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## Norman R. Augustine, Graduation Remarks

Augustine, Norman R.

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### GRADUATION REMARKS

*Administrators,*  
President Oliver, Faculty, Guests and members of the  
FROM ALL NATIONS. I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO BE  
Graduating Class <sup>that</sup> that was a very generous introduction, *RECOGNIZI*  
~~for an unemployed aerospace worker!~~ *IN A*  
*FASHION*  
*THAT*  
*MAKES ME*  
*A PART OF*  
*THIS GREAT*  
*INSTITUTION.*  
*ALSO,*

It brings to mind my first day serving on the faculty at  
Princeton. After having spent my entire career until  
that time in either industry or government, I had been  
invited to deliver the welcoming lecture to the incoming  
freshman engineering students. As the dean was  
making his introductory remarks I was busily flipping

through my lecture notes, not paying much attention to what he was saying—until suddenly I heard him announce, “And now, we will hear from *Professor Augustine.*” For just an instant – and this is true – the thought went through my mind, “Gee, what a coincidence. They have some guy here with the same name as me!”

Whatever the case, I am deeply honored to receive a degree from this great institution. Throughout my career I have worked with many of your faculty and graduates and on occasion spent brief periods of time here participating in various government committees. I am acutely aware of the standard of excellence that you maintain and the demands placed upon each individual

who is affiliated with the school. I therefore take particular pleasure in congratulating you <sup>THOSE OF</sup> who are receiving your degrees today; first for having been selected to <sup>AL</sup> attend the Navy Postgraduate School, and second for ~~you~~ having successfully completed your work here. These are no small accomplishments. And they are accomplishments that will serve you and our country well throughout your careers.

I should also note that I am particularly pleased <sup>THAT</sup> the sequence of today's ceremony is such that <sup>IT IS</sup> honorary degrees are presented *before* your degrees. I can hardly wait to get home to tell my family that I graduated *first* in my class! Not long ago I was fortunate enough to receive an honorary degree from my alma mater and, as

you might expect, I was very proud on that occasion, too. In fact, *The New York Times* even carried a story about the event. The headline read, "Mohammed Ali and *three others* receive Princeton degrees."

Needless to say, it is not easy for a graduation speaker to offer advice to such an accomplished class as this

one—but, of course, that is what graduation speakers

are expected to do. ~~Before~~ <sup>MANY OF YOU HAVE SERVED BEYOND ANY ~~DEGREE~~ LEVEL</sup> coming here I asked my wife

of 49 years what she thought I should say on such an

~~auspicious~~ occasion and she responded, "Well, whatever

you do, don't try to sound clever or intellectual or

charming. Just be yourself!" But fear not: as former

Yankees owner George Steinbrenner always told his

new managers, "I won't keep you long."

MOST  
CITIZENS  
CAN  
EVEN  
IMAGINE.  
SO

Today we celebrate what is commonly referred to as a “commencement”—that is, a *beginning*, rather than an *ending*. We do this because the focus of <sup>THIS</sup> ~~the~~ celebration is upon what you will *do* with what you learned here rather than what you <sup>ITAL</sup> did to learn it—no matter how significant the latter may be. In other words, you will be expected to be part of the answer to the problems now confronting our nation. Today, as we view these challenges, as the saying goes among Marines, it is a “target-rich” battlefield. Indeed, <sup>OUR NATION HAS</sup> ~~we have~~ <sup>^</sup> faced many great challenges throughout its history, but seldom if ever have we simultaneously faced such a variety of truly pivotal ~~matters~~ <sup>CONCERNS</sup>.

This is particularly the case for our Armed Services that have been fighting continuously and courageously for as long as many of our citizens can remember. Given America's great strength in conventional conflicts, a new kind of enemy has evolved that uses a new kind of tactics. While this is the case, some of the more traditional threats of the past have not gone away.

Further complicating <sup>THE MATTER,</sup> ~~this~~, as we all know, our nation is faced with an enormous budgeting dilemma—one that will take years to resolve, *and will have a major impact on our armed forces and the Nation as a whole,*

All of which is to say that this is a time of great opportunity to contribute. In the year's ahead our ~~nation's~~ military will be almost certain to reshape itself...and the Navy will likely take on increased

responsibility<sup>es,</sup>. Based upon the many years I have been associated with members of our Navy, I would observe that you could not find yourself in better company as you engage these challenges.]

~~In fact,~~

~~The entire world in which we live is itself being~~

~~reshaped.~~ What you will be asked to do is akin to

rebuilding an aircraft while it is in flight; a ship while it is underway.

But before we turn to the future, for perspective let us take a moment to turn the clock back a bit—say, about 200 million years! My geologist friends tell me that something over 200 million years ago many of what today are the earth's major continents were joined



together in a single “supercontinent” that we now call Gondwanaland. It included, in part, what today is South America, Africa, Australia, Antarctica, Arabia and the Indian Peninsula. Over time, these land masses slowly drifted apart...and their influence on each other

diminished correspondingly, *until each seemed quite isolated -*  
*As recently as World War II Americans spoke of being protected by*  
*two <sup>GREAT</sup> oceans;*

But then, according to my economist friends, in just the last few decades all these continents came crashing back together again. As Tom Friedman put it in his remarkable book, *The World is Flat*, “Globalization has accidentally made Beijing, Bangalore and Bethesda next door neighbors.” Now this is a truly remarkable happenstance...200 million years of drifting apart effectively reversed in just a few decades.

Francis Cairncross, writing in the Economist,  
encapsulates<sup>1</sup> this notion with the declaration that  
“Distance is Dead.”

Now that is a truly profound observation— <sup>17AL</sup> “Distance is  
<sup>17AL</sup> Dead”—and it underlies what we mean when we speak  
of globalization. The question of course arises, who  
*killed* “Distance?” The answer is that it was a  
conspiracy. First, modern jet aircraft made it possible  
to move things—including people—around the world at  
nearly the speed of sound. Second, modern information  
systems made it possible to move ideas and knowledge  
around the world literally at the speed of light.

Perhaps no other group in America understands “globalization” better than those ~~of you~~ who serve our Navy. Members of our Navy have throughout its history been continuously plying the far-reaches of the globe. You have no doubt heard the expression that every ship has a great captain in fair weather. But looking to the future, leadership will be needed more than ever as we sail these troubled waters.

Fortunately, there are certain principles of leadership that have served individuals well who have been placed in demanding positions in the past. It has been my great fortune to have known some of these leaders, including Adm. Arleigh Burke, Gen. Omar Bradley and Gen. Jimmy Doolittle. One can learn a lot from them.

One learns, for example, the importance of having a strong, uncompromising ethical compass. Ethical comportment is the *sin qua non* of leadership. As important as is your new degree, as important as is your health, there is something far more important than either — and that is your reputation. I say that not because graduation speakers are expected to say that — and they are — I say that because I have had highly accomplished friends destroy their lives because of a slip-up in the reputational sphere. The first rocket on which I worked blew up on the launch pad, to no ~~small~~ small degree because of an engineering oversight on my part, but my career survived. In contrast, one can never, ever fully recover from an *ethical* error. It endures for a lifetime ... and beyond.

One can also learn to appreciate from the leaders I have mentioned the immense value of selflessness. In fact, the best definition of "leadership" that I have ever seen is one that is inscribed on the tombstone of a British officer in a cemetery at Normandy. It reads,

"Leadership is wisdom and courage and carelessness of self." Selflessness is the essence of leadership. To quote

*the one famous military officer, " is the privilege to lead, not to have a bigger tent," ~~that~~ General Custer at least got that right!*

~~Further~~ <sup>also</sup> One can learn the critical role of

*from the careers of the three great military leaders I mentioned*  
courage...whether it be courage in the heat of battle or

courage to make the tough decision while sitting in a

comfortable office in <sup>Washington</sup> ~~the Pentagon~~. I think of the

advertisement that Antarctic explorer Ernest

Shackelton is said to have placed in a London

newspaper in 1900. It read (please forgive the sexism of the times):

**MEN WANTED**  
**FOR HAZARDOUS JOURNEY**  
Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful.  
Honor and Recognition in Case of Success.

Some 5,000 individuals are said to have replied to the ad.

Finally, one can learn the importance of setting demanding standards, especially for oneself. Newt Gingrich once asked me if I knew why lions don't hunt chipmunks. The answer is that if they catch them, they starve to death. In this regard I am often reminded of President Kennedy's statement in 1961: I believe that this

nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth.” Frankly, many of us who were aeronautical engineers at the time weren’t certain we knew how it could be done. But it was <sup>SOMEHOW</sup> done... *not over*  
*quit six times*

I would add two additional observations of my own.

The first is that in most undertakings, motivation will beat mere talent almost every time. I have been struck during my participation in over 500 board meetings of Fortune 100 companies how many of the leaders I met did not have four-digit IQ’s, or parents who were millionaires, or Ivy League diplomas...rather, they were people who were enormously dedicated to what they were doing and worked very hard at doing it. You may

recall the NFL playoff game—a “one and done” affair—a few years ago when Buffalo was 32 points behind at half-time. The game ended in overtime with a Buffalo victory. Did Buffalo’s players really acquire that much additional talent at half-time? I doubt it. The only possible explanation relates to motivation...driven by *such* ~~OUR~~ ATTRIBUTES AS pride, teamwork and commitment.

*PERSONAL*  
The second of my observations has to do with “getting ahead.” Ironically, the best way to get ahead seems to be not to try to get ahead! Sir William Osler, considered by many to be the father of modern Western medicine, put it in the following words:



“I have had ... personal ideals. One is to do the day’s work well and not to bother about tomorrow. It is ... to it, more than to anything else, I owe whatever success I have had – to this power of settling down to the day’s work and trying to do it well to the best of one’s ability, and letting the future take care of itself.”

I would like to close by once again congratulating each of you upon your accomplishments. And, if you will permit me, I would like to say a special word or two to those among you who wear our nation’s uniform. In my experience you exemplify the very best about America. Speaking as a ~~civilian and as a~~ private citizen, I thank each and every one of you for what you do for our

country. May you always enjoy fair winds and  
following-seas.