

American Admiralship

The Moral Imperatives of Naval Command

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Foreword – Admiral James Holloway III, CNO 1974-1978

Leader versus leadership position

- The single factor that distinguished one superior command from another is the Commanding Officer
- Leaders are made
 - Must have intelligence
 - Must have energy
 - Must have character
 - A moral outlook
 - A sense of integrity
- Leadership is the governing factor in the U.S. Navy promotion system
- The most impressive single factor in defining success is ***the ability to get things done***
- The primary responsibility of a naval officer in every grade is to help move the leadership bell curve to the right, to improve leadership at every echelon

Decisions

“Making decisions is the essence of leadership.” General Dwight D. Eisenhower

- There is no more difficult decision for a commander than to relieve an officer
- RADM Arleigh Burke jumped over 92 Admirals senior to him when President Eisenhower selected him to become CNO
 - Burke had no tolerance for mediocrity
 - The first thing a commander must learn is not to tolerate incompetence
 - *“That’s why it’s absolutely necessary that you have very high standards and you make sure those standards are met or – you cut throats.”*
- Making the tough decisions
 - True leaders are willing to make morally correct decisions at their personal peril
 - ADM Trost challenged SECNAV John Lehman’s interference with a promotion selection board
 - ADM Holloway tackled the Navy’s drug problem
 - ADM Larson fought back against blackmail on the POW/MIA issue
- One of the qualities of a good leader is that he is always training someone to follow him
 - Conduct monthly reviews with key staff
 - Express your leadership philosophy
 - Keep everyone abreast of facts and problems being dealt with

A Sixth Sense – The Feel of the Command

- *“The ship talks to you.”* ADM James Holloway III
- Personal contact with the crew is essential
- Go where the trouble is
- Have lunch with the crew
- Visit all the crew spaces
- Make a picture book with a page for every member of the command
 - Division officers can assemble this for their division
 - Department heads can compile division officer books

Yes Men

- Rank can give validity to decisions, but too often it stifles contrary opinions from subordinates
- Successful leaders and decision makers need the inputs and thoughts from subordinates and must create an atmosphere and relationship that allows for free exchange of idea until such time as a decision is made
- Very few leaders are successful when deprived of the opinions of their subordinates
- There must be a willingness to challenge cherished beliefs without disparagement and without equivocation
- The greatest deterrent to the development of dedicated young leaders is a system that encourages our young officers to be ‘yes men’ and not “rock the boat”

Books – The importance of reading

- Decision making skills can be developed
 - By being around people making decisions
 - By reading books – particularly history and biography
- Great naval leaders developed their character and leadership abilities by reading biography and military naval history
- Read the books on the CNO reading list
 - Require your Sailors to do the same

Mentorship

- Mentorship is associated with “meritocracy”, while sponsorship is associated with politics
 - Mentorship means taking the time to guide, counsel, advise, and teach in preparation for increased responsibility and thus higher rank
 - Sometimes a single act by a friend can be an act of mentorship that alters a career

Consideration

- *“In every position, a commander’s crew will want to know how much you care for them far more than they will ever care how much you know.”* ADM Thomas Moorer
- Consideration is defined simply as a thoughtful and sympathetic regard for others
 - Consideration, tolerance and understanding
 - *“Look with lenient and tolerant eyes on first offenders when they appear before you at Captain’s Mast.”* ADM Nimitz
 - KNOW YOUR SUBORDINATES’ NAMES
 - Be sensitive to their needs
- Few people live up to their full potential
 - GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PEOPLE
 - Show them how good they can be

Delegation

- A principle of Nimitz’s training plan was to give every man as much responsibility as he could handle, which was often a great deal more than the man thought he was capable of handling.
- He confined himself to those broad areas of command, administration and ceremony that only he, as Captain, could carry out.
- ADM Ghormley’s philosophy was – *“There’s lots to be done. Look around, see what it is, and do it.”*

Fix the Problem, Not the Blame

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

The Pueblo Incident

Sinking of USS JUNEAU

USS COLE bombing

Sinking of USS INDIANAPOLIS

The author provides a detailed examination of the Navy’s principles of command authority and responsibility for each of the events above.

- A good leader accepts responsibility for his or her mistakes and never blames superiors, even though orders or policies may originate with them
- A good leader likewise never blames subordinates when something goes wrong

Rickover and Zumwalt – Contrast and Contradiction

- *“Don’t confuse leadership with popularity.”* ADM James Holloway
- Most of the innovations of these two admirals were not welcomed by a significant portion of the naval establishment
- They were polar opposites in their approach to leadership. Both were professionally successful
- Rickover
 - He was never intimidated by those senior to him
 - He would not be ignored
 - He got results through sheer force of will
 - His accessibility allowed his staff to present ideas to him directly
 - His philosophy was “why not the best?”
 - He was a master of public relations
 - His powers of persuasion with the Congress were legendary
 - He was driven to “serve and protect the United States”
- Zumwalt
 - Youngest 4 star in U.S. Navy history; youngest to ever serve as CNO
 - NEVER held a Major Fleet Command
 - Faced serious problems as CNO
 - Vietnam War
 - Retention problems
 - Race relations
 - Initiated Z-GRAMS (issued 120 during his tenure)
 - Covered a myriad of subjects
 - PSC leave
 - College classes aboard ship
 - Sponsor programs
 - Civilian clothes on liberty
 - Comp time
 - Petty Officers as OOD
 - Equal Opportunity/Race relations
 - Sailor of the Year Program
 - Z-GRAM 57 was the most controversial
 - Originally titled – “Mickey Mouse, Elimination of?”
 - Re-titled – “Demeaning and Abrasive Regulations, Elimination of?”
 - He routinely polled all the 4 stars before issuing his NAVOPS
 - One of his fundamental views was that the Navy should be fun
 - He was the first CNO to testify before Congress that the Soviet Navy was better than the U.S. Navy
 - When ADM Holloway was chosen as the new CNO, SECNAV John Warner told him:
 - “Admiral Holloway, get some discipline and pride back in the Navy. I’m an old Navy man and I’m not very pleased with what’s going on in the Navy today.”*
 - ADM Zumwalt was a CHAMPION OF CHANGE

Selflessness

Three Navy heroes – all POWs in Vietnam

Commander Jeremiah Denton -- *Commander James Bond Stockdale* -- *LTJG Everett Alvarez Jr.*

- Denton
 - *“My heart and soul belonged to God, country and family long before the Navy got ahold of me.”*
 - He was beaten and tortured
 - At a press conference he blinked – T O R T U R E – in Morse code with his eyes
 - Once his captors found out, he was beaten and shackled worse than ever
 - Denton and CDR J. B. Stockdale were the senior officers in the POW camp
 - Denton developed the vocal tap code for communicating with the other POWs
- Stockdale
 - Deliberately inflicted near fatal wounds upon himself to keep the Viet Cong from using him as a propaganda tool
 - Frequently made himself sick with “puke ball” made from soap
 - Awarded the Medal of Honor for his leadership as a POW in Vietnam
 - He insisted that POWs abide by the Code of Conduct, demonstrate proper military bearing and enforced military standards among the demoralized POWs, thereby restoring their faith and instilling military discipline in the camps
- Alvarez
 - Longest held POW in Vietnam
 - 103 months; 446 weeks; 3135 days
 - His wife divorced him and his sister was an anti-war activist
 - Viet Cong tried to use this information to demoralize him and break his spirit
 - He was the spokesman for the POWs when they returned to the U.S.
 - It was his belief in the United States and the Code of Conduct that sustained him during captivity

Elements of Command – Self and Family

- Natural leaders seek command. They are born to it.
- The meaning of life for most Navy men is to go to sea, and the goal of 98 percent of young officers is command.
- Command is the pinnacle of any Navy career.
- The Navy gives our junior officers enormous amounts of responsibility and authority, and holds them accountable.
- A CO is responsible for his own actions, or inactions, and for those of every crewmember under his command. This has been so for centuries and is a cornerstone of U.S. Navy tradition.

- The Role of the Navy Spouse
 - Separations are frequent and may be lengthy – spouses understand this.
 - Long work days are the norm in a Naval officer's life
 - A supportive spouse is an important element of a successful naval career
 - Navy spouses are as talented and as independent as their naval officers (and many times – MORESO)
 - A Navy spouse is as selfless as a naval officer
 - Frequently only a Navy spouse can help the naval officer through the loneliness of command

The Pattern – of the successful leader

- There is a pattern in the fundamental traits of character that can be identified with the successful naval officer
- The pattern includes
 - Selfless desire to serve
 - The ability to accept responsibility for decision making
 - A “sixth sense” for decision making
 - They weren't “yes men”
 - They read widely
 - They accepted opportunities to work longer hours and face greater challenges than their peers
 - They were concerned and considerate of their people
 - They delegated
 - They try to “fix the problem and not the blame”