



by Hamilton Fish

The celebration of the 180th anniversary of the founding of my Alma Mater, the United States Military Academy at West Point, last month and my approaching second retirement this month prompted my thinking about our two mottos: the Point's motto: "Duty Honor Country" and St. Mary's: "Scientia Fides Amicitia", or "Scholarship (Knowledge) Honor Friendship." "Fides" suggests faith, fidelity, loyalty, allegiance, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and credibility—all of which can be summed up in "Honor". Sylvanus Thayer, Superintendent of West Point from 1817 to 1833, once declared the school's objective for its graduates to be "leadership integrated by excellence of character and excellence of knowledge." Someone later transformed the words of this goal into "Duty Honor Country". The three parts of this motto are not mutually exclusive; the meaning of each tends to overlap the fields of the others.

At West Point, discipline, an essential ingredient of the proper performance of duty, begins the moment the new cadet enters the Academy by passing through East Sullyport. There are few shocks that compare to the welcome given by the "Beast Detail" to "Beast Barracks", the new summer home of the incoming cadet! Just a few days before these ardent third classmen ("yearlings") completed their first year of "suppression" ("character-building") as fourth classmen ("plebes", the lowest estate). These yearlings are obviously only too eager to start the process of indoctrination, the same one they have just been through. For a full year plebes don't seem to have names: they are expected to respond to: "Mr. Ducrot, heave that chin back!", or "Suck in that horrible gut, Mr. Dumbjohn!", etc., all by way of "gentle", persuasive correction. I can only speculate on what titles the upperclassmen have conjured up for the new female cadets. "Miss Dumbjane"? Under this rather intensive and comprehensive levelling process, plebes early learn that their former civilian status, known as "PCS", or "prior condition of servitude"—any education they may have, or athletic prowess, or economic situation—is now a matter of no consequence in their new career. All new cadets start out on equal footing.

Principles and practice of discipline, intended to lead to self-discipline, honor, steadfastness and endurance are taught, retaught and retaught. This hardening and character building continues for three more years, even after "recognition", when, at the end of the first year, the hand of fellowship is extended by upperclassmen to this lowest class to acknowledge their acceptance as full-fledged, worthy members of the Corps of Cadets. "The mills of the gods do grind

slowly but surely" in turning out men and women with those qualities of leadership needed to command troops in battle, the ultimate test. (The virtues of war, if any, are not being extolled here.)

Are there, then, parallels between the mottos of our two schools, West Point and St. Mary's? I think so. First of all, you, the students of St. Mary's have a duty, an obligation, to yourself to learn (Scientia), to acquire that body of knowledge and methods of application that will be most likely to produce success in later life; otherwise, why should you be here?

Secondly, to be a truly happy and successful adult you must become self-disciplined. Certainly this trait is required of the officer, whose very presence must elicit respect and obedience. He is constantly required to make decisions affecting the lives of his or her command. Above all else he measures himself most severely by his own code of honor. Others must know that his or her word can be accepted without question. There is no place for a leader who lies, quibbles or tends to be evasive. Too much is at stake. In the "Cadet Prayer", the cadet prays: "Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won." It is mandatory that you too make this choice, that you develop self-discipline as the sound foundation on which to build your life. Here, then, is the essence of Honor, the second word in both mottos. Herein also lie those other meanings of "Fides": faith, fidelity, loyalty, allegiance, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and credibility.

As to the third word, "Amicitia", friendship, in St. Mary's motto, this word and "Country" from the Point's motto are not too far apart. Friendship must extend beyond our "grove of stately oaks", "where stands St. Mary's true and noble" to love of fellow men and women, wherever they are and whatever their station in life may be, and hence to dedication and devotion to country. Combine scientia, fides, and amicitia to become the total woman St. Mary's intends you to be.

Now there will be some among you, on reading this far, who will say: "too idealistic, an anachronism in our society." Skepticism as to men's motives is always justified. A case in point is the recent handling of the hostage situation at Central Prison here in Raleigh. Promises were made by prison officials in apparently good faith negotiations with some rebellious prisoners in order to secure the release of all hostages, a negotiation certainly understood to be genuine by the prisoners. The terms of the negotiation, it seems, were never meant to be kept, except in a token manner. Prison officials apparently felt ethics were not involved in dealing with criminals, and they said as much. But what of the

credibility of the prison administration at the next crisis? Will this short term, ends-justifying-the-means, solution come back to haunt the administrators and their staff? An ominous cloud now hands over Central and the entire North Carolina prison system.

And now we're hearing allegations of cheating in college basketball, particularly in the recruiting of players. Cheating the Internal Revenue Services, which places a greater burden on honest taxpayers, has risen to something over \$135 billion in unreported income. This list seems to go on and on.

It should not be inferred here that we are justified in pointing the finger only at others nor that every Academy graduate measures up perfectly to his or her motto. Integrity, veracity and devotion to duty must, once begun, continue to be worked on. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge two cheating scandals that have rocked the Academy in the past thirty years, one involving a large number of football players, and the other, an even larger group not as readily identifiable as the athletes.

Over the years football came to assume a disproportionate importance in West Point life; football has become a god. To satiate this god by assuring that football players could meet at least minimum academic standards a cheating arrangement came into being. "This has been an organized cheating ring." Wrote Brigadier General Chauncey Fenton, President of the Association of graduates to the alumni. "It has not been a number of isolated groups or individual cases. Because of the nature of the evidence, no one knows for certain when the activities of the ring began or in what numbers the ring began. It was certainly confined to a very small group as late as the fall of 1949. It spread in the spring of '50 and mushroomed to approximately 90 cadets from the examination period in December '50 to March '51, due primarily to spread among football players, their roommates and close associates. Men were added to the ring in two general ways. First, athletes low in studies had the system explained to them by their upperclass teammates. Second, one cadet might either ask another cadet for legitimate help or receive unsolicited aid. In either circumstance the man receiving the advice would find the next day that he had been given the same problem that appeared on the examination. The cadet giving the aid had used information given to him by members of the ring from the other regiment who had already taken the examination. When this happened consistently a cadet might become suspicious and ask about the matter. He would then be told that he was now in the ring, perhaps given the names of many personal friends (sometimes true, sometimes false) using this system, and in general placed under great pressure to stay in the ring. Many cadets in the ring seemed to have a double

standard of values and acted as if they were especially exempted from the Honor Code. Sworn testimony shows that individuals were aware that they were doing wrong. The secrecy with which they concealed operations from other cadets and their continual fear of detection bear witness to this fact."

The scandal was laid bare when two cadets, who had been asked to join the ring, blew the whistle on the conspirators by reporting their information to the Cadet Honor Committee. After lengthy and comprehensive investigations the ring was rooted out; all offending cadets were dismissed. The Academy had purged itself; it was clean and whole again.

However, a number of years later the lesson had to be learned all over again. Another cheating scandal developed sometime within the past seven years. Again an organized cheating ring was involved, this time concerned with passing electrical engineering take-home tests and exams. As before, the conspiracy collapsed after it came to light and had been thoroughly investigated. Again a thorough house-cleaning followed. A number of cadets were dismissed, although some were reinstated after a year's lapse, but only on a case by case basis for those who could demonstrate their potential for commissioning. After this second case the Secretary of the Army decided to make a complete investigation of the entire honor code and system, particularly of the academic processes pertaining to the giving and taking of tests, with special attention to what part the academic environment may have had in facilitating cheating. In the conclusions of the investigation it was stated that "there has been an erosion of effectiveness of the nontolerance concept of the Honor Code, particularly through lack of sufficient education, partially due to a decline in perceived importance of values relating to honor (including the linked concepts of duty and country), + + +. The concept of individual responsibility for moral choices is central to any code of ethics. We reaffirm that principle. West Point's Honor Code has always assumed that a cadet is a morally free agent, personally responsible for his choices, which are affected, but not determined, by his environment. However, the institution has a concomitant responsibility to provide an environment and context which is supportive of the cadet's understanding of the concepts of Duty Honor Country and his desire to make right moral choices."

The Superintendent of the Academy at that time, Lieutenant General Sidney B. Berry, stated that "the Corps is a resilient and essentially optimistic group of young men and women who want to get on to the future. They are prepared to put this behind them and to build upon it in a positive way so that the strength, meaning and utility of the Honor Code and System can be restored for them and the generations of cadets to follow." He continued, "One

of the interesting actions to come out of the investigation was the reaffirmation of the existing code, though much thought had been given to a possible need to change it, the reaffirmation coming most strongly from the Corps of Cadets itself. The Honor Code and System are stronger and even more effective than ever before." A stronger West Point has emerged from the traumas of its past.

General Andrew J. Goodpaster, who succeeded General Berry, instituted four years of courses in morals and ethics. In an interview with a reporter from the New York Times he conceded that imposing a stricter discipline would not be easy. "The plebes, or first-year cadets, who march through the sallyport each year are the products of a permissive society in which a 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours' approach is accepted," he said, but, he continued: "The most difficult point to instill is that a cadet must not tolerate lying or cheating in another cadet. They must learn that to tolerate such things damages the moral fiber of the man who lies or cheats, the man who tolerates it and in time the moral quality of the Army."

The investigations into the two cheating scandals were followed by an even broader investigation directed by the Secretary of the Army and chaired by Frank Borman, Class of 1951, former astronaut and now President of Eastern Airlines—a searching, sweeping inquiry into the entire structure and functioning of the Academy. This investigation covered such matters as internal governance, admissions, external governance, shaping cadet academic attitudes, academic curriculum, ethics and professionalism curriculum, library, faculty, pedagogy, academic administration, intercollegiate athletics, tactical department, military instruction and training, physical education, the Corps of Cadets, and the Honor Code and Honor System. The committee made over 150 recommendations for improvement. A new institution, yet one retaining its finest traditions, has really risen from the ashes. The intent and hope for the future is that no group will ever again be able to set itself apart from the rest of the Academy or to place itself outside the law or the spirit of the Honor Code.

In "Alma Mater", West Point's hymn, we find these words:

"Help us thy motto bear
Thru all the years.
Let Duty be well performed,
Honor be e'er unarn'd,
Country be ever armed,
West Point by thee!
Guide us thy sons a-right,
Teach us by day, by night,
To keep thine honor bright,
For thee to fight."

In St. Mary's School Hymn we sing these words:
"Guide Thou our falt'ring
steps aright

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Hold Thou each hand to keep it
just,
Touch Thou our lips and
make them pure;

If Thou are with us, Lord, we

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