

# Leadership Lessons for America's Heroes

By Annie Nelson & Gen. Michael Flynn

When I hear people talking about “leadership” and “leaders,” I think of the past 25 years I have been embedded in the U.S. military community. I have been humbled and honored to meet, work with and learn from some incredible individuals who I would call true leaders.

One of those people is U.S. Army General Michael Flynn. I recently reached out to General Flynn to discuss his thoughts on leadership in today's America. I hope you enjoy the following as much as I did:

“Leadership” seems to be the buzzword of the day. Every school in America promises to focus on training children to be leaders. Companies promise to turn their employees into leaders. No matter where you turn, it seems everyone wants to be a leader, or at



least claim to be one. Despite our culture's obsession with leadership, few stop to think about where leadership really comes from, or even what it actually is.

Leadership isn't a position or a title. Some of the most effective leaders I have ever see held no high rank. Leadership does not come with a degree or formal training. You do not have to be the most skilled or the most educated to lead.

## Withstanding the Pressure

Leaders are defined by their ability to withstand the pressures of external circumstances. I experienced this firsthand when the Deep State tried to destroy me and my family. Although many people I had once considered my friends abandoned me,

millions of my true friends rushed to help me in my hour of need. As I read through and responded to the tens of thousands of supportive letters I received, I was shocked to find out that these patriots saw me as a leader. To be perfectly honest, I never set out to lead these brave Americans. I simply refused to bend. Yet, for that act of stalwart defiance, the title of “leader” was thrust upon me.

## Leading by Example

However, many men have done far more to deserve the respect paid them as leaders. As many Americans were celebrating Christmas with their families in December 1945, Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe was surrounded on all sides by German troops in the small Belgian town of Bastogne. General McAuliffe was not supposed to be in command of the 101st Airborne Division, but Major General Maxwell Taylor was stateside at a war conference when the Germans launched the surprise offensive that would come to be called the Battle of the Bulge. When the German commander sent a lengthy demand for surrender to McAuliffe, he sent a reply that still echoes in the annals of military history: “NUTS!” Despite being heavily outnumbered and completely cut off from reinforcements, supplies and escape, McAuliffe and the 101st held their position for seven days before being relieved by General Patton's Third Army. Brigadier General McAuliffe is proof that true leaders do not bend to difficult circumstances.

Leadership often means standing strong against great pressure, but leaders should not be cold, unfeeling and self-centered. Great leaders are formed by looking to and learning from others.



## A Cloud of Witnesses

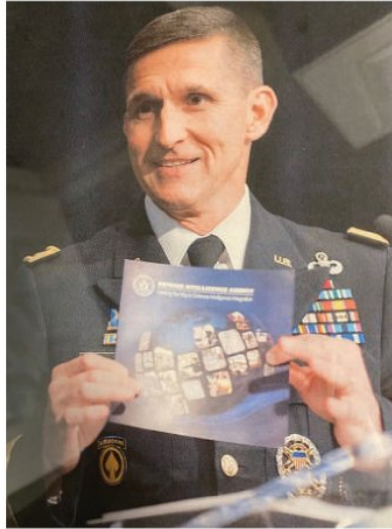
The Apostle Paul likened a life of faith to a footrace, and he wrote in Hebrews 12:1 that we should run our race because we are surrounded by what he called “so great a cloud of witnesses.” We press onward because of the people around us who give us the strength to keep going.

One such “witness” in my life is Major General John K. Singlaub (USA, Ret.) He is a leader if ever there was one. He served with honor from 1943 to 1978 in the U.S. Army, becoming a founding member of the CIA. He parachuted behind enemy lines in both theaters of World War II before leading troops in Korea and Vietnam. When I ask myself what it takes to be a leader, I think of my friend and mentor General Singlaub.

However, he is not just an example of leadership, but of a life well-lived. The bravery he showed on the battlefield may be evidenced by the extensive fruit salad on his chest, but the bravery he has shown throughout his life is evidenced by the freedoms he worked to secure for future generations of Americans. The great conservative titan Phyllis Schlafly encouraged him to continue the fight for freedom even after leaving the military. At her suggestion, he served for many years as the chairman of America’s Future, Inc., before passing the torch off to me earlier this year. A true leader will always find a place to serve.

## The Silent Leaders

Many leaders never get the recognition they deserve. They work quietly to improve their communities without bothering to seek the accolades that others covet. I’m proud to say that many of these silent leaders are veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Air Force Veteran Donald Christy is one such unsung hero. To bring attention to the true price of freedom, he petitioned the Santa Fe City Council to adorn streetlight poles throughout the city with pictures of veterans. After more than two years of coordination with the city council and local veterans’ groups, Christy’s vision has expanded from 20 banners to over 200, with more on the way next year. At this rate, his biggest concern is running out of streetlight poles! Yet, Christy himself refuses to be honored with a banner. As he put it, “This isn’t about



me. It’s about those veterans out there.” The inspirational story of Donald Christy is a lesson in how powerful leadership becomes when you work for the betterment of the community rather than for the credit.

## For the Greater Good

At the end of the day, leadership is impossible to define. Different leaders handle things in different ways. Different circumstances call for different kinds of leaders. Yet, the most effective leaders will always be those who are willing to tackle a crisis in spite of strong opposition. They always find a place to serve, and they do so without thinking about who gets the credit. These three qualities illustrate why veterans make great leaders. We have been trained how to seek a mission, fight to its completion and work for the good of the unit rather than for self.

America needs courageous veterans who will step up to be leaders. The fight to support and defend the Constitution may not look the same as it did when you enlisted, but your skills are needed just the same. Make the decision today to do your part in the conflict before us. Your community and your country need your leadership.

