

Battalion Commander's Address



Cadet LTC Yohann Bernard Xavier Offredo, the 2017-2018 Battalion Commander, gave his address to the Excalibur Society on Friday, March 23rd, 2018. In his speech listed below, LTC Offredo represented the Corps of Cadets by thanking all the Excalibur members and honoring their continuous support to Camden Military Academy.

Colonel Boland and Mrs. Boland, Chairman Walters and Mrs. Walters, thank you for allowing me to speak this evening. I am Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Yohann Bernard Xavier Offredo, and on behalf of Camden Military Academy I thank all members of the Excalibur Society for your contributions to CMA because, without you, this academy would not be the same. Many of the friends I have made at CMA were able to attend this academy thanks only to your generous donations. I also thank you for your contributions toward improving my favorite place on campus--the track--where I have spent hours with Captain Thomley on the track team. So many young men today want to have a second chance, just as I had. Whether they had a choice or not to attend this school, cadets by and large all agree that Camden Military Academy is a great school that fosters success among such young men. Without a second chance, I don't know whether I would be blessed enough even to be alive today.

Moved to Westport, Connecticut when I was just turning five years old; it was the town I resided in until I came to CMA my sophomore year. Going to high school changed my personality, and I didn't want to get left behind. I got involved with a group of people that pressured me to do the wrong thing. At first I thought I was in control; however, I was not in the right place to determine that. I would ignore my parents', siblings', and friends' warnings about what I was getting into. I needed help. My parents learned about Camden Military Academy one year prior because they considered sending my brother, Sébastien, here to help with his poor grades. In April 2015, neither my brother nor I were improving. We went to the New York open house where Casey Robinson had a presentation that explained all we needed to know about CMA. After his presentation, I knew that CMA was right for me. However, school wasn't out until the end of June, which led me to continue getting involved with bad influences. On Monday, May 11th, 2015, I made an unforgettable mistake. I was in school and my so called "friends" told me to try something new. Overlooking all previous warnings about what I was doing, I decided to do it anyway....My family, friends, and the doctors thought I was not going to survive that ambulance ride. That afternoon my best friend and brother, Sébastien, was sitting in his room wondering if he would ever get the chance to hug me again. This moment changed my life, and it is difficult to talk about, but I have to mention it because it was the last step of my old life and the first step toward my new.

My brother and I enrolled at the CMA summer school program during the summer of 2015. "Get to know the campus" is what my parents told me before we were sent off for the next six weeks. Going to summer school couldn't have been better: I met CMA cadets, and they gave me the 101 on things I would need to know. After the summer program was over, there wasn't much time until the school year would start. I didn't get the chance to return to my hometown because my parents wanted to shut out my past and allow me to focus on starting a new life.

Camden Military Academy is a culture shock when cadets arrive on their first day. Giving up your phone for two weeks? How can that be possible!? I was put in the Band & Staff Company and my Platoon Leader, 2Lt Woodfield, introduced himself by telling me how he was going to put me on P.A.D. if I didn't listen to him. Woodfield saw potential in me, and he told me to always be prepared for the question, "what makes you a better leader than others?" I was prepared during my sophomore year for this question but, ironically, I was never asked. However, my preparation for this question made me look for what the good qualities of being a leader are. Lieutenant Colonel Lawing taught me that all good leaders were good followers first, and First Sergeant Jackson taught me to lead by example.

Inspired by those words, I began my first day at the school as a follower and a cadet private; however, I wasn't so for long. I was given the opportunity to become a sergeant squad leader, but the catch was that I had to supervise the substandard cadets. Without taking this opportunity, I would not have gotten recognition for my leadership potential.

SGM Green and 1SG Irvin are the best TAC Officers I could have asked for. They helped me get accustomed to the school and enabled my leadership skills to grow. I learned that everyone makes mistakes, and that mistakes should be seen as lessons on how to better yourself. I did not fully understand this concept until this year, but I know that without SGM Green's and 1SG Irvin's guidance, my mistakes would be continuously holding me back today.

Many of my achievements that I have accomplished at CMA have been made possible by the faculty who molded me since my first day. Without the Excalibur Society, Camden Military Academy wouldn't be the same, so I am truly grateful. In the future, I plan to repay the school just as how some of you in the audience have done and are doing.

I am Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Yohann Bernard Xavier Offredo, and I am truly representing the Corps of Cadets by thanking everyone here tonight."

(Cadet LTC Yohann Offredo, Westport, Connecticut)



From Left to Right: Cadet CPT Matthew Rush from Lexington, South Carolina is joined by his New Excalibur Member parents, Mr. and Mrs. Randall Rush, on the night of the Excalibur. COL Katherine Brown (Ret. USAF) and Advisory Board member is pictured with Camden Mayor Alfred Mae Drakeford (right). Also shown are Colonel and Mrs. Lanning Risher (CMS'48 and CMA Edmaster emeritus) with Banks Scarborough (CMS'45) (left), chairman emeritus of the CMA Board of Trustees.