



By David Moore

My father, LTG Hal Moore, passed away two years ago on this day -10 February, three days shy of his 95th birthday. The purpose of this article is to not seek empathy but to use the occasion to reinforce a few beliefs that General Moore held dear. My method is to cite Owen Connelly's book [*On War and Leadership*](#) from the Hal Moore Bookshelf.

Why cite this book? Because it is a collection of Western generals' experiences leading in combat. And Hal Moore's markings capture six values that he pulled from their experiences to develop and inform his leadership style. We get a glimpse of what he learned from combat leaders such as Jackson, Bonaparte, Wavell, and Rommel.

FAITH: From Stonewall Jackson - "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that." Hal Moore would unequivocally state that "The purpose of life on earth is to QUALIFY for eternal life." He lived this belief every day and expected that his gift in heaven would be to see his wife AND his beloved troopers again.

CHARACTER: From Archibald Percival Wavell - "No amount of study or learning will make a man a leader unless he has the natural qualities of one. [The bare essentials are...] character, a general interest and knowledge of humanity (the raw material of his trade), and fighting spirit-the will to win." This person has the ability, when apparently beaten, to come back and "refuse to acknowledge defeat." Also from Napoleon Bonaparte - "[In war] there are no precise determined rules; everything depends on the character that nature has given the general."

Hal Moore understood the challenge of leadership: inspiring people to work hard and to execute tasks *willingly*. To meet that challenge, a leader must demonstrate three things: (1) He must be competent, (2) he must exercise good judgment, and (3) he must have character. By itself, competence is meaningless without character and good judgment.

Character, Humanity, and the Will to Win

I don't think I need [dwell] on the moral qualities of a leader. No amount of study or learning will make a man a leader unless he has the natural qualities of one. The qualities of a leader are well known. . . . Here I will mention only the barest essentials.

He must have "character," which simply means that he knows what he wants and has the courage and determination to get it. He should have a genuine interest in, and a real knowledge of, humanity, the raw material of his trade; and, most vital . . . he must have . . . fighting spirit, the will to win. You all know and recognize it in sport, the man who plays his best when things are going badly, who has the power to come back at you when apparently beaten, and who refuses to acknowledge defeat.

Zest for the Game

There is one other moral quality I would stress as the mark of the really great commander. . . . He must have a spirit of adventure, a touch of the gambler in him. As Napoleon said: "If the art of war consisted merely in not taking risks glory would be at the mercy of very mediocre talent." Napoleon always asked if a general was "lucky." . . . He [meant], "Was he bold?" . . . No general can be lucky unless he is bold. The general who allows himself to be . . . hampered by regulations is unlikely to win a battle.⁸

WILL TO WIN: The idea of an unconquerable spirit from Wavell - "No battle was ever lost until the leader thought it so." Hal Moore, in leadership talks, would always passionately argue that a leader's task is to "instill the will to win." When asked about the possibility of defeat in the Ia Drang battle, Hal Moore stated "It never crossed my mind that we would be defeated."

DISCIPLINE: From Napoleon Bonaparte: "Discipline ties troops to their flags; it is not harangues...that make them brave. Old soldiers are irritated by speeches; young ones forget them at the first cannon shot. The gesture of a general who is liked-held in esteem by his troops-is better than the most beautiful speech." Hal Moore held the highest personal standard - self-discipline - to create, model, and instill unit discipline.

PRESENCE: From Erwin Rommel - "The commander must have contact with his men. He must be capable of feeling and thinking with them. One must never make a show of false

emotions to one's men. The soldier has a surprisingly good nose for what is true and what is false." From Bonaparte - "Always when you are in the presence of your enemy, bivouac with your troops. It sets the right example for everybody." Hal Moore modeled leadership on the front line as the only real means to demonstrate commitment, understand his unit's fighting spirit, and more importantly, to see the real impact of orders issued.

BOLDNESS: Underlined and starred from Rommel - "...bold decisions give the best promise of success." From Wavell - "No general can be lucky unless he is bold." From Wavell citing Voltaire - "that calm courage in the midst of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of the nature of command." Finally from Wavell citing the first essential [trait] of a general - the quality of robustness, the ability to stand the shock of war."

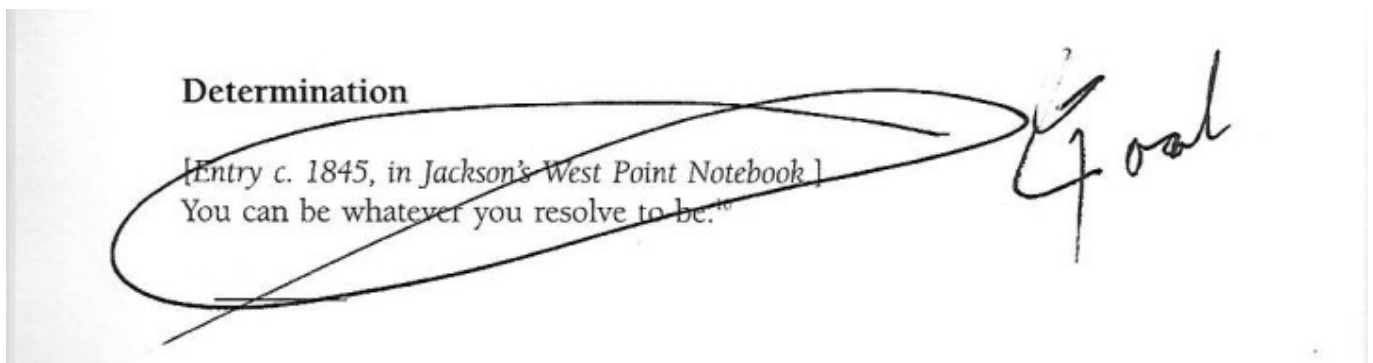
Tactical Boldness and Military Gambles

* It is my experience that bold decisions give the best promise of success. But one must differentiate between strategical or tactical boldness and a military gamble. A bold operation is one in which success is not a certainty but which in case of failure leaves one with sufficient forces in hand to cope with whatever situation may arise. A gamble, on the other hand, is an operation which can lead either to victory or to the complete destruction of one's force. Situations can arise where even a gamble may be justified—as, for instance, when in the normal course of events defeat is merely a matter of time, when the gaining of time is therefore pointless and the only chance lies in an operation of great risk.

Faith, character, will to win, discipline, presence, and boldness. Hal Moore made the lifelong learning of leaders and leadership a central tenet of his growth as a leader and commander. These writings cited from works that he marked indicate what he valued and what we should assess and internalize in our leadership style - appropriate for our

character. For more on Hal Moore and leadership please read [We Were Soldiers Once and Young](#) as well as [Hal Moore on Leadership](#).

These examples, while grounded in military experience, are very applicable to non-military organizations. These few essential qualities of a leader will not alone guarantee organizational success but it can be argued that the lack of these qualities will hasten an organization's demise. Study history, study leadership - what leaders do and fail to do. But more importantly, internalize what is good for you, your character, and your purpose and mission. **Create the resolve to be the leader you were born to be!**



David Moore began his military career in 1979, enlisting for the USMA Prep School. He graduated West Point in 1984. spent nine years as an infantry officer, then 16 years in the Acquisition Corps. David deployed to Operations Just Cause and Desert Shield/Desert Storm with the 82d Airborne. He was privileged to serve in RC-South Afghanistan in 2009 to support the 101st's expansion of that region. David moved to Auburn in 2011 to care for his dad, who's dementia was advancing. He then started his project consulting business - Command Decisions, LLC.

Share this:

- [Email](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Pinterest](#)