When Dean Bosworth sent me a letter inviting me to receive the Distinguished Leadership Award of the Class of ’47, I did not know why I was selected. After listening to his citation of me, I think I now understand.

Great thanks to the legendary Class of ’47 for creating this award. And thank you Dr. Gould for the presentation of this award on behalf of the class of 1947, which I receive on behalf of the Class of 1961. And thank you as well for your courageous service to this country in war at the Normandy landings and later, as one of Patton’s Boys, at the Battle of the Bulge. And thank you also for your service to this country and the world as Distinguished Professor at Scripps College and to Fletcher as historian of the Class of ’47.

Dean Bosworth, thank you for rising above decanal and inter-school rivalry to select me for this honor. It is an act of magnificence. I owe my entire professional life to The Fletcher School launching pad, for which I will always be grateful. And thanks as well for raising The Fletcher School to new terrestrial heights of excellence through your vision, innovation, and successful tambourine shaking (another term for fundraising!).

And speaking of successful fundraising, I cannot resist recounting how the Cabot Intercultural Center (in which we are situated today) came to be.

In the mid-1970s, I was a young dean of the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown, struggling to salvage the fortunes of the country’s first and largest school of international affairs. Doing so would clearly require adequate physical facilities. The school was impoverished and did not have the independent means to construct a home for a reborn school. Reflecting on the need and the circumstances, I recalled something that the late Dean Edmund Gullion of The Fletcher School once said about Alexander Hamilton. He said:
“Hamilton struck the rock of national credit, and streams of revenue gushed forth!” So I turned to the Jesuit fathers—Father Collins and Father George, who handled the University’s federal relations—to mount a raid on the federal treasury. They said that if I could come up with a compelling idea for a new building, they thought they could sell it to the Congress (these were pre-Tea Party days!). So I drafted a proposal to create at Georgetown an Intercultural Center to address deficiencies in the country’s knowledge of the world elsewhere. Lo and behold, the proposal became a law—but an unfunded one. For the Center to be built, an appropriation of at least $12 million was required. And for that authorization to be made, it had to be passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The problem was that Georgetown—located in a federal district without representation in the Senate—had no votes! The good Fathers asked me if I could find a school to pair with which had votes. So I called Dean Gullion at Fletcher—for whom I had happily worked for six years—and asked him if he would like an Intercultural Center and, if so, whether he would join me and the good Fathers in meeting with Senator Ed Brooke of Massachusetts, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Dean Gullion jumped at the chance for an Intercultural Center and readily agreed to join in the meeting with Senator Brooke.

Led by the good Fathers, with their turned-around collars, we met with Senator Brooke who agreed to advocate our project—which was now at the $20 million level ($12 million for Georgetown, $8 million for Fletcher)—on one condition; to wit: that the good Fathers would swear on a stack of bibles not to return to him with any more funding requests. The good Fathers promptly so swore, adding in a whisper inaudible to Senator Brooke: “At least not on this project!” So we got our buildings and both the Walsh School and The Fletcher School—with the generous support of John Moors and Elizabeth Cabot—went on to greater glory.

And now to the theme of my remarks: “The Fletcher School: An Act of Faith.”

In June of 1962, when I was exiting The Fletcher School, MALD in hand, to accept an appointment in the Foreign Service, Dean Robert Stewart, that great
Kentucky gentlemen, stopped me on the threshold of Goddard Hall and asked me if I would stay on to serve as his assistant. I readily agreed to do so, taking an immediate cut in pay from the $7,500 on offer from the Foreign Service to the $6,500 Dean Stewart could afford to pay me. This was a watershed moment in my life which led to a career path in international education and, routinely, to modest paychecks.

One of my first assignments as assistant to the dean was to serve as secretary of the school’s Admissions Committee. That committee consisted of the core faculty of the school at the time; namely: Ruhl Bartlett, an iconic figure in the field of American diplomatic history and one of my heroes; Leo Gross, a household name (we called him “Goodness Gracious Grotius”) in the field of international law and organization; and George Halm, a distinguished and loveable international economist (and mentor of two prior Class of ’47 award recipients; namely, Robert Hormats and Fred Bergsten). Professor Bartlett was the chairman of the committee and he sat me down to fill me in on philosophy and procedures. He told me that all education was basically an act of faith—faith that the right students would be admitted, faith that the education Fletcher offered to them would take hold and lead them and the world onward and upward.

So how has Fletcher’s act of faith played out across the years? The answer resides in the track record of its graduates.

Now the Class of ’47, which established today’s award, vindicated Fletcher’s act of faith in a BIG way. Pound for pound, it is the most distinguished class in the history of the school. Its ranks boast multiple ambassadors, high ranking public officials, and distinguished educators.

For its part, the Class of ’61, celebrating its fiftieth reunion, is no slouch. Our ranks boast a former deputy prime minister, a former foreign minister, a former member of the Council of Ministers of the European Union and a former Olympic fencer—all rolled up into one person, the inimitable Colette (aka “Coco”) Flesch, the rock star of our class! We also claim two distinguished
journalists, Lucia Mouat, long-time reporter for *The Christian Science Monitor*, and Yoshio Murakami, reporter for the *Asahi Shimbun*, which has a readership of over 8 million Japanese. I should also mention Carl Schmidt who served with distinction as director of the Slazburg Seminar, the Aspen Institute of Europe. And the list goes on, to include also classmates now deceased.

Among these, I would like to single out one in particular. This is Charles (Chuck) Grader, whose son Moses (also a Fletcher graduate) and his fiancé Rita Meihaus are with us today.

Chuck is often thought of as the Crocodile Dundee of our class. I prefer to think of him as the Theodore Roosevelt of our class, for reasons I will make clear in a moment.

Chuck was born in the seafaring town of Marblehead, Massachusetts in 1931. After nearly flunking out of high school, he was admitted based on his test scores, to the Coast Guard Academy. He was the second-to-last midshipman in his class to be thrown out of the Coast Guard Academy, but one of the first to secure command of a Coast Guard Cutter two years later. Somewhere along the way, he discovered that wonderful mechanism called the brain and decided to pursue higher education with a vengeance. Before he was finished he had earned a Certificate of Studies from the London School of Economics, a MA from MIT and a MA and PhD from The Fletcher School—whose admission of Chuck, with his checkered (to put it mildly!) academic record, was a supreme act of faith.

Chuck’s career took him first to the Bureau of the Budget, thence to USAID as it was taking off, and from this platform to lead AID missions abroad wherever the bullets were flying, most conspicuously in Afghanistan (as the Soviets invaded) and in Uganda. Chuck retired from USAID in 1981 to run the largest bauxite mine in the world in the Republic of Guinea with 3,700 employees, a budget of $250 million, its own railroad and its own airplanes.

In 1986 he returned to MIT where he directed the prestigious Sloane Fellows Program (from which he had graduated) for a decade until the sand in his shoes
became too much for him and he returned to the field to administer public and private aid programs in combat zones in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chuck would have preferred to die in the field from a bullet, but brain cancer got him first and, after a valiant two-year struggle, he succumbed in February 2009.

Chuck, like Theodore Roosevelt was totally fearless. And like Theodore Roosevelt, he actively sought out danger. He lived by Theodore Roosevelt’s standard, abjuring “the ignoble life of ease, embracing instead the strenuous life.” Along the way, Fletcher was his touchstone. In the words of his son, Moses, the school’s act of faith was “essential in validating, shaping, and directing” his father’s “mix of idealism, devotion to service, and dogged practicality.”

And now it is the turn of the class of 2012 to vindicate Fletcher’s act of faith. What lies in store for you as you seek to do so?

President Dwight Eisenhower captured the only certainty about the future when he famously declared: “Ladies and Gentlemen, the future lies before us.” Yogi Berra could not have put it any better. Indeed the future does lie before us. But so also does the past. The class of 2012 will, unfortunately, be faced with “the challenges that yesterday left behind.”

Left behind is the specter of nuclear proliferation, the threat of terrorism, unresolved regional and sectarian conflicts, failed states, grinding poverty in struggling countries, environmental degradation, and, unfortunately close to home, unfolding sovereign bankruptcies.

It is a commonplace for the older generation to observe that the world you face will be more difficult than ours was. Yet, as I review the situation in 1961, I am not sure that this is the case. In 1961, a newly elected charismatic president, Jack Kennedy, was urging Americans to build bomb shelters, meanwhile, the Soviets were building the Berlin Wall, the US sent its first troops to Vietnam, and the Bay of Pigs invasion backfired. The only good news was that Pampers, the disposable diaper, was invented in 1961.
At any rate, you are going to be better equipped to deal with the world than we were. Your class is larger, more diverse and—if Fletcher has been doing its work properly—brighter. The curriculum on offer is richer, the opportunities for international engagement closer at hand and your network of classmates from all quarters of the world is wider and deeper. So you will have no excuse for failing to vindicate Fletcher’s act of faith.

The question is, how best to do justice to Fletcher’s investment in you? Here I will offer one word of advice passed along to me by the late Secretary of State Dean Rusk, for whom I worked as a White House fellow. At the end of a television interview with him, conducted in his office at the Rusk Center at the University of Georgia, I asked him how a barefooted boy from Cherokee County, Georgia, could become the Secretary of State of the most powerful country in the world. He replied that he simply “followed my pappy’s advice and did the very best I could possibly do with what was at my fingertips at the time.”

So onward now, doing the best with what is at your fingertips at the time. The Class of ’61 wishes you good luck and extends its confident best wishes for success.

Since I personally owe this institution so much, I would like to close by simply saying: “God bless The Fletcher School!”