

The Piece of the Puzzle (Leadership) Part 1 By KI5LNM

I love stories where someone is in a situation that takes them to the edge of all they think possible and yet they come back wiser. This can be spoken of as “seeing the elephant” a phrase that definitely goes back to 19th century America but probably has roots even further back. To “see the elephant” has the idea of having an experience that cost you something in the extreme.

I guess this is partly why I love war stories. And from them we can have many take aways for our daily lives and even for our job in ARES. We may one day be called upon to take part in an event that is extreme in what it asks of us. Let us be ready - if that day comes.

One of my favorite books (and I recommend everyone buy it and read it) is *Get it On! What it Means to Lead the Way* by Keni Thomas. Keni Thomas was one of the rangers involved in the Battle of Mogadishu that is better known as Black Hawk Down. Based on his experiences in those 18 hours, he has written a book weaving the events of those hours with what it means to be a leader. Not just a leader of many but also what it means to be a leader of one - just yourself.

So as follows tonight and then in part 2 next week, are some points he makes to help us learn to be leaders of 1 or 5 or as many as God gives us.

1. **You train as you fight so you will fight as you train.** (p. 34) “You will only be as good as you prepared yourself to be.” (p. 34) If you see yourself as important to the team, then you will start acting and living up to that idea. You will not stoop to mediocrity. You will train to be the best you can be at the job you are given. It doesn’t matter if it is the job you want or desire. But you become the best and when the time comes, then you will be able to step forward and do great things. This goes for each of us individually as well as a unit. Good is not good enough, when you could be better. We can then be “the one piece of the puzzle that made everything work.”
2. **Don’t forget nothing. It is better to have and not need, than to need and not have.** (p.17) Captain Robert Rogers, founder of Roger’s Rangers who fought with the British during the Seven Years War, may have need of some English lessons, but he makes as his number one standing order this very important point. “Don’t forget Nothing!” We have been working on this often. Always adding to the list of those things one might need as it is better to have and not need, than to need and not have. If you read the book you will find two important illustrations of this. One a need that wasn’t brought along. And one a need that was brought, though not happily, but later grateful to have lugged about. Just remember that what you bring to the event can be “the one piece of the puzzle that made everything work.”
3. **You don’t have to like everyone you are with. You just have to count on them.** (p.9) In the event you are working with someone that just drives you crazy. Guess what? None of that matters. What matters is that you can work together and get the job done. To quote Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. “The army taught me some great lessons - to be prepared for catastrophe - to endure being bored - and to know that however fine a fellow I thought myself in my usual routine, there were other situations ... in which I was inferior to men that I might have looked down upon had not experience taught me to look up.” (Holmes-Laski Letters p. 905) A lesson here is to not count someone out because you don’t like them or they seem inferior. They may become “the one piece of the puzzle that made everything work.”
4. **If you are going to be the best you can be, which is what your team expects of you, then you have to do the hard work in advance.** (p.40) If you want to be trusted in a job then you must train for it with all your might. You will not gain the trust of those that will depend on you just because you show up. You have to earn it. So this means that you put in that extra time to learn to be the best at your job. You put in the time to practice. You put in the time to do what it takes to do the job well. When you know what your doing and have the experience because you put in the hard work, then you become “the one piece of the puzzle that made everything work.”
5. **If you start taking routine for granted, it leads to something called complacency.** (p.15) It really doesn’t matter that the last time you did something it went this way or that way. Always double check everything. Always make sure you have everything, even if you are sure you keep it in your go-bag or the truck. Did you forget that you borrowed it for something else? Just because it was right when you tried before, never assume that it will be right this time as well. Even if this is the fifteenth hundredth time you’ve done it, make sure you have done it right. This just may be the time when a mistake will end in disaster. If you don’t allow complacency in your work, you may find that you are “the piece of the puzzle that made everything work.”

6. **And just like that everything changed.** (p.82) An event or mission may not come off as easy or to plan as you may have thought or prepared for it to happen. What then? You don't have to be happy that what happens happens. But hopefully you have planned for all contingencies and already know what needs to be done. How to switch gears and head in a new direction. Even a rough direction. When plans go awry, ...training will take over and give you the advantage." (p.48) No sense crying and complaining. Just get the job done. "Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution." (p.95) You may be "the one piece of the puzzle that made everything work."

We will continue next week with 7 more points.