**Being Good Stewards Outline**

**INFORMATION:** Discuss why people you are in a competitive group with are not the reason you haven’t accomplished your goals.

https://www.usna.edu/Ethics/bios/stockdale.php

**History Segment:** Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale

The following biography is excerpted from what was, at the time, the Official Site for Admiral James Stockdale. We retain it, because of that sanction. Since it's writing, recently declassified material has detailed Admiral Stockdale's incredibly courageous command of the POWs in Hao Lo prison, whilst also heading up a successful espionage ring run by himself, the CIA and Sybil Stockdale. More on this mission can be seen in the Smithsonian Channel's - The Spy in the Hanoi Hilton Documentary.

James Stockdale as a midshipman

Admiral Stockdale was born on December 23, 1923 in Abingdon, Illinois. After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1946, he attended flight training in Pensacola, FL and in 1954, was accepted to the Navy Test Pilot School where he quickly became a standout and served as an instructor for a brief time.

James Stockdale as a Navy Pilot with his F-8U Crusader

Stockdale’s flying career took him west, and in 1962, he earned a Master’s Degree in International Relations from Stanford University. He was the first to amass more than one thousand hours in the F-8U Crusader, then the Navy’s hottest fighter, and by the early 1960’s, Stockdale was at the very pinnacle of his profession when he commanded a Navy fighter squadron.

James Stockdale as a Navy Pilot

In August 1964, Stockdale played a key role in the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which the Johnson Administration used to justify large-scale military action in Vietnam. Stockdale always maintained that he had not seen enemy vessels during the event, but the next morning, August 6, 1964, he was ordered to lead the first raid of the war on North Vietnamese oil refineries.

A-4 Skyhawk

On September 9, 1965, at the age of 40, Stockdale, who was the Commanding Officer, VF51 and Carrier Air Group Commander (CAG-16), was catapulted from the deck of the USS Oriskany for what would be the final mission. While returning from the target area, his A-4 Skyhawk was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Stockdale ejected, breaking a bone in his back. Upon landing in a small village, he badly dislocated his knee, which subsequently went untreated and eventually left him with a fused knee joint and a very distinctive gait.

Stockdale as a POW in Vietnam

Stockdale wound up in Hoa Lo Prison, the infamous “Hanoi Hilton,” where he spent the next seven years as the highest ranking naval officer and leader of American resistance against Vietnamese attempts to use prisoners for propaganda purposes. Despite being kept in solitary confinement for four years, in leg irons for two years, physically tortured more than 15 times, denied medical care and malnourished, Stockdale organized a system of communication and developed a cohesive set of rules governing prisoner behavior. Codified in the acronym BACK U.S. (Unity over Self), these rules gave prisoners a sense of hope and empowerment. Many of the prisoners credited these rules as giving them the strength to endure their lengthy ordeal. Drawing largely from principles of stoic philosophy, notably Epictetus’ The Enchiridion, Stockdale’s courage and decisive leadership was an inspiration to POWs.

Stockdale returning to the US in 1973

The climax of the struggle of wills between American POWs and their captors came in the spring of 1969. Told he was to be taken “downtown” and paraded in front of foreign journalists, Stockdale slashed his scalp with a razor and beat himself in the face with a wooden stool, knowing that his captors would not display a prisoner who was disfigured. Later, after discovering that some prisoners had died during torture, Stockdale's Medal of Honor Ceremony he slashed his wrists to demonstrate to his captors that he preferred death to submission. This act so convinced the Vietnamese of his determination to die rather than to cooperate that the Communists ceased the torture of American prisoners and gradually improved their treatment of POWs. Upon his release from prison in 1973, Stockdale’s extraordinary heroism became widely known, and he was awarded The Medal of Honor by President Gerald Ford in 1976.

He was one of the most highly decorated officers in the history of the Navy, wearing 26 personal combat decorations, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, two Purple Hearts, and four Silver Star medals in addition to the Medal of Honor. He was the only three-star admiral in the history of the Navy to wear both aviator wings and the Medal of Honor.

When asked what experiences he thought were essential to his survival and ultimate success in the prison, Admiral Stockdale referred to events early in his life: his childhood experiences in his mother’s local drama productions, which encouraged spontaneity, humor, and theatrical timing; the lessons of how to endure physical pain as a football player in high school and college; and his determination to live up to the promise he made to his father upon entering the Naval Academy that he would be the best midshipmen he could be. It was the uniquely American ability to improvise in tight situations, Stockdale believed, which gave him the confidence that the POWs could outwit their captors and return home with honor despite their dire situation.

Cover of 'In Love and War'Cover of 'Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot'

In 1984, Admiral Stockdale and his wife Sybil co-authored In Love and War, detailing his experiences in Vietnam as well as her experiences founding the League of American Families of POWs and MIAs at the same time she raised their four sons. After serving as the President of the Naval War College, Stockdale retired from the Navy in 1978 and embarked on a distinguished academic career.

Stockdale ca. 1979

He served 15 years as a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institute of War, Revolution, and Peace where he wrote numerous articles; published both A Vietnam Experience: Ten Years of Reflection and Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot; was awarded 11 honorary doctoral degrees; and lectured extensively on the stoicism of Epictetus and on those character traits which serve one best when faced with adversity. In 1992, he graciously agreed to the request from his old friend H. Ross Perot to stand in as the vice presidential candidate of the Reform Party. Stockdale disliked the glare of publicity and partisan politics, but throughout the campaign, he comported himself with the same integrity and dignity that marked his entire career.

Upon his retirement in 1979, the Secretary of the Navy established the Vice Admiral Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership, presented annually in both the Pacific and Atlantic fleet. Admiral Stockdale was a member of the Navy’s Carrier Hall of Fame and the National Aviation Hall of Fame, and he was an Honorary Fellow in the Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

**I. Introduction**

A. Attention (Being a good steward is a concept that struck me the other day, a bit of an epiphany on our responsibility in the training of leaders and what it should look like)

B. Motivation (Junior Sailors understanding their responsibility to be good stewards of leadership training and professional development will create a more prepared fighting force.)

C. Overview (So this is something that kind of fell out of my mouth the other day and I wondered it meant after I said it. I was answering a question from a Chief Select about the importance of training Junior Officers and described the removal of pride and ego from that process as “being good stewards” of a Chief’s responsibility to train them. For whatever reason it struck me as another moment where I explained a concept I had already known in a way but never really quantified. But I think it’s important enough to try, so here we go).

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**II. Body**

A. Main Point 1 (Background/Barriers)

1. Sub-point (Pride) – To discuss this concept I think first, I need to discuss the common barriers to it that drove me to think this topic was as important as it is. One of the biggest barriers in the training of leaders, ESPECIALLY the relationship between the Chief and Junior Officer, IS PRIDE. The relationship between a Senior NCO and a Junior Officer is a unique, complex relationship. The obvious complexities are that the Junior Officer is just that, junior, inexperienced and usually immature while carrying the burden of responsibility and sometimes, command. A Senior NCO is a product of their experience, a mature and developed leader that is senior – but it specifically there to advise the Officer and is technically subordinate. You can imagine how pride can become a trip wire here.

2. Sub-point (Ego) – Ego is similar to pride in ways but instead of coming from a place of experience and accomplishment, ego as an obstacle will come from a place of vanity. This one is both the easiest and hardest to control. It’s extremely easy to remove it as an obstacle, however it’s extremely difficult to get the person with the ego to admit that their ego is the issue.

2. Sub-point (Miscommunication) – No matter how great a relationship you have with your Officer, miscommunication WILL happen. The important piece is recognizing it, acknowledging it exists, and actively working on it. Many times this means swallowing pride and being the first person to admit their was a communication issue. Sometimes it may even mean owning the miscommunication when it wasn’t yours, simply to re-open communication. And sometimes you will need to tactfully confront them on their lack of it. Regardless of the avenue and reasons, ALWAYS be working on this.

B. Main Point 2 (What is “being a Good Steward”?)

1. Sub-point (Having a good rapport) – This is the product of working on communication. Of building trust. A constructive rapport is CRITICAL to being able to train a new leader. Officer or otherwise. The more they trust you the more they will be willing to receive your advice and guidance. The more you trust them, them more they trust you. One of the best ways to inspire confidence and build trust is to GIVE trust. Especially with junior leaders. When they see that YOU trust THEM, they will be inspired to trust YOU. THAT’s rapport.

2. Sub-point (Set-up) – Set them up for success! Part of your role in both training and advising the Officer you serve is setting them up to succeed. There are roles they are expected to be out front for and have no idea what to do when they get there. That’s where YOU come in. The confidence your juniors and seniors have in that leader you are charged with training depends on how well YOU set them up. Prepare them. Put them in the position to stand in front of your division at quarters and act the part. And sound the part. And pretty soon they will BE the part. They will be confident, strong, intelligent leaders due to your setting them up to succeed in those positions.

3. Sub-point (Support) – Support them in the daily grind. Come by the state room and check-in. Ask them how they’re doing. Ask them if they need anything. Let them know where you are and when you’re going home. Make suggestions. Give unsolicited advice and training. Sit down and walk them through things as if you’re briefing them, when you’re really training them. They need your support. They know they need your support. Even if they’re unwilling to admit it, they appreciate your support and know they can’t succeed without it.

B. Main Point 3 (What happens when it goes wrong?)

1. Sub-point (Why is happening?) – So the inevitable questions that come, which is why this topic came up in the first place, is what do you do when this goes terribly wrong? What happens when the JO thinks they know it all? What happens when they marginalize you because they had a bad experience with a Chief? What happens when you have to confront them on these issues? First, you need to take the time to figure out the why. Why are they behaving this way? There can be many reasons, some of which we covered in the background. When they’ve burned by a Chief, this relationship building process can be really tricky and a long trudge.

2. Sub-point (How do you deal with it.) – Confront it. Whatever “it” is. The issue you’re having with your Officer is not going to spontaneously cure itself. And if it’s an issue for you, it’s an issue for your division. They NOTICE. So confront the ISSUE. Not the PERSON. That’s an important distinction. This is another instance in life where setting pride aside and taking the time to work the actual issue is the best path. This person has an obstacle to effectively leading and at the end of the day, the effective leading of your Sailors is all that matters. So find a way. Find a way to help them overcome that obstacle. Whether it’s their own pride or ego, overcoming a past bad experience with a bad leader or some other trust issue, PUT IN THE WORK TO BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP. If you don’t, no one will and it will fester. It will develop into a toxic work environment and your junior Sailors will suffer. This is YOUR responsibility. You’re building a leader now with this Officer while you’re building future leaders in your junior Sailors. Junior Officers are the future Commanding Officers. Think about that.

**III. Conclusion**

A. Summary (We talked about…)

1. What obstacles exist in being a good stewards of leadership training…

2. How you can be a good steward of this process…

3. And what we as senior leaders do when the wheels come off the wagon…

B. Re-motivation (Junior Sailors understanding their responsibility to be good stewards of the leaders they train will create better, more prepared leadership.)

C. Closing – The reason I got excited for this topic was that I have literally had conversations myself from the perspective of a prideful leader that didn’t quite understand how important the stewardship of this responsibility is. I would talk about Junior Officers like one might talk about a Seamen. And in ways they are similar because they are both “Junior Sailors” but in more ways they’re not. Developing a Junior Officer is a profound responsibility because they will be future COs. They will be responsible for a command culture and will dictate the triad’s relationship with – you guessed it – the Chief’s Mess! By fumbling or low balling this you are planting the seed for a toxic command climate 16 years in the future. These Officers NEED to hear from you. They want to be lead, just like your junior enlisted. They also want to be strong leaders, and you’re the gateway for them to get there. Good stewardship of the relationship between a Chief and a Junior Officer; or any supervisor/subordinate relationship will foster good communication and establish trust. Take this responsibility extremely seriously. Ask questions of senior leadership. Ask senior OFFICERS what they wanted when they were a JO. It can be nothing but productive to have those types of conversations.

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