

LEAVING MY MARK

Over the four years that I taught at West Point - between the summer of 1955 through the summer of 1959, I became increasingly aware that my reputation as both a speaker and combat soldier grew among cadets.

I had one problem with that. Cadets in class would incessantly try to 'bait me' into going off the assigned topic, and repeat their wish to find out just how I led - and won - in the Korean War. Cadets have ever tried to get their instructors to spend time chatting about loosely, sometimes very loosely, related topics. So long as it delays or eliminates the day's lesson 'requirement' and certainly the graded quiz.

But in my case, as cadets came to know the military significance and weight of each of the combat ribbons I wore, they would bore in to get me to tell stories of combat that would illustrate a point of leadership, or fear, or reaction - in a profession they would soon enough join.

In short, my Reputation grew among the Corps of Cadets. A Warrior English Teacher.

The opportunity to clear the air once and for all, came

during Football Season in 1959. Army was scheduled to play Notre Dame after a decade of that series being dropped because of both the increasing violence by the 'Subway Alumni' for Notre Dame that too often led to ugly incidents against Uniformed Cadets in New York stemming from the Polo Grounds. And that series had started overshadowing the Army-Navy Game which was supposed to be the pinnacle of the Service Series.

So current cadets in 1959 had no memory of that series, or, as I had, been witness 13 years before to the titanic battle between Army and ND that ended in a 0-0 tie.

So for some reason I never figured out - it may have been passionate statements I had made in 1st Class English about winning, that were circulated, I was invited, by cadets, to be the Main speaker at the Football Rally to be held inside the giant Washington Dining Hall with all 2,500 cadets present the night before the team left for South Bend.

I accepted, in part, because I had a sense that the pro forma rah rah attitude cadets had toward that pivotal game was less than what was needed to win.

So I prepared to make my appearance on the wooden 'PT Stand' that would be put right in the middle of the entryway where cadets would pour into the mess hall, and leave from it.

I asked a Classmate to 'rehearse' my key remarks, that would make this game a metaphor for combat in which will to win trumps everything else. I would make them in the 3d person even though I would be speaking about the passions I felt in my most extreme battles in Korea.

And then I did something unusual. The normal 'Pep Rally' from a raised 'PT Stand' platform, whether inside or outside so that the audience can see from 1 to 4 cheerleaders on the same stand, is usually accompanied by, of course, loud costumes, noise makers, sometime drums. And then a few remarks from the whomever is invited to the stand - like the Superintendent - then Rah Rah cheerleading again.

I went out to the West Point Museum and got them to loan me a bona-fide Medivel Iron Battle Mace. So when the supper was over, and the cheerleading began, I was invited up to the stand where I would hold forth alone for the 5 or so minutes of my performance.

I started quietly but when I got to the first place when I really wanted to get their attention, I smashed down with the Mace on the edge of the wooden platform splintering it. THAT got their attention. And on the theme that they do not have a clue what they are in for Saturday with Notre Dame - I invoked comparisons with winning in combat, and then the titan football legends like the Gipper as ghosts hanging over West Point from both

teams playing each other back to the turn of the century with broken hands, fractured faces - but battling to win, win, win. And I likened the Notre Dame way as the American public way, while the West Point way represented all the US Military way.

And in another twist I exhorted that winning 'spirit is not a laugh - spirit is not a shout' or a cutely labeled bed sheet hung from a window. That there were no pep rallies in Korea before taking a hill. That spirit can be utter silence and determination. The Corps needs a 'New Kind of Spirit' So I called the football team up from its 'Corps eating tables' with 2,500 Cadets in absolute silence staring at them the long walk coming forward. They said later they had felt immense pressure. The enlisted men waiters at the serving tables had tears running down their faces. My smash-down-with-mace and eloquent soaring rally speech was so powerful that the Corps of Cadets implored me to write down those same remarks (which was not taped by anyone) so they could put it in their Pointer Magazine about the 'New Kind of Spirit' - that speech is attached here as a PDF file duplicating the magazine cover and 2 and a half printed pages.

If you have good bandwidth, click on this 5mb PDF file [Speech](#)

If you can read a Word .doc file, click here [Speech2](#)

I was stunned to read in the cadet Pointer magazine deliered to every cadet room, where it was printed by the Editor ***"We of the First Class would like to add our humble bit of praise to the chorus of the entire Corps, by saying this speech is undoubtedly the most impressive we have heard during our three and a quarter years at the Academy."***

Wow! What a tribute. And I received even a greater one. Red Reeder, one of the legendary football players who lost a leg at Normandy and helped coach the Football team and was at their table the night of the rally - I referred to him in my speech as one of the titans when, on Cullum Field at West Point, our own Red Reeder in the warm ups DROP kicked over the South goal posts. And George Gipp of Notre Dame did the same thing over the other end. Both of them were standing on the 50 yard line! Then the Gipper asked for four footballs and drop kicked all four over both goals before the game even started. And was dead at 25 six weeks later.

Reeder said my speech was the best he ever had heard to motivate a football team! That, coming from Colonel Red Reeder was a great tribute.

Well cest la guerre! In spite of my exhorations Army lost the game to Notre Dame that weekend in South Bend

But I think that was the greatest speech I ever made, in war or peace.

Goodby West Point

That was the last noteworthy thing I did while teaching at West Point. By spring we had new orders to go back into the operating Army. The normal rotation between being a leader in a combat unit, and an instructor, and a student. I was being assigned to the 27th Infantry Regiment - the 'Wolfhounds' in the 25th Division - the 'Tropic Lightning' - at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Another chance to command troops.

So in June 1959 Patsy I, young David and even younger Rebecca were on our way to Hawaii - the island of Oahu. Where Patsy had been born at the old Tripler Hospital in 1929!

We had had a great three years at West Point.

But Aloha!

To continue with my Military Years click... [NEXT, Hawaii Years \(1\)](#)