General (Retired) Carl Stiner

is a true American hero. He was commissioned in the Infantry in 1958. During his thirty-five-year career, General Stiner commanded the Army’s preeminent contingency strike forces including the Joint Special Operations Command, the 82nd Airborne Division and the XVIII Airborne Corps. General Stiner commanded SOCOM (Special Operations Command) from 1990-1993 where he directed all special operations activities during Operation Desert Storm.

Following his retirement General Stiner co-authored the 2002 book Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces with Tom Clancy. He has also received numerous awards and has done extensive teaching.

The following is an adaptation from a speech presented at University of the Cumberlands on December 7, 2009 in a general convocation.

Days That Changed America and Why Her Future is Worth Fighting For

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a high privilege to be with you today, and a special thanks to your President, Dr. Jim Taylor, for making this opportunity possible. A special thanks to the staff and faculty of this great University, who selflessly give of themselves every day for the benefit of students.

I would like to focus my remarks today on four specific areas: The significance of December 7th, 1941; the threat we are currently facing and will face for the foreseeable future; some specific advice to students as they prepare for the future; and this great country of ours.

Sixty-eight years ago on December 7th 1941, Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo led a thirty-three-ship Japanese strike force that steamed under the cover of darkness to within two-hundred miles of Oahu, Hawaii. His aircraft carriers launched roughly 360 airplanes against our Pacific Fleet that was stationed at Pearl Harbor. The first bombs fell on Pearl Harbor at 7:55 a.m. The chief targets were the eight American battleships among the ninety-two naval vessels anchored in the harbor.

The United States had eighteen ships sunk or severely damaged, together with one hundred planes destroyed and 3,700 casualties, thus significantly rippling our naval capability for the Pacific Theater in World War II (WWII). Today, the USS Arizona Memorial stands above the wreckage of the partly submerged battleship where more than one-thousand men are entombed. Among them, twenty-six sets of fathers and sons and brothers. Two days later on December 9th 1941, the U.S. officially entered WWII.

It is estimated that fifty-five million lives were lost in the terrible bloodletting of that war. The number of people killed, wounded, or missing between September 1939 and September 1945 can never be truly calculated. “These enormous but faceless numbers hid millions upon millions of
personal tragedies – soldiers shot and shattered by weapons of war, prisoners cut down by disease and starvation, children buried in rubble of bombed-out buildings, and entire families exterminated solely because of the blood that ran in their veins.”

(President Bill Clinton on the 50th anniversary of V-E Day) The end of the war, almost six years after it began, was the end of a long dark winter of so much death and destruction that it numbs the mind. On that day, there were no more tears left for the millions slaughtered on long-forgotten battlefields, in cities, and in concentration camps, which shall forever remain burned into our conscience.

Virtually every family in the United States was affected in one way or another. Yet the people stateside did not suffer hardships comparable to those of the fighting forces, for it was they who carried the banner of justice into the battle for freedom. Had it not been for their selfless service and sacrifice you and I might be speaking a different language than we are speaking today.

We enjoy our freedom today because over twenty-seven million Americans have served our nation. One and a quarter million have given their lives in America’s wars in the hope and belief that America would always remain a land of liberty and peace. By their sacrifice, they have secured our inalienable rights and our freedom. But these blessings are ours only as long as we are willing to sacrifice to retain them.

Current Threats

The attack of September 11th 2001, in which 2,783 innocent people were killed, was a “wake-up” call for the United States. Once again we are a nation at war. A war that threatens our freedom and our society, and there is no end in sight. 5,266 of our servicemen and women have already been killed in action and over thirty-six thousand have been wounded in this ongoing war over the last eight years. We are now involved in a war with Islamic extremists. It is a war that actually started twenty-two years before 9/11, when the Ayatollah Khomeini was allowed to return to Iran from his exile in France. Subsequently, he launched his Islamic Revolution, labeled us an infidel nation, and declared a Jihad “Holy War” against us advocating that it was God’s will that they kill us.

The attack of 9/11 was skillfully and specifically planned to kill the maximum number of innocent civilians, disrupt our government, our economy, and to wreak horror in the hearts of Americans. It was an attack against our society and our freedom. We are currently fighting three wars: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the worldwide war against the Islamic Jihadist extremists, which is the most dangerous and threatening of all.

We have two immediate opponents in this global war on terror: first, the irreconcilable wing of Islam; second, the rogue dictatorships that empower these radical Islamists. The irreconcilable wing of Islam considers America an infidel nation. The Islamists cannot reconcile with a secular system of laws. They cannot tolerate a West that maintains a presence in the Persian Gulf, or that would defend Israel’s right to survive as a nation. They cannot tolerate freedom of speech, freedom of religion, or freedom for women. While the irreconcilable wing must be fought militarily, this is also a cultural, political and economic war.
In my judgment this war is not primarily about terrorism. It is about an Islamic insurgency by a network of extremists against the modern world. An insurgency based on an ideology to change the balance of power, by causing moderate nations to submit to the will of extremists. Terrorists are just the military arm to achieve their political objectives. Our freedom and liberty are at stake. There is no pure or quick military solution to this threat, and we must anticipate further attacks against us and our allies, attacks that could involve the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

This is a war unlike any that we have ever fought before. All other wars have been fought with nation states where your enemy was known, where military actions were engagements on linear battlefields, and where non-combatants (women and children) on both sides were respected and protected from harm.

This enemy is different. They are not nation states or governmental organizations who recognize any treaties or protocols of war. Instead, they are forces of evil and darkness who intentionally and deliberately target innocent civilians and even people of their own blood to achieve their objectives. They are people who martyr themselves without equivocation. They have no conscience or respect for human life.

We were once united as a nation in support of these wars, but that support and our willingness to sacrifice as a nation is waning. Some are advocating a precipitous withdrawal of our forces, which in my judgment would be a terrible mistake. Our enemy knows that we are divided and perceives that we are weakening as a nation. They are taking advantage of this in every way possible, and they are winning the information war. Our enemy is fully committed to pay whatever price that is necessary to win this war.

Many of our troops are on their third or fourth tour in Iraq and Afghanistan. They know full well what is at stake in this war-- our freedom and the freedom for their children and future generations. Everyone will tell you that “we either fight them over there or here at home.” We must win this war no matter the cost or how long it takes. If for some reason we fail in our resolve then our children will pay, and it will be in terms far greater than money.

As we look back in our history we have faced some tough challenges before-- although not quite like this one-- and we have always come through. In my judgment, God intended freedom for every human being born on this earth. We have preserved our nation and freedom for 233 years only by the service and sacrifice of those brave men and women who valued freedom above all else. To our veterans and those serving today, all Americans owe them our deepest debt of gratitude and total support. I cannot think of words more appropriate for the challenge that we face than those of President Ronald Reagan when he said “the future does not belong to the faint-hearted. It belongs to the brave.”

Advice to Students

Up to this point I have focused my comments on our national challenges. Now let me talk specifically about you students. These are my personal views and reflect how I have lived my life and maybe they will be of help to you as you prepare yourself for fulfilling your responsibilities when your time comes for taking your place in our society, and that won’t be long.

You can be anything you want to be. You control your own destiny, but you have to work for it. Nothing good ever comes without hard work. Here are some goals and objectives for the
next ten to fifteen years of your life. You must get a good education or else you cannot provide for your children what they should have, and I am not referring to the material things in life just to satisfy their wants. Keep yourself physically fit. What is good for your health makes your mind work better. Nobody wants to follow a sloppy leader. Be mentally tough, especially with yourself. Never accept less of yourself than you are ultimately capable of. Never take the easy way out or that will become your standard in life.

Respect all people for what they are. Every person was born with a God given dignity and no one has a right to violate that. Have a solid relationship with your God. There is no substitute for this. It cannot be found in drugs, nor alcohol, nor in your relationships with other human beings. This is your source of inner strength and guidance that will enable you to face any situation. Stand for what you believe in regardless of what others may think. There is nothing more rewarding than a clear conscience. You will find that the race of life is long, and in the end, it is only with yourself.

Don't be afraid to take a chance or to make a mistake. The person who never makes a mistake is a person who never does anything. Don't worry about setbacks. You are not going to succeed in every undertaking and maybe it was not intended that you do so. Worry is wasted effort and self-flagellation over a mistake or setback is the worst possible form of punishment. There is good to be had from every setback as our challenge is to find it and then forget about the setback and move on. Forget your ego. Do not take credit for your successes; give it to those who helped you. This is all the credit they may ever get. Don't place your priorities on material things. You can't take them with you when it's your time to go. Worry has never solved a single problem and excuses are worthless utterances. Do not become a slave to technology. Technology fails with electrical surges. It is people who make decisions, and the best decisions are appropriately tempered with experience, good judgment, and conscience. Do your own thinking and make your own decisions.

Your family should be your first priority. Remember that each of you and your children-to-be are a gift from a divine power, and it is your responsibility to raise them accordingly each and every day. Unfortunately we often learn too late about the raising of our children. Know who your true friends are and nurture those relationships.

As you take your places in society there are certain values, qualities and principles which must remain inviolable in your profession. We must protect them today, tomorrow, and in the third Millenium. Your profession must be constructed around three factors. First, you need a high level of professional competence. Know the business of your profession. Second, you need inviolable honor with the faithful adherence to moral and ethical principles. Third, absolute integrity and incorruptible moral character is needed to display in fullest trusts and integrity which is the foundation of one's credibility.

Well, enough advice. I just wish that all young people were like you. For as I look at you this morning I see young people who are made of the right stuff and I feel good about the future of our nation.

Our Country

Two-hundred and thirty-three years ago our founding fathers, with wisdom beyond compare and God's blessings, gave us the greatest nation on this Earth with freedom and liberties like no other. In doing so they sacrificed all that they had, and expected each generation to make whatever sacrifice necessary to preserve what they had given us. No one has any control over where they are born, and we are so fortunate as Americans to have been born in this great land with all the blessings of freedom and liberty that we too often take for granted. However, with freedom and liberty comes responsibility. No great nation can long endure unless its citizens step up to their responsibilities for preserving our freedom.

I have no concern that we will ever be defeated from without, but what is happening to us from within should be of utmost concern. We have been blessed so abundantly that we have become complacent as to what is happening to us from within. For example, the burning of our flag by displeased groups of our own citizens. The Ten Commandments have been barred from display in schools and public places. Some are advocating that “In God We Trust” be removed
from our currency. Some want to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. Prayer has been restricted in our schools and other activities where we traditionally prayed openly. There is a great challenge from the illegal use of drugs and the ultimate consequences resulting there from.

Lastly, who would have ever thought that armed guards would have to be posted in our schools to keep order so teachers could teach. These are some of the things that are tearing at the very fabric of our society and the foundation upon which our great nation was built. It is our responsibility to fix them. It is imperative that we teach our children that the most important things in life are not material blessings, but are those that the reward for which is felt and measured only in the heart. We are not perfect and yes we have our challenges, but they are nothing compared to the problems experienced every minute of every day in most nations around this world.

Let me conclude by saying that our first thoughts and actions upon waking each day should be to thank God for the blessing of being born in America and for the great nation that he has given us. We need to ask ourselves “what can I do today to help someone in need and to make America better for the future of my children?” Let us remember our troops and their families in our prayers. They need our fullest support in every way possible. They are the only segment of our society that is sacrificing in this war.

As we prepare to go our separate ways, I have a request of you. That you express, in your own way, your thanks to your teachers for their dedicated efforts in making you what you are. Other than your parents, nobody cares more about you. Give thanks to your parents for what they have given you and for the sacrifices they have made in order to prepare you for life. And to the divine power that brought you this far and who will be your source of strength and guidance for years to come. Thank you, and I wish each of you good luck, good health, and the very best of God’s richest blessings.

People I have Met at University of the Cumberlands

At Homecoming 2009, Dr. Robert Michael Duncan (History and Political Science alumnus, 1971) gave a speech entitled “Five People I Met at Cumberland College.” Duncan, a recent chairman of the Republican National Committee and currently serving as Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, spoke of several lasting friendships he made at Cumberland. Future issues of Morning in America will feature some of these profiles.

One of the first people Duncan met while walking across campus in June of 1968 was Dr. J.M. Boswell, then president of Cumberland College. Duncan recalled:

Dr. Boswell was on his way to play tennis, but stopped to chat with me. It was the first of dozens of conversations we had until his death in 1988. Dr. Boswell taught me a sense of service. He told me of the need to have a balanced life with learning, earning, and service. He also tried to teach me patience. I was always proposing some idea that I thought was new, [Duncan had been active in Student Government] but he had discussed these suggestions with students for decades. I proposed longer social hours, allowing women to wear pants to class, and more entertainment. He invariably told me to come see him next Tuesday for a decision. He was testing my resolve. Dr. Boswell gave me a sense of serving something bigger than one’s self.

Dr. Duncan has certainly learned that lesson.

Poster by the Tennessee Historical Commission, featuring a portrait of Sgt. Alvin York, and signed by members of the York family, hangs in the office of President Jim Taylor
Choose Cumberlands

University of the Cumberlands has been in existence since 1888 providing an educational experience for the people of the Appalachian area and beyond.

While largely an undergraduate liberal arts institution providing over forty majors and minors, we also offer advanced degrees in such areas as educational leadership, clinical psychology, professional counseling, physician assistant studies, business administration and Christian studies. In addition, several master's degrees and certification programs are offered in the area of education. Many of our graduate courses are taught on-line.

Do you know someone who would benefit from an educational opportunity at a university that believes service and leadership should be a part of every student's college experience? At a university where each student completes a community service requirement prior to graduation?

If so, please contact our Director of Admissions, Erica Harris, at 800-343-1609 or email her at admis@ucumberlands.edu. She will be happy to provide you with information and an admissions application. We look forward to the opportunity to serve.

Some of the 3,200 miniature flags placed each September on the lawn of Cumberlands’ Hutton School of Business and in Patriot Park, which is adjacent to the building, in memory of the fallen of 9-11-01.
Remember Cumberlands

You can remember Cumberlands in your will or trust, or you might want to create a charitable gift annuity to provide you with a lifetime income as you assist deserving students.

With charitable gift annuities:
- The rates are significantly greater than bond rates and certificates of deposits.
- Annuity payments are fixed and based on the age(s) of the annuitant(s).
- Annuity payments are extremely favorably taxed.
- The donor is entitled to an income tax charitable contribution deduction.
- Appreciated securities given to Cumberlands for a charitable gift annuity are valued on the date of the gift; capital gains taxes are not immediately due as they are when securities are sold by the donor.
- A gift annuity is the simplest of all split-interest planned gifts.

A Charitable Gift Annuity, will not only provide you a fixed income, guaranteed for life, but also will create a significant legacy here at University of the Cumberlands. Benefits also include a substantial income tax deduction.

University of the Cumberlands offers numerous planned giving vehicles for people who require a guaranteed income for the remainder of life. Others have established trusts and deferred gift annuities naming a loved one as the income beneficiary. With the low payout rates currently on certificates of deposit (CDs) and the volatility of the stock market, deferred gift annuities are becoming extremely popular for young adults who will not be retiring any time soon but want to plan and secure a steady, fixed income that will begin when they retire. For instance, a 45-year-old can defer a gift annuity for 15 years and receive income at a rate of 9.2 percent for life. The income tax deduction would be immediate (during working years when your tax bracket is higher) and the income would not begin until you are 60. As with regular gift annuities, the entire amount of the annuity would be backed by all of the University’s assets.

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*based on minimum age of 65; a gift annuity of $10,000; figures for annual payment and IRS discount rate of 2.8% as of July, 2010

If you are considering the establishment of a Charitable Gift Annuity to provide life-long income for yourself and vital support for University of the Cumberlands, please contact Jim Taylor at presoff@ucumberlands.edu.

Remember, as a financial supporter of Cumberlands, you are encouraging today’s students as you also demonstrate your continuing commitment to the college’s mission to educate individuals for lives of responsible service and leadership.
Mike Huckabee was governor of Arkansas, 1996–2007, and declared his intention to run on the Republican ticket for the Presidency of the United States in 2007. While gaining much national attention and support, he did not obtain the nomination. He now has his own talk show on Fox News Channel.