

LIFE *in*

James G. Yarbrough, Jr.

SMALL BITES

3.16



**One Bite
at a Time**

Personal Stories of Leadership

Life in *SMALL BITES*

Personal Leadership Stories

By James G. Yarbrough, Jr.

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*Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap,
but by the seeds you plant.*

- - Robert Louis Stevenson

Life is what you make it. Always was – always will be.

- Grandma Moses

*The difference between a successful person and others
is not a lack of strength,
not a lack of knowledge,
but rather in a lack of will.*

- Vince Lombardi

DEDICATION

To my mentors and coaches, my Mom and Dad, Dorothy Ellen and James Sr.

To my children, Robin, George, and Gary, who are my continuous sources of inspiration, pride, and hope.

To my wife, Marlana, who never fails to remind me to live the “*Small Bites*” that I preach.

To all of the Doers:

Good intentions only provide the drive. It is the “driving” that gets us where we want to be.

Thank you for purchasing this collection of personal leadership stories.

A portion of the revenue received will be donated to two of my favorite charities:



If you would like to learn more about these two great organizations, please visit their websites at:

www.habitat.org

www.operationsmile.org

Contents

Introduction

High Flight

PRE-FLIGHT

One Stroke at a Time

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Fast Pants

Pigeon-toe Theory of Goal Achievement

Razor Burn

Treasure Cave Theory of Leadership

Lighthouse Theory of Leadership

Leadership Theory of ‘Keep Swinging’

B-52 Theory of Leadership

Piss Pants Theories of Leadership

My Barrel Roll Theory of Self-Mastery

THANKFULNESS

Gratitude Unleashed

Integrity is the Key – Compassion is the Answer

The Way

About the Author

Index of Authors

Introduction

In my life I have been an athlete, a warrior, and a businessman. I have had success and setbacks with all. It became evident early on that there was more learning and growth potential in understanding and recovering from the setbacks than from basking in the successes.

In wanting to create useful guideposts for my children I shared some of these personal experiences in story form. The following pages retell some of these stories and include a sampling of some of the wise quotes drawn from my *Small Bites: Life Lessons – One Bite at a Time*.

Please forgive the egocentric nature of the stories as these were originally written for my children. I suggest that you put yourself in the role of the story-teller and determine what personal lessons or insights might apply.

I trust that you will find value here.

It always begins with: “Let me tell you a story...” When I was young, my father was a US Army officer. Thankfully, he had strict requirements about respect for elders and authority, personal grooming, decorum, and manners—especially table manners. Practicing these standards has served me well throughout my life.

When I became a parent, I wanted to pass on the teachings that worked for me. Yet as a father guiding my children’s development, I admit that instilling proper table manners was challenging at times—“Elbows off the table”, “chew with your mouth closed”, “only put *small bites* in your mouth” were all endless refrains.

I often took advantage of mealtimes to dispense pedantic morsels—my “*small bites*” of guidance, insights, or philosophy. While many of these “*small bites*” were taken from my own experience and inspiration, most came from the borrowed and appreciated wisdom of others, especially my father. My aim was to provide instructions for establishing personal integrity, personal development, and social responsibility.

In spite of my sometimes reluctant audience, some things must have stuck.

I am very proud of my children, who they are, and what they have accomplished. My children are kind, enthusiastic, and compassionate people. They are living lives of integrity and contributing to their communities. In compiling this compendium of aphorisms and quotations, I not only honor my father, I proudly recognize the responsible adults that my children have become.

Before I was a parent, I was a pilot, two seemingly unrelated roles. The lessons I learned from being a pilot in planning, prioritizing, focus, responsibility, and courage certainly benefited my appreciation and performance of being a parent. Likewise, if I were ever to return to the cockpit, I know that my experience as a parent, given all the complexities of communication, guidance, support, education, and decision-making, would make me a better pilot and flight crew member.

I am proud of the time I served as an US Air Force pilot. The skills and risk required of pilots demand great discipline to learn and apply knowledge, judgment, focused attention, courage, and constantly correcting actions. For me, to “make ideas stick” I often make an association with the discipline and actions required in piloting an aircraft. I relate insights, activities, and destinations with required Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and flight terms.

In the full compilation of essays, poems, and quotations, I have categorized quotes and passages under a general subject heading. I have also associated a flight term with each heading that I deem relevant to the subject matter.

In promoting ideas related to human relationships and personal growth, I did not want to come across as too “spacey”. I wanted to establish some connection with things requiring order and discipline. Personal development guides are all too often dismissed as being “fluff”. As a pilot and businessman, I have a tendency to ignore the fluff and focus on the core actionable principles.

Pilots must memorize and understand many bits (*small bites*) of information about physics, weather, aeronautical principles, and the technical details and flight characteristics of their aircraft. To make these *small bites* relevant, they must be integrated into a coherent understandable and actionable framework. Also one's actionable and effective framework requires developing good judgment—when to act and when not to, remembering that the superior pilot is one who uses his superior judgment to avoid using his superior skill. My *Small Bites* are selected bits of Wisdom to develop Judgment that leads to Action.

Coming out of the hangar, I would like to share one of my favorite poems, a favorite of many pilots. This poem is a lyrical composite of Courage, Attitude, Goals, Action, and Spirit. I first memorized it when I got my Wings as a jet pilot. In the many years since, I often recite the poem when I feel, or need to feel, inspired.

High Flight

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and
swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air. . . .
Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

- John Gillespie Magee, Jr



For your additional appreciation, you can hear this special poem recited while viewing a video of a USAF T-38 Talon “dancing the skies”. The T-38 was the sleek supersonic jet used in the mid-60’s through 80’s for training pilots. It was a beautiful aircraft and had jaw-dropping performance. This video was used as the sign-off for KSAT TV station of San Antonio, Texas in the 70’s and 80’s.

Please click on the image above to [view the video](#) on YouTube.

In the full version, my *Small Bites* are grouped into the following subjects. My selected analogous pilot terms are shown in brackets:

GENERAL WISDOM (Standard Operating Procedures)

SELF-KNOWLEDGE (Operations Manual)

EDUCATION (Flight Planning)

GOALS (Mission)

ATTITUDE (Mission Driven)

RESPONSIBILITY (Duty)

ACTION (After-Burners)

COURAGE (Tailwind)

ADVERSITY (Turbulence - Emergency Procedures)

LEADERSHIP& MANAGEMENT (Formation Flying)

SUCCESS (Mission Accomplished)

FAMILY & FRIENDS (Air Crew)

SERVICE (Crew Care)

THANKFULNESS (Final Approach)

SPIRIT (Refueling)

Thank You

Thank you for letting me share these personal stories with you. I trust that you will find some value in the principles presented, a compelling thought, or a powerful idea that will guide you to take action. Remember inspiration not backed up by action is like buying a present for a loved one (or yourself) and never giving it.

Effective sharing with others by “walking the talk” is the only meaningful game in life. Our responsibility is to live ever more effectively and share our dreams— remembering,

["If it's to be - it's up to me!"](#)

Let us begin.



Chapter I

PRE-FLIGHT



My living spaces were often cluttered with books, tapes, videos, DVDs, and remnants of personal development courses. Although my overflowing library felt like a repository of useful information and wisdom, the contents were not as readily accessible as I would have liked. I found that if I distilled the insights into memorable “sound bites”, they became more readily available for providing inspiration and direction, often

for dealing with the unexpected challenges of life. I began collecting these distillations and even authoring my own. These became my own “*small bites*”.

At the dinner table, “don’t bite off more than you can chew” meant “keep your intake manageable”. In this era of information overload, this is a useful adage for most things. However, it doesn’t imply that we shouldn’t aim high and work to exceed expectations. Rather, it tells us to discriminate the chewable from the unnecessary—reduce overload and act first on the priorities offering the greatest return.

The full version of *Small Bites* is a categorized compilation of aphorisms and poems that served as inspirational guides and instructions to me and which I shared with my children.

I included only passages which inspired a personal, “Ah so...Yes, but of course”, prodding useful reflection, or new, or renewed awareness. Distilling personal “aha’s” into words has helped me refine and share the insights. Wherever relevant, I’ve worked to link passages with related messages.

To unleash the potential energy you must convert the “aha’s”—your personal insights, to “action steps”. You start by capturing and grounding your insights by writing them down and relating the wisdom to your current reality of where you are and where you want to go. As Naveed Peerzade of IM Protégé said,

Simply reading or thinking them keeps them floating around in the realm of possibilities to be tackled “some day.” “Some day”, the procrastinator’s crutch, too often never comes.

Life is not like chapters in a textbook where one subject ends and the next begins. There are many “chapters of experience” with some impactful isolated events and relationships. Yet these flow from one to another. All our experiences and relationships build on our previous ones. Our mission is to take this collage, this gathering of *small bites* of insights and wisdom, and re-order them to support our growth and success.

A personal note: The first book of aphorisms that I collected and packaged as a high school graduation gift for my oldest son was titled, “Never Pass Up A Chance To Pee”. I had learned the wisdom of not putting off what can, and should, be done now, and if not, becomes a negative distraction later. Timely appropriate action is the key.

It is said that if you can change your thinking, you can change your life. This is only the first step. Life changes only occur when we change our “doing.”

Before launching into my personal stories on Leadership I wish to tell one that largely set in motion my direction and intentions for becoming a responsible guiding father and hopeful positive contributor to my community. This experience was the genesis of compiling my collected quotations, poems, and stories into *Small Bites* of wisdom to feed to my children.

One Stroke at a Time

Floating lazily on my back in the Andaman Sea, I was drifting in and out of a pre-planned reverie. Three weeks earlier my son, Gary, had been born. He was healthy and beautiful.

The many weeks before had been less so. The doctors had advised that the baby was in a breech position and a cesarean delivery was recommended and scheduled.

On week before the scheduled surgery, Gary had flipped inside and a normal birth was now possible. With labor pains commencing, my wife, Marlana, was taken to the hospital. While monitoring Marlana's labor, it became evident that the baby was under stress as his heart rate had become irregular. The doctor, fearing that the umbilical cord had become wrapped around Gary's neck, decided to perform an immediate cesarean. The doctor's assessment and decision were correct - indeed the cord had wrapped dangerously around Gary's neck.

In addition to the normal stresses preceding the birth of a child my work and travel schedule had also sponsored mounting stresses. With Gary and Marlana healthy and safe, three weeks later I headed to the island of Phuket for a three-day respite.



Back to the Andaman: My floating reverie collapsed quickly when I opened my eyes to discover that a rip-tide had swept me hundreds of yard from shore. Never a strong swimmer, I attempted to swallow my panic and swim toward land. Not to be!

The more I thrashed the farther I was carried out to sea. I could barely spot a few people on the beach. My yells for help were unnoticed and unattended. Panic began to take control.

My total thoughts were about my new son and how thoughtless and careless I had been to deprive him of my fathering - and me of his loving companionship. From a deep recess a memory emerged.

I recalled reading that you cannot '*swim against the tide*'. To overcome the pull of the tide required swimming at an angle with it, hoping to swim out of its grip.

My thoughts exploded in expletives, "Damn! If this life experience is going to end here it is going to watch me swimming – and swimming!" Silently, but vehemently, I shouted down my panic and replaced it with the resolve that my life and Gary's, and all my 'loved ones', were worth '*one more stroke*'! My physical and mental strength became irrelevant – as did Time. My total focus was '*one more stroke*'! No enlightenment or 'open heavens' embraced me. I swam and I swam, and I swam – '*one stroke at a time*'.



A million years later I sensed that the current no longer commanded me. I turned toward shore, now a couple of miles distant, and continued one stroke at a time.

Stroke by stroke I inched closer to shore. I swam, promising to re-unite with my 'loved ones'. The water warmed as it shallowed. Trembling, I finally stood, staggered to the beach, seeing children and parents frolicking, totally oblivious to my survival ordeal.

As I collapsed on the bed of the rented island cottage, several thoughts flooded my mind:

1. Sometimes we seem to be truly alone.
2. Yet, we have inner strengths unbeknown to us.
3. The power of Love is a doorway.
4. As I create my life, great opportunities and contributions are possible when I willfully demand access to these strengths.

5. Summoned strength may not rush forward. It may only appear when decisively acting '*one stroke at a time*'.
6. My life experience is blessed – it is my challenge to share my strengths for the benefit of others.

In the full compilation of my *Small Bites* guidebook this story could have been positioned in my chapters on Adversity, Courage, Success, or even Responsibility. I chose Service because the lesson for me is, "I am strengthened when working for the benefit of my 'loved-ones' and others.

Although not always living-up to my own expectations, my life mantra continues to be, "Serving self is in serving others – *one stroke at a time.*"

"The service we render to others is really the rent we pay for our room on this earth. It is obvious that man is himself a traveler; that the purpose of this world is not 'to have and to hold' but 'to give and serve.' There can be no other meaning."

- Sir Wilfred Grenfell

Now onward to stories and principles of Leadership...



LEADERSHIP

(Formation Flying)

*Vision without Action is a daydream.
Acton without Vision is a nightmare.*

- Japanese Proverb

*Leadership is a “can-do”, “get-it-done”,
“everyone-pull-together”, “whatever-it- takes” attitude.*

- Orville Schell

Timely decisiveness is crucial to effective management and leadership. We must learn to take advantage of current fortune and be alert not to relax or underinvest in developing future options.

Always have a back-up plan.
Always have an exit strategy.
Always have an alternative airfield.

Always start your Plan with 4W + H:

- What?
- Who?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

A good friend, who is a very senior executive of Chevron, advises the following,

Good leaders are well grounded, introspective and humble. They never let power or ego blind them. Good leaders have passion and a bias for action. Leaders are not afraid to make mistakes but they are determined to learn from them. Responsible leaders don't accept the status quo and always work to change the outcome. These leaders see the innate potential in people and unlock it. Through inspiration and role modeling, these leaders win the hearts and minds of everyone around them and get more from their people than humanly possible.

Management and Leadership must co-exist. Good observation skills coupled with people-skills are essential for effective Management / Leadership.

Successful Leadership / Management strategies and processes must emanate from the synergistic intersection where courage, action, and responsibility meet.

My Operating Definition of Leadership:

Lead – to be out-in-front

Ship – a transport system

Therefore, for me, Leadership is a process that moves you forward, puts you out-in-front, that is synonymous with influence, authority, power, the ability to get things done. Responsible leadership is taking charge, even if only of oneself, to move toward a better place.

While researching principles for Leadership several concepts became apparent:

- The wisdom and advice for improved life experience through personal resolve apply to effective Responsible Leadership
- The corollary is also true: the principles for Responsible Leadership apply to strengthening personal resolve and enhancing an individual's life experience.

The principles of Responsible Leadership, the attributes, and the contributions are goals and actions that anyone can use in any situation.

Formation Flying

Building on others' good ideas, with proper acknowledgment, is true flattery and a sign of wisdom.

- Dad

The challenge of leadership is to

- be Strong, but not rude;*
- be Kind, but not weak;*
- be Bold, but not a bully;*
- be Thoughtful, but not lazy;*
- be Humble, but not timid;*
- be Proud but not arrogant;*
- have Humor, but without folly.*

- Jim Rohn

Surround yourself with persons who can do crucial tasks better than you.

- Dad

I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow.

- Woodrow Wilson

Those who are lifting the world upward and onward are those who encourage more than criticize.

- Elizabeth Harrison

Fast Pants

Before a fighter pilot climbs into his aircraft he dons his Fast Pants. These pants (anti-G suit) fitted with air bladders automatically inflate when high G-forces are experienced. The inflated bladders prevent blood from pooling in the lower body and depriving the brain of oxygen-rich blood to help prevent loss of sight and consciousness.

I suggest that Responsible Leaders intentionally don virtual fast pants when they enter a crisis to help them see clearly, avoid tunnel vision, and remain conscious of what's needed, and what's not.

What's important, and what's not?

The first leg of my virtual fast pants requires me to answer the following questions:

- Who should I collaborate with?
- What are the 2 to 3 most important issues to resolve in this situation?
- What are the most appropriate, timely, and available resources that apply to resolutions?

Pulling on the second leg I ask:

1. What are the action priorities?
2. What should I do Now?

My memory aid to remind me of these processes:

- Collaborate C
- Issues I
- Resources R
- Priority P
- Action A

Collaboratively work **I**ssues with **R**esources **P**rioritized for **A**ction

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on him not understanding it.

- Upton Sinclair

In the Workplace and in Life, you get the behavior that you reward.

- Dad

You'll get better cooperation and results if you are sincerely interested in people's families and interests, not simply in how they do their job.

- Coach John Wooden

No matter how much time you've wasted in the past, you still have an entire today.

- Denis Waitley

Many persons invest heavily of their time and money in trainings and materials to gain knowledge only to have the "learning" gather dust on the shelves of "inactivity". To Know is to Do.

- Dad

Attend the Crucial Few and Ignore the Trivial Many.

- Dad

*Choose actions appropriately.
In flood-prone areas replace chickens with ducks.*

- Dad

If you are building a house and the nail breaks, do you stop building, or do you change the nail?

- Rwandan Proverb

Every Job is an Opportunity and a Challenge. Make it “So” and it will be “So”.

- Dad

If you are selling eggs, don't piss-off your chickens.

- Anonymous

Be watchful of creating felonies out of matters not worth a summons.

- Dan Barry

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

- Abraham Lincoln

You must have long-range goals to keep you from short-range failures.

- Charles C. Noble

The Pigeon-toe Theory of Goal Achievement



Between the ages of two and three years old at bedtime my parents fitted me with leather boots connected by a steel brace that forced my feet to be aligned in parallel. I was pretty ‘pigeon-toed’ as my toes pointed inward at about 35 degrees. Thankfully, I have no cognitive memories of wearing the contraption or how it affected my sleep. I do have some early memories where walking and running felt more like stumbling forward rather than gliding.

The bracing didn’t help much as I remained ‘pigeon-toed’ for the next five years.

One summer day a school friend, commenting on the way I walked, asked, “Why don’t you just walk with your toes pointing straight ahead?”

The apparent simplicity of this question struck me very hard. Immediately and for the coming weeks I very consciously would walk with my toes pointing straight ahead. I practiced walking on straight lines on the pavement, in the school halls – even on the rails of nearby train tracks. Walking straight became a very conscious effort – until it wasn't.

I had practiced and willed my toes to point straight ahead. I do not remember how long it took, but soon, my toes got the hint and did so without my forced awareness. My memory is that this curing process was uncomplicated, painless, and relatively short.

Often I have used this experience to remind myself that many problems can be solved and many goals achieved by “consciously pointing straight ahead” - knowing precisely what your intention is and begin moving forward. Too often I have observed (and personally succumbed to) fear, confusion, and indecision to cloud the selecting of a simple solution to get to a desired outcome or even be clear about the objective. I have learned that starting forward, clearly stating the goal, and not waiting until everything was figured-out was a pretty effective strategy.

As the Tom Landry, the great coach of the Dallas Cowboys football team, said, *“Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.”*

Reflect on your own life experience and review where “consciously pointing straight ahead” would have simplified and or reduced the time getting to a desired solution.

Communication is the Response you get.

- Marshall Thurber

Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.

- Robert Schuller

Always watch your "six". (180 degrees behind you)

- Pilot's Law

Razor Burn

I was a college freshman sitting in a barber's chair with an unsightly and irritating case of facial razor burn. The barber asked, "Why do you shave so close?" I replied, "I want a very smooth face."

The wise barber counseled, "Don't you realize that no matter how closely you shave today, tomorrow you are going to have to do it again?"

That day was my last case of razor burn. The larger lesson was not wasted either. The greatest lesson arrived when I contemplated the corollary of his advice, "What are some issues that need to be done well because you may not return to them timely, or ever?"

I made a listing:

- First meetings
- Table manners
- Term papers / Exams
- Timely Thank You's
- Timely sincere acknowledgements
- Personally important race

Since then I have added to my list:

- Monthly reports
- Public statements especially issued during times of crisis
- Press interviews
- Crisis decisions
- Leadership meetings
- Any decision affecting the well-being of another
- Farewells
- Termination interviews

What would you add?

Many from my list are related to engagement with others. This is a useful alert. Being alert is to be conscious, present, and attentive while engaging with others are key skills of effective Responsible Leadership.

Most time is wasted, not in hours, but in minutes. A bucket with a small hole in the bottom gets just as empty as a bucket that is deliberately kicked over.

- Paul J. Meyer

Never settle for the cards you are dealt – but while you are working to earn new ones, learn to play the ones you have.

- Dad

4 P's necessary for Success:

Prayer

Productivity

Perseverance

Patience

There's a myth that time is money. In fact, time is more precious than money. It's a nonrenewable resource. Once you've spent it, and if you've spent it badly, it's gone forever.

- Neil Fiore

The Treasure Cave Theory of Leadership

In the mid-80's, I was a contractor to the US government in the former Panama Canal Zone. I had hundreds of local employees. Among them were half-dozen *Embera Choco* Indian tribesmen who hailed from the foreboding Darien jungle. The Darien, connecting Panama and Columbia, was virtually impenetrable and was the only stretch of land between the northern tip of Alaska and the southern tip of Chile where the Inter-American Highway was not connected.

The father of these '*Indios*' was a *Choco Cacique* (Chief) and also a *Brujo* (Witch-Doctor) of their village. The Chief visited me on several occasions bringing stories of gold and ancient Spanish treasures that he had discovered near his very small jungle village. The *Cacique* told me of finding a secret cave within which he uncovered a large wooden door. Behind the door he found a six-foot long alligator statue made of gold and many Spanish *Conquistador* helmets.



Remember in the 1500's, the Spanish *Conquistadors*, which plundered Inca gold and treasures from Peru, traversed the land bridge of Panama exiting on the Caribbean coast to board their ships for return voyages to Spain.

My interest and thoughts of adventure and riches spiked.

The *Cacique* said that he would guide me to his cave and share his findings. He asked me to bring provisions to his village of 40 people; shotgun and .22 shells, matches, rice, beans, coffee, beer, cigarettes—and bolts of red *tela* (cloth).

The *Cacique* cautioned that the area surrounding the cave was patrolled by dangerous ‘devil dogs’. The *tela* would be used to safely cordon off the cave, as the devil dogs feared the bright red cloth.

Within two weeks I had convinced several equally excited friends to join me in this treasure reclaiming expedition.

At 05:00 on a Saturday morning we left Panama City with a convoy of two of my large flatbed trucks and two 4-wheel drive vehicles. The journey to the end of the paved road to the beginning of the Darien was to take only three hours.

Not so! Mechanical failures and multiple tire blowouts delayed our arrival to 18:00. Near the equator, in the jungle, at 6:00 PM darkness is ‘at hand’.

The planned *Choco* bearers who were to help carry all the provisions and gear to the village had long ago decided that we were ‘No-Shows’ and had left for their village. This meant that the five *Gringos*, my friends, and me had to carry all the gear.

The Darien jungle is not a welcoming place for the inexperienced trekker.

At night it is a black scary a place.

Barely able to see three feet in front, each burdened with more than 50 lbs. of gear, my team stumbled blindly through the jungle while we fearfully followed the sole *Choco* guide for over three hours – that felt more like three days. If there was a path we couldn't see it. An unspoken rule was not to mention the deadly snakes, crocs, or wild boar that lived in the jungle

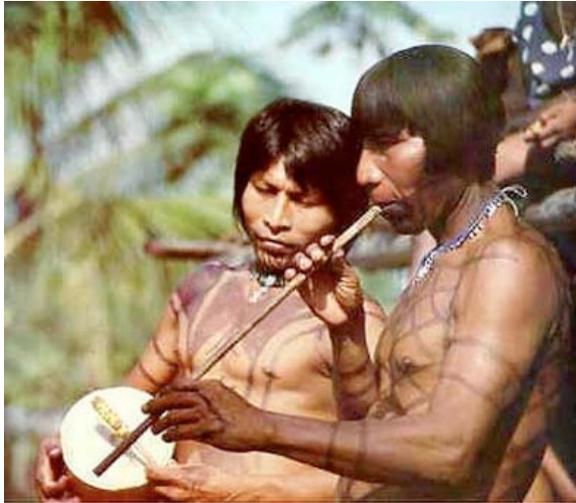


Finally we broke out of the jungle onto a riverbank. Three 20-foot *cayucos* (dug-out canoes) were waiting for us. Loading and boarding the narrow *cayucos* required balance and caution. Each dugout was piloted by a *Choco* whose only

propulsion was a long pole. My team and I did not want to know what kind of river-life threatened us from below.

Two hours later, exhausted, we disembarked on a small beach at the entrance to the *Cacique's* village. Dragging all the gear up the slope to the village our only aim was to collapse in whatever fashion of beds were available.

Not to be! The *Cacique* and a few elders had prepared a welcoming ceremony. Due to the very late time he immediately began. My team and I sat on the floor of the *Cacique's* raised hut while he began chanting to honor us and bless the expedition. The chanting, accompanied by the elders' drumming, lasted two hours – it felt like two days!



My attempt to meditate to the chanting was really more dozing, on and off. Each dozing would lead to full-colored fanciful dreams.

After less than four hours of restless sleep rude roosters brazenly crowed a wake-up call, “No choice. Get-up!” Still exhausted we surveyed our surroundings in the daylight. The village consisted of a dozen thatched-roofed, open-sided huts built on stilts. The huts were raised about 10 feet in the air to provide safety from roaming predators and floods.



After a simple breakfast of fertilized eggs and yucca, aided by some gear-carrying villagers, including bare-breasted teenage girls, we formed single-file and set off hiking through the jungle.

Our hike, steamy hot in daylight, was punctuated with annoying attacks of all sorts of flying insects, leeches, and other creepy crawlers. After 1-1/2 hours we arrived at a small clearing in the center of which was a 10 feet deep pit about 20 feet around. The *Cacique* pointed to a small opening on the other side of the pit and exclaimed, “*Aqui estamos!*” – “We are here!”, or something like that in his native language signaling that this was the site of the treasure cave.

My friends and I jumped in the pit and peered into the opening. With our flashlights we could see that the three-foot wide and tall entrance opened into a cavern with a five-foot ceiling and an indeterminable depth. Our lights also revealed that the cave ceiling was crowded with thousands of hanging bats – the floor with inches of bat droppings. The ammonia smell was nearly over-powering.

The *Cacique* handed us shovels and invited us to enter the cave. Some of my team members balked. No braver than the rest but compelled as the expedition financier and organizer I crawled, shovel in hand, through the entrance. A son of the Chief accompanied me and told me to start digging on the far earthen cave wall. So I did. The bats didn’t like my presence any more than I did theirs and they made it known by swooping and darting down at me. As the cave ceiling was only five feet high I had to dig while crouching on my knees trying not to touch or be touched by the bats.

Every 30 minute or so I would exit the cave for a rest and invite others to share in the digging. No takers...

After many hours of digging, finding only more dirt I exited the cave and asked the *Cacique* where the large wooden door was. In his language he made a lengthy reply gesturing wildly. I patiently waited for the fractured translation from *Choco* to Spanish to English.

Poof! That's how epiphanies happen! Mine was when I finally understood that the large wooden door, the golden alligator, and the *Conquistador* helmets were all seen by the *Cacique/Brujo* in a 'Vision'!

I am certain that the untold part of his vision included rifle shells, rice, beans, coffee, beer, cigarettes – and *tela*!

What is the lesson here?

An effective leader always works to understand the needs and wants of people feeding him information – knowing this will affect the 'What, Where, Why, and How' of the info provided and that the intentions and goals may not be in mutual alignment. Effective leaders do not let their personal exuberance cloud their judgment when developing or executing plans.

I would tell this long story to my managers and supervisors mentoring them to exercise diligence in assessing the needs, wants, and motivations of our suppliers and even our clients – working for alignment before finalizing or implementing deliverables.

What possible activities in your personal or professional life might be succumbing to not practicing the lessons of The Treasure Cave Theory of Leadership?

Name three. What reassessed actions are you going to take?

Never waste an experience of extreme stress, ego-wrenching embarrassment, or personal injury without learning from it.

- Dad

Leadership responsibility is to “Walk the Talk” – not play “Stumble the Mumble”.

- Anonymous

Think fast. Talk slow.

- Anonymous

If you can't measure it you don't understand it.

- Arthur Jones

Lighthouse Theory of Leadership (LTL)

(The names and places have been changed to protect the guilty.)

Perched on the high observation deck of a lighthouse, bathed by cooling trade winds, I looked out from the mountaintop of this small,-undeveloped Caribbean island toward the mainland. This was one of my favorite places on earth. To the north and east were thousands of miles of the Atlantic. To the south and west, I viewed the mountains and jungle of this beautiful Central American country.

The spectacular vista and experience was enhanced by the journey to arrive atop this lighthouse. I had to travel for many hours to reach the mainland coast. The last hour required a four-wheel drive vehicle to navigate the pitted and neglected unpaved roads. At the coast, I would transfer all my gear to a *cayuco*, a dugout canoe, for a 40-minute voyage to the island. The *cayuco* was beached in the shallows 50 meters from dry land. I would again gather all my gear and wade through the knee-deep water to the shore.

As there were no vehicles on the island, getting to the isolated and unattended lighthouse required more than an hour's hike along the shore, through a small village, along a narrow path through the hot dense jungle, while continually climbing to reach the mountain peak on which the lighthouse was located. Hot, sweaty, and tired, I was rewarded with refreshing breezes when breaking-out of the jungle and into the clearing surrounding the lighthouse. This relief was temporary as, packing all gear and supplies (leaving them would result in them being carried off or pilfered by the lurking monkeys or wild boars) I would climb the 132 steps up the circular

staircase inside the hot, humid, and dark tower of the Lighthouse. The stairs finally emptied into the round, window-filled room housing the large powerful light mechanism. This light would project its beams nightly warning sailors of the dangerous rocks, corals, and shallows surrounding the island.

My ideal spot, after traversing the ruts, waves, jungle, and mountain climb, was a perch on the outside deck encircling the light-room. For me, the splendid view and breeze was worth the journey. In truth, the journey greatly enhanced the experience.



Not so for the lighthouse workers. They too had to make the same arduous journey, carrying large buckets of paint, cleaning, and maintenance gear by hand. All these had to be schlepped, through the jungle, up the hills, and finally up the narrow challenging lighthouse staircase. Their job was to clean and paint the inside of the light room and maintain the light mechanism to ward off the corrosive effects of the salty sea-air. Most of the time, the job was given to a lone unsupervised worker.

In the 10+ years that I would visit the Lighthouse, I noticed increasingly shabby maintenance—the windows became spackled with drips of paint from careless painters addressing the metal window frames. An ever-thickening film of grime and paint began to overtake clear viewing through the windows. Although I noticed with some concern for this negligence, my primary focus was always to go outside to sit on the deck and refresh my body and spirit.

On one of my last trips to ‘my’ lighthouse, I was met by some local islanders who told me a story about a boat which had recently crashed on some nearby rocks, seriously injuring a number of the sailors. In researching the incident, I found that the primary cause of the crash was believed to be that the lighthouse beam was dimmed and refracted due to the dirty, paint-film covered windows and so did not properly illuminate the dangerous area.

What’s the Leadership moral of the story?

“A ‘watched pot’ won’t boil over. - A responsible effective leader can delegate the work – but he cannot delegate the oversight.”

In my many leadership roles while serving in developing countries where I was not conversant in the local language, I would coach and mentor my subordinates with stories embedded with management and leadership principles. The Lighthouse Theory of Leadership was always one that was effective in bringing home the requirement for active oversight and supervision, to promote correct task accomplishment and to prevent any potential undesirable consequences, especially for unpleasant tasks.

What responsibilities or assignments do you have where the LTL applies?

What gets measured gets managed.

- Peter Drucker

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

- Albert Einstein

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

There is a big difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.

- Dad

One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results.

- Milton Friedman

People who buy a $\frac{1}{4}$ drill bit don't necessarily want a drill bit – they want a $\frac{1}{4}$ hole. Always look to learn what is really wanted and needed and work to give it.

- Dad

The Leadership Theory of ‘Keep Swinging’

1958, Munich, Germany: Samuel Smart, an American military dependent, was not the fastest, best fielder, or batter on his Little League team, the ‘NCO Cadets’. He was one of the most intense and was nicknamed “Sammy Hustle” by his coaches. Regardless of inning or score Sammy would hustle on and off the field between innings – often arriving at the bench from his Center Field position before his 1st or 2nd basemen teammates.

6th inning, 2 out, runner on 1st, Sammy at bat: Opposing pitcher with blazing throwing speed for a 12-year-old already had 10 strikeouts. Sammy liked to hit pitches that were a little ‘high & inside’. The Pitcher knew this and immediately got two called strikes on ‘low & away’ pitches. Although Sammy disagreed with the calls at 0 - 2 he knew that showing upset with the Umpire was futile.



Sammy fouled-off the next ‘low & away’ pitch - driving it outside the Right Field Foul Line. He did the same with the next two pitches. Still at 0 – 2, the Pitcher threw a low inside pitch pushing Sammy outside the Batter’s Box. Count 1 – 2. Next pitch was a low screamer about to catch the outside edge of the Plate. Defending the Plate Sammy swung at the last minute and again drove the ball to the far right.

The Pitcher persisted with low-outside pitches. Each time Sammy fouled the pitches beyond First Base. With seven foul balls to the right both teams and the parents in the stands were becoming edgy. The fielders began fudging over toward the Right Field Foul Line. A ball thrown ‘way outside’ moved the Count to 2 – 2.

Sammy was not trying to hit foul balls. He was only trying to ‘stay alive’ at the Plate by taking the decision out of the Umpires hands and waiting for a Walk or ‘his pitch’.



Three more line-drive fouls outside the First Base Line. The Right Fielder moved to stand on the Foul Line. The Center and Left Fielders moved whole positions to their left.

Two more ‘low & away’ pitches – two more fouls. Sammy’s teammates on the bench began clapping and stomping their feet -they were joined by most people in the stands.

The Pitcher let a 'wild-one' go way inside – Full Count, 3 Balls – 2 Strikes. Two more outside pitches. Two more foul balls outside Right Field.



After throwing 19 straight pitches the weary-armed Pitcher delivered his 20th pitch. It sailed-in like a beach ball 'high & inside'. With all of the focus like a warrior in battle Sammy swatted the pitch down the 3rd Base Line. As the 3rd Baseman had, many fouls before, moved far inside the Base Line neither he nor the Left Fielder were anywhere near the driving ball.

Sammy tore around 1st, heading for 2nd. By the time the Left Fielder retrieved the ball it had rolled all the way to the Fence. Erectly occupying 3rd Base Sammy stood as if this were completely normal.

**40 years later, back in the USA, I happened to get a phone call from one of my fellow players on that Little League team. We had not talked or communicated in any way since that 1958 season. After a brief ‘catch-up’ and without any prompting we fell into reminiscing about Sammy Smart’s 6th inning ‘at bat’. Neither one of us could remember who won the game or even who the other team was. However, with crystal clarity we each remembered the exact pitch-count and how Sammy prevailed after fouling-away 14 pitches. We confided that it was one of our favorite childhood memories.

After that season had I moved back to the US and never saw Sammy or any of those teammates again. Yet, countless times I shared this story with future teammates, friends, and colleagues.

For me it has always been an inspiring story about ‘never giving-up’. It still is. Through all of Life’s ‘ups and downs’ one of my practices encourages me that, “When I’m focused, at some point, a floating beach ball will come my way that I can smack all the way to the Fence.” Since I never know when that will be I must ‘Keep Swinging’.

The B-52 Theory of Leadership



The Boeing B-52 Stratofortress, affectionately nicknamed the BUFF (Big Ugly Flying F**ker) by pilots, entered the USAF inventory during the early period of the ‘Cold War’ with the former Soviet Union. The B-52, a significant deterrent element of the US ‘Cold War’ strategy, was designed as a high-altitude strategic bombing platform for delivering nuclear weapons. In my early active air Force service in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) I was a ‘right-seater’ in the BUFF.

The eight-engine BUFF, with a wingspan of 190 feet and a gross weight of 450,000 lbs., was designed to fly into a target area at an altitude in excess of 40,000 feet. Aircraft detection radars in the 50’s were ‘line-of-sight’ and had limited ranges. These were deemed incapable of timely detecting a high-speed intruding aircraft at 40,000 feet.

However technology intervened. In mid-1960 former USAF Captain Gary Powers, while piloting a USAF/CIA U-2 reconnaissance jet aircraft, at an altitude of 80,000 feet, was shot down by a Soviet missile.

The message was clear. The strategy for the BUFF to perform its mission at 40,000' was now obsolete given the greatly improved Soviet radar technology.

The problem became, “How do you make a multi-million dollar aircraft, designed for a specific mission, a pillar of US deterrence, to be still effective with a now ineffective delivery strategy? You can't redesign the aircraft. What's left? The 'strategy'.



SAC leadership decided to severely change the strategy of flying as high as possible to fly as low and fast as possible when penetrating hostile territory. The new strategy required the BUFF to fly at Mach .86 at 250 feet AGL (Above Ground Level). Remember the Buff's wingspan was 190 feet! Hugging the ground lower than most hills and some buildings enabled the BUFF to avoid early detection – and for the pilots and crew made for some exciting flying!

What's the Leadership lesson here?

Plan well. Follow your strategy. When events make it clear that the strategy is ineffective - change immediately. Resources of hardware and personnel are usually not timely changeable. Their use might be. Adapt, Redeploy, Proceed.

Effective Leadership constantly reviews events and conditions – continually adapting their resources and use.

Where might you be stuck by applying ineffective strategies to accomplish your goals?

List three areas that are currently not working for you and as Henry Ford said, *“Don't find fault. Find a solution.”*

No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.

- Albert Einstein

Think fast. Talk slow.

- Anonymous

To retain your “self-respect” it is better to displease some people by doing what you know is right than to temporarily please them by doing what you know is wrong.

- William J. Boetcker

7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Habit 6: Synergize

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

- Stephen Covey

*To know how to do something is skill.
To know why to do something is wisdom.
To know when to do something is judgment.
To know to strive to do your best is dedication.
To do it for the benefit of others is compassion.
To get the job done is achievement.
To do this quietly is humility.
To get others to do all of these things willingly is
leadership.*

- Anonymous

*Ability can take you to the top, but it takes character to
keep you there.*

- Zig Ziglar

*Inspiring leadership often requires being tough – not
willing to compromise with mediocrity.*

- Walter Isaacson

The Piss-Pants Theories of Leadership

The following two personal incidents are ones that I have retold to my sons as examples of important leadership principles.

Theory # 1:

Walking out of the California Department of Motor Vehicles, dressed in light khaki slacks and my school letterman's sweater, I was proudly clutching my just issued first driver's license. Two days earlier I had turned 16, the minimum age required by the DMV.



Eager to show-off my new wealth I borrowed my mother's car to drive to Susan's house. Susan was a cute brunette cheerleader that I shared some classes with and whose attention I had been trying to attract for weeks.

Although surprised by my unannounced visit, Susan greeted me warmly and invited me in. Sitting in her living room I proudly displayed my new license and told her about the testing process. After a few minutes of small talk Susan said that she was going to the kitchen to prepare a few snacks. As she arose I asked to use her restroom.

As I open the faucet to wash my hands a big spray of water shot out at me. The water soaked the front of my khaki pants. It gave every appearance that I had peed my pants.

On the counter I saw a dish with a box of wooden matches. With the intention to dry my pants I struck three matches at once and held them near my soaked pants. The matches did not dry my pants. They burned a big hole right in the crotch.

Without a goodbye I sprinted out the front door, jumped in my car and sped home.

What is the Leadership Lesson here?:

Never try to solve a problem with a solution whose consequences may be greater than the problem.

Little white lies, inflated resumes, bogus tax reports, and usually selecting the cheapest product or bidder fall subject to this principle. What others can you think of?

Theory # 2:

Following is a long story to impart a short important leadership lesson.

Even in July, at 05:00 in the morning, in Amarillo, Texas it was uncomfortably cold.

Leading the squadron, running as hard as I could, I charged around the ¼ mile track in shorts, T-shirt, and heavy black combat boots. The mile-run was the start of each day at Air Force Boot Camp. As the Squadron Physical Training Officer (PTO) I set the goal of daily finishing the run ahead of all other cadets.

Months before, I had been drafted by the US Army. I was just finishing my third year at university. My Dad recommended that I try and join the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) at my university which if selected would allow me to complete my undergraduate studies and enter the service as an Officer. I applied and was selected as a candidate for Air Force pilot training. The ROTC program required that I train as a student cadet for two years taking courses in leadership and military subjects along with my other university classes.

ROTC Boot Camp was every cadet's first experience of the military. Boot Camp, physically and mentally very challenging, was designed to begin preparing cadets for the physical, mental, and emotional responsibilities of leadership positions in the Air Force. It was also designed to 'weed-out' young men who might not be suitable for such responsibilities.

Prior to going to camp I asked a fraternity brother who had recently completed Boot Camp how I could best prepare for the training and in what ways might I distinguish myself. He said that many cadets would be singled-out for various leadership positions throughout the six-week encampment. He advised to get into good physical condition, as the highest visibility was the PTO position. This role was fixed and not weekly rotated as were the other assignments.

So on the first day of Boot Camp when the Squadron Commander asked who would step-up and serve as PTO I eagerly volunteered. (Even though my Dad, a former US Army Officer, had warned me against volunteering for duties in the military.) As PTO it was my responsibility, in the dark and chill of every morning, after the mile run, to lead the squadron of several hundred cadets through 30 minutes of grueling calisthenics.



Every morning at 05:00 a bugle would trumpet ‘Reveille’ through loud-speakers demanding all cadets awaken, dress for PT, and ‘fall-in’ at ‘Attention’ in formation – all within five minutes. After the third day of this I stealthily started getting-up 10 minutes early to empty my bladder, don three extra T-shirts, extra socks, hide three sticks of gum in my mouth, and wait for the blare of the bugle. This worked wonders as I was warmer, on-time, and ready for the run.

During the last month of the training cadets were advised that each Flight Commander (FC), a regular AF Captain, could nominate exceptionally performing cadets from his flight to be considered for ‘Outstanding Cadet of the Encampment’. I was very proud to be nominated by my FC.



One week later I was sitting in the Headquarters Building with a dozen other cadets waiting to be interviewed by AF senior officers who would select the OCE. With two cadets ahead of me in the interviewing cue I excused myself to go to the latrine.

Different faucet – same result. An offending stream of water shot directly at my khaki uniform pants. No matches or other devices offered any solution. Escape also was not an option. I delayed as long as I could until I heard, “Cadet Yarbrough – report to the Interview Room!”

I entered the room and took the standing position of ‘Attention’ 10 feet in front of the table at which sat the Base Commandant—a full Colonel, two Majors, and two Captains – one of which was my FC.

I saluted and assumed the position of ‘Parade Rest’, standing, feet slightly apart, hands behind my back, eyes looking straight ahead, not focusing on the interviewing Officers.

For the next 15 interminable minutes the Officers asked me questions about world events, my personal background, my camp experiences, and my intentions for service in the Air Force. Staring straight ahead I answered as confidently and articulately as I could. I was subsequently dismissed and instructed to proceed to my next duty post.

The night before the Encampment was completed the regular Officers hosted a celebratory dinner for all the cadets who had successfully completed the training. Upon completion of the meal the Base Commandant gave a speech congratulating the cadets. He acknowledged that shortly many would be likely sent into combat and he wished us “good service and good luck”. His final congratulatory remarks were reserved for the announcement of the OCE.

With total surprise, great pride, and no faucets in sight, I strode to podium to accept the award.

The last day of Boot Camp, after a final scrub-down our barracks, I was ordered to go to my FC’s office. This was the only time his demeanor was cordial and encouraging. Throughout the previous two months he had prodded and pushed every cadet, excoriating them to constantly improve at whatever the task-at-hand was.

My Captain congratulated me on being selected as the OCE and counseled that if I maintained my focus and discipline I could have a distinguishing military career. I was humbled and honored and I asked him what were the determining factors in my selection. My FC recounted my hard work, outstanding physical and academic marks, and efforts to assist my fellow-cadets. Finally he smiled as he confided, “ Cadet, although you had distinguished yourself throughout the Encampment so had other excellently performing cadets. However, when you entered the Interview Room with a big piss stain on your pants and without excuse or hesitation confidently answered our questions we felt that you could be an officer who could rise-up above personal embarrassment and stress and effectively take-charge during times of crisis. This is a quality most needed by our Officers.”

What is the Leadership Lesson here?

Effective leaders must not allow personal issues or stresses to cloud their judgment or derail them from taking courageous, timely, and decisive action – especially during times of uncertainty or crisis.

Recall any personal “shoulda, woulda, coulda’s” where personal stresses interfered with you taking courageous effective action. With 20/20 hindsight estimate the potential ‘gains vs costs’ that might have resulted if you had acted on this Leadership principle. My Dad advised that Courage lives by risk, including the risk of failure. It is also the seed of expanded Insight, Growth, and Opportunity.

“Courage is being scared to death – and saddling up anyway.”

- John Wayne

PS – What I did not know when I was daily finishing first in the mile-run was that one FC had instructed his Flight to run as a unit. Within his flight was a track star from a big California university. On the last run of the encampment the FC had told him to take charge and win the run. When this cadet flew by me, not knowing who he was, I figured that he would burn-out so I worked to stay as close as I could. He finished the mile in 4 minutes 28 seconds – in black combat boots! I finished in 5 minutes – and spent the next 20 throwing-up.

Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.

- Albert Schweitzer

*Conduct is what we do; character is what we are.
Character is the root of the tree; conduct is the fruit it bears.*

- E. M. Bounds

Great leaders are like baseball umpires; they go practically unnoticed when doing their job right.

- Byrd Baggett

My Barrel Roll Theory of Self-Mastery

Blind, semi-conscious, experiencing extreme weight pressure, I was upside down hurtling toward earth at over 500 mph.



This was not my plan.

I was flying a USAF T-38 Talon, supersonic jet trainer – solo. What started as a routine training flight over mountains in southern Arizona, in the last month of year-long pilot training, had turned into a life challenging and changing event.

The plan had been to practice aerobatic maneuvers at altitudes between 25,000 and 10,000 feet to exercise control and confidence over all aspects of flight. One of the maneuvers to practice was a ‘Barrel Roll’. The maneuver is deceptively complex, involving continuous rotation around all three axes from start to finish. Successful demonstration requires thorough mastery of basic rolling and looping skills.

Proper execution of the maneuver required strict control of airspeed, aircraft attitude, direction, angle of attack, and roll-rate. In the last half of a Barrel Roll with the aircraft inverted, if the pilot did not keep the proper roll-rate and applied too much backpressure on ‘the stick’ a dangerous condition could result. With too much backpressure the aircraft would be upside down, headed to the ground, gaining excessive speed, and losing altitude rapidly. Sound familiar?

The proper recovery is to quickly rollout of the inverted attitude, regain level flight, and full aircraft control.

This should have been my plan.

Instead I had miss-controlled roll and back stick pressure trying to ‘pull through’ the turn and ended up in a ‘Split S’ maneuver. The increasing G-forces were causing the blood to drain from my brain resulting in ‘tunnel-vision’ to ‘grey-out’ to blindness.

I pulled out of the inverted dive at less than 800 feet AGL (Above Ground Level). My G-suit was fully inflated and my vision slowly returned. The G-meter was pegged at over seven G’s (7 X force of Gravity).

I was alive, had busted the safe altitude restrictions, stressed the aircraft, and had some decisions to make. Option A: I could regain a safe altitude and recover to Base, not disclose my loss of control, be thankful for surviving, and live to fly another day.

Or – Option B: I could do a ‘Reset’ – position my aircraft again at a safe 15,000 ft. and attempt another Barrel Roll.

I chose Option B. I do not profess bravery. It was clear to me that to be a competent and confident pilot I must immediately master fear and self-doubt. I did so with a forced confidence. This was not foolish courage as in earlier flights I had successfully completed the maneuver when flying with an instructor.

Mentally I knew the physical techniques to control my aircraft for proper execution. The required task at hand was to translate knowledge into action by physically and precisely controlling the airspeed, attitude, stick pressure, and roll-rate.

I willed ever-greater confidence and courage, reset my aircraft, and completed a near-perfect Barrel Roll.

As I headed back to Base I knew that I had decided and done something personally important. Trusting myself was a huge gift and I would 'cash-in' on this trust throughout my life.

*PS – Remember my story 'Piss Pants' Theories of Leadership'?
On exiting my aircraft I realized that the wetness in the crotch of my flight suit was not caused by an errant faucet.*

What were My Lessons Learned?:

1. Be prepared with procedural knowledge for effective recovery actions to potential problems whether operating or leading a personal or group physical task, project, or organization.
2. Learn to recognize and take corrective action at the first signs of a developing 'out-of-control' situation.

3. Focused Will (FW), embraced Self-Confidence (SC), and Decisive Action (DA) are the inner resources which call forth the deeper part of me that supports and sustains me offering opportunities for greatest success.
4. When I feel fear and self-doubt they are indicators that I need to 'Reset'.
5. FW, SC, & DA are also the lances to puncture debilitating fear, self-doubt, and sense of hopelessness.
6. I must not wait for fear or self-doubt to be dispelled. I will use FW to pretend to be SC and proceed to take DA.
7. Creation, inflation, and implementation of FW, SC, & DA are a matter of choice – and it is one that is always available.

Challenge:

Recall a time when you summoned Will and Confidence, did a 'Reset', and took Action in spite of fear and self-doubt.

How can you energize this memory to establish a Reset Button to be ever ready to activate your FW, SC & DA when needed?

Our Reset Button is not to be reserved for only severe life challenges. It should be activated whenever fear or self-doubt are felt. This includes all fears:

- Fear of Failure
- Fear of Embarrassment
- Fear of Inadequacy
- Fear of Disappointing Self or Others
- Fear of Success

Like muscles or any practiced skill our Reset Button response gets stronger and more effective the more we use it.

Opportunity:

What current or near-term challenges can be handled more effectively by hitting ‘Reset’ and ‘acting-as-if’ now?

“Leaders keep their eye on the doughnut and not the hole. They remind themselves it’s better to be in the arena, than to be up in the stands, or out in the parking lot.”

- Steven Pressfield; The War of Art



*Gratitude is an attitude.
It is the water that nourishes the seeds
that grow into Joy and Contribution.*

- Dad

THANKFULNESS (Final Approach)

It is said, “What gets measured gets managed.” For greater personal development, we must create a personal measure and management tool for our intangibles of:

- ⤴ Gratitude
- ⤴ Joy
- ⤴ Peace of Mind
- ⤴ Physical Health
- ⤴ Spiritual Peace
- ⤴ Sense of Contribution

These measures will be highly subjective and very personal. The effort you put into creating a personal benchmark, which allows you to calibrate your current state of mind for these intangibles will be greatly rewarded.

Becoming aware of where your mind is staging allows you to take control and move up your scale through “acting as if”.

No one can create this joy, peace of mind, or fulfillment for us. Remember, our first job is to create the mindset and thereby the conditions that allow these to occur. The mindset of Gratitude is a great start.

The author and philosopher, James Allen, advises us to, “Cherish your visions. Cherish your ideals. Cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built.”

Many philosophers have advised that a thankful mind is the one that is the most observant and receptive to external support. Being thankful broadens our focus and illuminates new opportunities. The mental state of gratitude allows us to transmit any condition into a higher state.



Final Approach

The only way to experience the richness of life is to live in an "attitude of Gratitude": to appreciate what you have and what you can give.

- Anthony Robbins

Gratitude isn't a debt to be paid but a key to a treasure chest filled with the fullness of life.

- Michael Josephson

Gratitude Unleashed

Pre-dawn Jakarta, Indonesia: Sitting in the back of my Mercedes I was wallowing in self-pity. My driver had stopped at a traffic light while I was caught-up in feeling over-worked, unacknowledged, and under-appreciated.

For the last three full days and nights I had been working non-stop to finalize reports and a presentation for a regional senior management conference to be held in Singapore. I felt that neither staff nor regional management knew or cared how hard I had been working.

As I casually looked to my left I saw a man with an out-stretched arm squatting on the roadside three feet from my car. A small cup dangled from his disfigured hand. He had no nose, no fingers, and no toes. He was a leper who had arrived in the early darkness and would likely remain in place all day hoping to stay alive through the alms he could elicit from passing motorists. He was a leper of advanced age.

In an instant my self-pity vanished. A feeling of compassion washed over me. Stronger than the sense of compassion was the emotion of thankfulness - profound thankfulness for the health, safety, and economic conditions of self and family. I had studied and worked hard to earn the management position and benefits I currently enjoyed. Yet I had no answer why I was born in America into a nurturing family providing me security and opportunities while the leper outside my window was living a life with a severely damaged body and little hope for a better future.

The traffic light turned green and as we sped toward the airport my spirits soared in appreciation for all my blessings and the expectation of ever-better tomorrows. I was truly privileged. It became clear that ‘privileges have responsibilities’.

In the years since, I have worked to practice my responsibilities – my contributions to my family, friends, and community. The accepting of responsibility did not emanate from the notion that I was trying to ward off bad luck or manipulate conditional universal support - it flowed from experiencing the joy that comes from being grateful and being useful to others. The brilliant Irish playwright in his poem, *True Joy*, penned,

*“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to
the Whole Community – and it is my Privilege –
My Privilege to do for it whatever I can.
For the harder I work the more I live.”*

Some people think that everything happens for a reason. I don’t. My experience is that for most of us we are stumbling or running so fast that we are often not even ‘in tune’ with our own experiences.

Occasionally, something happens that creates a personal ‘wake-up call’ or benchmark. There is a welling-up of emotion, consciousness, or sense of discovery. Whether you attribute these to a realized personal truth, the intervention of your Muse, or Divine guidance I have found these moments to be unique opportunities for personal growth and insight – sometimes bearing messages for ‘life corrections’ or new directions.

For me, these moments of clarity are precious. Examining these insights has often guided me to new perspectives and has been the catalyst for me to take actions that yield unexpected opportunities.

What are some of the ‘wake-up calls’ that you have experienced? How have you acknowledged, memorialized and acted on them? How have these guided you?

*Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough, and more.
It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity.*

- Michael Josephson

*It (gratitude) can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home,
a stranger into a friend.
Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today,
and creates a vision for tomorrow.*

- Melody Beattie

*How life comes at you today is determined by your past.
How you take it is determined by your present.
How you send it forth determines your future.
Send it forth with joy.*

- Anonymous

The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings!

- Henry Ward Beecher

Expressing gratitude is transformative, just as transformative as expressing complaint.... Expressing gratitude can, indeed, change our way of seeing ourselves and the world.

- Roshi John Daido Looi

What if you gave someone a gift, and they neglected to thank you for it - would you be likely to give them another? Life is the same way. In order to attract more of the blessings that life has to offer, you must truly appreciate what you already have.

- Ralph Marston

Each day offers us the gift of being a special occasion if we can simply learn that as well as giving, it is blessed to receive with grace and a grateful heart.

- Sarah Ban Breathnach

You must learn to understand the secret of gratitude. It is more than just so-called virtue. It is revealed to you as a mysterious law of existence. In obedience to it we have to fulfill our destiny.

- Albert Schweitzer

In the end the love you take is equal to the love you make.

- The Beatles

When we are grateful the option of abundance appears and dissolves the virus of fear.

- Wendy Franklin Muhammed

Abundance is not something we acquire. It is something we tune into.

- Dr. Wayne Dyer

Integrity is the Key – Compassion is the Answer

I am proud to share a story about one my favorite mentors, Anthony Robbins.

I met Tony in 1985 in Aspen, Colorado, at a global conference on World Peace that had been arranged by Thomas Crum, friend, sifu, and partner to the country-music artist John Denver. A dear friend and mentor, Dr. Jeff Alexander founder of Warrior Spirit (www.warriorspirit.com) introduced me to Tony.

I did my first ‘fire-walk’ with Tony the first night of the conference. It was a magical experience. The power for me was not in safely transiting the hot coals in bare feet. The personal victory and lasting empowerment was in believing in self, mastering fear, and allowing myself to do it.



(Tony in 1985: <http://bit.ly/Y7uD74>)

During the three-day meeting I spent some time with Tony and told him how I thought his message of personal responsibility and empowerment was needed and would be welcomed in Panama, R.P.

I had resided in Panama for the last 10 years conducting a growing business in the warehousing and relocation industry. I considered it home and was very concerned about the increasing negative changes under the self-imposed dictator, Manuel Noriega. I told Tony that there were many people opposed to Noriega's corruption and cruelty – and that most felt powerless.

Under the guise of conducting a leadership training Tony agreed to come to Panama for a week if I would organize and financially support the event. Thrilled with the opportunity and having no clue what my next step would be, I committed with an enthusiastic, “Yes.”

With only three months to prepare for the training and recruit attendees I moved into over-drive. My memory is that because this new large task, added to my already demanding business responsibilities, was energized by unbridled passion and enthusiasm, I became more efficient at all tasks.

Panama was far off the seminar trail - few ‘speakers of note’ ever visited the Republic. The increasing political chaos and violence were also factors dissuading visitors.

In 1985 Tony was still a relative ‘unknown’, especially outside the US. My explanations about the fire-walk, Tony's training sessions, and recruiting for the seminar became time-consuming challenges.

Fortunately, I had recruited several friends who worked for the US Army in senior admin positions who were interested in human development work. We concluded that conducting the event in the US controlled Canal Zone would shield us from the suspicious and corrupt Panama government.

Getting permission from local skeptical authorities to conduct a seminar with a ‘fire-walk’ on US government premises had been an exercise in artful negotiations. I personally agreed to take responsibility for all property damage and personal injuries.

A day before the ‘Fear into Power—the Fire Walk Experience’ was scheduled a supportive friend had arranged a luncheon information briefing at the Officers’ Club in Fort Amador, HQ for the US Army Southern Command. Over 175 people were waiting to meet Tony and learn about his programs. We waited and waited.

Lesson # 1: Always arrive at least 24 hours before any important scheduled event.

Tony had been scheduled to arrive early that day in plenty of time to attend the luncheon. He had arranged to fly from Los Angeles to Miami, remain overnight, and catch an early direct flight to Panama.

He missed his flight to Miami. Tony booked the next available flight to New York with a connection to Miami. Flight delays caused him to miss the Miami connection to Panama. As there were no flights to Panama until the next day Tony chartered a small private plane. The plane hopscothed several Caribbean islands before landing at Tocumen Airport, Panama, R.P. at 6:00 PM - six hours after the scheduled luncheon briefing.

This all occurred centuries before cell phones. My com-link to Tony had been through his secretary in LA who received periodic telephone travel updates from Tony. His secretary and I played phone-tag throughout the morning.

By 12:45 my luncheon guests were becoming impatient and prepared to leave. As a proxy for Tony I am not even on the same planet, however, I gave one of the best performances of my life explaining the power and opportunities of TR's training. The audience was respectful but unimpressed until I offered all present free attendance at the 'Fear into Power' event. What had been a challenge to recruit 40 people to invest in the trainings now resulted in over 150 showing-up.

Lesson # 2: 'Free' is a powerful motivator.

The Fire-Walk was a tremendous success – no injuries – and over 100 people signed-up for the following three-day training on 'Self-Mastery, Taking Charge, and Fitness & Health'. This program too, was an outstanding success. Many people discovered new self-appreciation and personal motivation to make empowering decisions and take consequential actions. Many of these participants became energetic devotees of the powerful teachings. An awareness of potential empowerment had been ignited in the community.

During the trip planning Tony had asked me if there were any persons of influence that I would like him to meet. A special friend who had connections with the Panama government had arranged a meeting for Tony with Nicolas Bartletta, the President of the Republic of Panama. Bartletta had formerly been the Vice-President of the World Bank. He had been pressed into service by General Noriega to help give his government a perception of legitimacy and credibility.

Tony's departure date had been scheduled for 4:00 PM the day after the seminar. The meeting with President Barletta had been arranged for 1:00 PM at the Presidencia.

In the morning of the departure day Tony and I were engaged in conversation. I told him the story of Jose Sinisterra. Six months before Jose, a fit and very competent local private contractor, was building a set of new multi-story offices inside my large warehouse. Jose had fallen off a 25 ft. scaffolding, landing on the warehouse concrete floor, and became paralyzed from the neck down.

Lesson # 3: Whatever the task, physical, mental, or social, an appropriate 'safety harness' is essential.

Jose spent the next four months in the hospital. After repeated treatments the doctors essentially gave-up any chances of physical improvement and sent him home to vegetate – or die.

I would visit Jose in his home leaving encouraged by his spirit but frustrated by his lack of physical progress, and my inability to render meaningful help.

Tony asked if we could visit Jose prior to going to the Presidencia. Jose's wife advised that she and Jose would be glad to see us. We arranged an 11:00 AM visit.

You likely know that Tony is a very tall man – 6' 7". Towering over the bedridden Jose he appeared as a friendly giant.

Tony talked at length to Jose, asking him about his family, his previous work, his former hopes and dreams, and his feelings about finding himself in his current physical condition. Tony

sincerely acknowledged his broken dreams while re-affirming his personal courage and strength to fight on. Jose was excited with the attention. He likely had not had such an in depth conversation or acknowledgment.

Lesson # 4: Sincere caring and acknowledgment is the surest pathway to establish a meaningful relationship.

Tony asked Jose to join him in a ‘closed-eye directed visualization’ exercise. With his agreement Tony guided Jose to create a series of mental pictures wherein he saw himself as ever more healthy and being able to contribute to his family. These images were not to be based on a wholly restored body but were suggesting that Jose could willfully gain more control and ability to contribute in new ways.

Jose had no movement of any body part south of his chin. During the visualization exercise Tony instructed Jose to direct his focus and energy to his feet. After 10 minutes Jose’s toes began to move – for the first time since his fall!

Lesson # 5: Our directed and energized ‘Will’ is one of our most resourceful but under-used powers.

It was 12:30. I quietly reminded Tony that we had to be leaving to meet the President. Tony said, “Jim – this is the most important thing I can personally do right now. Please call President Barletta and tell him that we will be late.” Somewhat shocked, with immense respect and appreciation for Tony, I called the President’s office and relayed the message.

We left Jose’s apartment at 1:30 leaving behind a very grateful and inspired family.

Arriving more than an hour late we expected to be greeted by a chastising President.

Ushered in to President Barletta's office, we demonstrated sincere respect and appreciation for the meeting opportunity and re-directed the energy. President Barletta was curious about Tony, his principles, and practices.

The President was immersed in a very contentious struggle with the despotic military, some of Noriega's appointed cabinet ministers, and others in and near government working for social change to improve the well-being of the people of Panama.

Tony and the President discussed what power he really had and how he might use his leadership position and personal influence to effectively promote change. President Barletta was very open and receptive to suggestions. He admitted that his authority was largely thwarted by General Noriega. He confided that he had to operate very carefully to pursue opportunities for change.

Tony asked the President if he would allow Tony to guide him in a 'closed-eye visualization' exercise. Tony advised that the process would be to relieve stress, energize him, and offer discovery of potential insights and ideas to use his influence more effectively.

In the stillness of the private office, with only Tony, the President, and myself present, Tony guided us through an empowering process that lasted over half an hour. A grateful President confirmed that he felt more insightful, energetic, directed, and hopeful.

The time was 3:15. The airport was 40 minutes drive from the Presidencia. Tony's Air Panama flight to New York was scheduled to depart at 4:00. As we were about to leave the President's office Tony turned to President Barletta and said, "Mr. President would you please call the airline and ask them to hold the plane for me." He did. They did. Tony made the flight and met with Donald Trump the next day.

Lesson # 6: "if you don't ask – you don't get!"

For over 30 years Tony's coaching has been a positive influence in my life. With great appreciation I have embraced and worked to practice his teachings. I have worked to teach his leadership principles and life skills' strategies to my employees. I have witnessed his successes in empowering millions of people through his trainings, books, videos, and CD's. He has counseled world famous celebrities, athletes, businessmen, and even US Presidents.

Tony, the 'larger-than-life' Coach, with his fantastic ability to effectively communicate self-empowering principles, and as impressive as his continuing contributions are I can personally attest are matched by his compassion and integrity.



(Tony's message: <http://bit.ly/ZXLMhv>)

PS: Shortly after Tony's visit I sold my businesses and moved with my new beautiful wife to California. In less than two years I moved to Asia and lost contact with Jose. In 2012, I asked my good friend, Michael Pierce, a respected attorney, still residing in Panama, to find out if Jose was alive and what this condition was. In a few days Mike reported that Jose was indeed still alive. Although he was still a paraplegic he had regained some use of his hands and had become an active letter writer on locally important social issues. Jose's two sons (both named Jose!) were gainfully employed, the family was stable, and if not thriving, remained positive about the future.

In closing, I trust that the 19th century English poet, William Dunkerley, will approve of my slight editing of his wonderful poem, “The Way”.

The Way

*Some men are on the High way,
Some men are on the Low.
And some on the misty, muddy flats below
Go aimlessly to and fro.
Some men choose the High way
Others choose the Low.
And the choice we make
Determines which way our Soul will go.*



About the Author



James G. Yarbrough, Jr.

Jim served as a US Air Force pilot, and for the last 25 years, has blended his business career, owning and managing companies engaged in international trade, with international NGO's committed to public service. Jim has lived and worked in four continents and many countries. He is married to Maria Elena Robison of Panama, and together they have three successful adult children.

Thank You Again

Thank you again for letting me share these personal stories about Leadership with you.

I encourage you to explore the full compilation of *Small Bites* and subject manuals available at Amazon:

<http://amzn.to/Rbh3f9>

GENERAL WISDOM (Standard Operating Procedures)

SELF-KNOWLEDGE (Operations Manual)

EDUCATION (Flight Planning)

GOALS (Mission)

ATTITUDE (Mission Driven)

RESPONSIBILITY (Duty)

ACTION (After-Burners)

COURAGE (Tailwind)

ADVERSITY (Turbulence - Emergency Procedures)

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT (Formation Flying)

SUCCESS (Mission Accomplished)

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SERVICE (Crew Care)

THANKFULNESS (Final Approach)

SPIRIT (Refueling)

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Index of Authors

Following is a listing of all of the authors whose quotes and poems are part of the full compilation of Small Bites. The authors' names are hyperlinked to websites with information about the author.

[Albom, Mitch](#)

American novelist, journalist, columnist
1958–

[Ali, Muhammad](#)

American boxer
1942–

[Allen, James](#)

British writer
1864–1912

[Angelou, Maya](#)

American poet, civil rights activist
1928–

[Apollo, Temple of](#)

[Arnold, Oren](#)

American editor, freelance writer
1900–1980

B

[Ball, Lucille](#)

American actress, comedian
1911–1989

[Barry, Dan](#)

American professor, astronaut
1953–

Basho, Matsuo

Japanese poet
1644–1694

The Beatles

British rock band
1960–1970

Beattie, Melody

American author
1948–

Beecher, Henry Ward

American Protestant clergyman
1813–1887

Bernstein, Leonard

American conductor, composer, author
1918–1990

Bird, Larry

American basketball player
1956–

Blanchard, Ken

American author, management expert
1939–

Boetcker, William J.

American religious leader, speaker
1873–1962

Bounds, E. M.

American Methodist minister, author
1835–1913

Bradshaw, Terry

American football quarterback
1948–

Breathnach, Sarah Ban

American author, spiritualist
1958–

Brinkley, David

American television news anchor
1920–2003

Brown Jr., Jackson H.

American author

Browne, Clyde Jackson

American singer-songwriter, musician, activist
1948–

Brown, Les

American big band leader, composer
1912–2001

Buscaglia, Leo

American speaker, writer, professor
1924–1998

Buddha, Gautama

Indian spiritual teacher
c. 563–483 BC

Buddhism

The teachings of Buddha

Bulwer Lytton E. G.

British politician, poet, playwright, novelist
1803–1873

C

Caddy, Eileen

Irish born spiritual teacher, author
1917–2006

Camara, Dom Helder

Italian Bishop
1909–1999

Camus, Albert

French author, journalist
1913–1960

Carlin, George

American stand-up comedian, social critic, actor, author
1937–2008

Carlyle, Thomas

Scottish essayist, satirist, historian
1795–1881

Carnegie, Dale

American writer, lecturer
1888–1955

Carver, George Washington

American scientist, botanist, educator, inventor
1864–1943

The Chambers Brothers

American soul music group
1954–1972

Chekhov, Anton

Russian writer, playwright
1860–1904

Chopra, Deepak

American Indian physician, writer, teacher
1946–

Churchill, Winston

British statesman, Prime Minister
1874–1965

Cicero

Roman politician, lawyer, orator, philosopher
106 BC–43 BC

Clancy, Tom

American novelist
1947–

Coelho, Paulo

Brazilian novelist, lyricist
1947–

Coffee, Gerald

American Naval Captain, author, Vietnam POW
1935–

Collier, Robert

American author
1885–1950

Collins, Marva

American educator
1936–

Confucius

Chinese Philosopher
551 BC–479 BC

Conversations With God

Series of books by Neale Donald Walsch
1995–2005

March, Peyton C.

American soldier, Army Chief of Staff.
1864–1955

Cooke, Alfred Alistair

British/American journalist, TV personality
1908–

Cooley, Mason

American Aphorist
1927–2002

Courtenay, Bryce

South African/Australian novelist
1933–

Cousins, Margaret

American fiction writer, editor
1905–1996

Covey, Stephen

American author, professional speaker,
known for "The 7 Habits of Highly Effectively People"
1932–2012

Crowley, Crowley

Irish politician
1903–1966

Cummings, E. E.

American poet, essayist, author, playwright.
1894–1962

D

The Dalai Lama

The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso
1935–

da Vinci, Leonardo

Italian painter, sculptor, architect, musician,
scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor,
1452–1519

De Angelis, Barbara

American relationship consultant, author
1951–

Dhammapada

Buddhist scripture

Diana, Princess Diana

British Royalty, humanitarian activist
1961–1997

Dickinson, Emily

American poet
1830–1886

Diderot, Denis

French philosopher, art critic, writer.
1713–1784

Didion, Joan

American novelist, memoirist, essayist
1934–

Disney, Walt

American film producer, co-founder of The Disney Co.
1901–1966

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor

Russian novelist, short story writer, essayist
1821–1881

Downs, Hugh

American television broadcaster, host, author
1921–

Drucker, Peter

Austrian writer, professor, management consultant
1909–2005

Durant, William

Irish historian, writer, philosopher, teacher
1885–1981

Dyer, Wayne

American advocate, author, lecturer.
1940–

E

Edison, Thomas

American inventor, scientist, businessman
1847–1931

Ehrmann, Max

American attorney, businessman, poet
1872–1945

Einstein, Albert

German theoretical physicist
1879–1955

Emerson, Ralph Waldo

American essayist, lecturer, poet
1803–1882

Everett, Douglas H.

Canadian lawyer, Senator.
1927–

Ewing, Sam

American baseball player
1949–

F

Farber, Steve

American author, motivational speaker
1959–

Feather, William

American author
1889–1981

Ferrucci, Piero

Italian psychotherapist, philosopher

Finley, Guy

American writer, philosopher, musician
1949–

Firebaugh, Doug

American author

Flaubert, Gustave

French novelist, playwright
1821–1880

Forbes, Malcolm

American publisher, business magnate
1919–1990

Ford, Henry

American industrialist, business magnate
1863–1947

Fowler, Chad

American writer, speaker, teacher

Frank, Anne

German Jewish holocaust victim, diarist
1929–1945

Frankl, Viktor

Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist
1905–1997

Franklin, Benjamin

American scientist, writer, politician
1706–1790

Friedman, Milton

American economist, statistician
1912–2006

Friedman, Thomas

American author, columnist
1953–

G

Gandhi, Mahatma

Indian political, ideological leader
1869–1948

Gerber, Michael E.

American author
1936–

Gibran, Khalil

Lebanese-American poet, painter, philosopher,
1883–1931

Glade, Earl J.

American Mormon missionary, broadcaster
1885–1966

Gladstone, William E.

British Prime Minister
1809–1898

von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang

German poet, novelist, playwright, philosopher
1749–1832

Grenfell, Sir Wilfred

British medical missionary
1865–1940

H

Harrison, Elizabeth

American college president, educator, author
1849–1927

Henley, William Ernest

English poet, critic, editor
1849–1903

Herbert, George

English poet, orator, priest
1593–1633

Herman, George 'Babe Ruth'

American baseball player
1895–1948

Hesse, Hermann

German Swiss novelist, author, essayist, poet
1877–1962

Hill, Napoleon

American author, journalist, attorney, lecturer
1883–1970

Holmes, Oliver Wendell

American physician, professor, author
1809–1894

Holtz, Lou

American coach, sportscaster, author
1937–

Homer

Greek poet
8th century BC

Hoover, Herbert

American President
1874–1964

Hopkins, Tom

American motivational speaker

Hugo, Victor

French poet, playwright, novelist, statesman
1802–1885

Humphrey, Hubert

American Vice President
1911–1978

I

Ingersoll, Robert Green.

American political leader
1833–1899

Isaacson, Walter

American author of biographies
1962–

J

James, Clive

Australian essayist, poet, broadcaster
1939–

James, William

American psychologist, philosopher
1842–1910

Jefferson, Thomas

American author, President
1743–1826

Joe Dirt

American comedy film, 2001

Jones, Arthur

American inventor
1926–2007

Jong, Erica

American author, teacher
1942–

Josephson, Michael

American speaker, lecturer, law professor
1942–

K

Keith, Kent M.

American author, motivational speaker
1948–

Keller, Helen

American author, political activist, lecturer
1880–1968

Kelly, Mathew

British television presenter, actor
1950–

Kennedy, John F.

American President
1917–1963

Kent, Corita

French artist, educator
1918–1986

Kersey, Cynthia

American author, motivational speaker

Kettering, Charles F.

American inventor, engineer, businessman

King, Coretta Scott

American activist, author
1927– 2006

Kiyosaki, Robert

American businessman, author, speaker
1947–

Knight, Bobby

American basketball coach
1940–

Koinonia Mission

Korbut, Olga

Russian Olympic Gold Medalist gymnast
1955–

Kübler-Ross, Elizabeth

Switzerland psychiatrist
1926–2004

L

L'Amour, Louis

American novelist, short story writer
1908–1988

Landry, Tom

American football player, coach
1924–2000

Lao Tzu

Chinese philosopher
Warring States Period, 5th to 4th century BC

Larson, Christian D.

American Thought leader, teacher, author
1874–1962

Lasorda, Tommy

American Major League baseball manager
1927–

Levinson, Sam

American humorist, writer, TV host, journalist
1911–1980

Lincoln, Abraham

American President
1809–1865

Linkletter, Art

Canadian TV & radio broadcaster
1912–2010

Lombardi, Vince

American football coach
1913–1970

Loori, John Daido

American Zen Buddhist abbot
1931–2009

Luce, Clare Boothe

American playwright, journalist, diplomat
1903–1987

Lynes, Russell

American art historian, photographer, author
1910–1991

M

MacEwen, Norman

British Royal Air Force Commander
1881–1953

Mackay, Harvey

American businessman, columnist.
1932–

Mahfouz, Naguib

Egyptian novelist
1911–2006

Mahoney, David

American soccer goalkeeper
1981–

Maltz, Dr. Maxwell

American cosmetic surgeon
1899–1975

Mandela, Nelson

South African political activist, President
1918–

Mandino, Og

American author
1923–1996

Mansfield, Katherine

New Zealand writer,
1888–1923

Marston, Ralph

American pro football player
1907–

Mason, John

English Army Major, American colonist
1600–1672

Masters, Edgar Lee

American poet, biographer, lawyer
1868–1950

Maxwell, John C.

American author, speaker, pastor
1947–

Meyer, Paul J.

American author, speaker
1928–2009

Moore, Christopher

American novelist
1957–

Moore, Thomas

Irish poet, singer, songwriter, entertainer
1779–1852

Morley, Christopher D.

American journalist, novelist, essayist, poet
1890–1957

Mortman, Doris

Author

Moses, 'Grandma Moses'

American folk artist
1860–1961

Murphy, Thomas P.

American businessman
1915–2006

N

Napoleon

Napoleon Bonaparte, also known as Napoleon I
French political leader, emperor
1769–1821

Nietzsche, Friedrich

German philosopher, poet, composer
1844–1900

Nightingale, Earl

American speaker, author, broadcaster
1921–1989

Nin, Anais

French-Cuban author
1903–1977

P

Paddleford, Clementine

American writer
1898–1967

Pascal, Blaise

French mathematician, physicist, philosopher
1623–1662

Pavarotti, Luciano

Italian operatic tenor
1935–2007

Peale, Norman Vincent

American author, speaker

Powell, Colin

US Army General, Secretary of State
1937 -

Proctor, Bob

American motivational consultant
1936 -

R

Rand, Ayn

Russian-American philosopher, writer
1905–1982

Reagan, Ronald

American President, actor
1911–2004

Redmoon, Ambrose

American beatnik, hippie, writer
1933–1996

Rice, Grantland

American sports writer
1880–1954

Robbins, Anthony

American author, actor, motivational facilitator
1960–

"Rocky", Rocky Balboa

Character from the Rocky series of movies
1976–2006

Rogers, Will

American actor, comic, satirist, columnist
1879–1935

Rohn, Jim

American, author, motivational speaker
1930–2009

Roosevelt, Eleanor

American First Lady, diplomat, activist
1884–1962

S

Saint Jerome

Roman Christian priest
c.341 AD–402 AD

Sartre, Jean Paul

French writer, philosopher
1905–1980

Schopenhauer, Arthur

German philosopher
1788–1860

Schuller, Robert H.

American televangelist, author
1926–

Schuller, Robert A.

American author, television executive
1954–

Schulz, Charles M.

American cartoonist and humorist
1922–2000

Schwarzenegger, Arnold

Austrian-American bodybuilder, actor, politician
1947–

Schwarzkopf, H. Norman

American U.S. Army General
1934–

Schweitzer, Albert

German Alsatian philosopher, medical missionary
1875–1965

Seneca, Marcus Annaeus

Roman writer
c. 54 BC–39 AD

Shaw, George Bernard

Irish playwright, critic, political activist
1856–1950

Shinn, Florence Scovel

American artist, book illustrator
1871–1940

Socrates

Athenian philosopher
c. 469 BC–399 BC

Stephenson, Sean

American author, motivational speaker
1979–

Stevenson, Robert Louis

Scottish novelist, poet, travel writer
1850–1894

Stone, W. Clement

American businessman, philanthropist
1902–2002

Dr. Seuss

American writer, cartoonist, animator, artist
1904–1991

Swindoll, Charles R.

American pastor, author, educator
1934–

T

Tagore, Rabindranath

Indian (Bengali) polymath
1861–1941

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre

French paleontologist, Jesuit priest, philosopher
1881–1955

Tao

“The Way”, a traditional Chinese philosophy

Templeton, John

Anglo-American businessman, philanthropist
1912–2008

Teresa, "Mother Teresa"

Catholic nun, charity missionary
1910–1997

Thoreau, Henry David

American author, poet, philosopher
1817–1862

Thurman, Howard

American author, philosopher, theologian,
1899–1981

Tracy, Brian

Canadian author
1944–

Truman, Harry S.

American President
1884–1972

Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemens)

American writer, lecturer
1835–1910

U

The Upanishads

Ancient Vedic text

V

van Gogh, Vincent

Dutch painter
1853–1890

Viscott, David

American psychiatrist, author
1938–1996

W

Waitley, Denis

American speaker, writer
1933–

Walsch, Neale Donald

[Walsch, Neale Donald](#)

American author

1943–

Ward, William Arthur

American writer

1921–1994

Washington, Booker T.

American educator, author

1856–1915

Wattles, Wallace D.

American author, philosopher

1860–1911

Wayne, John

American actor, director, producer

1907–1979

Wesley, John

British preacher, theologian

1703–1791

Wharton, Edith

American novelist, designer

1862–1937

Whitman, Walt

American poet, essayist, journalist

1819–1892

Wilcox, Ella Wheeler

American author, poet

1850–1919

Williamson, Marianne

American author, lecturer

1952–

Wilson, Woodrow

American statesman, President

1856–1924

Morris, Wolfe

British actor
1925–1996

Wooden, Coach John

American player, coach
1910–2010

Y

Yeats, William Butler

Irish poet, playwright
1865–1939

Yoda

A character in the Star Wars films

Z

Ziglar, Zig

American author, motivational speaker
1926–

Zola, Émile

French novelist, playwright, journalist
1840–1902