

and Mrs. Walters, Mr. Scarborough, Col. and Mrs. Boland, LTC and Mrs. Armstrong, Col. and Mrs. members of the Excalibur Society, alumni of Carlisle, Camden Academy and Camden Military Academy. I have been given the honor to speak about our school on behalf of the corps of cadets. First and foremost, I would like to show my gratitude for your support of Camden Military Academy. Without your endless support we could not be the school we are today.

My name is Yannick Andreas den Boer, I was born in Belgium and moved to France at the age of 10. I have a hard time figuring out where I am from. Ever since I was a young teenager I had the dream of going into the military and serving. I had researched numerous military schools and found Camden Military Academy. But being young, my parents didn't like the idea of me going away.

I had to keep this school in my back pocket until the idea resurfaced when I turned 14. Lacking discipline and wanting to do everything my own way I needed to find a different family situation. My mother and I searched some schools and one day when I was taking the train home with her from school she told me about a school called Camden Military Academy, a school in South Carolina. It took a few minutes for me to remember but a light shone. Yes, I said, that's a great idea.

About a month and a half later I arrived in Camden, SC. The first noticeable thing I remember was walking next to the armory, a small brick building which houses hundreds of drill rifles, watching my company, Charlie, march by. I was overwhelmed. About 45 cadets were marching, all in sync, they were majestic, something about this place was different and I was ready. Being told that playing sports and training clubs made the time go by faster, I did just that. I wrestled, played lacrosse and played football, for the first time in my life. I was open to new ideas and wasn't going to let a lack of prior experience hold me down. Academics are the main priority at CMA and teachers try their best to help us. John F. Kennedy said that "leadership and learning are indispensable to each other". A great leader is usually an intelligent one.

At the end of my Sophomore year I learned that I couldn't join any of the military branches because of an allergy problem which I have. My dreams were crushed but I picked myself up and decided to research the field of entrepreneurship which I have been interested in since I was a child. Since failure was no longer an option for me, I decided that I was going to excel academically. I have done so. Currently being ranked number one in my class and having been accepted to all the schools to which I applied to. Next year I will be going to the Rotterdam School of Management, in the Netherlands. I will study International Business Administration. I learned that if one of my dreams don't pan out the way I want it to, I always need an alternative.

Everything at our academy is perfect but there is a sense of "openness". LTC Armstrong and Col. Boland are always open to new ideas and are willing to try new things. For example, we had a trip to the coast during a furlough weekend, something which hasn't been done for a few years. I recommended this idea to LTC Armstrong and he trusted me on it. The trip was successful and there were no issues. This sense of trust in cadets is something that you do not regularly experience at any other school. We know there are nicks in the system, and that everything doesn't run as smoothly as it can, but sometimes that does not stop us from setting the goal of achieving excellence.

One of the major things which I learned this year was at the beginning. All of the school's officers went on a leadership retreat where the platoon leaders, executive officers and company commanders of each company set three major goals for their company to be achieved for the year. The battalion staff and I did the same. Having high expectations for ourselves is the key to everything. The most important thing I took away from this was to set goals for myself. This has changed the way I think. Taking my dreams and putting them into goals. Something which I have done is set my goals higher than what people would say I usually expected. My reasoning is if I fail and I don't achieve my goal, I will still achieve more than if I had a more conservative goal. Understanding that we are not and cannot be perfect should not stop us from achieving excellence which is possible for anyone. I have also learned to respect others and most importantly, respect myself. I have learned that "when your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier".

But not least I would like to thank everybody who has helped me throughout my journey. The faculty staff who are always ready to help, Col. Boland who is always looking out for all of the cadets, LTC Armstrong who has taught me so many things about life and who taught me to set goals. I would like to thank SGT Collins, who is not present tonight, who has mentored me throughout my years at CMA. And although I am no longer in his company he still looks out for me. He supports me and gives me advice when I need it. I would also like to thank my family and my girlfriend who have supported me throughout my years here and kept my goal in sight. Camden Military has changed me, I have met great people and become a leader, these three years have taught me what it takes some people a lifetime to learn.

