

INTRODUCTION

Title Fight

“When God passed out opinions, He shorted some folks but not me, so here goes. That title sounds so boring, truly. I would run from such a book. The chapter ‘Just Names’ was very moving, and ‘On Leadership and Kite Flying’ was wonderful. I liked the tone: personal, warm, down-to-earth, and wise. Your book should be a big hit. But the title, can you take it up a notch?”

Nancy, a friend since childhood, life-long educator, and part-time writer, had tendered her not completely tender sentiments on some of the initial drafts of this manuscript. My twin brother, Charles, a retired corporate lawyer, had rendered a similar verdict: “Love the stories; the title makes me yawn.” Both assured me that more “annoying” and “nitpicking” comments would follow should I continue to share the products of my literary labor. I did, and Nancy and Charles were true to their word.

Although generally defensive in the face of even constructive criticism, I valued their input and took their advice. I relinquished my original title, *The Reflective Leader: Leadership and Other Things I Learned Along the*

Way. At least I reduced it in rank. It does not appear on the front cover, but it has been given the not-so-shabby rank of section title. Whether you picked up this book because of the title or in spite of the title, let me say thank you, and I hope you, too, find the stories and ideas engaging and of value.

So, why *The Reflective Leader: Leadership and Other Things I Learned Along the Way*? Although I conceded and chose a different title, I rather liked my original wording. Let me explain—remember I said that I was defensive. But more than being defensive, I want you to understand several points essential to understanding leadership—and why I wrote this book.

At IBM, we believe that developing leaders is 10 percent classroom instruction, 20 percent on-the-job coaching and mentoring, and 70 percent experience. What we too often fail to do, however, is shed light on how our experiences change us. How do we learn from experience? Many assume that learning is automatic and uniform. Yet, we can easily find examples where two people have the same experience and different takeaways—and a third person may have no takeaway at all. Robert J. Thomas puts it more succinctly, “Experience by itself guarantees nothing.”¹

It is sort of like being a rat in a Skinner box. At first the rat inadvertently hits the lever and gets a pellet. But hitting the lever by accident and getting a pellet has to go on for a while before the rat does it with any consistency. Although the rat eventually learns that hitting the bar will result in a snack, I suspect the rat never thinks about how it learned to get the pellet or how to pass on that learning. We humans can conceptualize. So, if we hit the bar and a pellet comes out, we have the ability to make hypotheses about what links the events and put those hypotheses to the test. We can say to ourselves, “Hmm . . . I hit the bar and got a pellet. I wonder if it will happen again. Let me see.” We can then try it again, and if it works, we get the quick “aha” insight rather than a more protracted learning sequence. We can then tell our

¹ Robert J. Thomas, *How Do You Find What Matters in Experience: Becoming a More Effective Leader* (Boston: Harvard Business, 2008), p. 2.

colleagues how they can get a pellet. When it comes to leadership, however, most people are like the rat in the Skinner box. If we are successful at leading, we think it is because we are natural leaders rather than the more likely explanation that we unwittingly bumped into behaviors that worked and kept repeating these behaviors. Reflection helps us to understand these processes better so we can make our behavior more intentional and pass it on to others.

While experience alone may not guarantee that we learn from it, we generally do learn something from experience, even if we are unaware of the lessons at the time. By reflecting on our experiences, we increase our learning and our ability to articulate the lessons to others. By being able to give voice to our experiences, we can not only share lessons learned with others, but we can also accelerate our own development. Without reflection on experience and articulation of the lessons learned, our learning will be haphazard and incremental at best. Coaching and mentoring aid reflection and articulation, but we also need to learn to have private internal conversations about what our experiences have taught us.

Learning and development and helping others to learn and develop are essential and fundamental attributes of leadership. Leadership is about continually and effectively moving people into the future. That requires ongoing learning and development, not just mastery of the past and the present. In today's kaleidoscopically changing world, we must be agile learners.

From 2008 through the end of 2010, I had the privilege of leading a cross-organizational team whose mission was to decipher the competencies that will enable IBMers to make the rapid adaptations necessary to prosper in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA)² world marketplace so that the company can fulfill its goal of becoming the premier globally integrated enterprise. Although the competencies we defined are statistically independent of one another, they are laced with concepts such as “maintain openness” and “think and act shoulder to shoulder,” all of which have to do with deciphering

² Acronym used at the U.S. Army War College at the time I attended in 1991–1992.

and communicating the lessons that we individually and collectively learn from what we are experiencing. Behavioral scientists call this *sense making*. Emblematic of this goal of deciphering and sharing what we learn from experience are the competencies *continuously transform* and *act with a systemic perspective*.³

A partial description of *continuously transform* reads:

IBMers are committed to building the future—a better world, and a better IBM. . . . Our intellectual curiosity and spirit of restless reinvention. . . infuse the enterprise with energy. Today, in a world where the future is far less predictable, IBMers actively seek what we do not know and haven't yet imagined. We cultivate an environment of openness to new approaches and experimentation. We rethink assumptions and ask probing questions—to grasp new situations. . . . We engage others whose background, culture, language or work style is different from our own. This is the heart of an IBM that can learn, adapt, and *continuously transform* [italics added].⁴

As this competency indicates, the need to make sense of experience often occurs in ambiguous situations created when we are faced with new experiences. Previous approaches may no longer work in dealing with new events. When we are confronted by the unexpected, we need to ask ourselves, “What’s going on?” In the VUCA swirl that engulfs us, leaders must continually extract the relevant information and interconnected relationships that reveal patterns and distinguish them from the “noise.” Sense making is what we do when we do not know what to do!⁵ It allows us to learn from new experiences. Leaders must not only engage in this search themselves; they must help others to do so. The competency indicates that leaders should seek to learn not only from their own experiences but also from the experiences of a

3 For a description of all nine of IBM’s current competencies, go to Appendix I.

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5 This is a paraphrase of “What do you do, when you don’t know what to do?” Korn/Ferry International. FYI for Learning Agility™ (http://www.lominger.com/pdf/Final_lng_agilitysellsheet_10510.pdf).

diverse group of others. The search may recall an old lesson from past experience or, more often, teach the organization a new lesson.

The competency *act with a systemic perspective* makes explicit yet another requirement of effective learning from experience: action. Learning from experience not only involves “turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words” but “that serves as a springboard into action.”⁶ The description of *act with a systemic perspective* is as follows:

IBMers are systems thinkers. We help our clients, our colleagues and the world understand and design the essential dimensions of any system—how it senses, maps and analyzes information, detects underlying patterns, and *translates that knowledge into belief and action* [italics added]. . . . This systemic view allows us to frame problems properly, and to take the right action in the right way at the right time. It also lets us anticipate the impact of our actions on others. Knowing all this, we act wisely while boldly taking the right risks.⁷

Note that this competency makes explicit a crucial, and often overlooked, mediating variable between new understanding and taking action: belief. As IBM entered its centennial year, an external team of business writers was commissioned to take a historical perspective on IBM and account for its ability to thrive for a hundred years—a rare feat among large companies. Interestingly, their conclusion was that: “. . . *acting*—actually changing the complex systems of our planet in lasting ways—relies most fundamentally not on data but on *belief* [italics added].”⁸ In coming to this conclusion, the experts examined not only *what* IBM had achieved decade after decade but also *how* IBMers achieved it. They noted a consistent pattern of activity and mode of thought. What they

6 Karl E. Weick, Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, and David Obstfeld. “Organizing and the Process of Sense Making,” *Organization Science*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (July–August 2005), p. 409 (<http://orgsci.journal.informs.org/cgi/content/abstract/16/4/409>).

7 Copyright International Business Machines Corporation, 2010. Reproduced with permission from IBM.

8 Kevin Maney, Steve Hamm, and Jeffrey M. O’Brien. *Making the World Work Better: The Ideas That Shaped a Century and a Company* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: IBM Press—Pearson, 2011).

uncovered was a five-step process: *seeing*, *mapping*, *understanding*, *believing*, and *acting* (SMUBA).

Seeing happens in our mind's eye. It has to do with detecting the vast array of data out there. *Mapping* has to do with organizing those data. We frame the right questions and determine what data are connected, and how and if they relate to what we already know. *Understanding* means that we see something in a new light. Either it is something familiar that we see in a new way, or we realize that it is something we have not seen before. *Believing* is a combination of cognition and emotion. It is not faith in things unseen but rather "standing on the evidence."⁹ Additionally, it is the optimism about the possibilities these new understandings have for the future *and* resolving to realize these possibilities. *Acting* is, simply, making things happen—taking steps to realize the possibilities.

Finally, it is critical to understand that learning from experience as described in both *continuously transform* and *act with a systemic perspective* is not simply an analytical exercise. It is not just breaking down a situation into its component parts and summarizing the relationships among components; rather, it is a process of synthesis. It is combining the separate parts and relationships into an orderly, functional, structured new lesson.

So again, why *The Reflective Leader: Leadership and Other Things I Learned Along the Way*? Effective leadership requires learning from experience, and learning from experience requires not only experience but introspection and reflection on our experience. As far as the "other things along the way," those are the lessons that reflecting on experience teaches us about ourselves, others, and how we learn—all vital to growing as leaders and as people. Indeed, the other things—who we are, how we learn and get better, and who others are, their needs and aspirations—constitute a firm foundation without which authentic leadership cannot be achieved.

The defense rests.

9 Maney et al.

**The Reflective Leader:
Leadership
and Other Things
I Learned Along the Way**



1

Out of Control

So, what got me reflecting on leadership? There were several things. First, my Ph.D. is in clinical psychology. I have been a student of human behavior for a long time. But the biggest impetus for me to look specifically at leadership was that I spent thirty years in the Army. Throughout that time, as I advanced from private to colonel, I had positions of increasing responsibility, and for the final nearly eighteen years, I was a professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Since retiring from the Army in 1999, I have been a leadership developer with IBM, working mostly with executives and high-potential pre-executives. I have responsibility for overseeing all the executive leadership development programs and also manage the Leadership Strategy and Research Group. For more than forty years, my job has been to think in a self-conscious and disciplined way about leadership and how it is developed. But even before I became formally involved with leadership training, I would reflect on and try to dissect my experiences in an attempt to meet the leadership responsibilities entrusted to me.

In the pages ahead, I will be sharing some autobiographical stories and my takeaways from them. My organizing strategy is to present them, for the most part, in chronological order, starting with my earliest days in the Army. In fact, let's start with my very first day.

I entered the Army as an inducted draftee. I came of age in a time of an active draft—even before the draft lottery. I was twenty-four years old, which was old for a draftee. I was in my second year of graduate school when I was called to report. After petitioning the draft board for a delay, I was allowed to complete my semester; they postponed my induction date several months. Three days after defending my Master's thesis, I was in the Army. Things were happening quickly.

In the afternoon following my thesis defense, my wife, Maureen, and I loaded all our belongings into a U-Haul and moved from Orono, Maine, back to our hometown of Catskill, New York. Catskill is a small village of about five thousand people on the west shore of the Hudson River. The Catskill Mountains are just a few miles farther to the west. My parents had an apartment in their home where my father's widowed mother had lived, which they made available to us. Maureen's parents and family lived only about five miles away in the hamlet of Leeds, New York. Leeds was even smaller than Catskill, about four hundred residences at the time. Although Leeds was only about one hundred and twenty miles from New York City, Maureen had attended a three-room school through the eighth grade, at which time she and her eleven classmates entered Catskill High School, which is where we met. It seemed like being home was the best place for her as we waited to see just what Uncle Sam was going to do with me for the next couple of years. While it was pretty likely that I would be headed for Vietnam, Maureen was not yet ready to entertain that possibility.

On July 1, 1969, I got up and headed for the draft board, which was on Main Street, across from the courthouse and next to the bus station. As I walked, my mind was not so much on the future as on the past. It was a clear day, and I could see the mountains. We lived at 9 Liberty Street in a large Victorian home that my grandfather had built in 1904. The particular location was chosen because it had a panoramic view to

the west of the Catskill Mountains and the Catskill Mountain House¹⁰, where my grandfather had been raised. One block to the east, the woods bordering the Hudson River began.

In James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Pioneers*, which was the first of five books in his series *Leatherstocking Tales*¹¹, Natty Bumppo, the main character, speaks of a "second paradise." When asked where that is, he replies,

"Where! why, up on the Catskills. . . there's a place in them hills that I used to climb to when I wanted to see the carryings on of the world. . . . You know the Catskills, lad; for you must have seen them on your left, as you followed the river up from York. . . the place I mean is next to the river, where one of the ridges juts out a little from the rest, and where the rocks fall, for the best part of a thousand feet. . ." ¹²

And when he is asked, "What see you when you get there?" He answers, "Creation. . . all creation. . ." As our high-school alma mater put it, we were "in the land of Rip Van Winkle, nestled near the Hudson's shores." Catskill, with the river and the mountains laced with waterfalls and swimming holes, was to me every bit the paradise Natty Bumppo said it was.

I thought of the hours spent along the river shore, having picnics, making bonfires, and on occasion camping overnight in the woods with childhood friends or paddling our canoe to Rogers Island on the far side of the river. I mentally reminisced about my brother and me hitchhiking out to the mountains with our friends to spend summer days basking on the sun-warmed rocks and diving from the cliffs into the cool clear

10 The Catskill Mountain House was the first major resort in the United States. It was built in 1824 and operated continuously until 1941. It was visited by Presidents (Ulysses S. Grant, Chester A. Arthur, and Theodore Roosevelt), authors (James Fenimore Cooper), artists (Thomas Cole, Frederic Church), and other elites of the day. My grandfather Charles A. Beach was raised by his uncle Charles L. Beach, who was the sole proprietor of the Mountain House for most of its years.

11 James Fenimore Cooper was among the most famous and prolific writers of the early 19th century. His *Leatherstocking Tales* and *The Last of the Mohicans* were among his best-known works. The exact place he speaks of became the site of the Catskill Mountain House.

12 Quote taken from *The Pioneers*, located at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2275/pg2275.html>.

pools that formed beneath picturesque waterfalls. It was an idyllic place to have grown up. It was no surprise to me that the fabled Rip Van Winkle would have spent so much time avoiding all manner of labor just to tread the wooded wilderness and delight in the vistas to which its pinnacles gave way or that Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and other Hudson River School artists would have considered its magnificent landscapes as manifestations of God.

As I turned the corner from Liberty Street onto King Street, my reverie ceased as I ran into a friend, Eddy, who lived on the street one block down from Liberty Street. Eddy's house was the second house to the left when I looked off my back porch. As it turned out, Eddy, too, had been called to report. Greene County was not densely populated, and the draft board's quota was modest. Eddy and I were the only two being drafted from Greene County for the month of July. We proceeded down King Street, turned right onto Broad Street, and then left down Clark Street to Main Street to wait for the bus that would take us thirty-five miles up the New York State Thruway to the induction center in Albany.

As we crossed Main Street at the foot of Clark Street, we were face-to-face with the First Baptist Church where "Uncle Sam" had been a member. Samuel Wilson was a meat packer who supplied beef and pork to American troops during the War of 1812. As the barrels of meat were destined for the United States government, they were stamped "U.S.," from which the troops got Uncle Sam. He and his brother Nathaniel had a slaughterhouse and meat packing plant in Catskill. Also of interest was William Smith, a longtime resident of Catskill, whom local residents insist was the original model for the personification of Uncle Sam in a top hat, bow tie, vest, and striped pants. Photos dating from almost a decade before James Montgomery Flagg painted the well-known World War I "I Want You" recruiting poster show Mr. Smith in the iconic dress.¹³ As Eddy and I walked the remaining few yards to our destination, I thought to myself, "You want me, old man—you got me!"

13 See photos of William Smith as Uncle Sam in 1908, eleven years before James Montgomery Flagg painted the famous World War I recruiting poster of Uncle Sam pointing and saying "I want you!" at <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/3683666>. See also <http://www.catskillny.org/200years.htm>.

We arrived at about seven-thirty in the morning and had been standing outside the draft board for a few minutes just chatting and waiting for the bus when I noticed Eddy was taking off his clothes. At first, I thought he had unbuckled his belt to tuck in his shirt, but the loosening of the belt was followed in fairly rapid sequence by his pants dropping to the sidewalk, then his shirt, and he continued until he was as naked as the second he had made his entry into the outside world. He then proceeded to walk back and forth, fist in the air, chanting, “Hell no, I won’t go. I’m for peace, brother. I’m for peace!” The irony that Eddy’s demonstration took place a few yards from the church in which Uncle Sam had worshipped years before has never escaped me.

Eddy’s protest was clearly not something I had anticipated. Catching a glimpse through the window of the demonstration going on outside, Shirley, the clerk at the draft board, called the police. Meanwhile, I was walking alongside Eddy with my arm around his shoulder trying to reason with him—but to no avail. I am not sure that Eddy realized I was there. Although Eddy may not have felt my presence, I was acutely aware of his and Shirley’s. Even a small village feels pretty crowded when you are walking with your arm around a naked guy on Main Street.

Within minutes, Harry, one of the local cops, arrived. Harry, Eddy, and I were the same age, give or take a year. We were also neighbors. Harry lived next door to Eddy. But they were not friends—quite the opposite. Harry pushed Eddy face first against the wall, cuffed his hands behind him, and took him away.

So, why do I tell you this story? What does it have to do with leadership? The episode taught me that sometimes we just have no control over events. We cannot always control circumstance, and we will not be able to influence some people. Such inability to control or influence does not undermine the importance of leadership; leadership remains important; but not everything is a leadership issue. I had little control over being conscripted. But I showed up ready to do my duty. And, as hard as I tried—and I definitely tried—I could not get through to Eddy. In the end, all I could do was fold his clothes, make sure he had his glasses, which he had also taken off, and see that Harry did not use

excessive force. You do what you can with what you can control, even if you cannot control very much.

Not having full control is not an excuse for lack of leadership. In speaking to a group of new IBM executives, Lisa Su, who at the time was VP, Semiconductor Research Center, said, “As an executive I find myself looking at a situation and thinking, ‘How can it get better?’” As a leader you may not be able to do all that you would like to do, but focus on what you can do—not what you cannot. And, in whatever ways possible, work to make things better.

So, what became of Eddy? With the help of a lawyer (and doctors), he was able to prove that he had psychomotor epilepsy. He was released and went back to college. He died several years ago. He was a kind and gentle soul. His friends, including me, will remember him for more than his one naked act of civil disobedience.

2

The Face in the Mirror

Soon after Harry had taken naked Eddy to the police station, the bus arrived to take me to the induction center in Albany. In addition to getting a cursory physical exam and raising my right hand to swear to “support and defend the Constitution,” I mostly waited around. The induction center was full of inductees—one by the name of Bill Cloonan. Bill had just completed his first year of law school when Uncle Sam thought that he deserved a break from school. He was from Kingston, New York, a city on the Hudson about twenty-five miles south of Catskill. We quickly became friends.

By mid-afternoon, Bill and I along with the other inductees were on a bus and headed for Fort Dix, New Jersey, for Basic Combat Training. I had no idea what I was about to experience, nor did I have much anxiety about it. The bus left us at the reception center. The transformation from a lowly and flawed civilian to a noble soldier was about to begin.

The first step in our journey from civilian to soldier was getting a haircut. Even those who had tried to preempt the Army by shaving

their heads the night before did not escape. The act of sitting in the barber chair and having an Army barber spend a few seconds running his clippers over your head is a sacrament. Its outward manifestation is a flawlessly shaved head. The immediate mystical impact is that the person undergoing the experience no longer has any question about who is in charge.

If the haircut was the baptism that freed us from our old life as civilians and allowed us to be born again as soldiers, our transmutation was completed by the removal of our civilian clothes and the donning of simple, green, not-so-holy raiment known as fatigues. Why they were called fatigues would rudely and clearly be revealed to us during the next ten weeks. (In recent years this uniform has become the battle dress uniform, or BDU. No longer solid green, it has a camouflage pattern. I suspect this change of name and color was a marketing ploy on the part of the Army.) Instantaneously, whether a person had been a “rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, merchant,” or, yes, even “chief,”¹⁴ we were rendered devoid of all trappings that might otherwise distinguish us from our fellow recruits. Who we or our parents were no longer mattered. Moreover, in the eyes of the drill sergeants, we all even shared the same name, *trainee*, signifying our membership in the lowest caste of the military. The playing field had not only been flattened, it had been turned into a pit, and for the next ten weeks our measure would be taken on how able we were to climb or crawl out of that pit.

Having shed our old selves and put on the new, we were again subjected to a physical examination, similar to the one we had endured just hours ago. One had to wonder what they thought could have occurred in the intervening hours, but they were taking no chances. Following the second physical, we took a battery of written tests that would in large part determine our “MOS” (Military Operational Specialty). Finally, before being assigned to our companies, one of the post’s senior officers addressed us. He let us know that “in this era of nuclear weapons, rockets, guided missiles, and other modern tools of warfare, the most important element of the nation’s defense is the man who employs

¹⁴ Josephine P. Peabody, *Rich Man, Poor Man* (<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/12801>).

these tools.”¹⁵ I have a sneaking suspicion that he knew that we were not going to be involved in nuclear war or even one all that modern, because he quickly segued from the technological to the primal. “Man’s natural habitat is the earth, and in war, he must eventually defeat his enemies by struggles on the ground.”¹⁶ He concluded by making clear that he and the other officers and non-commissioned officers had a singular purpose, and that was to ensure each of us would be “thoroughly disciplined, technically qualified, and physically, morally, and mentally conditioned to survive on the battlefield.”¹⁷ We were then assigned and transported to our new companies, each convinced that we were on our way to becoming the ultimate weapon—the American soldier.

As luck would have it, Bill Cloonan and I ended up not only in the same Basic Training company but also as roommates. There were six to eight of us to a room. About two weeks into Basic Training, the drill sergeant switched one of our roommates and gave us a new one—Dickie Dickenson.¹⁸

Dickie was about six feet tall and probably weighed all of one hundred and thirty-five pounds—and was the biggest “tie up” in the company. He never seemed to know what he was doing or supposed to do. Within five seconds of the drill sergeant leaving the room, I had Dickie by the collar, up against the wall, and made it very clear to him that if he messed up in this room, he would have more problems than all the chaplains in the United States Army could remedy. Bill, who was sitting on his bunk, shining his boots, just looked up with a wry smile and said, “Jack, I am really impressed with all the psychology you learned in graduate school.”

This one moment had an impact on me that has lasted to this day. First, I was incredibly embarrassed. My first and immediate takeaway was that I could be a real “rear end.” And to this day, I have never raised my

15 Major General K.W. Collins, *The United States Army Training Center: Infantry* (Fort Dix, New Jersey, 1969). p. 3.

16 Collins, p. 3.

17 Collins, p. 3.

18 This is a fictitious name.

voice or been rude to a direct report or subordinate—I cannot say that I have been as considerate of peers, superiors, and bosses.

There were other lessons as well. One, we need to have at least one person we can trust to give us honest feedback—to hold a mirror up to us and say, “Do you see what you are doing? Do you see the impact? Is this what you intend to have happen?” At IBM, we call that *straight talk*.

Two, we need to be open to feedback. Straight talk is not only about giving it but also about receiving it—especially when the truth is personally disquieting.

Three, and perhaps most important, we need to take advantage of developmental moments. When we talk about coaching, people often think that it occurs on the third Thursday of every quarter. There is nothing wrong with scheduled coaching sessions; they are important. But coaching is also about who you are as a leader. Always be ready to take advantage of teachable moments. They generally arise unexpectedly, but if you are ready to take advantage of them, the impact will be far greater than that of many scheduled—and more detached—coaching sessions.

Yet another insight was that poor performance is not always improved by increasing motivation. Dickie Dickenson did not need more motivation; he was already doing his best. Leaders need to help a person’s best get better. Dickie needed a helping hand. I was adding to the problem, not helping to resolve it. As leaders, we need to determine what resources and development people require and also figure out how to keep people at their optimal level of motivation. That is where we get peak performance. Sometimes reaching optimal motivation means backing off.

After my initial “coaching session” with Dickie, there were times when I literally carried Dickenson through Basic Training. Over the following weeks, the drill sergeant cycled other “problem children” into the room with Bill and me. His unstated expectation was that we would take these kids under our wings—and I like to think that we did. I might add

that Dickie Dickenson had enlisted to be a computer specialist, which in the 1960s was pretty farsighted.

A few more words about the mystical power of shaving heads—even those already shaved. Like other rituals, that nonsectarian, sacred baptism was a common experience that created invisible bonds that connected the new recruits with each other and with all those who had come before and with all who would come afterwards. It gave us the sense that we were all on the same footing at a new beginning. Other than the haircut, there were going to be no shortcuts here. Instead of suggesting a rosy future, the ritual suggested a future that would be difficult and dangerous. Our training would not lead to monetary rewards but to the discipline and skills that we would need to survive and to carry out our mission, which was to protect others and to assist them to win freedoms to which we believed they were entitled.

I am not suggesting that companies shave new recruits' heads or issue them uniforms, but companies should think about the message that they send to people they recruit. How often do companies lure "high-potential" candidates by promises of shortcuts to the top and promises of financial rewards rather than offering them the opportunity to test their mettle and to achieve lofty goals? Too often we tell a certain few that they are "special" and offer them incentives that separate them from others and make them competitors rather than binding them to a joint mission with the entire organization.

In the short time that we had spent in the reception center—and most of us were *compelled* to be there, not lured to it—we left feeling that we needed to become the *ultimate weapon*. And, we were determined to do our best to do so. We were motivated not by monetary rewards (one hundred dollars a month) but by the challenge "to be all you can be" and being counted on to achieve a difficult mission that we understood would better the lives of others. While my view of the worthiness of that specific mission has changed somewhat over time, my view that leaders should challenge people to become better people, give them real responsibilities, and motivate them by the worthiness of the mission has not changed.