

GRADUATION ADDRESS TO RANGER CLASS # 5

Brigadier General Richard T. Knowles

18 February 1965

Colonel Edwards, ladies and gentlemen, and members of Ranger Class #5 . . . It is a privilege and a pleasure, indeed, to be here this morning to participate in this graduation ceremony. (Refer to headline.)

I'm happy to see several members of the 11th Air Assault Division in the class -- we are looking forward to your return.
John Armstrong - Mark Brownson

I would like to take a moment to welcome the wives, families, and friends who have turned out for this occasion. You have every reason to be proud of these young men who are about to receive one of the Army's special seals of approval. In a few minutes they will be given a graduation certificate which will authorize them to wear the highly-prized Ranger tab. This privilege was earned by completing the toughest course of instruction in the entire Army school system. It is positive proof of their skill, courage, and ability to meet the demands of modern combat. It is a tremendous personal accomplishment, and I believe it is self-evident that they have already embarked on successful Army careers.

Now, there are three points which I would like to raise this morning, which I believe will make the road ahead more meaningful.

To illustrate the first point, I would like to tell you a story about a British officer. Several years ago, Sir Richard Gale, of the British Army,

made a series of lectures to several of our military schools as part of the Kermit-Roosevelt exchange program. His subject was leadership. With the usual British humor, he gave highly entertaining presentations. On one occasion, a student stood up during the question and answer period and asked Sir Richard Gale if he would give a personal experience illustrating the point of where humor helped him as a leader in combat. Sir Richard told this story this way: "I was one of two Corps Commanders during the Dunkirk operation. Montgomery was the other. During one of the lowest points of the operation, I went forward to meet with my division commanders. Three of the Division Commanders were at the appointed road junction when I arrived. None of them had had any sleep for 3 - 4 days. We were a sorry lot. As I approached, my heart went out to them. But I knew we had to carry on, so I said "Cheer up, boys - - the situation could be worse!" One of the bloody blokes said, without cracking a smile, "Ow??". This rocked me back on my heels. I thought for a moment and then said, "Well, it could rain - - - - and by God, it did!!!"

The moral of this story is the fact that they squeezed a laugh out of a very difficult situation. It solidified their efforts, and they executed a successful withdrawal. So remember - - - look for an element of humor in any situation.

During the first year of the Korean War, I was in command of a medium Artillery battalion attached to the 1st Marine Division far up in North Korea. My mission was to provide transportation to haul ammunition

and other supplies. Additionally, we were required to establish and maintain communications between the X Corps and the 1st Marine Division CP. Overall we were understrength. Half of our men were utilized to establish a perimeter around our base of operation about 25 miles north of Hamhung; the other half was strung out along the road from there to the Chosen Reservoir. That was our situation when the Chinese entered the picture and started chopping our line to pieces. With a part of the battalion completely cut off but with the Marine elements, and the remainder desperately trying to hang onto a puny perimeter, my Executive Officer had made a plea to X Corps for some reinforcements. One understrength infantry platoon, commanded by a sergeant, appeared on the scene. The second evening after the Chinese intervention, I managed to arrange a meeting held in a bombed-out North Korean schoolhouse in the center of our perimeter, to talk to my senior officers and key NCOs. The weather was 35° below zero with a foot of snow on the ground. We were short of fuel, ammunition, food, clothing, and the overall situation, frankly, looked pretty hopeless. After receiving a briefing from the 2 and the 3 and looking at all of the Red symbols on the map, I asked the Executive Officer to review in detail our perimeter defense plans. We really had too many vehicles and too few people to stay in the area, but without a change in the mission, we had no choice but to do the best we could under the circumstances. I called on each key officer and commander in the battalion to explain their plans and problems. There wasn't a ray of sunshine from the lot. Finally, after a little pep talk telling them that we had no choice but to do our best

just to survive, I turned to the veteran infantry platoon leader and said "Sergeant, what do you think of the situation?". His response was, "Hell, sir, we'll get 20 to 1 here." That comment brought the basic fundamentals of warfare right into focus as far as we were concerned. Everyone there realized that if we could get 20 to 1, or thereabouts, we would be winning the war, even if it meant the complete sacrifice of our entire unit in the process. "20 to 1" became our battle cry throughout that first year of the war. *(The steaks & bags will be on the next truck)* It is that note of optimism that I think we should look for in every difficult situation. So, my second point is -- be optimistic.

Bernard Baruch is a great American, well-known to all of us. He now lives in New York and although he has retired from active business and public life, he walks in the New York park daily. When he has the occasion to meet government officials or business associates, they are invited to join him in the park. So it is not uncommon to see Mr. Baruch sitting on a bench and chatting with someone about world affairs. One day, a very old man sat down next to him and said, "Mr. Baruch, I have followed your career all my life. I think you are one of the really great Americans. I thought you would like to know that I have never in my life had anything to drink, and I don't smoke. Also, I have had nothing to do with women. Tonight I am going home and celebrate my 80th birthday. Bernard Baruch turned to him and said "How?". The point I would like to make is that even though you are on the road to success, take time out to have fun and enjoy life. I am sure, however, that the members of this class will not have a problem figuring out how to have fun tonight.

In conclusion, I want to pass on my heartiest congratulations; you have passed a very significant milestone in your lives. However, the best is yet to come, and I'm confident that you will meet the challenges

of the future.
Now, if my G2 is right, I understand that there are several cars parked out in front, one or two of them have their engines running for fast getaways. If, by chance, you find something missing when you get to your car, I just want to say that "the sleeping bags will be on the next truck."

Good luck and godspeed.