

*Man is and always will be the supreme element in combat, and upon the skill, the courage and endurance, and the fighting heart of the individual soldier the issue will ultimately depend.
Soldiers learn to be good leaders from good leaders.*

General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, Former Army Chief of Staff

George C. Marshall learned leadership from John J. Pershing, and Marshall's followers became great captains themselves: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar N. Bradley ... among them. Pershing and Marshall each taught their subordinates their profession; and, more importantly, they gave them room to grow.

General Gordon R. Sullivan, Army Chief of Staff, 1991-1995

... BECAUSE LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL CAN BE DEVELOPED

By Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, U.S. Army, 1975.

When I reflect on the leaders I have known, I find tall and short, noisy and quiet, extrovert and introvert, intellectual and bore. Which reminds me of an efficiency report, which I read when I was serving on a promotion board. The Rater said, *This officer is equally at ease with intellectuals and those in authority.* Another said, *Smith is not a born leader yet.* There seems to be some unknown chemistry, which makes a man an exceptional leader. This applies in other fields of endeavor also. For example, recently I was listening as Richard Burton, the famous actor, was being interviewed by Barbara Howard on *Who's Who*. He offered the view that many actors are as able as he is but by some strange trick of personality he has been more successful. If one wants to learn to be successful this is a strange *Will O' the Wisp* of advice and leaves little to emulate except a certain degree of modesty or self-effacement, neither of which are his long suits. Jon Ruskind said, *I fear uniformity. You cannot manufacture great men any more than you can manufacture gold.*

Despite all the conflicting evidence which I have inflicted on you I do have some advice to offer and certain points to make. If you heed them, you may, and I am cautious to use the qualifying phrase *may*, advance more rapidly and to a higher grade than your fellow officers and you may improve your leadership qualities and your ability to command because leadership potential can be developed. These pearls of wisdom come under the heading of pipe smoking, pot bellied, pontificating profundities and even if you agree with them you may not be able to or care to place them in effect or practice them.

A. Leadership is the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do. How one develops this capability is closer to an art than it is a science. The ability to get others to respond is a primary prerequisite however and the lack of this ability explains why some very able, bright, conscientious young men flourish in their youth and then begin a gradual fade out in their middle years. These are the men who do everything well as long as the results are dependent on their own efforts. While they are young and their tasks are minor, they are judged solely on their own performance. But, as they move up in the hierarchy, they are increasingly required to delegate responsibility and to create in their subordinates a strong desire to do that which has been directed by them. These men are subject to terrible disappointment and often bitterness because they watch as they are passed by contemporaries who in earlier years did not perform as well as they did. It also explains why some slow starters who suffer from impatience with detail and unwillingness to seek perfection in small matters but who have the ability to influence others to perform finally come into their own and advance rapidly. This explains why the class leaders at service academies, colleges and even advance service schools often are not the leaders in the field. One should therefore not be surprised to discover that many of our great leaders stood low in their class. The lesson here is obvious. The least you can learn to do is delegate. The ability to inspire others to perform is more difficult.

B. A young officer can and should learn by observation and imitation of his admired superiors and by rejection of the modus operandi of those he does not respond to. Often, more is to be learned from the latter. However, human nature is such that we

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Tend to treat others as we have been treated even when we did not like the treatment and then we justify the action with the rationale of, *That is how it was for me!* That explains some of the very harsh treatment meted out in recruit training and boot camp. It also has general application. For example, most people who brutalize their children were themselves beaten by their parents. In my career, I was fortunate to serve under only two men whom I considered sadistic or terribly egotistical. I learned a great deal from them. Mostly I had the good fortune to serve under and closely observe the conduct of such men as Matthew B. Ridgway, Maxwell D. Taylor, James M. Gavin, Creighton W. Abrams and many others. I watched these men very closely. My wife is continually astonished at how much I remember about my former commanders and colleagues. I watch them and I try to learn, which brings me to my next point.

C. You must adapt to your commander. He does not adapt to you. This is an issue on which more officers flounder than any other I know. It is also the most difficult advice to live up to when faced with a commander who violates your own sense of justice or code of ethics.

D. My next advice is don't fight higher headquarters. I know that many of you consider the next higher headquarters as your natural enemy. It requires strong willpower and a level head to keep your cool but you will find it counterproductive to engage in a running battle with your boss and his staff. Save your complaints for the very important issues; there is nothing as tiresome as a quibbling, griping, uncooperative subordinate unit commander. Hold your tongue and sweat your man. When you rarely complain, people listen.

E. Next, don't ask for guidance or you will get more than you want; if you are operating within general policy, move out and display initiative. If your boss doesn't like it, he will inform you. His opinion of you drops off with each succeeding C.Y.A. [cover your ass] request for approval.

F. Most successful leaders do more than is expected of them. You must pay the price; it is a conscious choice and I must admit that I have often envied many of my contemporaries who became much better golfers, bridge players, grass cutters and commissary shoppers than I. Even so, you need not become a

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drudge or a workaholic. I played golf, poker, fished, hunted, drank,
danced and generally had a good time.

G. You must be able to establish priorities and meet
deadlines. This again is where the perfectionist often becomes a
cropper. I replaced a very able man as the G-3 of the 82nd
Airborne Division because he tended to work on the top paper in
his in-basket rather than the most important or time sensitive.
Whichever paper he worked on, you could be sure, was a
masterpiece of attention to detail and thoroughness; however he
was often late with his effort and while he was laboring with
periods and commas the world was passing him by. You must also
be able to whip out an effort in the time allotted even though you
know that you could do a better job given more time. Your boss
will soon learn which of his subordinates can get with the problem
in a hurry and come up with something when he needs it.

H. As you move up—you must broaden your perspective. I
recall that Sir William Slim, Chief of the British Imperial General
Staff was the Kermit Roosevelt Lecturer when I was at the
Command and General Staff College in 1947. He talked about the
art of high command. He had commanded the 14th Army in Burma
and he reduced his hour lecture to three points dealing with the art
of high command—it was, *No papers, No details, and No regrets.*

I. Read about our great leaders. I equate this approach to
the case history method of teaching at the Harvard Business
School. When you read the lives of MacArthur, Marshall, Arnold,
Nimitz, King, Bradley, Ridgway and many others, you will learn a
great deal. Whether you can or will apply it is another matter, but
first must come learning and understanding.

J. Be for, not against. Most great leaders are positive. They
establish goals and achieve them or they have an idea and test it or
they have a dream and try to fulfill it. Those who are for things are
vibrant, filled with electricity, radiating energy and enthusiasm.
People who are against things tend to be dull, negative, uninspiring
and boring. They cast a pall on every gathering and they are a wet
blanket. We try to avoid them. They are not doers. Be a *Forer*—not
an *Aginer*! Happiness in the final analysis is something to be
enthusiastic about. Charles M. Schwab said, *A man can succeed at
almost anything for which he has unlimited enthusiasm.*

K. You must go where the action is. For some, it is to the sound of the guns. For others, it is in support of those who go to the sound of the guns. When I was privileged to deliver the Kermit Roosevelt Lecture Series in England, the title of my talk was: *Your mission is to fight and don't forget it.* I repeat it to you without elaboration. One thing which I know for sure is the fact that most of my success can be attributed to the fact that I went to the sound of the guns and I was lucky enough to survive.



*Discipline, which is but mutual trust and confidence,
is the key to all success in peace and war.*

General George S. Patton, Jr.

*I am confident that an army of strong individuals, held together by
a sound discipline based on respect for personal initiative and
rights and dignity of the individual, will never fail
this nation in time of need.*

General J. Lawton Collins, Former Army Chief of Staff

*Discipline and shared hardship
pull people together in powerful ways.*

Sergeant Alvin C. York

*In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right
thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing.*

President Theodore Roosevelt

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

President Thomas Jefferson, 1819