

# ***Living a Legacy – Part Two***

## ***Wonder and Belief***

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***Dedicated to the Amazing Men and Women of the 154th Wing (HIANG)***

***Inspired by the Authentic Leaders who have personally touched my life: Robert S.K. Lee Jr., Robert E. Rinker, Ira Vanterpool, Richard Dooley***

### ***When I was growing up. . .***

I wondered if it would be better to be Wilma Flintstone (who wore great jewelry) or better to be Betty Rubble (who had great hair).

I wondered why we couldn't eat chocolate ice cream with everything.

I wondered if twirling a baton and *shoop-shoop*ing a hula hoop would make me popular.

I wondered why my brothers rarely did anything the first time they were told.

I wondered if I was always going to be taller than the boys in school.

I wondered if butterflies remembered their life as a caterpillar.

I wondered if there was an alternative to being a "straight-A" student.

And of course, I wondered what I would be when I grew up.

## ***As an adult . .***

I wonder if the lyrics “the good, they die young” (written by songwriter Dion in 1969) is true, then at 52 and still living what does that make me.

I wonder if it’s more important to be loved than to be liked. My Dad (who passed away in 1986) *loved* me but I never got around to asking him, “Do you *like* the person I have become?”

I wonder why it seems easier to say good things about someone after they’ve died rather than while they’re still living.

I wonder if leaders are born or taught.

I wonder what the ultimate price is for “doing the right thing”.

## ***I believe . .***

I believe it’s better to be “ME” than to be someone else.

I believe you can always choose to have dessert first no matter what follows.

I believe being popular is not as important as being significant.

I believe my brothers only acted liked they didn’t hear things the first time as a way to get one more second of playtime.

I believe being tall is not the same as standing tall.

I believe some transformations are inevitable and even the smallest change can create the largest effect.

I believe seeking perfection is unrealistic because once you're perfect, you're no longer human.

I believe the good die young and the good die old. If you die before living the life YOU want to live (not the life others have defined for you), then it's a tragedy. But, if you die having lived YOUR life the best way you knew, being true to YOUR heart and YOUR soul, having lived YOUR legacy every day - - then it really doesn't matter how old you are when you die - - you are "good".

I believe it's more important to be loved than to be liked. Remember, I spent much of my corporate career criticized for being "intimidating" and "too direct". As a matter of fact, I found out many years later that my nickname on the frontline was "Ice Rink". Turns out people thought I was cold and unfeeling. It couldn't have been further from the truth, it was my shyness that was perceived as arrogance – still, it was the identity I let others see in order to get things done.

I believe we should say good things about others while they are still alive to hear it. The world would be much brighter if people could hear how much they are appreciated, valued, or loved. It's funny how we sometimes have such a hard

time talking directly to the intended person when it comes to matters of the heart.

I believe some people are born as destined future leaders. I also believe that people can learn to be leaders, and “once a leader, always a leader”. But leaders themselves are not always the first to realize their own true calling. It usually takes a teacher, guide, coach, or mentor to help you realize your potential as a true leader. For as long as I can remember I’ve been supported by people who “saw something in me” - - people who challenged me to step up and take the lead. And I took *the lead* for more than two decades. So when I left the corporate arena, I thought I would be able to take a break from the leadership role. But, no matter how many times I sat in the *passenger seat*, someone would ultimately ask me to take the *driver’s seat*. Bottom line, no matter how many masks you put on, people will always see through them to unveil who you really are.

I believe the ultimate price we pay for “doing the right thing” is the price of a human life - - which is priceless. I believe the truest test of honor and integrity happens when life is in the balance. I believe that when we are relied upon by the very person who has put their life in your hands to do the right thing when the time is right; the ultimate gift has been given.

And most importantly, I believe it's not as important to wonder what you will be when you grow up, but "who" you will be. Where does your inspiration come from? How do you inspire others?

**Play U2's  
Tribute to  
Martin Luther  
King, Jr. (4 min)**

*"In these powerful days, these days of challenge will make America what it ought to be, we have an opportunity to make America a better nation."*

Inspiring words spoken over 40 years ago, yet still hold true today.

**PAUSE** - - In the summer of 1963, I was too young to understand the words spoken by Martin Luther King on Capitol Mall in Washington DC. He had a dream - - and it wasn't until 1968, the year he died, that I began to listen to his dream.

It was the year I turned 12 - - my last year in elementary school before I headed off to junior high. It was a confusing time - my dad was on a tour of duty in Vietnam, so in his absence - - without the sound of his voice to listen to - - I turned to the public leaders of that time for words of inspiration. I listened, I listened very carefully. They resonated with me then, and they resonate with me now.

Take a few minutes to hear for yourself. . . **PLAY VIDEO FILE.**

45 years later, the words of Martin Luther King, and the authentic leaders of his time still inspire me to do the right thing.

As I search for the authentic leaders of today . . .

I believe there is a reason for all of the chaos in our world today.

I believe in the goodness of mankind.

I believe we are capable of doing better.

I believe we control our own destiny.

I believe we are here to leave the world a little bit better off than it was when we arrived.

I believe our future will be as bright as we allow it to be, as long as we muster the courage to do the right thing.

And I believe it's up to each of us, to contemplate "who" we are and who we will be.

***Close with a call to action.***

So - - as you participate in this conference and throughout the remainder of the day, I want you to contemplate the two most important leadership challenges you face in your life right now - - today, this evening, and over the weekend, make a commitment to yourself to turn those two challenges into two opportunities - - opportunities that will enable you to inspire others to step up and lead.

You've already answered the call. Now it's time to look deep inside yourself.

Who is your authentic self and what does it look like?

Who will you inspire?

What steps can you take tomorrow to put your leadership principles into practice?

Only you know the true answers to these questions - - and I want you to start answering them now.

Today is YOUR day!

Make it an extraordinary one!

Thank you.