for all degree programs as a new skill set for all of our graduates. Without shutting our eyes to the need to adapt our academic offerings to the needs of the times, we continue to hold fast to providing 14 solid academic majors rather than expanding that number as interests ebb and flow. In the academic areas, as with all areas of the Institute, we must look deep into the future if we are to remain strong and vibrant and meet the needs of a changing world.

Princeton Review, Forbes, U.S. News and World Report, Atlantic Monthly, Money, and others have ranked VMI "well up" in the upper quartile of all national colleges – public and private. *Money*, for example, ranked VMI second among public schools in Virginia, third among all schools in Virginia, and very high nationally in return on investment: the amount of money a student is likely to earn with a degree minus the net cost of attending the school. And.... VMI's Applied Math program was ranked ninth by College Factual in a list of top applied mathematics programs in the nation. VMI's program is the only one in Virginia in the top 10, which includes Brown, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins

universities. But it is also “word of mouth” and our ultimate “credential” ... *the graduate* ... that most favorably affects the reputation of the Institute.

VMI cadets (across all services) continue to do exceptionally well at the ROTC summer camps, consistently earning high marks and awards for their performance. U.S. Army Cadet Command and the General Douglas McArthur Foundation recently announced that the VMI Army ROTC Department had won the McArthur Award as the year’s Outstanding Program in competition with the nation’s six Senior Military Colleges and five of the Military Junior Colleges of their 1st Brigade. Our Naval ROTC Department increasingly sees the selection of cadets for naval special warfare (SEALS), naval special operations (EOD), and significant growth in nuclear officer assignments for submarines and surface warfare...leading the nation, by far, across all naval ROTC programs.

As you know, VMI was one of the first members of the Southern Conference, starting in 1924, and remained in that conference until 2003 when we entered the Big South Conference. VMI was invited to return to the Southern Conference commencing 1 July 2014, and the reintegration has been accomplished most professionally. As happens periodically with faculty and in the coaching profession, VMI is currently experiencing a “significant” number of head coaching changes. We feel that our NCAA athletic future is very “promising” across all 18 sports with the recent hiring of outstanding coaches, significant procedural and organizational changes in our athletic department and new initiatives. Academic performance and grade point averages across all sports are on the rise. Our club sports programs are nationally, internationally, and individually ranked in lacrosse, rugby, and power-lifting ... and last academic year our boxing team upset the University of Michigan to win the national collegiate boxing championship among 28 colleges. I’m more confident with the position of our NCAA Teams and Club Sports programs today than anytime in my past 13 years as your Superintendent.

Creating an environment to facilitate and encourage the major goals of “Vision 2039”, by necessity, has meant improving, updating, and expanding our physical facilities. This has been, perhaps, the most visible aspect of “Vision 2039,” with major changes to North, Main, and South Posts. Accomplishing more than \$359 million of construction in the past decade, we have fully updated academic buildings all along Letcher Avenue. On 11 November 2013, we rededicated the New Science Building, a \$19.6 full modernization that gives us the very best technologically enhanced classrooms and laboratories, as “Maury-Brooke Hall.” We have secured state resources of \$120 million to build or modernize three (3) separate Corps Indoor Training Facilities: this entails \$20 million for a major rebuild of Cormack Hall (you knew that as “The Pit”) as

the new home of the Physical Education Department with its popular new minor in Exercise Science, and includes the new Thunder-dome for NCAA cadet wrestling; modifying Cocke Hall (last renovated in 1923) at \$20 million as a Corps support building with a modernized massive Corps weight room, new locker rooms, basketball courts, enhancements for Hops, and much more; and, a new \$80 million Corps Physical Training Facility, located on Route 11 adjacent to Cameron Hall, which will provide an indoor facility for Corps fitness, drill, confidence courses, high rope courses, rock climbing, endurance training, rappelling, coaches offices, and a world class adjustable-banked Olympic indoor track. Construction on this project is well underway, and when completed in December 2016, this facility will be one of the most outstanding on the eastern seaboard. These three projects “transform” our South Post, facilitate Corps training (particularly in bitter weather) throughout the academic year, and aesthetically enhances the principal entrance to Lexington...all the while promoting Corps fitness, discipline, confidence, and NCAA athletics. Construction on North Post of a new Leadership Reaction Course, a north post maintenance facility, and the addition of numerous confidence course obstacles to our Leadership Valley have also been completed.

After a decade of severe state financial cuts to higher education across the Commonwealth, support this year remained constant with approximately 16 percent of our total operational budget coming from that source. No college president in the country is happy with the cost of education as exemplified by rising tuition and fees. We offset these costs with financial aid, merit aid, ROTC scholarships, and other directed donor support. A major source of new funding for the Institute will come from the current campaign. The Campaign Cabinet is chaired by the very able Mr. Don Wilkinson, VMI Class of 1961...and it is very successful with the initial \$180 million goal established in the quiet phase and the \$225 million goal announced in the public phase both being exceeded. The campaign stands at \$276 million this evening with the possibility to reach \$300 million.

Through this Campaign, VMI will raise the resources necessary to ensure that its education will remain of the very highest quality for its cadets, and that VMI graduates will remain an invaluable resource to our state and nation.

The Institute continues to stand on the bedrock of personal honor as described in VMI’s historic Honor Code. In its fundamental expectations and requirements..., the VMI Honor System and the Honor Court basically remain as you knew them. There have been slight “procedural” changes, but no changes in the standards or in the penalties. Education continues to be key to our success in countering the plague of cheating that is rampant in our high schools today. That education for our Rats and their transformation

commences (literally) within 5 minutes of meeting their cadre on matriculation day..., and “continuing education” for the Old Corps is seen by our commitment to hosting national Honor Conferences and emphasis by all at VMI. The VMI Honor System is the most cherished of all our systems, and we work tirelessly to ensure its integrity and effectiveness.

VMI is a remarkable institution, and it is getting stronger and better with each year. You can be justifiably proud of your school and equally proud of its exciting and bright future. Thank you for your loyal and generous support.

Welcome back.... Enjoy your reunion with Brother Rats and seeing all that has changed..., and..., all that has remained the same at the Institute.