

Leader – Born or Achieved? My Opinion
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What constitutes becoming a “Leader? Is one born with genes that will develop to becoming a leader, or does one achieve that title through personal involvement in his or her trade? Likely one or the other or both.

My opinion from personal experience through my life and what became “achievement,” is that a “leader” can become so more from one’s challenging one’s self to work at being the very best in whatever occupation they have chosen to pursue. My challenge began in my somewhat small town of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. My Mother and I were considered among the “poor.” My Father deserted us shortly after I was born, and to exist my Mother washed, dried on lines strung throughout the house, and ironed clothes for those who desired those services. As soon as able, I began work with a daily newspaper route, added a Sunday paper route, then worked in a wide variety of many other odd-jobs throughout my youth in order to buy my own clothes and help my Mother as best I could. Apparently seeking financial help, my Mother married a man who turned out to be a drunk and abusing husband to my Mother as well as to me. This served as an impetus for me to want to “get-away.”

MILITARY CAREER

The day after I turned 17 years of age, with no goals set nor education achievements that indicated I was going to become anything more than a mediocre citizen, I enlisted in the Navy in 1949. Fortunately, my Mother eventually divorced, was hired to reasonable office employment, and led a comfortable life until her demise at 96 years of age.

For some – and I see this in my experience – events can fall into place that provide opportunities for achievement that one may not recognize. As a Navy recruit at the Naval Recruit Training Center in Great Lakes, Illinois, I performed no different than my shipmates but apparently my Company Commander saw something that led him to designate me as a squad leader; obviously my first “leadership” role in the Navy. Every “Company” in recruit training is involved in marching drills and as a marching unit want to be the best in competition with other Companies. Every recruit in my Company became cohesive in our will to accept the challenge and be

the best; and we succeeded. As recruits, we changed as individuals and learned the importance of unity, the joining together to accomplish the goals expected of a recruit to become an important member of the Navy as he/she moved on to face the challenges to meet operational requirements of a military force.

We were tested to determine those traits we may have that should be exploited and were recommend Navy schools to consider following graduation from recruit training. Many qualified while many did not. Those who qualified were provided choices of schools for which they showed aptitude, those who did not were transferred to ships. I qualified for clerical pursuits and though I thought being a “Storekeeper” dealing with supplies would be interesting, it was suggested I consider going to “Teleman” school, a new rating in the Navy that taught operation of Teletypewriters and associated communications equipment and subsequent assignment to a Navy communications center or department either on land or at sea, and also included learning Postal Clerk requirements since the Postal Clerk rating was to be brought into the Teleman rating.

I had become savvy enough to recognize that advancement opportunities would likely be much better in a new rating than most others, so accepted that choice of transfer to Teleman school – considered an “A” school – in Norfolk, Virginia. With completion of recruit training I was advanced from Seaman Recruit (SR), pay grade E1, to Seaman Apprentice (SA), pay grade E2.

I “was not” a top student in “A” school and upon graduation expected I would be transferred to one of the ships based in Norfolk. This is where my opening remark “events can fall into place” came to pass. Turns out the higher achievers were transferred to ships, and I was transferred over the New Year 1950 to 1951 to the communications department of the Naval Operating Base located on the island of Trinidad, then considered part of the British West Indies. With graduation of “A” school I had also advanced to Teleman Seaman (TESN), meaning Teleman as my specialty, paygrade E3.

While stationed in Trinidad I made an effort to be the best any Teleman Seaman could be and worked both in the communications department as well as the base Post Office. Apparently those efforts paid off since I scored well for advancement to both Teleman 3rd Class Petty Officer (TE3), pay grade E4, and Teleman 2nd Class Petty Officer (TE2), pay grade E5 while still in Trinidad. With transfer looming I requested being sent back to Norfolk in 1952 to the Teleman “C” School to learn trouble-shooting, stripping down and putting back together, and general

repair of all Teletype and associated equipment. As a 2nd Class Petty Officer I was heading towards becoming a leader, but not yet there.

With graduation from “C” school looming, I again expected I was destined to be assigned a ship as my next duty assignment. But once again (“events can fall into place”), I was transferred locally in Norfolk to the communications department of the headquarters for the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANTFLT).

With all assignments I worked diligently to be the best in my rating, or at least showing that I was exceeding expectations and felt it my duty to do so to relieve the workload of those under whom I was assigned. During an off day from communication department watch assignments I noticed a 1st Class Petty Officer walking along with an unusual rating insignia on his uniform – a lightning bolt crossed by a quill. This was very similar to what my Telemen rating badge looked like, but the Telemen rating badge had that same lightning bolt and crossed quill but they were crossed over the “cancelled stamp” symbol of a postal clerk, thus signifying Telemen as both a communications rating as well as postal clerk. I asked him what just the lightning bolt crossed over by a quill signified. He explained that the rating was “Communications Technician” (CT) and the enlisted rating of those who have been accepted into the Naval Security Group headquartered in Washington, D.C. He further explained that Communications Technician was considered an “elite” communications rating given only to those who were accepted as part of the Naval Security Group Command and one had to request consideration for transfer to this elite command. He also made note that at that time, most all assignments whether in the United States or overseas, were shore duty (no ship assignments unless for special purposes). Since I was completing my first four years of duty and time to consider re-enlisting (and the idea of continued shore duty certainly sounded appealing) I submitted an official request that if accepted for transfer to the Naval Security Group Command I would re-enlist for another four years. Within two weeks I received transfer orders and transferred to Washington, D.C. in November 1953. Once again - “events can fall into place.” Since being accepted to the rating of Communications Technician required background checks and clearances by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in order to become privy to information considered Top Secret as well as assigned special codewords because of the nature of the information, I was placed in assignments not yet requiring such “clearances.” With transfer from Washington, D.C. to Naval Communications Station, Guam, Marianas Islands, I married AnnaBelle Perlog of Canton, Ohio in April 1954 while still a TE2 while enroute with her having to wait for my arrival on Guam and paperwork submitted for her to be recognized as a military

dependent before she could be provided orders for transportation to Guam to accompany me during that assignment. Paperwork was completed, Navy housing was assigned, and she received transportation orders to arrive on Guam in November 1954. While still stationed on Guam and working in Communications Security (COMSEC), a non-Security Group role, I advanced to Teleman 1st Class Petty Officer (TE1), pay grade E6 in August 1955, and shortly thereafter background checks were completed and I was accepted into the Naval Security Group with rating change from TE1 to CT1. Since my former Teleman specialty was in communications, my assigned specialty in the CT rating was “O” for Operations (meaning communications operations) Branch, thus later defined as CTO1. I should mention that the Naval Security Group had six branches; O/Communications branch, T/Technical branch, A/Administrative Branch, M/Maintenance branch, R/Radio branch, and I/Interpretive (linguistic) branch.

Subsequent transfers following three years on Guam with my developing family accompanying were more “events can fall into place.” With return to Washington, D.C. in 1957 for three years I began my first “leadership” role as the assistant supervisor of a communications department watch section. I served that same leadership role when transferred three years later in 1960 to Wahiawa, Hawaii for another three years. With transfer to Kodiak Island, Alaska in 1963 I served in my first sole leadership role as head of a six-man team providing special intelligence communications for the Commander, Alaskan Sea Frontier (COMALSEAFRON) for three years (and where I advanced to Chief Petty Officer (CTOC), pay grade E7 August 16, 1964).

With transfer to Naval Security Group Activity Homestead, Florida in 1966 I served as the acquisition Chief for the Communications Department that included a trip to Washington, D.C. to insure appropriate communications and cryptographic equipment would be supplied for installation in the communications department of a new Naval Security Group operations site built within the confines of a Wullenweber antenna array in the Florida Everglades south of Florida City. During that assignment I advanced to Senior Chief Petty Officer (CTOCS), pay grade E8 August 16, 1967).

After two years I was then transferred back to Guam in 1968 serving as the Operations Chief while another CTOCS served as the Administrative Chief. We were the two lead chiefs of the communications department. During this tour of duty on Guam, through the Catholic Church in the village of Tamuning, joining the men’s choir singing bass. I immersed myself and family in the Guamanian community both in this choir consisting of all Guamanians except me, in joining

members and their families in village fiestas, in friendly get-togethers and discussion; much different than our first tour of duty there over a decade earlier where my then new wife and child born while there kept more close to military families. While at this assignment I advanced to Master Chief Petty Officer (CTOCM), top enlisted pay grade in the Navy and my specialty (E9), August 16, 1969. The Navy changed the rating Communications Technician to Cryptologic Technician shortly thereafter.

Having requested consideration for transfer to the Master Chief “O” Branch billet in London, England, the Navy accepted that consideration and I was transferred to arrive in London in January 1970 accompanied by my family. Before leaving Guam, I was called to the Governor’s office where I was presented with the “Ancient Order of the Chamkori” for my service and friendship to the community. The Ancient Order of the Chamkori is the highest honor a non-native of Guam can receive.

The assignment in London was for a Master Chief “O” branch specialist to serve under the Director, Naval Security Groups, Europe (DIRNAVSECGRUEUR) and Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe (CINCUSNAVEUR) overseeing communications intelligence/signal intelligence requirements of all Naval Security Group units throughout Europe and the Middle East. A dual assignment was Command Master Chief for DIRNAVSECGRUEUR that included visits to all Naval Security Group units throughout Europe. Because of operational requirements, this normally 3-year assignment extended to 4 ½ years before transfer in 1974 once again to Naval Security Group Activity Homestead, Florida.

With my return to Homestead the Commanding Officer asked that I serve as his Command Master Chief seeing to the well-being of all enlisted personnel of the Command. I continued this “leadership” role until retirement from Navy active duty December 31st, 1976 and transfer to the Navy Fleet Reserve where I served in an inactive/on-call status until December 1979; thus, completing my 30-year career obligation to the United States Navy and to my country.

Following retirement from the Navy and with the GI Bill to cover the expense, I decided I would go to college more to see what it was like than needed since I already had employment in Management. So, I spent two years going to evening and Saturday courses subsequently graduating with an Associate of Arts with summa cum laude honors.

Leader by birth? Certainly not in my case. Leader by achievement? It appears so.

ADDENDUMS:

Further to “achievements” as a factor in the making of a leader:

INSTRUCTOR, KODOKAN JUDO

In 1961 and 1962 while stationed at the Naval Communications Station Wahiawa, Hawaii, Navy 1st Class Petty Officer Edward Alseika, a 4th Degree/Yodan Black Belt in this martial art and sport, and heavyweight competitor in Judo who represented the United States in World Championships, offered his free services to train men in this art in a Quonset on base during the noon hour break. As I recall, there were only four of us showing interest – surprising, considering the level of this man in Judo. While in the Navy and stationed in Japan, Ed had earlier trained at the “Kodokan Judo Institute” and through subsequent training and competition, rose to his 4th Degree level - he eventually advanced to 7th Degree/Shichidan Black Belt level before his death in later years. He was very serious that his students dedicated that one hour every day to learning this martial art and accepting what we would be enduring with intense training and repeated falls as he demonstrated on us a multitude of the movements and throws that are a part of this art. He initially put us through exercises to loosen our muscles and many drills to learn how to “fall” should an opponent get the better of us and succeed in getting us off balance and through a Judo movement thrown through the air to most often land on our backs but often to other locations of our body. Just a couple of us stayed with his training and became relatively capable in throwing techniques, mat work, joint locks, and strangling techniques to where, in 1962 we represented the Navy as Hawaiian Area Navy Judo Champions in our weight class (mine at the time heavyweight at 225 lbs.) in an All Services Judo Tournament. In the process of training we had advanced to Brown Belt 1st Class, a step below Black Belt. When I was transferring for duty to the Naval Operating Base on Kodiak Island, Alaska in 1963 I was advanced to Kodokan Judo 1st Degree/Shodan Black Belt level at about the same time. As soon as I became aware that Judo was not taught on the island I began, as Sensei/instructor, training men on base evenings and on Saturdays. Shortly thereafter I realized that the kids on the base, because of the weather, had little to occupy them sports-wise during the fall/winter/spring season so I opened instruction to these kids from ages 5 to 17 on different evenings and different hours on Saturdays. By 1965 I had developed, and recognized by the Armed Forces Judo Association (AFJA), the largest Judo program in the Navy with over 100 boys, 30 men, and 20 women. Another Black Belt Shodan, John Peters, a Master Chief on the Coast Guard Cutter Storis home ported at the Base,

along with his teenage daughter Karen, a Brown Belt 1st Class, and son, Rusty, a Brown Belt 2nd Class, joined me as assistant instructors. We put on demonstrations as well as taught women's self-defense that led to 20 or so of those women choosing to become part of our regular training under the direct instruction of Karen Peters. A few years later, after having left Kodiak in 1966, I was advanced to Kodokan Judo 2nd Degree/Nidan Black Belt level. I am a Life Member of the United States Judo Association (USJA).

CIVILIAN CAREER

In retirement from military service and move to civilian employment I was hired by Fuchs Baking Company/Holsum Bakers in Miami, Florida to manage and oversee their Retail Thrift Store operations and store employees at Agency locations across Southern Florida from the East to the West coasts. The "agencies" are where "route bread trucks" work from to deliver bread products to restaurants, grocery stores, and other businesses in the surrounding area of their city locations that had been delivered to the agencies from the main bakery plant in Miami. These agencies and the Retail Thrift Stores at the agencies numbered seventeen in cities/counties located down the Florida Keys to Key West, midway up the Florida East Coast, then midway up the Florida West Coast resulting in many days and miles "on the road." I served a collateral assignment to locate four new areas for agencies, insure sufficient size/acreage for semi-tractors and route trucks to drive in/out of the space, design small scale drawings of agency building and platform loading size, of layout of store and agency office equipment, then work with architects and construction companies in their construction.

IN RETIREMENT

In total retirement and having been diagnosed with Prostate Cancer in late 1992, and cancer that returned in 1996 despite earlier surgical removal of the prostate gland as well as salvage radiation to the entire prostate bed and its periphery, I dedicated my retirement to research and study of this insidious men's disease, first to insure my own continuing appropriate treatment, then as an online mentor to patients and their caregivers throughout the world. This is fully explained on my personal website www.theprostateadvocate.com.

I added these "Addendums" as other manners in which "Leadership" can be achieved when we choose to pass on and train others in a specialty we have achieved through our own choices of improving our lives. A far cry from my

military specialty, but challenges that turned out to be easily managed as the result of my leadership roles in the military.

AND OF COURSE, NONE OF THIS COULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT "LOVE OF GOD."

IF

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