

Section 1
ORIGINAL MILITARY STUDIES

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ESSENTIALS OF LEADERSHIP

A Lecture by

Major General H.J. Brees, United States Army

The subject of this lecture is one about which volumes have been written. I claim no originality. On the contrary, I quote freely from articles I have read on this subject although I have endeavored to incorporate my own individual views.

One may roughly divide all mankind into two general classifications: leaders and followers. This is true no matter what walk of life or what profession, business, or pursuit. There are leaders and followers in all. We are concerned here with military leadership, although it is an interesting comparison to note whether the qualities we deem essential in military leadership are also deemed essential qualities of leadership in other professions or business. What are considered necessary qualities to differentiate the leader from the follower can only be deduced by a study of the lives and characteristics of past and present leaders. Pertinent also to the question is a determination as to whether these qualities are innate or are cultivated and developed.

It is probable that no one person ever possesses *all* the qualities the various writers consider essential. Such a person would be a super being. But it is probable that all leaders, and by that we mean successful leaders, do possess in common a number of so-called essential characteristics. So let us first determine what we mean by "essential" and what we mean by "leadership." "Essential" is defined as "important in the highest degree; indispensable to the attainment of an object; indispensably necessary." An apt synonym would be "needful." A "leader" is defined as "a chief, a commander, one having authority to precede and direct." By adding the suffix "ship" we find

that "leadership" means the "quality or ability to lead." Consequently this lecture is intended as an endeavor to determine, if possible, from out of the mass of desirable qualifications those "needful or indispensably necessary qualities" that one must possess to become a successful leader of military men.

In reading articles on this subject, one is impressed by the variety and scope of qualifications considered desirable by various writers. It is my endeavor to select those that are considered absolutely necessary. Many of you will probably disagree with me, for one's point of view is always colored by one's ideas and ideals. To arrive at a conclusion, therefore, I propose to list some (probably not all) of the characteristics or qualities considered necessary and from these to select those which seem to be predominant or which, in my opinion, are the essential or absolutely necessary ones.

I have consequently arranged, alphabetically, a considerable number of qualities or characteristics which various writers have listed as needful or desirable qualities of leadership. This list is by no means all inclusive. Let us analyze these and see if we can determine certain ones which are inherent to all or most leaders and consequently necessary to all to a greater or lesser degree. In conning over this list, we note a number which are practically synonymous, or so co-related as to be treated together.

Desirables

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|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Ambition | 15. Example | 29. Professional fitness |
| 2. Age | 16. Fairness | 30. Personal appearance |
| 3. Courage | 17. Honor | 31. Personality |
| 4. Character | 18. Initiative | 32. Perseverance |
| 5. Coolness | 19. Intelligence | 33. Prestige |
| 6. Confidence | 20. Imagination | 34. Psychology |
| 7. Common sense | 21. Industry | 35. Popularity |
| 8. Duty | 22. Judgment | 36. Responsibility |
| 9. Decision | 23. Justice | 37. Resourcefulness |
| 10. Dignity | 24. Knowledge | 38. Self-control |
| 11. Energy | 25. Knowledge of men | 39. Self-knowledge |
| 12. Enthusiasm | 26. Loyalty | 40. Sense of humor |
| 13. Executive ability | 27. Physical fitness | 41. Tenacity of purpose. |
| 14. Endurance | 28. Physique | |

AMBITION.—Strictly speaking, ambition is the eager or inordinate desire for self-advancement or preferment, honor, and power. Properly controlled, it is a desirable characteristic, for without ambition one is apt to stagnate or become self-satisfied. One of our outstanding military leaders was intensely ambitious, but, coupled with his ambition were other traits

which counterbalanced his tremendous ambitions and made success possible. Yet in the end there is no doubt that his inordinate desire for power led to his undoing. I refer to Napoleon. Ambition within reason is necessary, for it leads to the development of other desirable traits. Unbridled ambition becomes ruthlessness and frequently license.

AGE.—Age, endurance, physical fitness and physique are more or less inter-related and will be considered together. It has been said that war is a young man's game. However, age is a comparative term. One man may be old in his youth because of a frail physique, a lack of physical fitness, or because of physical defects. Another may be strong and sturdy in old age. The leaders of the lower echelons must perforce be in their early maturity to withstand the hardships and the hurly-burly of physical contact inherent in those echelons. On the other hand, the man of age may, because of experience and physical fitness, be fully capable and qualified physically to command the higher echelons. The end of our Civil War found few, if any, of our commanders and soldiers beyond middle age. The conclusion of the World War found armies commanded by men in their fifties to the case of Hindenburg, who was seventy-odd years of age.

Physical fitness is absolutely essential regardless of age or physique. If one is not fit physically, his judgment, his mental ability, and all that goes with it must suffer. If one is not physically fit, it is impossible to stand the stress and strain incident to warfare. Endurance diminishes and with it comes all the aftermath of the uncoordinated action of the physical and mental make-up.

The matter of physique, and by that we mean the physical make-up of a man, including posture and carriage, is something of not relatively great importance. The tall, sturdy, well-set-up man attracts attention and invites confidence, but unless he has other attributes, this is one of the least of the desirable qualities. The thin man is frequently possessed of infinite endurance. The man who carries excess baggage is handicapped and, if medical records are correct, is less apt to be able to withstand the rigors of active campaign.

COURAGE.—By courage we mean both physical and mental courage. Probably the majority of human beings are possessed of a considerable amount of physical courage, if physically fit. Moral courage is far more rare. The power to take action

which will result in loss of life, or to do things which one knows are right and proper, but which will have unpleasant repercussions, demand moral courage. Many of us are inclined to temporize, to procrastinate, or to dodge the issue. This is a form of moral cowardice. The leader of a squad or platoon must have physical courage. He may be a moral coward, but unless he has the physical courage his usefulness as a leader is at an end at once. On the contrary, the leader of a division, or a corps, or an army, must have moral courage in the highest degree. Physically he may be a craven and get away with it.

CHARACTER.—Character is that innate something which is hard to describe. It may refer to one's reputation for morals or for probity, or may be the sum of distinguishing traits or characteristics. Closely allied to character is personality; yet to my mind there is a distinct difference. A man of character engenders respect which in turn engenders loyalty and obedience. Yet a man of high character may lack other essential traits. Conversely, a man may possess all the other desirable traits of a leader and still fail as one because of undesirable traits of character. Character implies moral cleanliness, force, ardour, sincerity and will to do, to say nothing of personal magnetism. General Robert E. Lee is probably as fine an example as any of this most desirable characteristic.

COOLNESS.—Coolness means the ability to remain calm and self-possessed in times of stress and danger. It flows from knowledge and physical fitness.

CONFIDENCE.—This is assurance in one's self. It springs from thorough knowledge of one's profession and a perfect physical and mental balance.

DUTY.—Duty, responsibility, and honor go hand in hand. It means that inner something which is greater than self. It is devotion to the job. It is that transcendent something to which the military man devotes his life. It is allied to patriotism but yet is something more. It means the assumption of responsibility without regard to the attendant trials and tribulations incident thereto.

COMMON SENSE.—Common sense is the ability to take action along simple and sane lines with no frills and no extraneous matters to distract the mind from the main issue. It is the quintessence of the application of the practical to the theoretical. And yet, how many of us fail to apply simple and practical methods to practical issues. Common sense implies

good judgment. To say that a leader has good judgment is just another way of saying he has common sense.

DECISION.—To the natural born leader, if there is such a person, the power of decision is a second nature. It is inherent in the man. The leader must be decisive. He must have confidence in himself and here again he must have knowledge and be physically and mentally fit. A poor decision promptly rendered and rigorously followed is infinitely better than no decision at all. Vacillation has no place in the make-up of a real leader. However, wrong decisions if made too frequently lead to loss of prestige and lack of confidence. The real leader is never a straddler.

DIGNITY.—Dignity and personal appearance are closely allied. It implies carriage, decorum, and dress. The leader who behaves in an undignified manner will have an undignified command which may even be a rabble. The leader who is careless and sloppy in his dress will have a sloppy command. By dignified demeanor I do not mean the stuffed shirt type. With him dignity is merely a front to cover his ignorance or lack of knowledge.

ENERGY.—Energy, enthusiasm, and industry go hand in hand. It is an old saying that a command takes its tone from its commander. One who is energetic, enthusiastic, and industrious will find that that spirit permeates his organization. He may be the driver type, but men are willing to be driven if they know the "Old Man" is working as hard as they are. If he is the persuasive type, he will engender energy, enthusiasm, and industry by his force of example. But here again we have to go back to physical fitness as a basis. No commander who is not physically fit can imbue his command with his enthusiasm and industry.

EXECUTIVE ABILITY.—This means the ability to direct men along definite lines to secure coordination of effort. With our large modern and diversified staffs, coordination is essential and a leader must have the knowledge and ability to so shape their efforts as to reach the desired result with the minimum of friction and lost motion.

EXAMPLE.—The force of example is a most potent factor. It is a trait or characteristic which a leader should be very scrupulous in developing. He should set the standard by which he gauges others. I said a moment ago that a command takes

its tone from its commander. In no respect is this more true than in the force of example.

FAIRNESS.—Fairness and justice are the same. No commander can play favorites and get away with it for any length of time. He should be most careful to hear both sides of a question whenever possible, but if time does not permit, and the occasion demands, justice must be rendered firmly, promptly, and impartially. A leader who is a square-shooter can demand much of his command. And he can be sure of getting results willingly, freely, and gladly if he is known as a square-shooter. When necessary, action may be ruthless provided it is just and impartial. No display of anger or lack of self-control must be shown. Action must be cold-blooded but fair.

INITIATIVE.—Initiative, imagination, and resourcefulness may well be coupled together. While not synonymous they are so closely related that one merges into the other. Initiative is the trait of taking needed action without necessarily waiting for orders. In order to take initiative, one must have imagination and must have resources within himself. To put it in the vernacular, a leader must keep one jump ahead of the other fellow, be it his enemy or his staff.

INTELLIGENCE.—Intelligence is the faculty of understanding. It goes without saying, therefore, that a leader must know his business and have a greater and more complete grasp of his profession than his fellow men. His mind must be adaptable, and he must be capable of absorbing new ideas, new thoughts, new trends, and new developments promptly and easily. Woodenness is certainly not a trait for a leader. The mere fact that he is a leader presupposes an intelligent mind.

KNOWLEDGE.—Under knowledge I am grouping the headings of knowledge, knowledge of men, professional fitness, and self-knowledge. In other words, I consider the term as all-embracing. To me it is self-evident that a leader must not only know all about his profession and all its ramifications, but he must also have a broad general knowledge as well. This means constant study and reading. He must be well grounded and well rounded. He must not only know military history, but he must be up to date and must be able to look into the future as far as it is humanly possible to do so. Especially must he know men, for it is with men that he is dealing. He must not only know them individually but must know them in the mass. He must have a knowledge of individual psy-

chology, and he must have a knowledge of mass psychology. If a leader knows his men, can talk their language, knows their problems, and can convince them he has their interests at heart, he can do with them almost anything he wishes. This can come only by association with them and by command of them in the lower grades. In modern warfare it is next to impossible for high commanders to have the close personal contact of by-gone days when men were led by force of example. General Pershing was almost a myth to the men in the A.E.F.; yet he is probably one of our greatest commanders. Those division commanders who were seen by their men at the front were almost idolized. A leader who tries to bluff his way is inevitably doomed. As P.T. Barnum put it, "You can fool some of the people all of the time; all of the people some of the time; but you can't fool all of the people all of the time."

Asidè from mental knowledge, if I may so express it, a knowledge of men, knowledge of one's self is just as important. Every leader, or potential leader, should subject himself to the closest possible personal scrutiny and find out how he ticks. In this way only can he ascertain his shortcomings and thus take steps to overcome and correct his personal deficiencies.

LOYALTY.—It is an unfortunate thing that loyalty is all too often one-sided. There is one thing a commander should never forget and that is loyalty begets loyalty. Leaders expect loyalty from those under them. In return they should be equally loyal to them. Firmness and discipline are no bar to loyalty. Ability, a square deal, that intangible something called personality will invariably produce a spontaneous loyalty which the French call *esprit-de-corps*. If a leader expects loyalty, he must give it himself, both to his superiors and to his subordinates. He must look after them and fight their battles. A leader or anyone else who gripes, knocks, criticises, or gossips can neither give loyalty nor expect it.

PERSEVERANCE.—Perseverance and tenacity of purpose are one and the same thing. This means the intestinal fortitude, or guts if you will, to carry on to the bitter end. It means the sticking to a thing, whole heartedly. It is the reverse of being a quitter. When everything is black and things look hopeless, it takes will-power of the highest sort to keep plugging along. I consider Grant's statement, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," classic.

PRESTIGE.—Prestige is a dominant factor if it rests on a firm foundation of character and ability. If not, it is like a house built on the sand. In this life we are prone to judge men by what they do in the present, not by what they have done in the past. "By their deeds ye shall know them."

POPULARITY.—Equally dangerous is popularity. Probably nothing is more ephermal or evanescent. Popularity, based on a foundation of worth and ability, is a most desirable attribute, but unless it is so based it is short lived.

SELF-CONTROL.—Self-control is most important. There is a saying that to control others one must first learn to control one's self. Mastery of one's self means mastery of others. Self-control inspires confidence. Lack of self-control means lack of moral fiber.

SENSE OF HUMOR.—While a desirable trait, it is by no means an essential attribute. Nevertheless, a sense of humor helps materially to oil the pathway of life and to bring a ray of light into the gloom of darkness. It eases and appeases the mental and physical tension in times of stress.

The above is an attempt at a brief and hasty analysis of attributes considered desirable in leaders by writers in different walks of life. It is certain that no one man can possess them all—at any rate not in equal proportion. The attempt should now be made to cull from the list those that are deemed essential, whether inborn or acquired. We should also consider the type or kind of leader we have in mind. All of us are potential leaders of greater or lesser degree, by virtue of the commissions we hold. However, the placing of a commission in our hands does not make all of us leaders in the true sense of the word. Some of us may be born leaders; whereas others of us may be better fitted potentially as advisers or staff officers. Here we are not concerned primarily with the leaders of small units, but we are vitally interested in the essentials of leadership that go to make division and corps commanders. So our conclusions should be based on that premise.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to arrange them in order of priority. Some are innate in the individual. Others are acquired. Some may be stronger or more potent than others and thus achieve a balance whereby the potency of one overcomes the weakness of another. Those which I consider essential are few in number but they are of such a nature that from them

flow the others less necessary but nonetheless desirable. I list them as follows:

Essentials

Force of character
Physical fitness
Knowledge of one's profession, of men, and of self
Courage, both physical and moral
Common sense and judgment
Tenacity of purpose
Executive ability
And last, but not least, that intangible something known as personality.

FIELD SERVICE REGULATIONS OF THE FUTURE*

By Major E.S. Johnston, Infantry

[In order to demonstrate that his recommendations, which were published in the preceding issue of the "Review of Military Literature" (No. 61, June 1936), are practical, Major Johnston has prepared suggested passages from an imaginary edition of the Field Service Regulations, which are contained in the following Appendix.—Editor.]

APPENDIX

(Order Promulgating Field Service Regulations)

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(Heading)

These Field Service Regulations include the basic doctrine of war of the army.

This doctrine is applicable to forces of all types, and to operations of every character.

It is presented in terms expected to require minimum revision by reason of changes in organization, equipment, and armament.

Detailed discussions of the employment of contemporary units are to be found in other appropriate publications.

(Ending)

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(NOTE: This article does not necessarily convey the views of this School, but is the expression of the opinions of the author.—*Editor.*)

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