

Speech given by
Air Chief Marshal Sir HUBERT PATCH, K.C.B., C.B.E.
at Royal Air Force, Locking, on the occasion of the
Passing-Out of the 84th Entry of Aircraft Apprentices
on the 26th July, 1959

Commander-in-Chief, Your Worship,
 Commandant, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When that young man there in that picture was a Flight Cadet, I took part in a Passing-Out Parade, and I know exactly what it feels like to be called so early in the morning, to be on parade long before the time required, to march and counter-march and press on your butt a bit more, and then listen to a lot of chaps talking. I know exactly how you are feeling, and I know exactly what some of you are thinking, but I can take it, and I will not keep you long.

Now this has been a great occasion for me, it is the first time I have ever had the honour of taking a Passing-Out Parade at any Air Force School or College, and I must say I was tremendously impressed. You obviously have worked extremely hard. I have heard what your Commandant has said, and there is little more I can add except to say that I saw reflected in your bearing and smartness on Parade today the high tradition—the personal qualities—which you must all have, and which have been proved by your hard work here, and hard work it must have been because I am astounded at the difficulty of the syllabus which you chaps have to do, and while I realise that it is necessary, as I will explain afterwards, I am sure that most of you, when you came here, did not know what you were in for. But you have done it, and that is a matter of great congratulation to you and a matter of great pride to each one of you and to your parents.

I know all about this business of "mid-term blue," or "mid-course blue," or whatever it is that happens to you in your second year, because it has happened to me, and I must confess that at one time I thought I had "had it," or whatever the expression was at that time, but luckily I had a very sensible father, as many of you must have, who talked me out of giving up, and I carried on, and in a few weeks I was

very glad I had done so. But you know, life is like that—full of ups and downs or mid-course blues. It is always happening like that, there will always be disappointments and things mount up and appear to be too much to manage, or you get posted to a Station where you do not want to be posted, or think you do not want to be posted, when in point of fact, when you get there you are jolly glad you are there. But this pattern of hurdles to overcome, difficult- ? ties and disappointments to face is soon forgotten and eventually, if you have done your best, you reach your goal and make the grade, I but remember, you will not make the grade if you do not work hard. I am sorry that everyone says exactly the same, and some have said it better than I am doing, but it is a fact, and it is not said because it is the thing to say, but because they know from their own experience over the years and other people's experience, that it is absolutely necessary, particularly in these days of great competition.

When you chose to join that thing called the Royal Air Force, you joined the Service, and we have to realise why it is called the Service. It is called the Service because you join it to, serve your country, you join it not for what you can get out of it, except your own satisfaction for a job well done, because you join to serve. Now this means what it says, you do not hope for tremendous rewards, you do not join it for a tremendous reward, but in point of fact, if you believe in the Service and what it stands for, then that in itself is its own reward. It all depends how much you put into it how much you get out of it. If you do your best then you will get plenty out of it. The Service expects a lot from you, as you have seen from this course. The Service in this case is your country, but the Service is a good master and it will give back to you what you deserve. It is fair, it will not carry the lazy ones, it will not carry you know the—sort of chaps I mean—but if you do your best to the best of your ability, the Service will look after you.

I am permanently passed over now. It is a state of affairs we all have to come to sooner or later, and I have not regretted one second. There are times when I have been disappointed, frustrated, and I find, the more senior you get, the more frustrated you get, nevertheless, it all comes right in the end. Keep up this ability you have shown for hard work, you are going out into something which I think is one of the most interesting branches of our Service. The Royal Air force is becoming more electronic-minded, more instrument-minded, everything is electronic now. I would like to go into more detail, but I am sure that someone in the audience would know more about this than I, and would probably correct me, but nevertheless it is a fact that you are joining the most modern Service in the world, and one which I think has the greatest future. The future is very exciting for us all—at least it is for you—and I believe that this grounding you have had here is as good a grounding as you could get anywhere in the world, but it is your initial training, and now you are going to start on your own, now you have got to go out into the world and think for yourselves, and things like private study, from now on, are up to you as individuals, but I, and all the School, hope that you will keep it up. As I said, if you do your best, you will get on. Now do not rush things, take it easy when you get out to the Squadron, judge the good from the bad, do not follow the bad or lazy ones—there will be plenty of those. Look around, do not be afraid to ask questions, and then go ahead. Just watch the leaders and try to keep up with them, but do not try and make your heart burst yet, and you will find that the race is fairly straightforward if you have enough determination to keep going, and keep your sense of humour; this is very important and a great thing in life. I seem to be developing into a bit of a sermon, so I'll stop.

I am delighted, and I can only reiterate the words of the Commandant, to see so many parents here today, many of whom have travelled long distances to be here. I am sorry

that the Parade was not outside today, but I think the Commandant had your interests at heart when he decided to have it indoors. I am delighted, too, to see the Mayor and Mayoress have taken time off from their many duties to be here. I hope the parents here today are proud of their sons, they have every reason to be. I was terribly impressed with everything I have seen today and I am sure the "Mums" will be pleased about one or two things themselves. We know how hard it is to make boys wash, brush their clothes and polish their shoes, but Locking has made them do this. Finally, before I finish with drill, I most sincerely say that I was very impressed with the Parade today, which was carried out under very difficult circumstances. You can get away with murder on a large parade ground when you are about 50 yards away from the Reviewing Officer, but when you are inside and up very close, it is extremely difficult to get away with anything, and you performed exceptionally well, and I congratulate you.

I will now finish up by saying thank you for letting me come here today—thank you for giving me fresh encouragement. In my job I get a bit depressed occasionally. We are faced with the tremendous task of forming this new look Air Force, and it does me good to get out a bit sometimes and see what is being done to bring about this transition to the new style Service, this new highly efficient all-regular Air Force, this important factor in our national life, a Service bound to the highest efficiency, the main part of our agreed Government policy—a deterrent, an Air Force, trained not to fight but to prevent fighting. But it will not prevent another war unless it is 100% efficient—each one of you must be 100% efficient. Your role in life is the most important one in the country today. Good luck to you all— Good flying, and I hope I will see fulfilled the promise you have undoubtedly shown since you have been at Locking.

God Bless you all.