

# Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Retired Brig. Gen. Duane Lodrige – U.S. Air Force Academy Acceptance Day on August 6, 2021

## **Retired Brig. Gen. Duane Lodrige:**

Good Morning General Clark, General Moga, General Letendre, Chief Sparks, Academy Staff, Cadet Wing, Parents, Distinguished members of the legacy Class of 75 AND drum roll please A most special welcome to the Cadets of the Class of 2025!

50 years ago the class of '75 (best alive) stood through our Acceptance Day, still shell shocked from six weeks of Basic Training. I know that many of us were wondering what we had gotten ourselves into -- and what future challenges lay ahead. Or more like what future tortures and harassment we could expect.

I'm here today on behalf of your Legacy Class—75 best alive. I'd like to share how our experiences at this academy created opportunities that we would never have found otherwise.

When I was your age, my dad, who dropped out of school during WWII, enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was later commissioned thru the Aviation Cadet program, suggested I look at a fairly new institution—the Air Force Academy. I had no idea that his prompting would lead me on an incredible 36 year journey that began right here where you are standing.

Yes, Over the past 50 years, things have changed but so much is the same. What was the new dorm is Sijan Hall, you're issued a computer instead of a slide rule, The warbirds are still on the terrazzo but now they're chained down so they don't end up at the North Gate, and the Air Gardens once again have water. An all male academy with a "bring me men" sign at the base of the ramp is now much more inclusive and representative of our national diversity. This institution is better prepared than ever to produce Air and Space Warriors for the greatest military in the world.

So my advice as you begin your cadet life is:

1) First —Hallelujah, Basic Cadet Training is in the rear view mirror, and now you embark on your next challenge—your next chapter in a four year journey that is a marathon not a sprint. You begin the rigorous task of navigating a highly competitive academic environment that your peers at other universities could never imagine BUT WAIT—let's pile on some military requirements and athletic challenges. Academics, military training, and extracurricular activities are a 3 legged stool that you must be keep in balance.

2) No matter how gifted you are, there will be times when you will be overwhelmed but there is never a time that you should feel alone. You are no strangers to hard work or you would not have made it to where you are standing. But this is a new environment unlike anything that you've ever experienced. When I arrived here 50 years ago, I was one of the smartest people on the planet. What I didn't realize was— there were 1000 classmates and 3000 upper class just like me. At the mid-terms in doolie math, I was struggling so for meals, my squadron placed me at a special squadron table in Mitchell Hall where I

was tutored in math by an aeronautical engineering major and a future Rhodes Scholar. I was a recipient of an upper class that cared about my success. I'm confident that I would not be standing here without their time and effort. In fact everyone at this institution, academic instructors, military cadre, and the sponsors that you will meet tomorrow are here for one purpose—to help you succeed.

3) Aim high in everything you do—the dean's list, physical fitness tests, and military training. If you haven't heard it already, you're going to hear "if the minimum wasn't the minimum, it wouldn't be the minimum. Do not utter those words. That is not acceptable to the class of 2025! You will be given every opportunity to be the best you can be and grow as an individual, class member, and future officer. The path is challenging. Always Strive for excellence in all endeavors no matter how mundane or unreasonable they might seem. Whether it is calling minutes, squaring corners on the terrazzo, or prepping for a SAMI. There is a purpose behind the many military customs, courtesies and traditions. If you're going to do something, do it to your utmost best.

4) Carpe Diem (Seize the Day)—There is an abundance of opportunities here that you would never find at any other college or universities. There will be a great deal of focus on milestone events with countdowns—days to recognition, days to the ring dance, spring break, to your car, graduation, and so on. As I previously mentioned, it was my Dad that urged me to attend the Academy and when I left home for Colorado Springs he told me "Son, You are going to a phenomenal place of learning and only you can decide what kind of experience to make of it". Don't just go thru the cadet experience, Make this place special for yourself and those around you.

5) Your Attitude is everything—embrace everyday. Just because you are in a military environment doesn't mean you can't have fun. Find a healthy balance between working hard and playing hard. When time finally permits, take advantage of this unique location and special opportunities—ski vail, climb eagles peak or some 14'ers, go to the rodeo, garden of the gods, attend concerts, and sporting events. Get involved in an aviation or falcon program. Encourage your fellow cadets to go along as wingmen. Do this and you will make your four years here even more rewarding and memorable.

6) By far the greatest gift from your next four years will be the depth of special friendships you form with your classmates. Today you hardly know them but over the next four years you will learn to greatly care for each other. Thru the common experiences of cadet life and conquering the many challenges and difficulties ahead, you will forge lifelong professional and social connections that in my case have stood the test of time for the past 50 years. It will be no different for you!

My four years here set me up to be with you today. the AF Academy provided opportunities not even remotely attainable anywhere else. I earned an outstanding education, countless lessons in leadership and self-development with tremendous support from a dedicated faculty and staff. I made tremendous friends for a lifetime. During my AF career, I led combat deployments, was pinned to general officer by my father, walked with a president, and was humbled to be in the presence of Medal of Honor recipients. But Never did I dream that I would be addressing the cadet wing 50 years later. This is an honor and a special moment in my life. I wish that I could join the class of 2025 and start this journey again!

Once again from your legacy class of 1975, we welcome the class of 2025 to the Long Blue Line!

Go Air Force, Beat Navy!