

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Woodward Academy Baccalaureate, May 14, 2004

President Payne, class of 2004, faculty, parents and friends. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to congratulate the graduating seniors of Woodward Academy. This is an exciting time as you celebrate together this evening in preparation for commencement tomorrow morning.

Those of you who are graduating today have successfully completed the rigorous curriculum of Atlanta's oldest and America's largest independent school. You have learned about striving for excellence, to value good character, to be prepared for opportunity, and I know your faculty and parents hope that you learned to have fun, but just not too much. You are now headed for college, and we look forward to welcoming several of you to the Georgia Tech campus next August.

As you know, Georgia Tech is ranked as one of the top universities in the nation, but our name officially still is Georgia **Institute** of Technology. People often ask me why we don't change our name to Georgia Tech University. In response, I remind them of the definition of a university. One definition is that a university is a college with a football stadium that seats over 40,000, and we qualify, especially since we expanded our stadium to seat over 55,000 last year. The other definition is that a university is a place where knowledge accumulates – because the freshmen come in with a little and the seniors leave with none. Fortunately at Georgia Tech we are pleased that our seniors leave smarter than when they came in, so we are happy by being still called an institute.

But seriously, a university, college or an institute is a place where learning should take place, and an important part of it is learning to make good choices. A few years back, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Anan told the graduating class of MIT that “to live is to choose.” And if you stop to think about it, every day of our life is filled with choices. Some of them don't make a lot of difference – a white shirt or a blue shirt, Coke or iced tea. But other choices, even sometimes seemingly small ones, will change the course of your life and can make a difference in the lives of countless others.

Making good choices is important to those who will be called upon to be leaders in our society, and with your excellent education, each of you will have the opportunity to fill a leadership role sometime in your lives. When you arrived in the Upper School as freshmen, you were mentored by junior and senior peer leaders, and some of you went on to become peer leaders yourselves. Each of you has done at least 20 hours of service to the Academy and the community each of the past four years. And this is important – there is no higher motivational basis for leadership than in service to others.

Back when I was a student, which, granted, was a long time ago, no one seemed to appreciate that it was important for us to understand the skills and responsibilities required to be a leader. So I was left to figure much of this out on my own. If I developed a formula, it revolved around one principle – learn from example. Fortunately I loved to read and one of my favorite subjects was, and is, history, which is rich with lore about all types of leaders, good and bad. The key is

to look to those who set the good example and to understand the circumstances they faced when making their choices. You have to practice putting yourself in their position to see how you would have done it to really glean the lessons there. Later as I matured I learned that while history teaches wonderful lessons, one does not in fact have to look very far to find role models for leadership.

So today I'd like to tell you about just a few of the leaders I have come to admire, and what I have learned about leadership from their stories. One of the earliest and best leadership stories in history is that of Cincinnatus, a farmer by profession who lived in Rome during the fifth century, B.C. In those days, Rome was a small republic, governed by two consuls who were elected to one-year terms. Cincinnatus was elected consul for the year in 460 B.C., and Romans came to know him as a man of intelligence and wisdom. After serving as consul, Cincinnatus returned to his farm, but two years later the Roman Republic was attacked by a tribe from the east, and the consuls who were in office that year led the army out to meet them. Eventually the Romans were caught in a trap, with enemy forces blocking their passage from a canyon.

Fortunately, a few soldiers managed to escape and rode to Rome for help. The consuls were with the army, so the Senate decided that this emergency called for a general who would have absolute authority. They chose Cincinnatus, and messengers rushed to his farm with the news. Cincinnatus left his plow standing in the field and hurried to Rome. He raised an army from the city's guards and the boys who had been considered too young for military service, and led them to the Alban Hills. Within 16 days he had defeated the enemy.

Cincinnatus returned to Rome as a hero with bugles and trumpets sounding and crowds throwing flowers before his chariot and crying, "Hail to the Conqueror!" He could have chosen to declare himself king or emperor, like Julius Caesar did centuries later. But he resigned his office, helped restore confidence in participatory government, and went back home to his farm. In denying himself power when it was in his grasp, and reinforcing the importance of citizen participation in government, his example has stood through the ages for others to emulate.

In 200 BC the great Roman general Scipio Africanus daringly defeated the famous Carthaginian general Hannibal on his home grounds against great odds and saved Rome. Like Cincinnatus, on his return to Rome Scipio was greeted as a conquering hero, but he followed Cincinnatus' example and turned down the offer of power, returned to his role as a private citizen, and preserved the concept of the Roman Senate.

Closer to home, our own George Washington knew of and admired the story of Cincinnatus. Like Cincinnatus, Washington was a farmer, and he too was asked to fight a war at great risk to his life while commanding a poorly trained and organized army. After overcoming great odds to defeat the British, and then serving two terms as our president, he chose to retire and support a government based on the will of the people rather than heed the calls of some to take power as a king or dictator.

A few years after George Washington's death, a close friend named David Ramsay wrote the first of many biographies of the man we revere as the father of our country. He wrote that Washington "viewed the character of a patriot as superior to that of a sovereign. To be elevated

to supreme power was less in his esteem than to be a good man.” Washington’s principled beliefs helped save our new country and cemented our democratic way of government.

The record established by the actions of leaders like Cincinnatus, Scipio Africanus, and George Washington is a strong part of our western heritage and is often repeated in our culture. These legends were re-visited in Tolkien’s telling of the story of our friends Frodo and Gandalf in *The Return of the King*. After they and their friends defeated the evil forces of the Kingdom of Mordor, they resisted the power of the ring, destroyed it, and gave the power back to the people.

While leadership is often easy to identify on the battlefield, examples are found in many other places. Marie Curie was one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century – the first woman to teach at the Sorbonne in Paris, the first woman to win a Nobel Prize. In fact she won two, one in physics and one in chemistry, and she is still the only scientist to have won Nobel Prizes in two different disciplines of science.

How did the youngest child in a family of modest means achieve such accomplishments? How did a young girl reach these heights in what was then a “man’s world”? The answer is, not easily. Although it was recognized she was very bright, following high school she spent the next 8 years as a governess and tutor, contributing to her older sister’s education and saving up for her own. Finally, at the age of 24, she was able to go to Paris to study physics, chemistry and mathematics while living in a garret and subsisting on bread and tea. She persevered and graduated first in her class in physical sciences in 1893, and two years later married Pierre Curie, an acclaimed professor of physics.

After the birth of their first daughter, Marie Curie began work on her Ph.D., and focused her study on the source of the mysterious rays given off by uranium. Soon her husband was helping her with her research rather than the other way around. Their discovery of two radioactive elements earned Marie the first doctorate awarded to a woman in Europe and the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics.

After her husband died in an accident, Marie Curie assumed his professorship at the Sorbonne and continued her research on radiation, earning her second Nobel Prize. She spent much of her later life working on practical applications for radiation in X-ray technology with the goal to help relieve suffering and save lives.

Albert Einstein said of her, “Marie Curie is, of all celebrated beings, the one whom fame has not corrupted.” And Marie herself explained why. “You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individual,” she said. “To that end, each of us must work for our own improvement and, at the same time, share a general responsibility for all humanity.”

The leadership examples of Marie Curie, George Washington, Scipio Africanus, Cincinnatus as well as Frodo and Gandalf are etched in the books many love to read. But even as I learned from history about these and many others, I began to realize great leaders can be found very close to home. I was a student at Georgia Tech when the names of great men were added to the history books. Through the remarkable courage and conviction of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his colleagues, such as Andrew Young and John Lewis, our nation was saved from itself and its

inability to openly confront the wrongs perpetrated by racism and segregation. We are fortunate to have Ambassador Young and Representative Lewis among us today to remind us of a world now part of our history books.

Their efforts were greatly aided by Ivan Allen, Jr., a Georgia Tech graduate who served as mayor of Atlanta during one of the most intense periods of change seen in Atlanta's history. Last year I served as a pall bearer at Mayor Allen's funeral and was able to visit with those who lived at the time. They said Ivan's stand in support of Dr. King caused his family to be rebuked by many of their long-time friends, and that he received numerous death threats. Ivan also stalwartly chose to become the only elected official from the deep South who testified to Congress on behalf of the Civil Rights Bill, even when advised not to do so. Ivan Allen exhibited remarkable leadership in standing firm against long odds to achieve what was right for our nation and his home state and city. Today we remember him, not his critics.

Of course, we don't really have to read history to find our heroes. Right here today we have leaders like Millard Fuller who created Habitat for Humanity by giving up his fortune, and he was criticized by many for doing it. His example as a great servant leader is remarkable and one we all could do well to emulate or at least draw on as inspiration in our daily lives. In fact, there are leaders all around us we can learn from, and in many cases they are even as close as your parents and your teachers.

So, as you head off to the next stage in your life, I would hope you will take the opportunity to explore what leadership means in all of its dimensions, and I would recommend that you learn from examples of leaders. While leaders derive from different eras and diverse backgrounds, what they have in common is that they are all interested in serving the well-being of others rather than in promoting their own wealth or fame or power. Today's media are full of self-absorbed people who are grasping at wealth, fame and glory. But they will soon be forgotten.

Winston Churchill best explained the difference when he said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." No one was ever honored for being a grabber. We are only honored and remembered for what we give.

These are the leadership qualities that will determine the next Cincinnatus, the next Marie Curie, the next Scipio Africanus, the next Martin Luther King. And that person could be you.