

The Generals' Story

The Center for Creative Leadership has a long history of receiving into the Leadership Development Program (LDP) the new U.S. Army Brigadiers as they are promoted to General rank. In my LDP in May, 1979, there were 3 attending with me, and one of them went on to become Superintendent of West Point. Lt.Gen. Dave Palmer was credited with turning around the Academy's leadership training and was featured in a videotape by Warren Bennis, "The Leader Within".

The generals called LDP "charm school", and it was thought to be a program where they rounded out, or in some cases, perhaps, softened-up their leadership style. Of course, all of these officers were star performers (pardon the pun) and had to be in order to make General rank. (Only about 1 out of every 300 Colonels makes Brigadier.) So it would not be surprising that many of them went on to major accomplishments in their careers.

Such was the case of Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of the coalition forces in the 1st Gulf War, Desert Storm, in 1991. Likewise, Gen. Tommy Franks, who led the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, was also an LDP alumnus.

The story below was written by David Campbell, himself a star performer at CCL. David is a researcher, facilitator, author, and test publisher. He was also a program creator and designer, and was the COO responsible for setting up, through TEAM International, the LDPs in Mexico and San Antonio. David opened the Center's first branch campus in Colorado Springs, and one of his LDP attendees there was BG James Dozier, who also later earned his fame at the hands of the Red Brigade in Italy. Here is David's, and Dozier's story:

The General James Dozier – CCL Story

David P Campbell, PhD

Smith Richardson Senior Fellow, Center for Creative Leadership

Colorado Springs, CO 80906

In July, 1981, Brigadier General James Dozier attended the Center for Creative Leadership's six-day training session (now five days) called simply the Leadership Development Program, the now famous LDP, along with approximately 18 other attendees drawn from other organizations, mostly corporate.

On December 17, 1981, five months later, General Dozier, then Deputy Chief of Staff of the NATO command in Italy, was kidnapped by the Italian Red Brigades, an extremist terrorist organization.

On January 28, 1982, six weeks later, General Dozier was located and rescued by the fine work of the Italian Secret Police. On March 11, 1982, he wrote me the following letter (on his Brigadier General one-star stationery):

11 March 1982

Dear Dave:

Just a quick note to let you know that the week that I spent with you and your staff in Greensboro this past summer stood me in good stead during the 6 weeks that I spent as an unwelcome guest of the Red Brigades here in Italy. When I return to the United States in a month or so I will contact you and we can talk about it.

Sincerely,

Jim

A wonderful letter, but with no details about exactly how the LDP course had helped him. I was grateful for his letter but immensely curious about that issue.

LDP participants going through these intense personal and group experiences inevitably become quite well acquainted with each other, along with reaching a high level of mutual respect. The word “bonding” is often applied to describe this process.

Because of this bonding, when General Dozier was kidnapped by the terrorist Italian Red Brigades, there was great concern for his welfare among both his fellow classmates and the CCL faculty who had presented the LDP course.

His capture was followed by a highly visible media flurry which included reports of other high profile kidnapping victims being killed by their captors. Personally, at that point, I thought, “We’ll probably never see Jim alive again.”

Among his LDP classmates, along with intense concern, there was an accompanying tinge of pride. In the classroom, Jim was relatively quiet but with a strong erect military bearing, complete with the “white side-wall” crew cut always common in the military but even more noticeable in the immediate post-Vietnam era when the country was still reverberating from the angry, often long-haired denunciations of the military. As so often happens when representatives of the military and civilian worlds meet in our courses, both sides came to a mutual and, to many concerned, unexpected admiration. A frequent comment was (and is), “You know, those people came off better than I had expected them to when the week started.”

This was especially true of the civilians’ appraisal of Jim; there was general agreement that “whatever happens, the Italians have their hands full.”

Thus, it was with joyous relief three months later, again through widespread media coverage that we read of Jim’s rescue through the dogged efforts of the Italian Secret Police. It seemed almost too good to be true, especially as it appeared he was unharmed. (Later we were to learn that his captors had kept him restrained with a Walkman playing full blast in his ears, deadening both eardrums.) With good reason, he became a momentary national hero, which he handled marvelously.

For example, in their full page of coverage of his adventure, *TIME* magazine (February 15, 1982) reported:

“Before flying to Washington for breakfast with President Reagan, the general lunched with the Italian President Sandro Pertini, then met with Prime Minister Giovanni at Rome’s Chigi Palace. Dozier handled himself like a practiced politician, showing no signs of the anxiety or depression that so often afflicts victims of a hostage taking...

“(In Washington) the Commander in Chief (Reagan) lavished an encomium on Brigadier General James Dozier during his 42-day ordeal as a prisoner of Italy’s Red Brigade terrorists. Added Reagan with deft simplicity: “Welcome home, soldier.”

Further, during their Eastern week of international coverage, NBC’s Today show invited him to be a discussant to comment on the international repercussions of his experience. As was always his stance, Jim was quite complimentary of the Italian people, reporting only friendship and admiration for the Italian culture and society, dismissing his captors as an aberration. There was no hint of anger nor desired revenge, only a slight sadness that the Italians had to suffer such lawless individuals in their midst.

As an American and, as I perceived myself, his friend, I was extremely impressed, proud, and admiring, first of his courage and durability and second of his extraordinary and heartfelt diplomacy.

Receiving that letter was one of the highlights of my career. After showing it to everyone in sight, I had it framed and it has hung on my wall for over twenty years. Of course, I was quite curious: what was it about the LDP experience that helped him while he was “an unwelcome guest of the Red Brigades” .

Whatever the answer, I was very curious about it.

General Dozier returned to the US a few weeks later, still very much a media hero. I knew from my earlier contact with him that he was a private person. There was none of the glad-handing extrovert about him and, after acknowledging his letter, I made no attempt to contact him – but my curiosity was unfulfilled.

About 18 months later – I cannot place the date exactly – I ran into Jim in the living room of Lt. General Walter and his wife, Marty Ulmer at Fort Hood, Texas, where General Ulmer was Commanding General. Dozier, with his second star, now a Major General, was Deputy Commanding General of III Corps. After the briefest of greetings, I immediately asked him, “Jim, your wonderful letter made my day – but tell me, what was it about the LDP course that helped you?”

I vividly remember both the first and last sentences of his reply; in what follows I am filling in the middle with a twenty year old reminiscence.

“Dave,” he said, “you’re a psychologist so you are going to think this is quite primitive, but it was those videotapes that you showed us of our groups working together to solve problems. Those sessions often started out with conflicting opinions, and we had to learn how to resolve them and still remain an effective group.”

He continued, “One of the outcomes of those discussions, which came as a shocked “Aha!” to me was: The way you treat other people impacts the way they treat you.”

“I know, I know,” he said, “that seems obvious in retrospect but I had never thought about it in that way --- the way you treat other people impacts the way that they treat you.”

I asked, “I understand that conclusion, but how was that relevant during your captivity in Italy?”

He explained, “I quickly realized that I had been captured by an agitated bunch of volatile Italians; they were bouncing off the walls with adrenaline. I was afraid they were going to shoot me, just out of excitement.

“I also realized that I had no direct power over them; indeed, they had complete power over me. There was no way that I could order them to calm down, or even suggest that they back off a bit. I had no means of control.

“And then I remembered those tapes – ‘The way you treat other people impacts the way they treat you.’ On the basis of that knowledge, I decided to become very calm, very predictable in the hopes that that would calm them down. I acted deliberately, quietly, predictably. I faithfully did the same thing at the same time every day, and it worked. They calmed down.

“I think that if I had tried any John Wayne stuff, I’d be dead today.”

And he added with a smile, “Dave, so **there’s a testimonial that you can use with others -- this course can save your life.**”

A memorable comment. It made more than my day – it made a whole career seem worthwhile.

I believe it was on that same trip to Ft. Hood that I met Jim’s wife, Judy, a charming woman. I had my camera with me and took some pictures of the gathering in the Ulmer living room; it was a lively and engaging evening with, what else, lots of war stories.

The next chapter of the Jim Dozier – CCL story happened in 1999 when the Center co-operated with the Oral History program at the University of North Carolina in a project funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation. For this archival project, the University conducted lengthy, taped interviews with selected members of the staff, and especially with those of us who had been “present at the creation” some twenty-five years earlier.

As a result of that activity, a lovely little book was produced, *Herding Cats: An Oral History of the Center for Creative Leadership*. The book consisted of a series of selected quotes from the taped interviews, along with many pictures of the interviewees from earlier times. As I had been an active photographer during that early history, many of my pictures were included.

The 1981 letter from General Dozier was also included, accompanied by an informal picture taken in the Ulmers’ living room, captioned, “General James Dozier and his wife, Judith.”

I was asked by the project editor to check the final galley proofs for accuracy, which I did, catching several small factual errors. For this purpose, the proofs had been Xeroxed for me, including the embedded photos. However, the copies of the pictures were dark, hard to see, and I did not pay much attention to them.

Consequently, I was appalled and extremely embarrassed when I saw the final published book; the picture was not of Jim Dozier “and his wife, Judith,” but of Jim Dozier and Walt Ulmer’s wife, Marty.

A few thousand copies had already been printed and distributed.

Horrified, I quickly sent a copy to the Doziers, wanting them to see the error from me, and taking full responsibility. “I checked the galley proofs, and I simply missed this.” Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.

The Doziers responded with a Xeroxed copy of a vibrant 5 x 9 color photo of Judy, apparently taken during a gala costume event at the Officer’s Club. Wearing an electric smile, she was dressed in a faux tuxedo outfit, complete with top hat and an over-sized, sequined bow tie. The tux ended some six or eight inches above the knee and, in her Ginger Rogers pose, if she wasn’t a lanky dancer, she certainly looked like one.

Across the bottom of the picture she had written,

Dave –

This is me!!

Judy.

Underneath, Jim had written,

Dave – See Judy’s comment.

My lawyer is curious about your net worth.

Jim.

This photo, paired up with the renegade photo from the Herding Cats book, is now also framed and hanging on my wall. Another eminently memorable archival memento.

The final chapter of the General Dozier – CCL relationship, at least to this point, occurred on October 8, 2003 when General Dozier was awarded the CCL 2003 Distinguished Alumni Award.

The citation reads: Presented to Major General James Dozier.

In recognition of his distinguished contributions to the betterment of society worldwide.

His leadership and achievements exemplify the Center’s mission and values, which encourage others to reach their highest potential as leaders and as productive human beings.

The careers of Jim and Judy Dozier remind us once again of a quote from John Gardner: “Some people strengthen the fabric of our society, simply by being the kind of people that they are.”

P.S. A bit of history relevant to our Center: The Dozier – CCL connection brought the Center to General Ulmer’s attention, and visa versa, which led to Walt Ulmer’s assuming the presidency of CCL in 1985, a position that he held until October 1st, 1994. During his decade as president, the Center went through a substantial growth spurt and geographic expansion, adding branches in Colorado, San Diego, and Brussels, Belgium. Historic connections are often hard to unravel but this one seems clear, leading to the slightly disorienting question, “Where would CCL be today if Jim Dozier had not been kidnapped?”

~David Campbell

TEAM International has had our share of these newly frocked Generals, and at least one or two of them are worth telling.

Lt. General Marc Antonio Cisneros attended our LDP in Mexico in 1987 as a new Brigadier General, just before he went to Panama to eventually take command of Southcom, the U.S. Army's Southern Command in Latin America. Although we had had several BGs in our LDPs at that point, in the long line of general officers who took the LDP at different CCL locations, Mark was the 1st to do so in another language – Spanish being his second language. Mark later gained some quiet publicity when he was chosen to receive Manuel Noriega's surrender. Noriega had asked to turn over his sword to another General Officer. Noriega had been Cisneros' nemesis as COMSOUTH, and there is no record of the words that passed between them when Noriega was hauled out of Panama on a U.S. Army helicopter.

There were several high points of Gen. Cisneros' participation in the program, not the least of which was when his group in the videotaped teamwork exercise followed his lead headlong into failure – and a terrible performance by solving the problem exactly wrong! When confronted with their failure, Marc faulted them for supposing without question that he was the expert for the problem in the survival scenario of the exercise; and they faulted him for having accepted the leadership thrust upon him. One of Marc's comments to the group, half-jokingly said, was that if they were in his real command, he would have them all court-marshaled!

But we didn't learn what Gen. Cisneros had really learned in the LDP just then. This would happen years later when, after earning his second star in Washington, DC and his third in taking command of 5th Army, headquartered in San Antonio. Marc had asked me to do some teamwork training with his command staff, and I thought to invite him as a dinner speaker for one of our LDPs in San Antonio. (There happened to be, by coincidence, a new Army BG in that group.) As part of his talk, Marc requested questions, and I asked him (as might be expected of anyone from CCL) what was the most important thing he had learned in the LDP? He responded without hesitation, with the following story:

In VietNam, Marc had been a Major in charge of a battalion of troops. Preparing for a trip to HQ in Saigon, he briefed the young Captain who was to be in charge of the battalion, told him where he would be and how to contact him in an emergency, and left him on his own. Nothing of importance happened during Marc's absence. But on his return, Marc found the Captain to be quite relieved that he was back, and very happy to see him. Marc took great pleasure in that, in knowing that he was missed and needed and valued by his subordinate --- until years later when he took the LDP. At some point during the program, a light went off for him: he shouldn't have felt good about his Captain's relief on his return. If he had prepared him right, Marc reasoned, the Captain should have been very glad to see him leave, and very sorry to have him return! That would have been a true test of Marc's leadership development of his junior officer.

What a story! He had our attention, I can tell you. I neglected to ask the new BG present what he thought of the General's comments. But I have his name, and you can believe if I ever run into him again, even after more than 20 years, I will certainly ask him if he remembers Marc's lesson. I will also, of course, ask this General the same question I asked Marc. What did you learn from the LDP?

There above story is still awaiting completion: The last general mentioned is Robert Clark, who retired recently as a Lt.Gen. His later career was marked by controversy, since he was the Commander of Fort Campbell, KY, when one of his soldiers was beaten and killed as a suspected homosexual. His next command was as Commanding General of 5th Army, but his promotion to a third star was held up by in Congress until he was exonerated by the Department of Defense and the Senate Armed Services Committee from the charge that he allowed an anti-gay climate to fester in his command at Fort Campbell. He was promoted to Lt. Gen in 2003 and retired in 2006.

These stories are entertaining, of course, but what are the lessons they teach us? I propose the following, probably incomplete list:

- Life at the top is a risky enterprise. Leaders at that level are exposed to considerable risk, many times from unexpected sources. Both Generals Dozier and Clark faced challenges that came at them suddenly, and in which they had to marshal resources to overcome. I'm not certain that CEOs and other top leaders should earn as much as they seem to in U.S. companies; but the risk of failure is enormous, either from inside, as in the case of Enron, or outside, as in the case of, for example, Chuck Prince at Citigroup, who presided over the near-demise of his company through its participation in the home loan fiasco. (There are some who argue that Prince, a lawyer not a banker, should have known what was about to happen, but apparently he did not. Shortly before the implosion, he was quoted by his top lieutenants as quite confident that Citi was not at risk from loan failure.) The lesson overall is that we need all the personal resources we can assemble, and all the learnings we can accumulate in order to deal with our challenges, large and small.
- That there definitely are "defining moments" in the development of a high-profile career, or in Bill George's and other writers' terms, "crucibles of leadership". These occur throughout a leader's lifetime and come from many sources, perhaps even during an LDP. "Every experience a learning experience", as we learn from the CCL literature on *The Lessons of Experience* and *The Learning Organization*. The lesson, perhaps, is to continually be aware of what we are learning, refining and testing the gold in our crucibles, taking hold of the "defining moments" and making them count for our development.
- There is no such thing as failure, only learning opportunities. Of course, this depends on whether we survive the failure or not. In this sense, it wouldn't have mattered if Gen. Dozier had ultimately perished in his experience with the Red Brigades -- even if he had, he might have somehow benefited from his learnings, though we might never have heard about them afterward. However, survive or almost survive, our task is to strive on regardless. Though there be an assassin's weapon pointed at us at any given moment, the danger is irrelevant to our central task of striving to learn.
- The experiences of Gen. Clark and Chuck Prince and others I have heard or read about leads me to wonder just how responsible (read accountable) leaders are for the actions of their colleagues and associates down the organizational line. We are familiar with the Japanese custom of leaders falling on their sword (sometimes literally) when their organizations fail. But in our Western cultures, the penalties are not generally dealt out so severely. (For example, Chuck Prince was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of Xerox, in spite of his loss of face in Citi.) And what, if anything, does this say about the learning process? My tentative conclusion takes me back to the 1979 movie, "Being There". Peter Sellers' character, Chance the Gardiner, was apparently totally devoid of any kind of learning process, simply using clichés to provide answers. But luck just kept putting him in the right places at the right times. Robert Thomas, a leading author in the Authentic Leadership field, counts bad fortune or "reversals" as he calls them, as one of the factors in the crucible. And if bad fortune is in the mix, so is good fortune. "Bad things happen to good people," as the saying goes (pardon the cliché); but good things do too, so we have to deal with both good and bad. The lesson seems to be that we are all more or less accountable for everything that goes on around us, good and bad, even though we may not be aware of our impact on these forces -- or our lack of impact, as the case may be, if we were supposed to exercise same. Gen. Dozier learned that by doing less, he could accomplish more, and he was "lucky enough" to escape alive. Perhaps Gen. Clark learned that he could have done more, but he was unlucky enough to be caught up in a whirlwind.

I may never hear the end of that last particular story, and the stories of our other Generals may perhaps never have their endings. The really interesting part of a story is not the ending

but in the telling of it, and the important part of lifelong learning is not in the end of life, but in the process of living it.

Do you remember in the film when Chance the Gardiner walks away, and it appears he is walking on the water, not through it? Was that the end of the story....? The stories about the Generals above are really the beginning, the start and/or the continuation of the learning process of those of us who read about them.

~ T. Noel Osborn

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