Command and Leadership

Their Diseases and Cures

Col Richard Reynolds, USAF (Ret.)

Maj Gen William J. "Bud" Breckner was unlike any general I ever met, and I have met many in my almost 50 years of military, government, and aerospace industry service. He electrified a room and filled it with his energy and presence. I first worked for him as a young captain in the early 1980s after joining the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) Command Briefing Team, composed mostly of fighter pilots from various squadrons in Europe. General Breckner was the USAFE chief of staff then and ran a tight ship. We all knew who was boss and we knew, unequivocally, that he would ask the best of us and always give the best of himself. When he took over 17th Air Force he also had operational command of all the US and Allied fighter aircraft in Europe. It was a big job—and he was just the person for it.

Under his leadership, the first Allied Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) became a reality, and offensive and defensive air operations were planned and executed from his underground bunker headquarters (HQ) at Sembach Air Base, Germany, with a multinational staff. I was with him during the first day of operations in the Sembach bunker when, just a few hours before the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, his staff, and dignitaries from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were due to arrive, the newly completed bunker experienced a fuel spill and was flooded with diesel fuel. General Breckner never missed a beat nor raised his voice. He just made sure the job was done and voiced confidence in his team throughout.

Hours later, with NATO leadership looking on, two United States Air Force SR71 reconnaissance aircraft raced along the inner German border, prompting a response from the Soviets. The CAOC captured all the action, during which General Breckner directed active scrambles of fighter aircraft to shadow the Soviet aircraft and ensure the NATO borders were not breached. The Sembach CAOC ushered in a new era in air and space operations and laid the groundwork for today's military command and control enterprises.

This is the man you will meet in the next few pages, giving his talk on "Command and Leadership: Their Diseases and Cures." For over 10 years, his talk came at the conclusion of the Operations Group Commander's Course at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. It never failed to be voted by each attending class as the best lecture in the entire series. You will soon see why. Even in retirement, General Breckner came to the lecture hall in full uniform. Tall and powerfully built, he cut an imposing figure, tempered by an open smile and extended hand. I now present to you my former boss, my good friend, and the best general I have ever known, William J. "Bud" Breckner, in his own words:

What is there about leadership that's new and innovative? What can possibly be said about leadership that hasn't been said before? The answer is, of course, nothing! You likely have taken many courses, read many books, participated in many seminars, and attended countless lectures and presentations on leadership, so you won't be fooled into thinking I am going to offer you anything remotely resembling a startling breakthrough on the principles

of leadership. Leadership traits, characteristics, fundamentals, principles, and theories have been well covered for many years. I will not attempt to add to them. As a matter of fact, descriptions of leadership, the demand for it, and its challenges, are as old as recorded history itself.

I'm reminded of an interview with the famous actor Charlton Heston when he was asked which was the most important movie role he ever played. Without hesitating, he replied "Moses, in *The Ten Commandments.*" When asked why, he said "Because Moses was mortal." He went on to say that he meant Moses had all the human attributes—the fears and strengths and weaknesses of man—and was given the tremendous challenge of leading the Israelites out of bondage: out of Egypt and into the Promised Land . . . wherever that was. Here was a man—like you or me—being directed by God to take his people on a journey to somewhere no better described than "the Promised Land."

So there he was, roaming around in the wilderness with a flock of people for 40 years looking for the "Promised Land." The troops were getting mad and discouraged and Moses had run out of airspeed and ideas, and one day he heard a big, booming voice: "Moses, Moses." Moses looked up and was told "Get up to the mountain top. I want to talk to you." So Moses got his sack together, threw it over his shoulder, and trudged up the mountain. God gave him a couple of attention-getters—like a flaming bush—to keep him focused. Moses finally arrived, saluted smartly, and said, "Moses reporting as ordered, sir." God told him to pull up a rock and have a seat.

This is what in later years could be considered a "Come to Jesus" meeting, but of course this is an Old Testament story. God proceeded to tell Moses how he should get moving and get the job done. He had to show some leadership down there, get the people properly motivated, and move on to the Promised Land. God also told Moses he needed a checklist. He handed Moses the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments etched on them and told him to follow those to the letter and make sure everyone else did too. God also told Moses that he knew Moses might need some other help and that he, God, would stand behind him and give it to him. All he needed to do was ask. He couldn't ask too often, but when he really needed help, for instance when there was a big body of water and the people couldn't get across, Moses should just call him and he would perform a miracle or something and help them out.

So Moses takes all this down and tells God he got it. He thanked him and turns to go, and then asks "Let's see: I follow these Ten Commandments and get everyone else to do it also, and if I really get in some trouble—something I can't handle—I can call up here and get some real help so we can get to the Promised Land?" God said "You got it."

Obviously Moses's leadership challenge was formidable, and there was probably no more important mission in the history of man. But the parallels to today's challenges are obvious, even in terms of what the rewards might be. Which brings me to the next point: We all want to be successful, don't we? What, then, is the measure of success for this undertaking of ours? What have you defined as your goal: the thing that you have to achieve in order to feel you have been successful? Have you done this yet? How will you ever know if you have achieved success if you haven't defined it? And may I suggest you be very careful in how you define it, success is not always what you think it is.

There are numerous examples—high-profile examples, I might add—of people who have gained fame, fortune, position, and power: kings and presidents, billionaires, industrialists, people in the arts and literally from all walks of life, who have often been very good at their profession or in their skills, but were never considered by history or their fellow man to be successful. Thus, we must define success or we shall have no hope of achieving it. That's what we are about today: leadership and success.

As I said, I have nothing new to tell you about leadership: everything that can be said has been said. But maybe there is something that, mentioned one more time, may have a lasting influence. You might think about leadership and its study the same way you think about playing golf. In golf, you can practice, take lessons, read books, and watch videos to try to improve your game. You may have read hundreds of articles on how to cure a slice or a hook and nothing seemed to help. Then one day, someone showed you something that was probably not new at all, but explained it in a way that connected with you and let you put the tip to work—and it worked! That's all I can hope to do here: present a couple of things that you may have heard or seen before, but do it in a way that will stick with you. As you head out to your next assignment, I want to be sure you can hit with all the clubs in your bag, because you are going to need them.

Remember, above all else leadership is a contact sport. You can't carry out leadership actions at a distance. You have to be in the arena, hands on, all the time. Leadership is not a hobby—something that you do on occasion or when the mood strikes you. You have to be engaged in it totally, all the time, with all your energies, with everything you have. Your dedication to leadership must be all consuming and must be the most important aspect of your profession. Your obligation to the people you serve demands it. In this short time, I hope to cover some things that just might help you be successful.

Any good presentation, as you know, must be kept simple. As speakers should always follow the cardinal rule that you can only have three main points in any presen-

tation, here they are: Things you might want to know, things that would be useful for you to do, and things that you should believe in to become a successful leader.

Know, Do, Believe

There are actually three things worth knowing, four things that you must do, and three things worth believing. As you have probably been quick to realize, that adds up to 10. If that was good enough for God and Moses, it's good enough for you and me.

Know

Motivation

Have you ever gone to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to the annual airshow put on by the Experimental Aircraft Association? EAA's "Air Venture" is truly a unique event: the mother of all airshows. You can see everything from homebuilt airplanes to modern jet fighters, transports, and bombers, with World War I and II aircraft thrown in. There are flight demonstrations every day with airplanes you will never see except at an event like this. Half a million people or more attend the week-long show, and you can't help being impressed by the behavior and demeanor of the crowd. Cordial barely describes it. The airshow is a great family affair. People are polite and courteous. You never see unruly behavior, and you hear a lot of "Pardon me," "Excuse me," and "Oh, you were here before me." You have never felt safer or more comfortable in such a large crowd. Why? For one reason: all the people there have an interest in something larger than themselves. They all share a deep and abiding interest in aviation, and that interest is more important than any self-interest.

When I got my first motorcycle a couple of years ago, I thought I might as well totally immerse myself and go to a big motorcycle rally—one where the big dogs go. So I went to Sturgis, South Dakota. Sturgis is a small town (less than 5,000 people) that since before World War II has been a rallying point for motorcycle enthusiasts every year. Some bad boys take part: Hell's Angels, *Bandidos*, Sons of Silence, and the list goes on. There may be up to 150,000 motorcycles in this small town on any given day of the rally. It is one big street party. I really didn't know what to expect, but I found that I could go into any bar, restaurant, tavern, store, or anywhere in town at any time of the day or night and feel safe. Why? Because even in this rough-and-tumble crowd, people were drawn to this place because of a common interest in motorcycles. Admittedly, law enforcement had it well policed to take care of the occasional reveler who got carried away, but mostly one

could feel safe because everyone had a shared interest that was bigger than anything else for them that weekend: motorcycles.

You can easily see how important it is to the success of your mission to have a constituency of people who are so dedicated to a single purpose and so motivated that everything else is of secondary importance. How great, then, to incorporate this idea of motivating people—having them so interested in the unit's mission that everything else is secondary—into your approach to leadership! Problems melt away, people are happy in what they are doing and more effective, and mission performance is outstanding. So motivation is an essential tool.

Great Myth

The one great myth that I discovered after so many years was that you, the commander, can make any organization the best there is: that you can make it good, better, best. The truth is that there may be situations where you will be highly constrained in your ability to make major improvements by yourself. You do make a difference, but you can't do everything. A good leader will always improve an organization, but you cannot always guarantee that your unit is the best of its kind by yourself.

If you still have doubts about this, look at pro sports. How often do pro football teams repeat as national champions—Super Bowl winners? Not often. Does that mean the coach who won last year all of a sudden isn't as good this year? Is it merely the performance of the franchise quarterback or Most Valuable Player running back that makes the difference?

Take, for example, the flying training wings in Air Education and Training Command. At one time there were six similar Air Force pilot training wings. All had the same training jet aircraft, T-37s and T-38s; all had the same quality inputs of pilot-qualified and highly motivated young men and women who had recently graduated from college or one of the Service academies; the maintenance and support people at each base were all similarly qualified in their jobs; and the curriculum was exactly the same for all student pilots. Every year Air Education and Training Command conducted an unofficial evaluation of the wings to see which wing was the best. Yet it was rare that the best wing in a given year was able to repeat in the next year, even with the same wing commander.

Clearly, there were times when it was obvious to even the least astute among observers that the most competent wing commander did not have the outstanding wing. What accounts for this disparity? Obviously, many factors. The leadership within the organization as well as at the top is very important, and it could have changed due to rotation of personnel. A change in operational factors within the wing over which the wing commander had little or no control could have

played a significant role. Remember: an organization is a team, and you don't get to pick all the members or to hire and fire your personnel at will. The point is that, regardless of how well the commander leads, there is no guarantee that the unit will be the best in any given period, so don't worry about it.

"Well," you say, "I wasn't worrying about it anyhow." Good for you! But some of you are worrying; I was, and now I know why. I believe there is a bipolarity of leadership styles. We all know that leaders are generally considered to have a so-called "Type A personality". It is commonly thought that the more solidly Type A the leader is, the better he or she will likely be as a leader. Perhaps. But there are also two different people who reside within these Type A personalities. One is the person who is so proactive, so positive, that he or she knows they are going to win, be successful, be the top organization, win the prize, that defeat hardly, if ever, enters their mind. The other person within the Type A personality, while wanting to win, fears and loathes losing even more and will do almost anything to keep from losing—which to that person means ending up as anything less than number one. It is to this person that the recognition of the great myth is most important. I found out only after leaving active duty that I was one of those who couldn't stand to lose. Subconsciously, I probably always suspected this, and always wished I were that other someone. But it is important to see where you fall among these Type A leaders. By the way, not all leaders are even Type A personalities; just most of them are. I suspect, however, that the two different people—wanting to win and hating to lose—reside in every Type A personality.

Just remember: effective leaders, regardless of type, do make a difference, and if it were not for their leadership the unit would be less than it is. There is a lot you can do to enhance the performance of otherwise medium-performing people, and you need to get on with it. Some say that is the hallmark of superior leadership. I would agree.

Confidence

Who wants you to succeed the most? Your boss, of course. After all, he or she is probably the one who hired you or saw to it that you got the job. If it was not that person, then it was someone further up the chain who saw to it that you were hired, and that higher leader doesn't want to be accused of picking losers. Years after I had my first significant command, I was told the dirty little secret of how it works: the big guys select their commanders and then see to it that they succeed, because they want to be seen as people who can pick winning leaders.

Look at what happens in pro football or basketball. The leagues have an elaborate draft system and assign the draft picks so that there is some equity in the selection process; that is, the poorest performing teams pick first and so on. Once

they have chosen their new stars, the teams do everything in their power to give those people every chance to succeed. Why not? They have a lot invested in them. Do you think for a minute a walk-on has the same opportunity as the number one draft pick? To be sure, the number one draft pick has to prove himself. He has to perform—and sometimes he doesn't. He is then out of the game. But he gets a more than even chance—sometimes many chances—and so do you to prove yourself. You will be given a fair chance, but not many.

This means you ought to have a good feeling from the start about the organization and leaders above you. They selected you and they want you to succeed. So you ought to go about your duties with a fairly high degree of confidence that you are going to succeed, because you are—for two reasons: you're not stupid or you wouldn't be here, and your boss wants you to succeed.

Do

Create the Environment

Of the four things that you must do, the first and most important is to create the environment that brings out the best in your people—or, more precisely, the one that allows your people to do their best. There are many different categories of environments, but I believe there are two primary ones, which I call a happy environment and a realistic environment.

A happy environment is one which the leader seems to believe that if people are left alone, everyone will see what has to be done and will cheerfully and willingly perform his or her best in getting it done. This approach is not realistic. It does not address the conflicts that can and do arise from the organizational interaction between certain tasks and job functions and does not recognize that some people perform better than others—and that some people simply do not meet standards. Individual comfort levels are important, but getting the job done is more important. Getting it done right and on time is the most important. It is also important to believe that everyone wants to do his or her job (even though you know that this is not always the case) and do it well.

Years ago, I was the commander of a small outpost in rural Wisconsin. There were slightly less than 250 people assigned, with three other officers in addition to myself, and we were responsible for keeping some assigned aircraft from two other bases on a reduced strategic alert. While it was indeed a small base, we had to perform all the functions of a large base inasmuch as we had all the normal routine reports to be submitted, programs to run, and plans to execute, not to mention that we had nuclear weapons and all the detailed actions their presence demanded. But we had very few people to do the work, and many of those who were

assigned were not necessarily the cream of the crop. It looked like a sleepy little outpost, but was not. That's probably why they summarily fired the person I replaced and left me with several Congressional inquiries and unsatisfactory inspections that had to be cleaned up.

We had several government-leased rental houses in a 30-mile radius of the base for the married personnel, some contract physicians, and even contract chaplains from the surrounding small towns. Directly across the highway from the base was a small (less than 1,000 population) town with a Catholic parish and a pastor by the name of Father Chilecki. Father Chilecki was a second-generation American of Czech descent, small, slightly built, quiet, and unassuming. Before I got there he had been given pretty much the run of the base, except for the classified areas, and I saw no reason to change the policy. He visited the base a couple of days a week, and more often than not he would stop by my office on his way home to have a cup of coffee and chat.

One day, as he was getting up to leave, he said, "Bud, I hope you don't mind me stopping by to chat and have coffee with you." If he had only known, he was the one bright thing I had to look forward to: one, if not the only one, of the truly intelligent people I could carry on a rational conversation about anything deeper than the weather. I assured him it was no problem whatsoever and that I liked having him stop by and looked forward to his visits. He replied, "Well, thank you. You know, we are, you and I, in the same business."

No, I didn't know that. After all, I was one of the truly great fighter pilots (in my mind), and had just finished a successful tour as a Navy exchange pilot, completed 110 missions into North Vietnam off Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf, had 219 carrier landings, and considered my profession to be as far removed from that of a priest with a small Catholic parish as one could get.

He went on, "You see, of course, you do the same things I do. I have a parish of a few hundred people, who are farmers, carpenters, merchants, teachers, homemakers, and what have you, and they have problems. My job is to help them with their lives so that they can go on to be useful citizens and support their families and their communities—so that they can do the things that they are skilled in doing. You do the same thing. I know you fly occasionally, but your main job is to be sure your people are taken care of, and that their human and personal needs are met so that they can go on to maintain the airplanes and the facility and have everything ready if we should have to go to war. To make sure they can do their jobs. That's what you do: you create the environment that allows them to do their job. Same as I do."

I had just finished a year-long course in residence at the Air Command and Staff College, and a few years before that had attended another professional school

called Squadron Officers School, and I must have heard something like that before; but I don't remember it. I do vividly remember that brief discussion with Father Chilecki and which has stuck with me ever since. Of course! How was it I never thought of it before? How is it that no one had impressed me with that idea before? It profoundly changed my whole approach to leadership from that moment forward. Create the environment! It sounds simple, and it might be in some cases. But simple or not, it is vital to successful leadership.

Some years later, as the wing commander at Williams Air Force Base (AFB), Arizona, I was on the flight line one early Saturday morning checking on the preparations for flight operations. We didn't normally fly on Saturdays, unless we were far behind in student training. We were, and no one was very happy about it: not me, not higher HQ, not the staff, and certainly not my troops who would much rather be enjoying the weekend off as they were supposed to do.

Since it required the entire flying organization to work, but not the base support functions, it was even more important for me to be seen where the action was. Besides, you learn so much more that way. As I rode down the flight line on my bicycle, I could see where the centers of activity were coming to life and where they were late in getting started. As I approached the T-38 flight line, one of the crew chiefs was already underneath an airplane beginning his preflight inspection—the first crew chief to do so. I stopped in front of the airplane and saw the crew chief peek out from underneath the plane. He said, "Sir, do you mind if I finish here first?" Of course I didn't, and told him so. A few minutes later he came up from under the airplane, walked over to me, and asked, "Can I help you, sir?"

"No, son," I said, "just wondered if I could help you. You're the only one out here so far." He said he was fine, and then he said, "Sir, there is one thing you could answer for me." "Yeah, what's that?" I asked. "Well," he began, "how come I have to put on my Class A uniform and come up to HQ and talk to a bunch of senior enlisted folks about politics and world issues and other stuff that has nothing to do with my job?"

I then recognized the young man. I had seen him before at the little Italian restaurant just outside the main gate when on occasion I had gone out to get some carry-out pizza for dinner. We had spoken to each other before and I remembered he was from Tennessee.

I also remembered him because I had recently given a talk at Commander's Call in the base theater with reference to driving safety—particularly motorcycle safety. We had recently lost two young men in fatal motorcycle accidents late at night returning to the base. It bothered me a great deal, and at the time, if I had had the authority, I would have seriously considered making the ownership of motorcycles unauthorized. This man owned a motorcycle and didn't like the inference.

What he was complaining about was having to put on the dress uniform and appearing before a board of senior noncommissioned officers to interview for the Outstanding Airman of the Quarter. It was supposed to be an honor to be chosen to appear for the interview and an even greater honor to win the competition against similar Airmen from other organizations in the wing. There were several prizes given: a three-day pass, free dinners at some of the best restaurants in town, a $50 savings bond, free movie tickets, picture in the local paper with a favorable write-up, and a press release for the winner's hometown newspaper, among others.

I explained to him why it should be considered an honor and remembered that he had already won for the previous quarter. I also explained that in addition to the awards he might win for this competition, he would also be in the running for Airman of the Year; his name would go forward to the command HQ and he would be eligible for even higher level awards. I told him that is how we recognize our outstanding people and he could be proud of that.

Then he gave me a very important insight. He said, "Sir, those things don't mean that much to me. I came into the Air Force because I wanted to work on airplanes. That's what I like to do most and that's what makes me happiest. If you want to do something for me, how about getting rid of the dead weight around here? There's a couple of guys in this flight that I saw downtown last night who were still there when I left and they aren't here to work yet. They had too much to drink, they were smoking pot, and they won't do a damn lick of work when they get here. Anything that they might do around an airplane I'll have to double-check because I wouldn't trust them to do it right. I would rather have fewer people doing the job right than the right number of people made up of some of those whose work you have to do over. If you want to do something for me that I really like, do that. That would be my reward."

This kid was a three-striper (Senior Airman). He wasn't even in a supervisory role, and he saw the big picture more clearly than anyone else. He was right. The point was simply this: recognize that everyone does his or her job (and let them do it); reward the truly outstanding performers (less than 5 percent); train those who do not know how to do their jobs (or retrain them if required); find more useful employment for those who can't meet standards (return them to civilian life if necessary); always set the example; and communicate. This is insight you would expect to get from upper level leadership, but I got it from a three-striper crew chief from Tennessee.

Understand the Situation

Command and leadership depend largely on what is required. That is, the situation creates the demand for the type of leadership that is necessary for mission success.

Leadership, then, is situational. We should spend some extra time on this point to fully understand the pressures and unique situations in which operations group commanders will find themselves. I firmly believe that in your position as an operations group commander, perhaps more than in any other, your leadership skills will be tested to the maximum. Why is that? Leadership is still leadership, isn't it? All the principles are still in effect, aren't they? Yes, but an ops group commander will have to be many things to many people, and sometimes all at the same time.

Here's why I say that. You will have to apply your best leadership to your subordinates, your peers, and your superiors—and in the operations group commanders' arena it will have to be applied to all three, usually at the same location, frequently on the same day, and sometimes in the same room simultaneously. There will be no such thing as talking and behaving one way to your squadron commanders and having a different demeanor for your boss. You are going to have to find a way to apply the tenets of good leadership to everyone and make it work up, down, and across, and on a daily basis.

We used to say there was no such thing as a personality conflict with your boss. If there was a conflict, the problem must be your personality, not your boss's. If there was a disagreement, it was your problem. It still is, and you will have to deal with it as never before, but the same will not necessarily apply to those who work for you.

Today's Air Force is faced with tremendous civilian competition. Personnel have been deluged with numerous outside offers, including job opportunities and positions that far exceed those that have been available before. So you will have to find ways to apply yourself to your subordinates. You will not have the luxury of merely firing people who do not perform up to their potential; there aren't enough qualified people out there to take their place. Besides, you won't have the time to go through the replacement process. You can replace someone once in a while, but you are going to be better off going the extra step and bringing your subordinate commanders along. That means to a large degree that you are going to have to interact with your subordinates to some extent differently than the way your commanders interacted with you, so it's going to be new to you.

In addition, you will have to muster all of your leadership skills to ensure that you are an effective team member with your group commander peers. I know: we all think that operations is more important than the support side of the house. But whether it is or not, you will not be furthering the cause of the mission if there is dissension among peers. There is no room for jealousies, competition for recognition and rewards, or bravado about who is best or most important. Pride and the acknowledgment that everyone has an important job to do must be dealt with equally. Your superior—your boss, your immediate commander—will want to see that you can be a leader among leaders, not a leader above leaders. Wing

commanders expect their group commanders to be team builders and team players while still leading their troops.

Of course, you must also show the requisite leadership abilities to your immediate commander. If you are performing well with your peers, your boss will see that and know it, but in addition, your boss must see in you the capacity for even more responsibility. You must be able to serve him or her as he or she wants you to serve, while still maintaining the type of leadership necessary for your subordinates and peers. Your boss wants to see a strong leader and commander who can get the job done while building the strength and capability of all the units in his or her command. That's no small job, but it is yours.

You have to be effective in all these arenas. No one is more important than the others, and they are interdependent. The one who performs equally well in all of them will be the most effective leader.

Train

Probably the most important single function that goes on in the Air Force on any given day is training. If you took all the duty time spent and all the flight time flown by the US Air Force since it became its own service in 1947, you'd probably find that over 95 percent of it was spent in training. We even flew some training events when we were coming back from combat missions. Training is what we do the most, and for good reason. You can never be too good at what you do.

Training is not just formal school training. We are always training someone to replace us. Flight leads train wingmen; flight commanders train flight leads; ops officers train flight commanders; squadron commanders train ops officers. In prisoner of war camps, leaders always maintained a succession to command. We had to be sure that someone was ready to take the lead if the senior officer was taken out of the system for some reason.

Some leaders believe they have to know everything about everything: that they should be knowledgeable enough about every function in the organization so they could perform every job as well as the people assigned to do it. They try to be the expert in every facet of the operation. This is not the way to succeed. The all-knowledge leader is not the successful one: the all-understanding one is.

Sometimes leaders have the mistaken notion that to be successful they must be indispensable. They make the mistake of trying to make themselves too important to the unit and the mission. However, great leaders cause an organization to run so well that his or her absence is scarcely noticed. The important thing to remember is that as a leader you do not want to be indispensable: on the contrary, you want to build a team, not an empire.

Help

Help always means "get help." No one ever said you had to do it all yourself, and that's a good thing, too, because you can't! You'll need support from organizations around you and from within your organization. Whoever said leadership can't come from within?

A major impediment sometimes develops in an area from which you should be getting the most support: the HQ. Normally every major function in a wing organization has a parallel function at the HQ, and every wing has a stovepipe(vertical functional integration) problem to some degree. The reason is that your functional chief's career progression relies, to a large extent, on the opinion of the Major Command (MAJCOM) functional managers as well as the opinion of his or her immediate commander, so the chief tries to please both and sometimes the unit commander gets short shrift.

Early on, I got tired of having the MAJCOM staff trying to run my wing for me, so I made some appointments, went to the HQ, and spent a day and a half in meetings with the various staffs. In these meetings, I had something for everybody to lean into. I told them some of the things I was trying to do and how I could use their help in getting them done. This gave them buy-in to our organization and made them feel like they were part of our team (they were, of course), but now they worked with me and saw our mission through our eyes, and not their functional staff eyes. This approach really works. You want to build a constituency: a group of supporters who want to be part of a successful operation and know they played a role in it. In other words, you want to develop a community. It's your organization to command and lead, but the more participation you can get, the more resources you can bring to bear on your problems—and the more help you'll get for your initiatives.

Maybe Air Training Command (ATC) was special; I know that Bennie Davis was. I was at the Academy when I was selected to become the wing commander of Williams AFB. I had to go to Randolph for my executive instructor pilot check-out just before graduation, then back to the Academy to clean things up, then on to Williams AFB. I had only met General Davis once, briefly, at a dining in, and hadn't talked to him at all since he had called to tell me I was getting the assignment. I had just finished my last flight in the morning and was back at the bachelor officer quarters packing my bags (the jet taking me back to Colorado Springs was blocked for takeoff in about an hour), when the phone rang. General Davis's secretary wanted to know if I could drop by and see him before I left. The answer was "Yes."

As a matter of fact, I had been thinking all that week, "Should I call him and ask if he wants to see me? Should I ask for an appointment and go in to just sort of check him out—or what?" So I was greatly relieved when I was asked to go see him. That meeting took less time than it takes to tell about it. I didn't even sit down. It went like this:

Davis: "Well, Bud, how did the training go?"
Me: "Fine, sir."
Davis: "You're getting a great wing out there."
Me: "Yes, sir."
Davis: "I don't think there are any problems."
Me: "No, sir."
Davis: "If you need anything, my phone is right here. Call me direct; you don't have to go through anybody else."
Me: "Thank you, sir."
Davis: "Of course, if there is anything you think I should have a heads-up on, give me a call. No one likes surprises."
Me: "Yes, sir."
Davis: "It's your wing. You make the decisions. Good luck."
Me: "Thank you, sir."

And as I turned to leave:
Davis: "When you have some nice weather and you don't have anything else to do, give me a call and I'll jump in the T-39 and come out and play some golf with you."
Me: "Yes, sir; thank you, sir."

Seven months later I reported to the HQ as a brigadier general select and went to my new office as the ATC/LG (Logistics): a job I was ill prepared for, ill at ease with, and which was vacant because the previous incumbent had already departed for the Pentagon. After three days of thrashing around (moving the furniture), I began to wonder, once again, if I should ask for an appointment to see the boss, or just what protocol would require a new one-star (general) in a new job to follow next. I knew the weekly staff meeting was coming up on Monday; this was Thursday, and I was clueless. Then my secretary came in and said that General Davis's office was on the phone and the general wanted to know if I had a moment to see him. My answer was, "Yes, sir."

That meeting took about 20 minutes. It was simple and direct. Essentially he said to me: "Bud, you know how I treat my commanders. I give them all the latitude they need to succeed. I expect my staff to support them and give them everything legal that they need to command and lead successfully. If they want some-

thing the regs don't permit, the staff should advise them and then try to find a way to get it done, legally. If it's important and a reg (regulation) needs changing, change it. Your job is not to prepare briefing charts and position papers for me: your job is to support our commanders in the field. I only pick the commanders who can succeed. When they falter, I look first to see if the staff is supporting them adequately. I expect you to work with the HQ staff across the board. Remember: the mission is not here at the HQ. The mission is done in the field. Welcome to the staff, and I'm glad to have you on board. Can you play golf this Saturday morning?" Me: "Yes, sir."

That's what I call guidance. What a concept! Believe me, it causes you to think, every night when you leave your office, "Have I done everything I can to support the commanders in the field? Is there something I forgot? Is there something else that could have been done? Is what we have done going to produce the desired effect? Did the measures taken get to the field in a useful way?"

Believe

There are three things, at least, in which to believe—and remember; there is a big difference between what you know and what you believe. You bet your soul on what you believe, but you bet your life on what you know. What you believe in is what got you into the fight; what you know is what gets you to the target and back.

Geronimo. What is that? It's a term that was used in training WWII paratroopers. They were supposed to shout it when they went out of the airplane to keep them from holding their breath, to give the static lines a few seconds to deploy the chute, and as a signal that they ought to pull their reserve chute. But it's also the name of a famous Native American chief, and it reminds me of a common trait of almost all Native American tribes. It is widely known that Native Americans knew they had to live with the land—in fact, that they lived within the land. They used everything from whatever they killed; they wasted nothing. They ate the meat; used the hides, the hoofs, the horns, the teeth, everything; and they only killed what they needed. They knew that if they overkilled, they would go hungry later. They didn't believe in "owning" anything, including land. They had to be in harmony with their surroundings and live with the land and within it. They could only take what nature offered.

I know of countless stories from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam where leaders came into an organization and did a seemingly fantastic job. The problem is that they burned off all the flying time, used up the resources, made sure the right guys got the right missions, got the medals, shot down the Russian Mikoyan fighter jets (MiGs, as they're more commonly known), and then left. The next poor chap had a team that was not ready to go: too many people not fully qualified in all the

missions, and not enough good airplanes to get the job done. However, this is not your command to own: it is yours to maintain, to make better, and to leave to the next leader as an organization that is better than it was when you found it. It's called stewardship.

I had a squadron commander at Williams AFB who had come from legislative liaison at the Pentagon and kept harping on me to have some "CODELs" visit the base. I had no idea what a CODEL was (it's a Congressional delegation). After he explained it to me, I still didn't get the point; after all, I had a job to do and they should have one as well. But he went on to explain it was sort of my duty to take the time to have them out there to see at firsthand what we did, and how important it was, so they could get back to their Armed Services Committees, for example, and pass better legislation that would help us do our mission. So I relented.

The first visitor was Bob Dornan, and he was really good. He was a conservative Republican from California with a military background and was a great military supporter. The next was a lady named Beverly Byron, a Maryland Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, who was known to be fairly supportive of the military. Beverly's husband had been a congressman who dropped dead while jogging along the canal in Georgetown and she had filled his term in office and won reelection in her own right. When she came, we gave her the usual briefings and a flight in the T-38. We were the first wing to graduate woman pilots and have women instructor pilots, so she wanted to really get into that aspect of training.

I did have a minor problem going on and was hoping it wouldn't get aired there. I had a woman pilot about to graduate who was single when she got there, but married one of the instructors as she was going through training. They were both being reassigned and she didn't like the assignments they were getting: she was going to Norton AFB to fly C-141s and he was going to March AFB to fly KC-135s. She had made some serious noise to Personnel and threatened to call her congressman. I had granted her an interview to try to see what her thinking was on an Air Force career. I explained to her that they could live between the two bases and each commute, and it should work out very well. She would have none of it; she wanted them to both be at the same base, flying the same aircraft. When I asked her how she saw the next 10–15 years in the Air Force together, she went through the whole thing: first assignment together, flying the same airplane, in the same squadron, on the same missions; going to Squadron Officer School together; then another assignment; then Command and Staff College together; then the Pentagon together, etc. I told her she was dreaming and there was little or no chance of that scenario playing out.

Come Friday, Beverly was holding court at a table right in front of the bar where no one could miss her, and one of the very first people who came up to bat

was this young woman. I edged over to hear what was going on and I heard Beverly give her an earful. She told her how she lost her husband and had to do some things that she never thought she would have to, and how life does not give you any guarantees, only opportunities. She told that young woman that she had one now, but if she couldn't see that, maybe she ought to get out of the service now. I wish I could have said that!

The next morning, Saturday, I was giving Beverly a tour of the base and explaining all the things my wing was doing to improve living and working conditions. There was, luckily, only a small entourage of people as I showed her what my wing had done with self-help projects, what my wing was getting accomplished with military construction projects, etc., when she stopped me short by saying, "Colonel, you keep saying 'my wing.' I thought this all belonged to the taxpayers."

I felt as though I had just won the Olympic gold medal for javelin catching—I mean, right in the gut. She was right: this wasn't *my* wing. I don't think I really felt it was, but I was over-identifying with it. Everything on that base belongs to our country, and so do the people. I'm only the steward. I am entrusted with the responsibility to take care of the wing; to see that the assigned mission is taken care of and the resources are used wisely and effectively. It's like the Native American belief: I must live with what I've got. I can't waste it. Leadership is stewardship!

Be Yourself

You would think the easiest thing in the world to do would be to be yourself. That's not necessarily so. We can allow ourselves, over time, to be so concerned with leadership styles—because we have spent so much time and effort in studying them—that we have a tendency to forget who we are. So don't be concerned with leadership styles; you are going to have to use different ones at different times anyhow.

Remember, leadership is situational. You will have to adapt your talents and skills to the situation you find yourself in. That doesn't mean that leadership fundamentals, traits, and characteristics are no longer valid, aren't relevant, or must be compromised. It just means you have to apply different approaches in different measures as the situation calls for them.

Remember this: you can't fool your people. Given time—and not a lot of it either—they will probably get to know the real you, and if you are a phony, they will know it sooner than you think. So be yourself.

I always wanted to visualize myself as the group commander played by Gregory Peck, in the movie "Twelve O'Clock High". Too bad, because I'm not Gregory Peck and there aren't any more B-17 bomber aircraft around anyhow. That doesn't mean I can't use some of the leadership lessons portrayed in that mag-

nificent movie of nearly 75 years ago, but I can't be Gregory Peck, and it would be a bad mistake to try to be.

This is a natural tendency. When I was a new second lieutenant in Europe, our squadron commander was the one and only Chuck Yeager. He never said much—and he really wasn't around much, unfortunately—but he had a major impact on the squadron. You couldn't help but notice how the guys talked over the air: everyone had a tendency to mimic that West Virginia drawl of his. Most noticeable was the way he said "Roger." It always came out "Uh-Roj." People wanted to be like him, to sound like him, and, most importantly, to be able to fly like him. However, of course, just saying the words doesn't get the job done. There will only be one Chuck Yeager. There may be better squadron commanders, but no one like him.

I know you want to be good at what you do, so know this: so do your people. They want good leadership, and they will assume you are going to give it to them until you prove otherwise. They also know you are human and that you will make mistakes; they just don't want too many of them. They want you to be slightly better than they are in the performance of your duties, and if you do no more than be just as good as they are, they will elevate you anyhow, because they want a leader they can look up to. So don't try elevating yourself ahead of time; it won't work. Let them do it for you, they will. You can't fool your people, just be yourself. That's why we picked you: we like you the way you are.

Selflessness

I place importance on all the areas we've talked about so far, but if there is one that probably holds most of the keys to your success it's probably here; if you have properly defined success.

Service is what we are all about: we wear a uniform; we are by definition in a service. To serve means being willing to place service above self and realizing that the greatest pleasure you can derive is to serve: others, mission, country, unit—something bigger than yourself, something more important than self. You have to want to serve this mission, your unit, your people, this duty, to the point where this service is even more important than being recognized for the part you play in it. You have to feel that it matters little or not at all who gets the credit when it goes right—and not be afraid to take the blame when it goes wrong. You might as well get used to it, because you won't always get credit for things that go right, but you will get the blame when they go wrong. But if you have arrived at the true level of service, of selflessness, where your desire to serve is dominant over your desire for personal recognition, reward, or distinction,

then you are probably going to be successful, and so will all your people, because you will have set the example of success.

Thank you and good hunting to you all. ❑

Col Richard Reynolds, USAF (Ret.)

Served 23 years in fighter operations at various locations throughout the world including the Middle East, Europe, and Southeast Asia. His writings include a Harvard University publication, *What Fighter Pilot's Mothers Never Told Them About Tactical Command and Control—and Certainly Should Have*, and an Air University Press book, *Heart of the Storm—The Genesis Of The Air Campaign Against Iraq*, now in its 11th printing. Colonel Reynolds resides in Huntsville, Alabama.

Maj Gen William J. Breckner, USAF (Ret.)

MG William "Bud" Breckner flew a wide variety of fighter and interceptor aircraft in his 31-year Air Force career, which included two tours with the Navy as an exchange pilot flying 100 combat missions in A-4s off the USS *Intrepid* on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. He returned to South East Asia flying F-4 Phantoms and while over Hanoi was hit by a surface-to-air missile and spent time there as a prisoner of war. Upon his repatriation in March of 1973, General Breckner flew the F-106 and commanded the Air Force Interceptor Weapons School. A charismatic and innovative leader, General Breckner rose quickly through a series of key positions in the Air Force and ended his career as the 17th Air Force Commander at Sembach Air Base, Germany. While there, he designed, built, and commanded the first Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Europe that led to the modernization and effective use of airpower we see today. General Breckner died in an automobile accident on 16 February 2008.