

**GENERAL J. H. BINFORD PEAY, III  
SUPERINTENDENT**

**REMARKS AT THE SPORTS HALL OF FAME DINNER  
(as delivered)**

**Location: Center for Leadership & Ethics  
13 September 2013**

Ladies and gentlemen, let me add my welcome as well to the VMI Sports Hall of Fame dinner, and my thanks to the Selection Committee for their work. Tonight's event marks the 29<sup>th</sup> time we have gathered to honor former VMI athletes of extraordinary athletic talent and achievement. Their hard work, commitment, and skill brought well-deserved attention to them as players and greatly enhanced the reputation of VMI's athletic programs and mission. A *Newsweek* reporter once reminded his audience that there are (regretfully) no **academic pages** in our newspapers, but there are **sports pages**... and it is through those daily and weekly reports that many in the general public learn about or keep in touch with institutions of higher education. Our athletes, in other words, regularly serve as our ambassadors to the wider world. And those who excel brighten and often clarify the image of our institutions.

Athletics at VMI play a larger role in the life of the Institute than found at most other colleges and universities. To a great degree, the success of our athletes and our teams has a direct bearing on the morale of the Corps because ours is an extraordinarily "close-knit" community. Athletes do not live apart from the rest of the Corps, nor are they exempt from much of the training of other cadets. Our teams are not adjuncts to our mission; they are integral parts of that mission, and have been for many years. I have often said that at VMI the ideal is: "Every athlete is a cadet, and every cadet is an athlete." That doesn't mean, of course, that every cadet is a Division I or intercollegiate athlete. Instead, every cadet is engaged in some form of athletic competition, not only for health and strength, but to build on the qualities of hard work, self-discipline, determination, confidence, and teamwork. Rat Challenge, and the "massive explosion" and growth of our Club Sports...add to that reputation and our mission.

Our athletic program has evolved over the years, from only a fencing team in the earliest days of the Institute, to a full roster of teams today. We are intensely proud of our current intercollegiate program of men's and women's sports, and I believe, firmly, that we are headed for a decade of success with them.

Our affiliation with other colleges has also evolved and continues to evolve. For many years VMI was the oldest member of the Southern Conference. It was founded in 1921 and VMI was admitted in the fall of 1924. In 2003, we left the Southern to join the Big South Conference. The Institute is consistently recognized as one of the smallest colleges playing Division I athletics. We have enjoyed our affiliation with the Big South and won the Big South Institutional Sportsmanship Award seven (7) of the past eight (8) years. Recently, we were invited to rejoin the Southern Conference, a move that will take place 31 May 2014.

When we speak of conferences and teams, we are also speaking of individual athletes, coaches, and faculty – men and women who give it their all every day of their seasons, and often beyond. They deserve our praise and recognition. In that regard, I should mention COL John Barrett this evening, long time VMI representative to and a leader in the governing of the Southern Conference. In the past several years, our cars were often parked (on game days) next to each other near Cameron Hall. We would discuss the victories and defeats of our basketball and wrestling Teams before departing...often during the coldest of evenings. COL Barrett will be missed...a giant in his time...in the classroom and in athletics at the Institute.

And, COL Don Jamison....will be recognized this evening. As a young Major, he taught me Fluids in his first class upon completing military duty and returning to the Institute as a member of the faculty in 1959. He was the best of instructors...and we all had enormous respect for him...then....and even more so today...54 years later. Caring, capable, competent, involved and loyal to the traditions, discipline, and requirements of the Institute....he is still active and represents the very best of our faculty.

The men we honor, and those who have been honored over the years by inclusion in this Hall of Fame, have distinguished themselves ... and yet they remained part of the larger team, part of the Corps, part of the VMI community. That is the hallmark of the VMI athletic program; that is our strength; that is “The Spirit of VMI.”

Congratulations to our newest inductees this evening. You make us proud!