



by Don Gomez

*Editor's Note: The following essay was the winner of our [From Their Green Notebooks](#) essay contest. For the contest, authors were asked to reflect on lessons learned in their favorite episode(s) of the [From the Green Notebook Podcast](#). The top three winners received a one year subscription to the [DDPY Fitness App](#) and an autographed copy of Steven Pressfield's [A Man at Arms](#).*

I have been reading FTGN since the beginning, but wasn't sure what the FTGN podcast would offer. Admittedly, I was initially skeptical. Early guests were "known knowns" in the military community - mostly serving or recently retired Army generals - and that left me with a sense that the podcast would not offer anything new.

Still, I decided to give it a shot.

While I expected standard interviews covering well-worn career highlights, I found myself impressed with conversations that revealed tangible practices, human experience, and empathy. Three episodes stand out: [General Votel](#), [General McChrystal](#), and [Diamond Dallas Page](#). There is wisdom in each, but the three share a common theme of reflection, resignation, and resilience.

General Votel's unique take on reflection surprised me. I've heard about the importance of setting aside time to "reflect" but have rarely heard this discussed in practice. The thought of a leader "reflecting" immediately conjures images of an individual sitting in a closed room, pensively looking out the window, pontificating about the day's issues. Instead, Votel describes reflection in the context of conversation - deep-dives and briefings with minimal agendas.

Isn't it true that just having a conversation generates new thoughts and ideas?

In this sense, writing, too, can be a form of reflection – an opportunity to deliberately think through an idea, tussle with it in a notebook or on a screen, and see where it goes.

The interview with General Votel led me to the General McChrystal episode. Highlights include McChrystal speaking at length about the role of his chief mentor, airborne legend John R. Vines, and his quiet admiration for the zeal of our adversaries.

However, it was McChrystal's description of the infamous [Rolling Stone article](#) and its aftermath that captured my attention. He lamented that regardless of his life's accomplishments, his name will be forever-linked to this singular experience that abruptly ended his Army career. To navigate this, he stressed the importance of maintaining and depending on strong personal social networks. While it is an oft-repeated Army truism that "everyone gets out eventually," you have to imagine that for someone who makes it to the very top of the Profession, to leave the service on unflattering terms must have felt soul-crushing.

This led me to the third episode: Joe's interview with Diamond Dallas Page (DDP). The fact that DDP, a retired professional wrestler turned wellness professional, was sharing the same space as Generals Votel and McChrystal is impressive. As insightful as advice from military leaders can be, it is derived from similar material – military education, combat experience, and a lifetime of service. It's hard to suss out new ideas there. Candid discussions with outsiders of the Profession – if approached with an open mind – can serve as an inspiration for innovation.

Towards the end, DDP emphasized the inevitability of failure. Relationships, career, money, health – there will come a point when things get dark. His advice isn't glamorous, there is no magic pill. Instead, DDP insists that you accept it – *you "feel it"* – and begin moving on. Resignation builds resilience.

The most important element through these episodes was the human dimension of the

guests' experiences. Reflection is how we synthesize our experiences and intensify learning. I've doubled-down on my dedication to learning through reflection, chiefly through [writing](#), but also through conversation and podcasts like these. Understanding that dark moments are on the horizon should encourage us to listen and be present for others (and ourselves). This is the space for resignation - or acceptance. And through this process, we build resilience. Life is full of obstacles. Learning how to accept them, learn from them - and move on - can be a superpower.

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