

DRESSED DOWN BY A GENERAL

After 27 years of U.S. military service and experience as executive director of a leadership consultancy company, Retired Brigadier General Becky Halstead founded her own organization, STEADFAST Leadership, LLC.

She recalls a pivotal moment in her professional growth.



While she was commanding in Germany, she experienced “one of the lowest moments in my military career.”

After 24 years of experience and as a one-star general, “I found myself questioning my leadership capability – until I realized that attitude was self-destructive. I needed to trust my ability to lead myself through the situation.”

Just months before her units were deployed, her boss, a three-star general, made an unannounced field visit to observe their training and readiness for deployment. When he arrived, they were packing up their gear. Their exercise had ended.

Furious with what he witnessed, he immediately ordered Halstead to his office in Heidleberg.

“When I reported, he pulled an envelope out of his bottom desk drawer, threw the contents on the table, pounded his fist on the packet, and said, ‘This is what is going to happen to your units in Iraq. I have no confidence in your ability to lead in combat.’”

“I couldn’t breathe. *Did he really just say that?*” she thought.

The general continued his rant: “If you think that unit is trained and certified, you are wrong. You will retrain and recertify all your battalion headquarters and come back to me with a plan to do so.”

Halstead said her head spun as she tried to grasp the gravity of the situation. “Thoughts raced through my head, ‘We are within months of deploying. Is there enough time? How will I resource this?’”

(over)

She concluded that time spent defending the fairness of his review would have been wasted. “I needed to focus on resolving his perceived training gap, making certain my units were fully prepared.”

This situation, she added, “taught me not to lead others the way this leader led me, and to avoid being intimidating or threatening to those I led. I was reminded that leaders should be demanding, not demeaning.”

Halstead’s experience is instructive to those of us who lead in Life Care and Century Park.

In *Your Life Care Journey: Just the Beginning*, I review the qualities of a servant leader – the kind of authority figure Jesus exemplified and taught. These characteristics are: be an example, show them how, meet their needs, expect a lot and believe in them.

Adherence to those principles can bring success for the organization and respect and trust for the leader.

Whosoever will be chief (or a leader) among you, let him be your servant (Matthew 20:27 KJV).

– Beecher Hunter