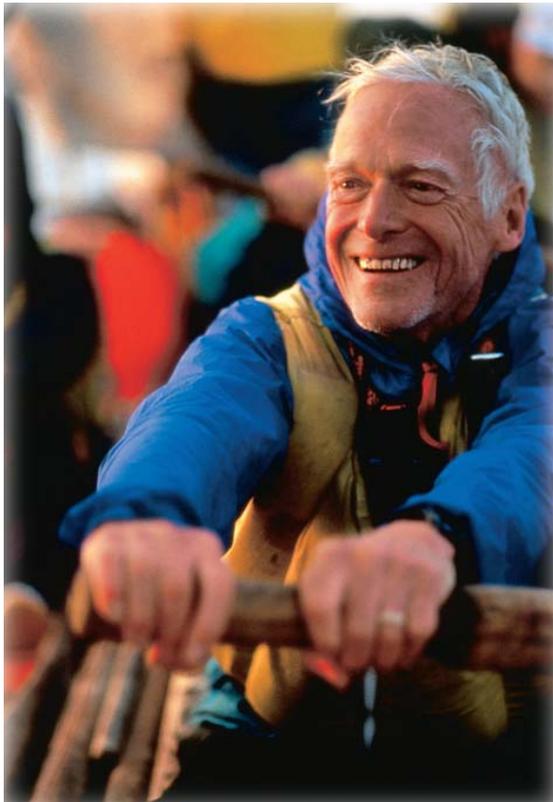


# REAL LEADERSHIP



*Bound School (HIOBS) during his lengthy tenure. Bob Rheault currently lives with his wife Susan in Owls Head, Maine.*

When I first came on board as a brand new and untrained (albeit old) assistant instructor at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, in the waning days of the Viet Nam War, American Outward Bound strongly resisted any connection with the military—though in England many of the Wardens were old soldiers. As the new guy, it was not politic to point out the close relationship between a Green Beret “A Team” (two officers and ten sergeants) and the HIOBS “watch” (two instructors and ten students), each operating in the boondocks very much on their own, doing difficult stuff under physically stressful conditions and dealing with real problems without prescribed solutions. Now more than thirty-two years later, I can indulge myself. The old saw “I hate to use personal experience, but it is the only kind I have had” applies, so my thoughts are inevitably the result of twenty-six years in the Army and thirty-two years with Outward Bound. And I will address here only one aspect of leadership—an absolutely critical one, yet one that is rarely given the emphasis it deserves and is too often violated.

*Bob Rheault is singularly well equipped to comment on leadership. As a West Point graduate with twenty-six years in the United States Army, including two tours of duty in Southeast Asia, and as commander of all Special Forces (Green Berets) in Viet Nam, his direct knowledge of the impact that leadership, or the lack thereof, has on people, whether they be soldiers or Outward Bound instructors, is considerable and almost without parallel in the Outdoor Education world.*

*When Rheault, a full Colonel, left the service in 1969 he had no real idea what he wanted to do other*

*than heal the wounds left by the Viet Nam War. As he tells it, he just “stumbled” onto the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in 1971, where he has worked and served until retiring several years ago.*

*He has instructed, course and program directed, and served both as Vice President and Acting President for the Hurricane Island Outward*

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London Times ad.

to keep people relatively content because “everything is OK” or “I need the job,” etc. I am talking about being able to inspire others to do the hard, dangerous, uncomfortable stuff for low pay and little hope of reward. (See: Shackleton’s advertisement in the London Times for volunteers for his Antarctic Expedition.) We had an old expression of high praise in the military: “I would follow

Let me be clear, when I speak of leadership, I am not talking about management or merely being able

[him] into hell carrying two cans of gas.” This, I submit, is the kind of leadership needed in combat and in Outward Bound at the Course Director, Program Director, and yes, the Executive Director level.

And what does it take to create that relationship? Of course, a combination of many factors (for leadership is indeed an art, not a science), but the essence is this: Leadership and Ethics are NOT separate, but converge to create trustworthiness; and trust in the leader depends upon these elements:

### **“Leadership and Ethics are NOT separate.”**

- That the leader is competent, knows what is being asked of the troops from personal experience—hence the importance of having come up through the ranks. One does not become a trusted leader in combat or Outward Bound without having “done the stuff” in the field.
- That the leader has good judgment and the personal restraint and integrity to act on it.
- That the leader has good will towards the troops and will take care of them.
- That the leader is confident because he/she knows the profession, knows the troops, and knows that his/her boss is committed to his/her success and will not abandon him/her.

We come back to INTEGRITY. The leader lives in a fishbowl. There is no such thing as a “private wrong.” Every injustice harms the whole outfit. Injustice and humiliation do NOT work. The troops will ask, “Does the boss put the mission and care of the troops above his/her career goals?”

In organizations where the leaders are role models of integrity, the troops will revel in the pleasure of living and working in a community of TRUST, MUTUAL RESPECT, and SHARED PRIDE.

Such was my privilege in service with two wonderful organizations: US Army Special Forces and Outward Bound.

