

**Convocation:
Thursday 18 August, 2016**

How wonderful it is to have our CGA Community together in one house again...in this beautiful Leamy Auditorium... Welcome back everybody.

I welcome once again all our distinguished visitors who are here this afternoon...thank you for joining us... In particular, I want to offer a special welcome to our current Chairman of the Board of Trustee...RDML Bill Kelly ...thank you for making the extra effort to be here...and thanks for your continued support of this institution.

To the Faculty/Staff: For many of you welcome back...I hope you had a relaxing, rejuvenating, enjoyable summer! For those that are new...those that I met last week at the New Faculty School orientation, welcome once again! For others who worked, here at CGA, or participated on key activities remotely throughout the summer months... thank you for your support...It's been a busy but highly successful time and I thank you... for all of your hard work.

Up here on stage...I'd like to introduce three new members of the Senior Staff. Our new Assistant Superintendent...CAPT Ron LaBrec...our Senior Command Chaplain, CAPT Michael Parisi... and our new Aide to the Superintendent, LT Heather Imbriale...and of course, me being a high-maintenance kinda guy...boy, does she have her work cut for her.

Anyway, terrific additions to our Academy family...our Academy Team. Welcome to each of you.

To the Corps of Cadets...it is truly good to see you all together again...welcome home!

A special welcome to our new Exchange Students from the Air Force Academy...the Naval Academy...and West Point...welcome aboard.

And as most of you know... one of our shipmates has not yet returned to us. 1/c Duncan Quinn was in an off duty accident this summer and remains in a hospital in California.

I ask that you keep Duncan and his family in your thoughts and prayers as you go about your week preparing for the start of classes..... Thank you.”

What a busy week it has been so far, and oh, how proud I am of where we are as an Academy...and how optimistic I am as I look forward to what lies ahead.

I realize many of you have been here over the summer, but for those who have not...you may have noticed the new banners we have displayed down Bear Drive...1st is the banner that says “Character...Welcome Class of 2020.” As you know, on 27 Jun, 312 young men and women reported aboard and formed the Class of 2020...

These individuals, sitting right here in front have been working hard the past 7 weeks...getting to know each other, getting to know our Coast Guard...they have succeeded as Swabs...as a tight-knit Team...on Monday, they earned their shoulder boards and are now 4/C cadets.

How about a Corps-wide welcome and congratulations, to the Class of 2020? (*applause*)

Class of 2020..I hope you feel good about this past summer. You have learned to be good followers this first 7 weeks of your 200 week journey. You will continue to be challenged throughout this Academic Year to grow even stronger as followers...and I have every confidence that you are up to the task. However, right now, rather than be “followers”...I ask that you be “leaders”...to lead, loud, and proud...as a Class... reminding all of us here, what the mission of this place is...and I would hope that the rest of the Corps will join you...How about it, What is the mission of the United States Coast Guard Academy? (*recite the mission*)

Man...I love this place...Go Bears!

Back to the banners...the second new Banner on Bear Drive says....Character, 40th Anniversary of the first woman cadet...

Yes, it's been 40 years since the first group of women joined the Corps of Cadets... 38 courageous women who joined the Class of 1980.

Today...there are 353...36% women in the entire Corps... something to be very proud of. And so THANKS to the pioneering actions of those first women ...their extraordinary character and courage ...and those who followed all these years...this Academy is a better place...this Coast Guard of ours is a better Coast Guard. How about a celebratory round of applause on this 40th Anniversary...

Speaking of women...the third banner on Bear Drive says "Character... Women's National Sailing Champions."

Yes...as I'm sure most of you know...our Womens Sailing Team is indeed NUMERO UNO...THE TOP...THE BEST...sailing team in the Nation...as well, our co-ed team took the number two spot, just 5 points behind Georgetown...THOSE DARN HOYAS!

What an absolute joy it was for me to call the women's team on the evening of their victorious performance...a performance that resulted in a dominating...40 point win over the nearest competitor...

I told the team... *"Your National Sailing Dominance...has led to Coast Guard Academy National Prominence."* I told 1/C Nikki Barnes, who was crowned as the 2016 College Sailing "Sailor of the Year"...that I enjoyed her remarks after she received her award. In her humble way, she gave full credit to her coaches and her team. I also enjoyed it when she said *"what made me a better sailor was all those "push-ups" I had to do at the Academy."*

A Class Act by all accounts by 1/C Barnes, by the entire sailing team....and so... may I ask all sailing coaches, and our men and women teams to rise...so we can give you a hearty, round of applause!

While I'm at it...in terms of National Champions...how about 3/C Ellen Ho, and 3/C Brian Kim...our two pistol National Champions...also please stand ...how about it (*applause*)

That leads me to the last new Banner...a banner with a number of cadets on display...with the banner reading “Strength of Character is Formed Here.” And as I reflect on this concept...a concept I talked about last Convocation...and as I reflect on this past year...all of you doing your thing, with great success...in the classroom...on the courts & fields of play...on the water, playing your instruments, singing your songs...serving our Community...training, and being trained...supporting each other... “Strength of Character in Action?”

Yes indeed...many, many examples...in many, many forms...ALL YEAR LONG.

You as a Corps...we as an Academy have done so many of the things that we set out to do a year ago.... And I could not be more proud of all the success that we have experienced “together.”

When I spoke to each class on Tuesday...I said to appreciate where you are right now in your 200-week program... take full advantage of this opportunity to grow academically, athletically, professionally, and ethically... stay focused. I trust this week, you’ve been sharing your summer stories with each other...and that’s always great fun...but also, I hope you’ve been reflecting a little...about your experiences ...your journey thus far...your performance? For those doing your best, good on you...for those who have room to do more or do better... those of you that may have been distracted a time or two.

From this day forth, be committed to make necessary course changes...remember...this education...this training...it's your job...your chosen profession... your nation depends on you.

Now I'd like to share something that has been on my mind of late...and it has to do with the civilian component here at CGA...the civil-servants that day in and day out, serve our country, just like us in uniform. Civilian faculty, coaches, administrative assistants, grounds crew, facility engineers, librarian staff, all the civilian entities that contribute to our mission.

What I've been thinking about... is the fact that me in uniform, and most all of us here in uniform...we tend to receive frequent words of gratitude, appreciation, encouragement, and respect here on campus, as well, in public...due to the mere fact that we wear a uniform and are recognizable.

For instance, here and in public, I am on the receiving end of daily salutes, and salutations... all officers here experience the same...in public, those of us in uniform, officer and enlisted alike, we often receive a sincere “*thank you for your service*”...from Joe citizen...and I don’t know about you, but these signs of respect and appreciation...they feel good, they inspire me, they energize me, they boost my morale and feeling of worth.

You know, we do something really neat here....at least once a month. Immediately after morning colors...Ms. Sunnie Robinson, our Civilian Service Administrator escorts over to Hamilton, new civilian employees that have just reported aboard...and in the Henriques Room, I welcome them, then I have them raise their right hand...and I administer the Oath of Office...just like we do with our military folks. They too solemnly swear...to support and defend...to bear true faith and allegiance...they too take this obligation freely...they swear to well and faithfully discharge the duties.

SO HELP ME GOD!

So, where am I going with all of this? I think you know...The civilian component here at CGA...and for that matter across our Coast Guard...is just as important as those of us in uniform...just as vital... just as key...and just as deserving of thanks, appreciation, encouragement and RESPECT. And so...to the Corps of Cadets...think about your current day influencers/mentors/teachers /counselors ...those here who have helped you during your Academy experience...those here that allow this place to look and operate as well as it does...so many of them are civilians...right? And so to you, and all those in uniform...as we start this Academic Year...let's together make a concerted effort...let's make it a point... to give frequent thanks/appreciation/ encouragement & RESPECT to our civilian-servants here at CGA...not just today...but all year long.

How about standing...right now...and join me in a collective round of applause...a Standing Ovation... for all of our Academy civilians.....Thank you Civilians (*applause*)

As I mentioned earlier...we have done some wonderful things this past year...in support of our current Strategic Plan...as well, in support of the number of specific initiatives I introduced, as your new Superintendant last year.

For instance...I indicated that I wanted to grow the size of the Corps...and I am happy to report that we now have marching orders to do just that... to grow the Corps size to 1,000 strong...we've doubled the number of International students in this most recent class as compared to last year's class... (welcoming students from Mexico, Philippines, Turkey, Haiti, and Federated States of Micronesia)...

On the Intellectual Capacity front...just look at the 33 or so senior CAPSTONE projects completed this past year that supported one or more of the Commandant's 4 Strategic Priorities.

In terms of a balanced approach to Leader Development...we have made great strides to build on the healthy foundation of our Institute for Leadership...our IFL...growing the staff, creating Strategic imperatives and an annual work plan...allowing us to refine, implement, and assess the leader development programs, across our four developmental domains that comprise the 200-week practicum.

On the diversity and inclusion front...what we see now is one of the most diverse groups to enter the Academy...with Class of 2020 consisting of 38% women, and 33 % underrepresented minorities.

We see fully engaged and active cadet led affinity councils working collaboratively across campus to celebrate the strengths each culture lends to the Academy's rich and diverse history. We see cadets who strongly value diversity and inclusion by stepping forward, in leadership roles, serving as peer mentors in Chase Hall. And we see cadets, faculty, and staff...doing the "right thing"...speaking up when they see or hear about situations that do not align with our core values.

There is still work to do in this area, but we are making progress. We must continue...so that we truly achieve an Academy... and a Coast Guard... where ALL can be assured they are being treated fairly...and all can do their best work. This is an incredible imperative for our service, which struggles to retain and promote diversity and then loses the contributions of those who leave. It is also important for our nation, which continues to struggle with the legacy of its racial history.

Your generation, here at the Academy, and across the nation, can be the “leaders of character” who fix this. You... we here at CGA, can be the change that is so desperately needed.

In terms of our “Margin of Excellence Needs”...how pleased and grateful we are for the generous and caring support that we have gotten this past year under the leadership of the Alumni Association...partnering with our Parents Association and the Coast Guard Foundation.

So many of our needs have been met this past year, and the future looks bright. Center of Arctic Study and Policy... in business and producing; the Cadet Aviation Simulator... up and running; near-completion of the Otto Graham Athletic Hall of Excellence, with a ribbon cutting this Homecoming; the Honors Program, Club Sports Endowment, Recruiting Programs, Plasma Lab...ALL well supported.

Other future projects that generate extra excitement here are the Strength and Conditioning Center and Cyber Center construction in Mac Hall; and of course the continuing generosity and attention given to our sailing programs and in particular, the most popular training program, Coastal Sail.

And I gotta tell you... I am super jazzed about the vision of a Maritime Center of Excellence mentioned this time last year...as it has received great interest within our Academy supporters...with a design concept in the making...and a timeline envisioned for construction in 2021...

All this, in addition to the annual \$1.5 million dollars, that support a spectrum of cadet activities... allowing for enhanced developmental opportunities throughout the year.

How fortunate we are to receive so many gestures of pride, generosity, camaraderie, and love... from our Alumni,

and other Academy family and friends. GO BEARS! Thank You!

Lastly, is our commitment to serve this community we are so privileged to be a part of. Corps of Cadets...be proud of the 22,000 hours of community engagement...community giving you have produced this past year. This Coast Guard of ours is all about doing things for the public good...and your work in the community this past year is well reflective of that ideal... very well done.

As mentioned...our collective efforts here at CGA have been shepherded by our 5-year Strategic Plan that takes us to 2018...being on the back end of that plan, we intend to commit energy and focus this year...revising the plan...producing a product that will guide us for an additional five years.

This effort will be inclusive...the entire Academy Community will have an opportunity to contribute... along with our external stakeholders.

It will challenge us...maybe even stretch us a bit...but at the same time, it will be realistic in terms of resource requirements. Lastly, and most importantly, the plan will be well aligned with our organization's strategic challenges...and will help propel this institution to an even higher level of Professional Excellence...Academic Excellence, Athletic & Physical Excellence...all the while, serving as a model Community of Inclusion.

Let me start to wrap things up with a quick experience I had over the summer...as many of you know, I like to run around campus a lot in the morning. Most mornings, I end my run up at the Chapel...and I walk around to cool off. One morning, I walked over to Hopley Yeaton's gravesite.

Hopley Yeaton...The Coast Guard's first Commissioned Officer... a man known as a consummate professional mariner and leader who embodied the 'can-do' attitude...and our core values.

I looked at his Tomb...and on the top of the tomb is a quote etched in stone...and the quote goes like this.

“No joys domestic, not the love of ease...could cool thy patriot zeal, in war or in peace”

It's a beautiful quote...one that certainly captures what Hopley Yeaton was all about...and I would say, what Coast Guard service is all about... what all of you... are all about.

“No joys domestic, not the love of ease...could cool thy patriot zeal, in war or in peace”

I asked my Aide...LT Imbriale to get a cadet perspective of this quote...and so she had the opportunity to chat with

1/C Tvrdy, 1/C Dieter-Leeds, and 1/C Meeks... three stellar organizational leaders this summer. Together, they came up with something along the lines of this:

“The whole quote is referring to the fact that he, Hopley Yeaton... chose to serve in the Revenue Marine, the earlier version of today’s Coast Guard. Serving the country he loved...knowing it would be a lifestyle that wouldn’t necessarily make him rich...a lifestyle that certainly wouldn’t be easy... but rather, a lifestyle that would be tremendously fulfilling. He, Hopley Yeaton, is the example for all of us...intrinsically motivated to serve others—intrinsically driven, with purpose...ALWAYS”

So my message to you... the Corps....thank you for choosing to be here...continue to grow, learn, and serve with great energy, enthusiasm in pursuit of your diploma...and your commission in this wonderful Coast Guard of ours.

Continue to approach your work with Yeaton’s “patriotic zeal”...each and every day.

And to the staff and faculty...once again... a heartfelt thank you for all you do...for your patriotism...your collective zeal...for your meaningful...and impactful, contributions to this feel-good mission of ours...

So at the start of this Academic Year, in this 226th year of our service, let’s all...cadets, faculty, and staff...again commit to helping our beloved Academy achieve our vision...of being a locally relevant, nationally prominent and internationally recognized institution... helping our Coast Guard serve the American public in this dynamic and challenging world.

OK...on a lighter note... now, can we talk about the upcoming Secretary’s Cup on the 10th of September?



You may remember last year...we turned to the “*Power of the Bear*” for support as we approached the Secretary’s Cup competition against our rival Merchant Marine Academy...or as we say, Kings Point...and as you know, we fell just a bit short in keeping the Cup...it was a tough day. Well this year...I thought we would turn to the “Power and PRESENCE of the Bear.” Objee...where are you?

(Objee arrives)

Ok...from now until the Secretary’s Cup Day...I order that all salutes and greetings here at the Academy are to be accompanied with a hearty Go Bears! And that all responses by the receiver of such salute or greeting...shall be returned with a ”Beat KP.” LT Imbriale...how about a demonstration.

GO BEARS.....BEAT KP

Let’s have a great year!

GO CORPS OF CADETS....GO STAFF &
FACULTY...AND FOREVER...GO BEARS!