

*Remarks for the
200th Graduating Class of MS Law Enforcement Officers Training Academy
November 21, 2002*

(recognize Commissioner Huggins / Colonel
Claiborne)

I'm proud to be here for this ceremony today,
proud because I know that when you leave here
you will return home to towns across the state –
to Bailey and Natchez, to Collins and Nettleton,
to Conehatta and Moss Point.

I know – and the people waiting for you back in
your hometowns – know that you will return a
different person than you were when you left,
because you have completed the finest law
enforcement training academy in the nation.

The skills you have learned here over the past two months will stay with you a lifetime. Those skills will protect you, they will protect property, and they will protect innocent citizens.

Use them wisely, and use them well.

The profession you have chosen has taken on new dynamics over the past year. The role of a law enforcement officer in a small Mississippi town used to be different from the role of those serving in larger metropolitan areas. That's no longer true.

Now, we face different threats, different scenarios. We have to be prepared for the most unimaginable events, because the unimaginable already happened in New York and Washington last year.

We know the potential exists for the unimaginable to happen again.

That's why we've taken steps to make sure that every emergency responder and every law enforcement agency is prepared.

We've instituted an incident command system to ensure communications are seamless and quick.

We've built a command structure to serve the people of this state quickly and efficiently.

We've brought together law enforcement, emergency management and the military to work toward the best protection possible.

That's the role you are taking on as graduates of this academy. It's a role I know you take seriously, and I appreciate that.

All of you who serve in law enforcement do so much that is taken for granted. Unfortunately, it is usually the tragedies that remind us of the risks that are taken every day, risks each you know all too well.

We all want to feel safe. But, in finding that safety we cannot forget the work that you do in leading us to it.

We won't be the ones on patrol. We won't be the ones faced with life-or-death situations on a regular basis. We won't be the first ones on the scene of a fatal accident or disturbing crime scene.

That's your job – and you're going to do it well.

The work you do hasn't changed since the first law enforcement officers began walking a beat. The tools of the trade may be different, but the work's the same – it's the same in Mississippi as it around the nation and the world.

One interesting thing about your work – at the end of the day, there's no tangible product. There's no way to measure what you've done in the day, other than to see kids playing outside; people wearing their seatbelts; families walking through their neighborhoods in the evening.

We don't see the dark streets you patrol at night. We don't know about the thoughts that run through your mind as you go into a dangerous situation with your gun drawn. We don't know the feelings in your heart at the end of a long and difficult shift.

We do know that every man and woman who wears a badge and takes an oath "to serve and protect" has qualities that help them rise above the rest.

You are our heroes. You are people of honor – in your instinct and in your actions. You are the best in your world, and more than good enough for any other world.

You are the people who keep us safe – and we thank you for it.

And today, you are the 200th graduating class of the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers Training Academy. You are Mississippi's best. You are America's best.

May God bless you, your families, and those you serve and protect. Congratulations.