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REALTORS® COULD LEARN FROM MISSOURI GENERALS (Published in ESource, the newsletter of the Columbia Board of Realtors, Jan. 16, 2004) - 1/16/2004

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You may not have realized it, but Ulysses S. Grant was a real estate agent. He wasn't a very good one, but he sold real estate for a time in St. Louis during a depression in the 1850s.

While reviews of his later presidency would be lukewarm, he is best remembered as a leader on the battlefields of the Civil War, where he commanded the Union armies to victory over often more tactically talented peers leading Confederate troops. In his book, *Lincoln on Leadership*, Donald T. Phillips used Lincoln's search for Grant as an example of how an executive must look for a good subordinate and then empower him or her to accomplish great things as a leader in his or her own right.

While researching a possible book of my own, I have been learning about Missouri generals. Frankly, you don't have to look much farther than the Show-Me State when seeking examples of good leadership in action.

Over the past 200 years or so, Missouri claims at least 30 generals, the majority serving during the Civil War, and four admirals. However, I believe six of them would receive recognition as being "superstars" with national impact.

Besides Grant, the superstars would include William T. Sherman, John J. Pershing, Alexander Doniphan, Omar Bradley, and Maxwell Taylor. As I have learned more about them, a common theme in these men seems to be their ability to overcome difficult trials in their youth or career to excel in their chosen profession. These tests of character would shape their later careers and make their future triumphs that much sweeter. Perhaps that is what leadership is all about.

Be Tenacious

Grant is perhaps most emblematic of this theme. Closely associated to the St. Louis area, Grant was a failure as a farmer and a real estate agent. Yet he won the Civil War for the Union, and he went on to become president.

His tenacity is legendary, and he refused to quit, even when facing certain defeat. Surprised by the enemy at Shiloh early in the war, with his men falling back and cornered by a river, the scene was set for another Union disaster. Instead, Grant turned his men around, inspired them to try again. They attacked and wound up winning the battle. Later, this same trait would be even more important when, as commander in chief in the East, he devised a successful strategy to win the war even while his nemesis, Robert E. Lee, was winning many of the battles.

Be Determined in Pursuit of your Goals

Like Grant, William T. Sherman was a failure as a bank manager, a lawyer and an entrepreneur. But he became Grant's right-hand man and one of the most successful Union commanders of the Civil War.

Buried in St. Louis, Sherman is best known for his "War is Hell" philosophy. Although his scorched-earth tactics are still vilified in Georgia and the Carolinas, it is hard to argue with the military results of his tactics, which knocked these states out of the war. He was a brilliant warrior who accomplished his mission of breaking the enemy's will to fight through determined ferocity. While Grant used tenacity to attain his goals, Sherman attained his through sheer force of will.

Be a Peacemaker

In contrast, Alexander Doniphan, who moved to Missouri to seek his fortune as a lawyer, turned to his talent for peacemaking and compromise, finding a middle path to resolve disputes. A slaveholding Union supporter during the Civil War, this man of principle attempted to mediate the growing hostility between the Mormons and their neighbors in northwest Missouri in the 1830s.

Although for the most part a successful lawyer, he was unsuccessful in defending the Mormons from the confiscation of their land. As a brigadier general in of the state militia a few years later, he was later forced to lead troops against the Mormons, but he disobeyed an order to execute the Mormon leaders and defended them in court.

Yet this complex man would later become a hero of the Mexican War in 1848, leading a ragtag army of Missouri volunteers on a brilliant 3,600-mile campaign, defeating larger Mexican armies with his poorly equipped force. Once the battles were over, he turned to creating a new code of laws for the New Mexico Territory and would later be elected to the Missouri legislature. We could use a man with such peacemaking talents today in Iraq.

Earn the Respect of your Troops and Peers

While the best leaders earn the respect of their troops and bring that capital to bear in difficult circumstances, another Missouri general that might have fallen in the superstar group was not successful in that regard. The story of General John Pope, also buried in St. Louis, provides a primer in how not to handle command. Pope's star quickly rose at the beginning of the Civil War with easy victories in the West at New Madrid, Mo., and Island Number 10 in the Mississippi River.

However, the ease of his early victories lay the seeds of his later fall from grace. His peers viewed him as cocky, pompous or arrogant. When promoted to command of the Army of the Virginia, the plum post in the East, he was unable to translate his western methods into Eastern victories.

Unable to gain the respect of his men or the other generals, his career crashed on the shoals of what we now might call "office politics." Outmaneuvered by Robert E. Lee, he lost the Battle of Second Manassas in large part because his other generals did not support him with troops when he needed their aid.

Stay Calm in a Crisis

Judging from Pope's experience, perhaps it was good that John J. Pershing suffered through a difficult childhood in Laclede, Mo., before attaining success. The man who would later chase bandit Pancho Villa across northern Mexico and lead the American Expeditionary Force to

victory in World War I would become known for his ability to remain calm in desperate situations.

Pershing's siblings died early in his life, and his father lost the family store and land in the depression of 1873. He was forced to find work as a janitor, teacher and hired hand. He attended West Point because it was an inexpensive way to get a good education, a mere stepping-stone to a possible law career. But the experience would lead instead to a lifelong military career that would culminate in the victory of Allied forces in World War I, service as army chief of staff and a Pulitzer Prize for his book about his experiences in the Great War.

Stand Your Ground

Similarly, Omar Bradley overcame a childhood in Moberly, Mo., that was punctuated by poverty, drudgery and personal loss. His father died when he was 13, and he worked a series of part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Bradley too applied to West Point because it was a low-cost educational opportunity. Unlike Pope, he knew how to earn the respect of his men. Beloved by his men in World War II, and nicknamed the "G.I. General," he was given command of the 12th Army, which won the war in Europe. During the Battle of the Bulge, when the Germans had mounted a desperate counterattack to win the war, he stood his ground and refused to move even though the Germans were only 10 miles away. He would later become a five-star general and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff.

The Vision Thing

The last of my six superstars, Maxwell Taylor, best exemplifies the important leadership trait of vision. Taylor is perhaps less well known than the others, but he was a driving force in creating the modern military of today by a greater emphasis on analysis and flexible response over brute force.

Maxwell was the first American general on French soil at D-Day, when he parachuted in with the 101st Airborne and was integral to the survival of the "Battered Bastards of Bastogne" when they did not surrender even though surrounded by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge.

He later assumed command of troops and stabilized America's situation in the Korean War and was named Army chief of staff in 1955. Retiring four years later after disagreeing with the chairman of the joint chiefs over the doctrine of massive retaliation as our chief deterrent against the Soviets, he would be recalled by President John Kennedy to overhaul the U.S. intelligence system after the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

He was named chairman of the joint chiefs in 1962 and was retained as principle military advisor to President Lyndon Johnson after Kennedy's assassination. Sent to Saigon as U.S. ambassador, Taylor voiced doubts about the ability of South Vietnam to defend itself and soon returned to Washington. Even though Vietnam became a lost cause, Maxwell's focus on the need for conventional forces was vindicated in later conflicts.

Although the other Missouri generals did not have real estate experience as did Grant, it surely didn't hurt him either. The skills demanded in meeting a client's needs are skills that any great leader can use to great advantage.

As Phillips said about Grant in *Lincoln on Leadership*, "Corporate executives can possess great vision and be able to provide all the direction in the world...but they can't succeed without a man like U.S. Grant to carry out the company's mission."

The same could be said of Missouri's other superstar generals, and it applies to the best

REALTORS® as well.

