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Lifelong Leadership and Service Grounded in Biblical Truth

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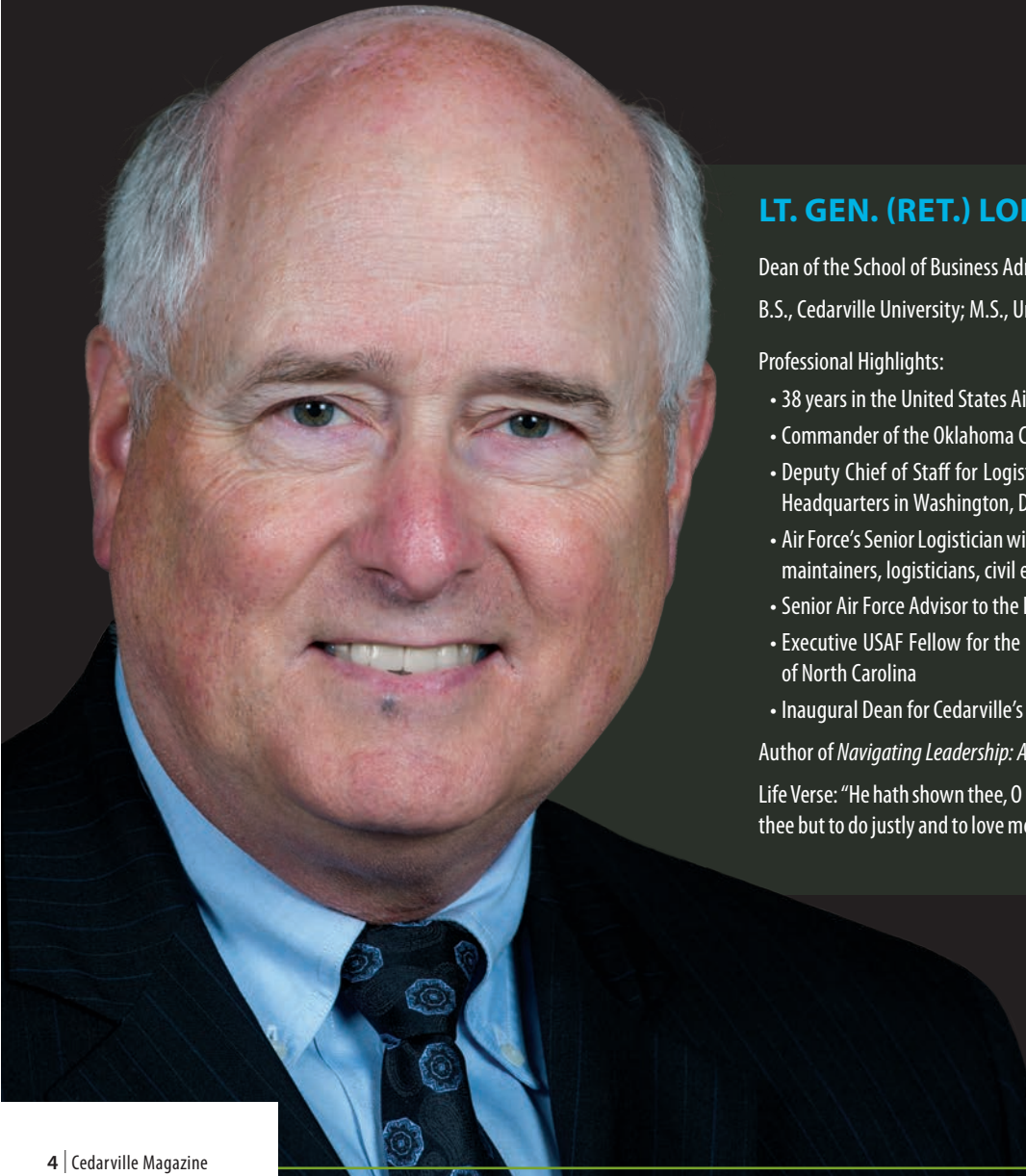
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Lifelong Leadership and Service

Grounded in Biblical Truth

Q&A with Loren Reno '70 and Patrick Oliver



LT. GEN. (RET.) LOREN RENO, USAF

Dean of the School of Business Administration and Professor of Management
B.S., Cedarville University; M.S., University of Southern California

Professional Highlights:

- 38 years in the United States Air Force (USAF)
- Commander of the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker Air Force Base
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support at the USAF Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
- Air Force's Senior Logistician with policy oversight and budget advocacy for 207,000 maintainers, logisticians, civil engineers, and security forces men and women
- Senior Air Force Advisor to the Logistics Officer Association
- Executive USAF Fellow for the Institute of Defense and Business at The University of North Carolina
- Inaugural Dean for Cedarville's School of Business Administration

Author of *Navigating Leadership: A Guide for Serving and Leading* (in production)

Life Verse: "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

“Equipping students for lifelong leadership and service” is at the core of Cedarville’s educational mission. With more than 70 years of military and law enforcement service between them, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Loren Reno ’70 and Dr. Patrick Oliver bring a wealth of leadership experience to the classroom. While they teach undergraduate courses in business administration and criminal justice, respectively, they are collaborating to develop a leadership course for Cedarville’s M.B.A. program.

After a 38-year career, Reno held the rank of a three-star general when he retired as Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support at the United States Air Force (USAF) Headquarters in Washington, D.C. For nearly three decades, Oliver served as the Chief of Police in Fairborn, Grandview Heights, and Cleveland, Ohio, and as Ranger Chief of Cleveland Metropolitan Parks.

Both men are passionate about leadership and are unwaveringly committed to the biblical principles that define their calling.

DR. PATRICK OLIVER

Director of the Criminal Justice Program and Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
B.A. and M.B.A., Baldwin Wallace University; Ph.D., Antioch University

Professional Highlights:

- 27 years in law enforcement, including Chief of Police in the cities of Fairborn, Grandview Heights, and Cleveland, Ohio, and as Ranger Chief of Cleveland Metropolitan Parks
- 11 years as a trooper with the Ohio State Highway Patrol
- Consultant and Trainer with the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- Founder and Director of the Chief Executive Officers Mentoring Program for NOBLE
- Past Commissioner for the Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
- Past President for the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
- Member of the Civil Rights Committee for the International Association of Chiefs of Police

Author of *Recruitment, Selection & Retention of Law Enforcement Officers*, 2013

Life Verse: “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”
(1 Cor. 4:2)



..... How did the respective organizational cultures in the military and law enforcement inform your leadership style?

Reno – In more than 20 locations and even more job assignments with the USAF, I was led by men and women with humility and high integrity. They cared about people and were devoted to the mission. They were good communicators, deliberate thinkers, action-oriented, and loyal — up, across, and down the chain of command. This became clearer as I advanced in the organization. In those I worked with at the highest levels, I witnessed the greatest integrity, passion for the mission, and sense of duty.

When I worked at the Pentagon, my boss was the Air Force Chief of Staff, the most senior general in the Air Force. One day, my secretary informed me he wanted to see me in my office, and I knew that couldn't be right. Surely, I should go to see him. I went to his office and spoke with his executive officer. "Sir," he replied, "He wants to meet with you in your office." I was surprised, but even more so when he came, alone, walking down the corridor, a quarter mile from his office to mine. He had no deputy with him, no entourage. After greeting me by name, he requested the services of a sergeant who worked for me. Because I reported to him, each person who reported to me worked for him already. As a senior general, he did not need to ask me for anything that was by all rights already his, but his deference to me made a lasting impression.

Good leaders taught me a lot about leadership, but so did poor leaders. I knew a boss whose insecurity made him overbearing and heavy-handed. I saw the effect it had on his subordinates, and from his example, I learned to respond to people in more positive ways. There are times when orders flow down the line. When your commander says, "Take your unit and conduct these operations," there's no discussion. It's time to salute and carry out orders. But there are other times when empowering those who work for you benefits the entire team.

Oliver – Law enforcement culture is paramilitary; it adopts a partial military style in command structure. One key difference is that the higher up you go, the more rules and legal guidelines you must follow. You have less discretion to "do whatever you want." Some law enforcement agencies, like those I worked for in Ohio, have collective bargaining — first-line management and middle management negotiate wages, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment. It changes the leader's role when work rules can be negotiated and grieved through a labor agreement. A leader in this environment gets things done through personal influence and negotiation skills rather than positional authority.

In one agency, I wanted to end the 12-hour shifts that didn't serve the community or the agency well. Some officers liked the schedule and some did not, but that schedule was written into the labor agreement and, therefore, considered sacred. After a series of meetings with members of the labor unit and others who wanted to attend, we were able to agree on a nine-hour day that gave officers more weekends off. Far from a unilateral decision, this required a great deal of give-and-take to find a better alternative.

What is a hot topic in leadership literature right now where you particularly agree?

Reno – Leaders need to be nimble, able to adapt — not their values,

but their styles — and adjust to each situation. This is not only true from job to job but also within elements of the job. The wise leader will adjust to meet the needs of the organization, not make them adjust to his needs. (If you sense an element of humble service here, it is intended.) Within a particular job, the wise leader, CEO, or other will adapt his style to the different needs of superiors, peers, and subordinates as well as in varying situations. Flexibility is key to effectiveness.

What seems to be missing from today's leadership literature?

Oliver – The emphasis seems to be on techniques, methods, and strategies — public image and tactics that can make a person appear to influence and get what he wants from people. The focus is less about the integrity of the leader and doing what is morally right. Character is the essence of leadership. The most important question people ask of those who have authority over them — whether an athlete to a coach, a child to a parent, a student to a teacher, or an employee to a manager — is, "Can I trust you? Will you be honest and truthful while looking out for my interests?"

You primarily lead from your moral authority more than your knowledge and ability. If people can discredit the messenger, they will discredit the message. Leadership, more than anything else, is a practice; it is something you do, and ultimately, it is something you become. Not everyone can be a leader, but everyone can lead from an area of responsibility.

What are the core values that shape who you are and how you lead?

Reno –

Vision — Without it, the people perish (Prov. 29:18).

Integrity — Your credibility is anchored on this.

Communication — When things go wrong in an organization, it's usually caused by poor or lack of communication.

Balance — Your job is important, but not at the expense of your faithfulness to your spouse, children, and God.

Service — Who will be greatest in God's kingdom? The one who is servant of all (Mark 9:35).

The USAF has three core values: integrity, service before self, and excellence

in all we do. Each of these is a biblical value that is consistent with how a Christian should live and lead. Colossians 3:23 calls us to do all things with excellence, as unto the Lord. Even higher than our calling to serve our country is our calling to serve our Savior.

Oliver –

Integrity — You simply cannot lead effectively without character.

Orientation to service — You work for your organization, your people, and your community. Approach them like Jesus would, with a servant's heart.

Relational skills — Law enforcement professionals need to be good with people. They often encounter people in negative situations. Even when you can't heal wounds or return property, you can leave people better than you found them by being professional and compassionate.

Team compatibility — An individual's goals cannot supersede those of the team. A successful criminal justice team has members who will come early, stay late, and sacrifice to help the team reach its goals.

Performance-driven mindset — Set and achieve goals, but do not compare yourself to others. The ultimate measure of success is not what you achieve, but whether you are achieving the maximum use of your God-given talents and abilities. Seek continuous improvement by striving to be the best you can be.

These are also the core values for the Criminal Justice program.

What Bible verse has especially challenged you to be a Christlike leader? When have you employed this Scripture in a leadership situation, and what was the result?

Reno – Micah 6:8: "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

God has shown us what He expects of us. Shouldn't we be interested in what God requires? It's easy for a leader to require justice — to put the hammer down, admonish, demote someone, or keep them from being promoted. But to love mercy? This is not only showing mercy, but is an attitude of mercy. How do we balance

justice and mercy? We learn the answer only by walking humbly with God.

As a commander, I faced difficult decisions with personnel, often having to review results of courts-martial. It's no light decision to take a person's stripe and reduce his or her salary. My approach was always to sleep on it. On occasion, others wanted me to hurry and make the decision for administrative reasons. My response would still be timely, but it was more important to get it right than do it quickly. The only way to balance justice and mercy was through humility.

Oliver – 1 Corinthians 4:2: "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."

Government is a God-ordained institution. Law enforcement is a calling to administer justice and be a steward over that which God has given you responsibility. When He places you in a position to lead, He expects that you will be found faithful, able to give an account of the way you served God by serving others.

I worked in an agency that needed to undergo major reform, and change did not come easily. We faced resistance from staff, some managers, employees, community members, and even a few local politicians. At our staff meeting, those around the table were visibly despondent, and one officer asked the question on everyone's minds: "Are we going to make it?" I began the conversation by addressing each contested issue, one by one, with the "three question" test: Are we doing the right thing? The right way? For the right reasons? We were able to answer "yes" to all three on each issue, and therefore, we decided to stay the course.

"Now to your question, 'Are we going to make it?'" I concluded, "I don't know. Only God knows. But He brought me here, and whatever He wants to do will be done." It was one of those days I'll never forget; the Holy Spirit was present in the room, and everyone was lifted up.

A biblical worldview changes your perspective about everything and allows you to make decisions according to what God is calling you to do.

Could you both share some books and authors that have shaped your thinking about leadership?

- The Bible, specifically:
 - Nehemiah
 - Proverbs, the book of wisdom
 - The Gospel accounts of the life of Christ
- Jim Collins, *Good to Great*
- Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
- Edwin J. Delattre, *Character and Cops*
- James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner
- John C. Maxwell
- Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*
- Edgar Puryear, *American Generalship: Character is Everything: The Art of Command* ☩