

Secretary/Executive Director

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The Source of Leadership

It is my pleasure to welcome you to another exciting issue of *The Scrivener*. Leadership is a topic that will generate many different thoughts in the minds of our readers and as you will see, has generated various ideas and opinions from our writers.

Is a person born with leadership abilities? Can these skills be taught? Are leadership lessons learned over time?

Probably some of each. Some individuals seem to be born with the skills to step in—to “be the leader.” When children play, one or two always want to direct the play or the activities, and others are quite happy with someone else making the decisions about what to do next. There are always those who just naturally take over. Of course, some do so with ability and skill; some simply fall flat.

I am sure you have observed as I have what happens when two or more leadership personalities collide. The group often sits back and waits until the leaders either get it together or “duke it out”! Ever watch a political leadership convention? Often the leader with the skills and ability to work with consensus is the one who guides the activity. Confucius said: “to lead the people, walk behind them.”

Leadership styles change with the era and situations. I have just finished

reading a book by Bob Greene: *Duty: A Father, His Son, and the Man Who Won the War*. Much of the story is about the leadership style of the man who piloted the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, to end WWII.

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To understand how a man could undertake such a mission, an understanding of the commitment to this style of leadership is necessary. The style of leadership of that time was to demand attention to detail and to demand total commitment. Followers were not to question any order or direction; they were to do as they were told.

As a young man entering the business world, I was fortunate to come across a terrific organization that taught the various styles of leadership. Jaycees, a young men’s group (later to become a young person’s group), provided excellent educational material—material that had been put together by some of the most successful leaders of that time; it was a

forum where we could practise skills learned through the course material.

The group’s main focus was to train leaders for tomorrow. I recall one of their programs very well: Leadership in Action.

A major tenet of the Jaycees was community service; the Leadership in Action program called for the member to start a project in the community. The program had guidelines on how to involve the community, how to engage the political leaders of the city, how to raise the funds for the project, how to budget, how to present the ideas, and how to deal with the media in the community. It was an outstanding training program that taught people how to organize and get others to buy into the project and provide a benefit for others.

In our community many projects were undertaken, including establishing trade fairs, building parks, establishing educational endowments, assisting youngsters with bicycle safety, and driver training. Through these simple and small projects, leaders were born or developed.

I owe a great deal to programs such as those offered by the Jaycees that helped establish some of the skills I apply on a daily basis in the operation of the Secretariat.

Are leadership skills natural or learned? Some of both! ▲