

APPRENTICE SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT SPEECH
February 17, 2006

THANK YOU, BOB.

GOOD EVENING -- DISTINGUISHED PLATFORM GUESTS,
FACULTY MEMBERS, MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATING CLASS,
AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT EVENING FOR THE GRADUATES.

FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

AND FOR NORTHROP GRUMMAN NEWPORT NEWS.

TONIGHT, WE CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF AT LEAST
FOUR YEARS OF VERY DEMANDING WORK AND STUDY.

GRADUATES -- YOU SHOULD ALL FEEL VERY HAPPY AND PROUD OF WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED.

AND IT'S A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE TONIGHT TO SHARE IN YOUR SPECIAL TIME.

IT'S A CHALLENGE AS WELL.

EVERY COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER WANTS TO BE REMEMBERED FOR SOMETHING.

QUITE HONESTLY, I'M NO DIFFERENT.

MY FIRST COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER -- AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY -- WAS CASPER WEINBERGER.

HE SERVED AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE UNDER PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN.

I WOULD GUESS THAT A GOOD PORTION OF TONIGHT'S AUDIENCE HAS NEVER EVEN HEARD OF HIM.

WHEN I GRADUATED FROM THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY – I HEARD ANOTHER COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS -- AND YOU MIGHT BE MORE FAMILIAR WITH THIS NAME.

IT WAS BILL COSBY.

THAT'S PRETTY COOL, ISN'T IT?

THE THING IS – I CAN'T REMEMBER A WHOLE LOT ABOUT WHAT EITHER ONE OF THEM HAD TO SAY.

AND YET -- NOW THAT I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING YOUR COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER – I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO LEAVE WITH YOU SOME IMPORTANT MESSAGE THAT YOU WILL REMEMBER.

SO BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR CERTIFICATES TONIGHT –
YOU’LL BE REQUIRED TO TAKE A QUIZ ON WHAT I’M ABOUT TO
SAY...

AND YOU THOUGHT SCHOOL WAS OVER!

TONIGHT – I AM NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT MY CAREER OR
TELL YOU WHAT TO DO NEXT.

INSTEAD – I’M GOING TO TALK ABOUT YOU – THE
GRADUATES.

OR AT LEAST SOME OF YOU.

BECAUSE EACH OF YOU IS UNIQUE – AND YOU EACH HAVE
YOUR OWN STORIES ABOUT WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO THIS
STAGE TONIGHT -- AND WHO HELPED YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY.

SO IF YOU WOULD, PLEASE PERMIT ME TO SHARE A FEW OF THESE STORIES.

AND I ALWAYS START WITH THE HARD ONES -- LET ME START WITH YEVGENIY CHERNYSHEV, WHO EVERYONE – UNDERSTANDABLY -- CALLS YEVE FOR SHORT.

YEVE CAME TO THIS COUNTRY FROM KAZAKHSTAN IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION WHEN HE WAS 14.

HE COULD NOT SPEAK ANY ENGLISH.

HE JOINED THE NAVY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.

AND AFTER LEAVING THE NAVY, HE WAS DOING SOME WORK FOR THE SUPERVISOR OF SHIPBUILDING AT NEWPORT NEWS -- AND SOMEONE THERE SUGGESTED HE JOIN THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL.

YEV TOOK THAT ADVICE AND JOINED THE ADVANCED SHIPYARD OPERATIONS PROGRAM.

YEV SAYS THAT THE LAST YEAR HAS BEEN THE TOUGHEST.

HE THINKS IT'S DUE TO THE FACT THAT HE HAS A THIRTEEN MONTH OLD DAUGHTER -- AND TRYING TO JUGGLE WORK, SCHOOL AND BEING A NEW FATHER – ALL WITHOUT MUCH SLEEP – IS NOT THAT EASY.

YEV SAYS HE GETS A BIG THRILL FROM WATCHING THE SHIPS COME TOGETHER AND HE'S CURRENTLY TESTING THE DIVE PLANES ON THE SUBMARINE TEXAS.

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING – HE SAYS THE WORK IS GOING JUST FINE.

YEV, COULD YOU PLEASE STAND?

NEXT I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT FRED CANADY.

FRED'S FROM A TOWN NEAR ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

AND HE CAME TO NEWPORT NEWS TO GO TO SCHOOL AND TO PLAY FOOTBALL.

HE REMEMBERS WELL THE FIRST TIME HE VISITED THE SHIPYARD ON A RECRUITING TRIP.

HE WAS COMING ACROSS THE JAMES RIVER BRIDGE AND SAW THE CARRIER REAGAN SITTING AT THE OUTBOARD WAYS AND HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, "WHAT AM I GETTING MYSELF INTO?"

FRED ALSO COMPLETED THE ADVANCED SHIPYARD OPERATIONS COURSE – WHILE SETTING SOME IMPRESSIVE RECORDS FOR THE BUILDERS.

AND HE GIVES A LOT OF CREDIT TO ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR ROBERT LEWIS FOR HELPING HIM GET TO THIS STAGE TONIGHT – SAYING THAT LEWIS HAS BEEN LIKE A FATHER-FIGURE TO HIM -- AND TOOK HIM UNDER HIS WING.

FRED ALSO BROUGHT HIS HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEART TO NEWPORT NEWS WITH HIM AND THEY ARE MARRIED AND HAVE A DAUGHTER WHO IS ALMOST THREE.

FRED, CAN YOU PLEASE STAND?

AMANDA HESTER – WHO GOES BY MANDY -- PRACTICALLY GREW UP IN THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL.

BOTH PARENTS WORK AT THE SHIPYARD AND HER MOM HAS WORKED FOR THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL FOR NEARLY THREE DECADES.

SHE ALSO HAS A COUSIN GRADUATING WITH HER TONIGHT.

WHILE GROWING UP, MANDY WENT TO ALMOST EVERY APPRENTICE SCHOOL EVENT. SHE SAYS THAT FRANK SATCHELL LIVES IN HER NEIGHBORHOOD AND SHE'S KNOWN DAN BROOKMAN AND JIM HUGHES NEARLY HER WHOLE LIFE.

WHILE IT MAY SEEM LIKE THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL WAS MANDY'S DESTINY – SHE REALLY CAME HERE BECAUSE SHE WASN'T READY FOR COLLEGE AND SHE WANTED TO MAKE SOME MONEY.

SO SHE JOINED THE SCHOOL IN THE OUTSIDE MACHINIST CURRICULUM.

AND WHILE DOING THAT, SHE'S DISCOVERED SOMETHING ABOUT HERSELF.

SHE'S REALLY GOOD AT WHAT SHE DOES.

AND WE'RE GLAD TO HAVE HER.

MANDY, WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND?

DAVID DAVENPORT IS THE FIRST APPRENTICE TO FINISH IN THE DIMENSIONAL CONTROL TECHNICIAN CURRICULUM.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN GENERAL TERMS IS THAT DAVID HELPS TO INSTALL COMPONENTS THAT HAVE TO BE SET TO VERY TIGHT TOLERANCES.

THAT'S PRETTY IMPORTANT IN OUR BUSINESS.

FOUR YEARS AGO, PAUL HOFFMAN, FROM HUMAN RESOURCES, CALLED DAVID AND ASKED HIM IF HE WAS INTERESTED IN JOINING THIS NEW PROGRAM.

DAVID HAD A FAMILY TO SUPPORT -- AND HE WANTED TO GET AN EDUCATION -- SO IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.

DAVID HAD ONE CHILD WHEN HE STARTED THE PROGRAM.

TODAY, HE HAS THREE – SO HE’S HAD A VERY BUSY FOUR YEARS!

HE SAYS HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE HAS BEEN STAYING FOCUSED WHEN HIS KIDS WANT TO COLOR WITH HIM IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS STRENGTH OF MATERIALS HOMEWORK.

BUT HE CREDITS HIS WIFE, HER PARENTS AND HIS PARENTS FOR PROVIDING HIM THE SUPPORT TO HELP HIM GET WHERE HE IS TODAY.

“THEY ARE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME,” HE SAID.

DAVID, WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND?

NOW LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT LYNETTE CHISM.

SHE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE APPRENTICES I'VE MENTIONED SO FAR IN THE FACT THAT SHE WORKED AS A SHIPBUILDER FOR NEARLY 16 YEARS BEFORE JOINING THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL.

SHE HAD A SUPERVISOR – EARL SULLIVAN – WHO SHE SAYS PUSHED HER INTO JOINING THE SCHOOL.

SHE SAID WHEN SHE FIRST JOINED – SHE WAS – AND I'M QUOTING LYNETTE – “SO SCARED OF MR. SATCHELL I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO.”

SHE GOES ON TO SAY THAT HE ENDED UP BEING ONE OF HER BEST TEACHERS – AND IT'S ONLY BECAUSE OF HIM THAT SHE MADE IT THROUGH THE STRENGTH OF MATERIALS CLASS.

LYNETTE ALSO HAD HELP FROM HER KIDS -- ALBEIT
INDIRECTLY.

ONCE SHE BECAME AN APPRENTICE, SHE KNEW THEY WERE
WATCHING HER TO SEE IF SHE FINISHED HER HOMEWORK
AND PUT IN HER TIME STUDYING.

AND SHE KNEW THAT IF SHE DIDN'T DO IT – THEY WOULDN'T
DO IT.

TODAY, HER SON IS AT THOMAS NELSON IN THE DESIGN CO-
OP PROGRAM AND HER DAUGHTER IS AT WARWICK HIGH
SCHOOL.

I'M SURE BOTH OF THEM ARE VERY PROUD OF THEIR
MOTHER WHO GRADUATES FROM THE PRODUCTION
PLANNER PROGRAM.

LYNETTE, WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND?

THE LAST APPRENTICE I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT IS DAVID LEMON – ANOTHER ADVANCED SHIPYARD OPERATIONS GRADUATE.

DAVID GREW UP IN HAMPTON AND HAS A LOT OF FAMILY MEMBERS HERE AT THE YARD TO INCLUDE HIS FATHER, TWO UNCLES AND NUMEROUS COUSINS.

THE SHIPYARD IS A FAMILY TRADITION.

HIS FAMILY ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT THE SHIPYARD AND HE WANTED TO SEE WHAT ALL THE TALK WAS ALL ABOUT.

PLUS, HE WANTED TO MAKE SOME MONEY AND GO TO SCHOOL – A FAMILIAR THEME.

IT WASN'T AN EASY TRANSITION FOR DAVID TO GO FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL.

HE ADMITS THAT IN THE BEGINNING, ATTENDANCE WAS NOT EXACTLY HIS STRONG SUIT.

PLUS, DAVID'S VERY FIRST JOB AT THE SHIPYARD WAS TO DRILL HOLES IN THE WHIP ANTENNAE ON THE CARRIER RONALD REAGAN – IN JANUARY.

AFTER THIS TASTE OF WINTER SHIPBUILDING – DAVID DID NOT THINK IT WAS FOR HIM.

WHEN ASKED WHAT CHANGED HIS MIND – HE SAID HALF-JOKINGLY -- “SPRING.”

BUT HE GIVES THE REAL CREDIT TO TROY FAISON -- A FOREMAN HE HAD ABOUT A YEAR INTO HIS APPRENTICESHIP WHO IS A 1991 APPRENTICE SCHOOL GRADUATE.

HE SAYS THAT TROY TURNED HIM AROUND – THAT HE USED “TOUGH LOVE” AND WANTED TO SEE HIM GROW.

TROY PAID ATTENTION TO DAVID – AND IS A REAL PART OF THE REASON THAT DAVID’S HERE TONIGHT.

DAVID, WE’RE HAPPY YOU HUNG IN THERE – PLEASE STAND.

I JUST TOLD YOU ABOUT SIX APPRENTICES AND A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHO HELPED GET THEM HERE TONIGHT.

AND I COULD TELL YOU A HUNDRED MORE STORIES – BUT THAT WOULD JUST MAKE YOUR QUIZ AT THE END OF THE SPEECH HARDER...

I AM KIDDING ABOUT THE QUIZ.

BUT I'M SERIOUS WHEN I SAY THAT EACH OF YOU HAS YOUR OWN STORY.

EACH OF YOU HAS SOMEONE TO THANK – AND EACH OF YOU DESERVES A LOT OF INDIVIDUAL CREDIT FOR THIS VERY IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT.

IT'S FITTING THAT THIS CEREMONY IS BEING HELD TONIGHT –
FOR THE FIRST TIME - AT THE FERGUSON CENTER.

MOST OF YOU PROBABLY KNOW THAT IT WAS UNDER HOMER
L. FERGUSON THAT THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL WAS
FOUNDED.

FERGUSON SERVED AS SHIPYARD PRESIDENT FOR MORE
THAN THREE DECADES AND WAS ALWAYS A STRONG
ADVOCATE FOR THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL.

IN A BOOK ABOUT FERGUSON, IT'S WRITTEN THAT “WITHOUT
MINIMIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING THE HAND IN
VARIOUS SKILLS AND THE HEAD IN RELATED KNOWLEDGE,
HOMER FERGUSON LAID PARTICULAR STRESS UPON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MORALE AND THE TRAINING OF THE
HEART.”

FERGUSON BELIEVED THAT RECOGNIZING THE APPRENTICES AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS -- AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INSTRUCTORS AND COWORKERS -- AS WELL AS COMPANY LEADERS -- WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE APPRENTICESHIP.

HE FELT THAT WHEN THESE THINGS OCURRED, A SENSE OF UNDERSTANDING, LOYALTY AND APPRECIATION WERE DEVELOPED IN THE APPRENTICE THAT INFLUENCED HIS OR HER PERFORMANCE.

I BELIEVE THIS TOO. I CALL THAT "OWNERSHIP."

THIS IS MY REAL MESSAGE TO YOU TONIGHT.

AND THIS IS WHAT I WANT EACH OF YOU TO REMEMBER.

I WANT – I NEED -- WE ALL NEED -- FOR YOU TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR ROLE AS AN APPRENTICE GRADUATE AND AS A SHIPBUILDER.

WE NEED FOR YOU TO BRING TO WORK THE KIND OF PASSION THAT YOU WOULD BRING TO COACHING YOUR KID'S LITTLE LEAGUE TEAM OR TO TEACHING THEM HOW TO DRIVE A CAR FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.

WE NEED YOU TO BE A SUPPORTER OF WHAT WE DO INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE GATES – SO THAT IN TEN OR TWENTY YEARS WHEN THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL IS HAVING ANOTHER COMMENCEMENT -- AND THE GRADUATES ARE TALKING ABOUT WHO HELPED THEM GET TO THE STAGE – YOUR NAME IS MENTIONED.

WITHOUT A DOUBT – APPRENTICES ARE A VALUABLE COMPANY RESOURCE.

IT WILL FALL UPON YOU -- AND OTHERS LIKE YOU -- TO MAINTAIN THE TRADITION OF QUALITY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP FOR WHICH THIS COMPANY IS SO WELL KNOWN.

QUALITY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP THAT'S BEEN ILLUSTRATED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEARLY 800 SHIPS THROUGHOUT OUR 120-YEAR HISTORY.

FROM THE FIRST APPRENTICE GRADUATE IN 1894 -- A MR. NORWOOD JONES --TO THE GROUP OF 125 HERE TONIGHT – THE ROLE OF THE APPRENTICE IN THIS SHIPYARD IS UNIQUE.

OUR APPRENTICES ARE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN WHAT DISTINGUISHES US FROM OUR COMPETITION – AND IN THE OPINION OF MANY – MAKE US BETTER THAN ANY OTHER SHIPBUILDER.

I HAVE FOUND THAT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRULY
SUCCESSFUL HERE ARE THE ONES WHO REALLY ENJOY
WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

THEY TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR WORK.

THEY PERSEVERE.

THEY CONTINUE TO LEARN.

THEY WORK HARD.

AND THEY TAKE OWNERSHIP.

THEY KNOW – AS SHOULD YOU --THAT WHAT WE DO HERE
HAS VALUE AND MEANING.

THAT WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING A WHOLE LOT BIGGER
THAN OURSELVES.

I CONGRATULATE YOU ON THIS GREAT ACHIEVEMENT.

I WISH YOU PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL CAREERS.

IN MY CAREER, I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO WORK WITH
SOMETHING I LOVE – THE SHIPS – AND WITH THE GREATEST
SHIPBUILDERS IN THE WORLD.

TONIGHT -- ON BEHALF OF NORTHROP GRUMMAN NEWPORT
NEWS –I'M PRIVILEGED TO WELCOME 125 MORE
SHIPBUILDERS INTO THE FOLD.

THANK YOU.