



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive
DSpace Repository

Institutional Publications

Institutional Publications (Other)

2011-12-16

Graduation Speech Naval Postgraduate School
16 December 2011 by Professor Wayne P.
Hughes, Jr., Captain (Retired)

Hughes, Wayne P. Jr.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10945/65114>

This publication is a work of the U.S. Government as defined in Title 17, United States Code, Section 101. Copyright protection is not available for this work in the United States.

Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun



Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

GRADUATION SPEECH

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL 16 DECEMBER 2011

By Professor Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., Captain USN (Retired)

[Salutations]

I have had the pleasure and sometimes pain of listening to many distinguished graduation speakers on this podium. Today I bring you the one thing almost none of them could offer. I bring you inside information!

I was a student much—but not exactly—like you are today. “Not exactly” because there have been many advances since I studied operations research, but there are more similarities than differences. It was my habit to study at night in a little room at home. My wife, Joan, claimed to be pleased at this because, as she expressed it, she was sure that the second or maybe the third time she screamed “There’s a burglar in the house,” I would come out and chase him away.

My hovel on Sunnyhill Court in Seaside had a phone with which I used to compare wrong answers to homework problems with my study buddy, Joe Metcalf, who lived in La Mesa Village. Joe and I were foolish enough to choose each other for compatibility rather than mathematical prowess. Joe went on to be Commander Second Fleet and led the highly successful fast response Grenada operation assisted by an Army Deputy by the name of “Stormin” Norman Schwarzkopf. It is fun to compare Joe’s memory of his first meeting with General Schwarzkopf’s recollection in his autobiography. The two reports actually agree closely enough, considering these were two forceful personalities. They are rather like the reports of the life of Jesus by two different gospel writers.

You know about some of our recent distinguished graduates, such as CNO and JCS Chairman Michael Mullen, Marine Commandant Michael Hagee, senior woman to serve the Navy, Vice Admiral Pat Tracey, and Singapore Chief Defence Scientist, Lui Pao Chuen. I call out Admiral Joe Metcalf and others from my era, because as you return to your service assignments you should know you follow in the wakes of generations of stellar graduates. Within a block or two of us in Seaside lived later-to-be Vice Admiral Dick Miller and his wife Claire. Claire and Dick have returned, living in Pebble Beach. Also nearby were Bill and Mary Zobel and their boys. Rear Admiral Zobel went on to head the Navy Civil Engineer Corps. Our closest friends, Bill and Sally Rowden and their children lived down the glass plant slope directly behind us. As a Vice Admiral, Bill was Commander Sixth Fleet, headed the Military Sealift Command, and was Chief of the Naval Sea Systems Command.

There are more I could mention, but I must hasten on to my other source of inside information—as a teacher at NPS. Now I must compress the observations of

thirty years into a single illustration. Some of you will have suspected, [correctly](#), that we professors work you like dogs. But that's because you're dogs of a special breed. One March, when Joan and I were visiting my daughter and her family, she took us to downtown Anchorage, Alaska, to watch the start of the Iditarod. As the drivers took their dogs out of their cages, we watched them JUMPING UP AND DOWN, barking let's go! What are you waiting for? Get me in my harness; come on, come on, I wanta pull, pull, pull—for ten days, for 1,200 miles, through snow and sleet and cold and dark, all the way to Nome. These wonderful dogs had no [sense](#) of WINNING. They just wanted to go, go, go, pulling alongside their buddies.

And now here is my last inside secret. We, your professors, are like the sled drivers. It is our joy to be pulled after you, learning and growing from your professional maturity and your widespread service experiences.

Frequently Admiral Rowden came back to NPS to plug in with his surface warfare community. Once he told them, tongue in cheek, that in his speeches he made just two points because that was all he could remember. I am now also going to make only two points because that is the most I can hope that *you* will remember!

The first one is by Abraham Lincoln. He said, "Whatever you are, be a good one." Now, Mr. Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address and he was also a lawyer, so you may be certain he chose his words carefully.

"Whatever you are" speaks to every serviceman graduating today. You came here from diverse personal backgrounds and professional duties. Now you return better equipped to take on even more varied tasks in your future. You already know that to be an effective serviceman you must adapt and do it fast. Mr. Lincoln knows it, too, when he says "whatever you are, be a good one."

Abraham Lincoln did not say, "Be the best one." Aspiring to be best is an invitation to steroids. Wanting to be best is also an invitation to narrow your goal, merely to be a star athlete, or a superb fighter pilot, or the best marksman. [You](#) are in a profession that expects you to expand your horizons, because that is the essence of leadership. You cannot be A Good One if you forget you are on a team—in your ship, in your service, and in your country. Mr. Lincoln is not telling you the military ethic to excel is wrong, but that you can excel without trying to be better than everyone else. That will lead not only steroids but ruthlessness.

Our Professor Gordon McCormick, until very recently the Chairman of the Defense Analysis Department, [is such a leader](#). [He was](#) so effective at delegating [authority](#) that he was able to teach a heavy load, collaborate on some remarkable research, and advise many thesis students. One of his students was Commander Bill McRaven, who organized the successful operation against Osama bin Laden.

Admiral McRaven now leads the entire Special Operations Command. Professor McCormick is an archetypal Good One. His relief, Professor John Arquilla, is on the stage this morning and I believe John has the same talent to get the most out of his professors and into his students.

My second and last point for you to remember comes from a personal creed first written down in the book, *Fleet Tactics*. In it, one paragraph it says, “The most important thing an officer or petty officer can do in *peacetime* is find two others who are better than you are, keep them in the navy, and nurture their careers.” That is the way to make a better Navy. I think—incidentally—my advice applies equally to graduate school professors, but for them it applies in both peace and war!

This is not an egalitarian creed that aspires to achieve equal wealth and happiness for everyone in a society. In my society of the Navy, or the Naval Postgraduate School, or the nation, I first look for the Lions. These are the leaders who will take charge selflessly and make my society better. Meanwhile I keep a lookout for the Jackals. Jackals are the people who are so self-centered or self-pitying that if you let them they will take up all your time. Then there are the rest of us—most of a society—for which our task is to help shape them as round pegs to fit in round holes so that, whatever they are, they will be good ones.

I have not given you precepts or principles. I have given you two things to *do* every day. For the students who are not yet graduating, for all spouses in the audience, and indeed for every faculty member right up to our own President, I ask you to be *a good one*. To the graduating class, you are going back to your profession *a better one*. And as a better one, I ask you to find two or more Lions and nurture their careers, to make your entire profession a better one.

Provost Ferrari and President Oliver, now I turn the podium back to you, so we can get on with the important business of the day.