

"Landis on Leadership"... (second in a series)

7 Dec 08, Orlando. As we drove home from Church that Sunday, I was thinking about all the items on my "Honey-Do" and professional lists and wondering if I could fit in the trip to the Orlando Airport that I had suggested to Sandie. I had been asked by several of the military organizations of which I am a member to join the crowd scheduled to assemble and welcome a large group of Wounded Warriors who would be attending the 5th Annual Road to Recovery Conference and Tribute at Walt Disney World. The more I thought about the sacrifices of our Veterans on that Pearl Harbor Day, I knew what my top priority had to be joining my colleagues at the airport. After lunch, we drove to the airport, parked and entered the arrival area to see a couple of hundred other Veterans, each of us recognizable by some form of military regalia. Like many, I was wearing my "US Army Retired" cap, covered with rank, skill and unit badges and pins. I chatted with many of my old friends, made some new ones and watched as the crowd continued to build in number and noise level. By the time the first flight of our very severely wounded buddies arrived, there were nearly a thousand people – cheering, singing, high-fiving, hugging and enveloping the Troops from all directions. As the Troopers and their families waded through the crowd, a lump appeared in my throat; it grew bigger as I greeted each wounded were horrific! There was a tall man into scars on top of scars; he had a smile on his sightless man with many wounds to his face; he for the reception. There were men and women new prostheses that resembled the robotics in of them as possible, patting a shoulder here, serving," or "God bless you," or (to a Spouse) the generic term I use for members of all incredible, the outpouring of love and exchanged words, hugs, kisses and more than a complete a full sentence. Two different soldiers at my cap and said "Thank **you** for leading the Lammers; when Matt joined the Army in Olathe, Kansas, he was 5'9." He now approached me at an even 4', walking on two curved metal plates connected to metal rods that disappeared into his denim shorts. In place of his left arm, he had a prosthetic one that gripped some of the souvenirs that he had been given. With his right hand, he strongly shook mine; I barely mumbled a "God bless you." The woman next to me thanked Matt for serving and his reply will stay with me forever – "I would do it again in a heartbeat, Ma'am!" Waving his good hand over his body, he continued, "These are nothing but flesh wounds!" I would later learn that Matt's wife of nearly five years had divorced him and that he had been accompanied by his two young daughters. War can be cruel in so many ways...Matt's Humvee had been hit with a huge IED (Improved Explosive Device) and he had taken the brunt of the explosion. (We encountered the **Un**improved versions in Viet Nam, but they were just as deadly.) Matt's buddy from that same Humvee and fellow amputee, Angel Gomez, was also in the crowd and they proclaimed themselves lucky because they, unlike some of their comrades, had survived. Had they been injured in Viet Nam, their chances of survival would have been much lower. The progress of battlefield medicine, especially wound treatments, has been hugely successful. After three hours of greeting America's latest heroes, we headed for home rather emotionally drained. As I reflected on our welcoming event, I remembered my return from Viet Nam. It was a far cry from the outpouring of which I was a part at the Orlando Airport! I also remembered the welcome in which I participated for Desert Storm Veterans at Oakland Army Base in 1991; it was a joyous occasion and the local populace turned out in droves. I am disappointed but not bitter about my own reception in 1968. It has inspired me to insure that the same treatment will not be afforded to this or any future generation of Veterans. In that crowd at the Orlando International Airport, leadership was not the germane issue. We were the leaders and the led, but more importantly, we were comrades-in-arms, buddies who experienced a common challenge, survivors who wondered why we escaped the fate of so many of our fallen comrades. May God bless all our Veterans, especially those who have made the supreme sacrifice, and all who love, support and mourn them.



General Brigadier
George Landis
retired US Army

Soldier, Spouse, and Child. The injuries of the whose exposed flesh had been melted and hardened face and a daughter on his shoulders. There was a was escorted by a wife who kept thanking everyone missing limbs, some in wheelchairs, and others on current sci-fi movies. I personally greeted as many shaking a hand there, saying "Thank you for "Thanks for supporting your Soldier!" ("Soldier" is branches.) The support of the crowd was appreciation palpable; greeters and greeted few tears – the lump in my throat would not let me accepted my handshake and my thanks, then looked way, Sir!" My tear-filled eyes then fell on Matt