



Paramedic Graduates:

Unfortunately, I cannot give this to you as a group. Instead, I am writing so you can review, contemplate and re-read when times are challenging.

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome you to your graduation. Today we honor a select group of men and women for their accomplishments gained over the course of the last year. To me these men and women have been an inspiration, a pain, and most importantly, a breath of fresh air in an otherwise hectic life. (Thank you for this!)

I feel that it is important for us as an EMS community to take the time to “smell the roses,” & acknowledge the accomplishments of you and your classmates. Nevertheless, just as important, it must be remembered that this is just a milestone, and not an end.

There are three things I wish to talk to you about this today:

- o History
- o Responsibility
- o Challenges

History

Let's first talk about the history of EMS:

Has EMS changed in the last 40 years? Yes, it has!

- Roots of EMS go back to 1966.
 - o 1965 Highway deaths reached all time high
 - o 1966 US Congress passed the Highway Safety Act, which opened the door for development of modern EMS
 - o 1966 “White Paper” pointing out the need to address accidental death and disability in the prehospital setting.
- The 60's, 70's, & 80 have showed a rapid development and redefinition as to how Emergency Medicine, EMS, & Trauma would be practiced in the US.
- The Vietnam experience with trauma, EMS, Helicopter transfers, and developing acceptance and latter expectation by the American Public as to the role of EMS.
- TV's: Emergency, Medical Center, and later; ER and Rescue 911 helped to educate the lay public to this new and exciting branch of medicine.



There has been a dramatic change since the days of “pulmotor and inhalators” to the present day ambulance and infield resuscitation, with 12 lead EKGs in the field being interpreted by a Medic and not a cardiologist! The same technology that sent man to the moon enables us to do our jobs on the street and in the hospital:

- EKG monitoring, Telemetry, pulse-oximetry, Telemedicine, Cellular telephone, computerization, Global positioning.

These are all contributions that were made as a result of others thinking to themselves: What can I do to make this better.

In the same breath, I think it is important that you realize that you come from a program developed by and supported by people who are considered leaders in their field:

The late Dr. Shea -- a legend as PMD at Loyola. He felt that the community needed something better. Loyola just celebrated 40 years as a resource hospital for EMS one of the first three in the state of Illinois.

Dr. Gamelli –Dean of the Medical School is also Director of a world-renowned burn unit. He saw a need, and did something about it.

The late Dr. Freeark -- Developed the very first trauma unit in the US in the city of Chicago in 1963 at Cook County Hospital. Coming to Loyola University Medical Center in the 70’s to establish our current trauma service.

The late Dr. Ron Lee – Help bring Emergency Medical Services for Children to Illinois. This program has grown into only one of three in the US that recognizes ED across the state for their ability to care for children. Since it’s inception it has shown a decrease in the morbidity and mortality of children in Illinois.

In this class are the finest paramedics in the country. You did not get here on your own, your family, friends, significant others had a lot to do with it. So did the people I trust, respect, and hold my loyalty to. Folks like Rita, Tara, Dawn, Oliver, Josh, Steve, Mike, Tom, John, and Robert.

The point is that many people who came before you made tremendous sacrifices, which have allowed us to be here today!

This is the history and legacy you take with you!

Responsibility

Let’s talk about responsibility.

What does it mean to be responsible? Discussion of the meaning of responsibility brings into the discussion other relevant concepts: Honor, Value, Intelligence, Dependability, Fair-mindedness, Maturity, Loyalty, and Courageous, Forward-looking.

All these words have the common thread to them: they describe leadership.



Leadership ultimately says: "I will do what I say I will do."

You too are a leader in that you are responsible.

- Whether to act or not,
- Whether to accept or not the situation that you are in.

The choice of what to do or not do is yours.

‘This is a sobering thought. However, so is the frailty of human life. And if that isn’t enough to consider remember this thought: yours maybe the last hand another human being holds in this world or it maybe the first human touch that is felt, even before it’s own mother.

Being this is a journey, where do we go from here? Who knows, but do know that we all walk together with a common bond:

Care for the individual,
Commitment to excellence,
Faith in God and religious experience,
And Service to others.

..... In other words in the tradition of Ignatius Loyola.

Do we live in interesting times in medicine?

We live in tumultuous time:

- ☒ More consumer demands.
- ☒ Work Force reduction
- ☒ Greater burden of proof
- ☒ Higher clinical standards
- ☒ And now, Health Care Reform

Out of this turmoil will come opportunity. I hope that this program will instill the responsibility to recognize these opportunities and act in an ethical manner.

Hence comes one of my challenges:

Push, Pull, or get the hell out of the way.
Get a mitt, get a ball, Get into the game.

However, that’s a little of my world, what about you?



You know have a foundation of knowledge in pre-hospital care.
In your minds, you have a vision of the type paramedic you want to be.
Through your evaluations and tests, you will learn the type of medic you currently are.
There will exist a gap. For some it may be wide, for others it may be narrow.
Allow this gap to drive you to be better. If the gap is narrow, re-evaluate your vision.
Raise the bar. Society will be the recipient of this positive movement.

Here is my other challenge: Be your best, if you find it easy; raise your internal bar.
Medicine needs this. You are a direct extension of the physician in the field. Through
your interactions, you will be afforded what is considered in medicine to be the
"Moment of Truth."

Moment of Truth is the first 15-second encounter between the front-line
individual for an institution (EMS for medicine) and the individual seeking help.
This moment of truth will many times determine how the institution (in our case
Medicine and the Health Field) will be viewed and remembered, and how our
institution's credibility will be achieved. Moreover, since you represent an institution
that I love, respect, and have sacrificed a great deal of myself to be a part of, I hope you
use this moment of truth to put your best foot forward.

Finally,

I have given you some of my advice, my values, and my beliefs. But I wish to leave you
with what I believe can be a guide for your "Life in the Street"

This guide was penned many years ago in different times, but it still holds true today
and probably will hold true for the future.

"The Desiderata"

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in
silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak
your truth quietly and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they too have
their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you
compare yourself to others you become vain and bitter, for there will always be greater
and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your career
however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise
caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you
to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals and everywhere life is full of
heroism. Be yourself especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for



in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly to the counsel of years gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture the strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars: you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be; and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its shams, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.

Be cheerful, strive to be happy.

“So, what it comes down to my friends
Is that everything’s just fine fine fine,
Cause I’ve got one hand in my pocket
And the other one is hailing and ALS rig with a Loyola Paramedic in it!”

Continue to make us proud!

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