

The Pack Mentality and the Leadership Lessons of Ike speaks to current and future Law Enforcement leaders. Using the idea of Law Enforcement as "Sheepdogs" made popular by LTC (RET) Dave Grossman, it expands to the leadership aspects of the "Pack" of Sheepdogs and how to be a true "Alpha Dog" leader. This is done by using the example of "Ike", a Border Collie who led his pack as a true Alpha Dog.

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THE PACK MENTALITY AND THE LEADERSHIP LESSONS OF IKE

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR
TODAY'S LAW ENFORCEMENT



LEADING SHEEPDOGS IN A WORLD OF
SHEEP AND WOLVES

Corey D. Roberts

The Pack Mentality and the Leadership Lessons of Ike

In the world of Law Enforcement we are the protectors, the defenders, the warriors against the evils of the world. We are the pack of Sheepdogs, searching out what goes bump in the night and confronting the wolf. We must identify with the Alpha Dog if we are to lead this group of dedicated warriors in the pure and honorable fight.

Corey D Roberts has dedicated his life to being a Sheepdog and has served in leadership roles in the US Army, in Law Enforcement, and in the private sector.

Ike was a border collie, a constant presence during Corey's formative years and a great example of leadership for us all. Ike was the Sheepdog, he was the Alpha Dog.

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of Ike**

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What does it all mean?

Leadership in the demanding, highly individualized environment of the Sheepdogs presents unique challenges to the leader.

I have spoken often of the need to avoid the pack mentality and be the strong leader that can focus our packs and bring them to a single minded purpose.

By following the principles laid out it is possible to have a strong pack, a pack dedicated to the protection of the sheep. These are not easy principles to follow. No one promised that leadership was an easy task.

I believe that the key component to keeping our packs focused on the duty of protecting the sheep, and avoiding the pack mentality is simply this:

Provide the leadership, the strength of character, the direction, the tasks, and the purpose that will allow your pack to operate with a single mind and a single purpose.

That single purpose must be our chosen duty of protection and defense of the sheep, our neighbors, our families, our friends, our fellow human beings. Even at the peril of ourselves. We must instill the principle of selfless service into our pack.

Our Sheepdogs need purpose, they long for it. If we fail them as Alpha Dogs, they will revert to a pack mentality of territorial defense, and will begin to place the needs of the pack over the duty and service to our fellow human beings.

When this happens, we become the predators, we become the wolf. When the Sheepdogs become the predators, who will stand and protect the sheep?

Who will stand with me in the breach and face the wolf? Who will lead the sheepdogs as they hunt down the fears and the phobias of our

neighbors and friends? Who will stand before the wolf and say, “not on my watch”?

No calling is higher than the calling of the Sheepdog. And no greater reward can be had than to lead those men and women of character into the pure fight.

I want to be like Ike.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ~John 15:13

How do I move from Sheepdog to Alpha Dog?

So far we have focused on those currently in leadership positions and how to be an effective Alpha Dog. But what about the Sheepdog who wants to rise above their current station? What about the officer who wants to be the next great leader.

I spoke in the previous sections about Alpha Dogs creating a “school for leaders” in their packs, but what steps should an officer take to prepare themselves for the responsibility and the mantle of leadership?

There is a great debate across all spectrums between the ideas that leaders are made, or leaders are born.

I remember seeing a flyer for Officer Candidate School (OCS) in the Army that very boldly

proclaimed “Leaders are made, not born”. At the time I didn’t think much about what that was saying beyond the fact that I wanted to be accepted into OCS, and I wanted to be a leader.

I wish I could settle the argument of made vs. born, but I cannot. I have, however, observed some phenomenon that I believe most of you will agree with.

Not everyone is cut out to lead. I know this sounds harsh and it may appear to limit some options for people, but I will explain.

There is, what I believe to be, a natural human drive to have things our way. Most of the population of the world believes deep down that they have the right answers and that if given the chance, they could right the wrongs and fix the problems of the world.

One only has to listen to talk radio for a few minutes or listen to talking heads on the television as they march expert after expert before us, each with the only way, and each with the solution of all solutions for any topic that can be thought of in the minds of men.

From religion, to politics, to world economics, everyone believes that they know the way. Simply take the time to spend a few minutes in the local coffee shop at 6:00 AM and listen to the discussions of the news of the day to view this natural occurring interaction.

From the mouths of retired farmers and business men, I have heard the solutions to poverty, war, economics, Law Enforcement, crime, energy policy and my favorite, the often arising “evils of Dick Cheney and Halliburton”. I have been told that I encourage it just to stir the pot, and they could be right.

I am as guilty as anyone when it comes to this phenomenon. If you were to ask anyone who knows me how I feel about a certain topic, I am confident that they would have a pretty good idea about my beliefs. I’m certainly not shy with my opinions. No one will ever mistake me for a left wing ideologue.

Within this phenomenon rises the desire to be in a position to implement our beliefs. Whether in a desire to simply prove we are right, or in order to

actually effect change, we want our ideas to be recognized and action taken.

Does this desire make a competent leader? I hardly think so. The desire to see our ideas brought to light does not automatically make our ideas recommended or even feasible.

I have heard some absolutely terrible ideas put out with all the passion and deep belief that can be mustered at 6:00 in the morning. I just as passionately (and silently) thanked the Good Lord above that those ideas would go no farther than the ashtray in front of the giver.

Having a “good idea” does not translate to being a good leader. Everyone has a “good idea”; just ask them, most will be more than willing to share it with you.

So, the first question that must be asked when looking to move up in the ranks is simply this: why?

What is your motivation for wanting to be in charge?

Do not misunderstand the need for the potential new leader to have ideas. A new leader without any ideas is just another supervisor. The question really is do I want to lead only because my ideas are better?

I spoke of having a pure and just cause when in a leadership position and it is as vitally important and possibly even more so for the one who wants to lead.

I feel that there is nothing at all wrong with having the drive to better yourself, or to move up in the pack. These are the motivations that will lead you to perform at a higher level and to push yourself. But what is your cause? What is your ultimate personal goal? Is your personal goal a name plate on a door, a badge with Sergeant, or Lieutenant on it, a bigger paycheck?

Or is your goal to lead sheepdogs into the fight against the wolf. To take everything you have learned and share it with the next generation of officers and show them true success. Are you willing to trade your personal goals for the goals of the pack?

Having good ideas is not enough. There must be a drive to succeed and a desire to take others with you on the road to success.

So do I believe leaders are born? Yes. I believe that within our society and within our profession there are those who have a special drive. There are those who stand apart in their willingness to take extra responsibility. There are those who others will follow.

These are the ones who have already, within themselves, chosen to be the best. They are willing to take responsibility when others will not; they set the tone of their groups by being the most ethical, by getting their hands dirty and by never accepting the minimums for themselves.

Some of this may sound familiar. These traits are the traits of a leader. Some have chosen to live by them with or without a title or position. They naturally drive to be the best they can be in all things. These are leaders, whether they take the positions of leadership or not.

Can leaders be made? This question can be misleading. No one can be forced to be a leader. I

believe great leaders can be made, but one cannot be forced into being a leader.

If there is no drive to lead and one has not chosen to live the traits of an Alpha Dog, true leadership cannot be forced upon them. On the other hand if one has the drive to lead and is willing to learn the traits of leadership and apply them to their lives, they can be made into great leaders.

So are leaders born or made? In my opinion, it must be both. Simply the drive to lead without living the traits of a leader is not enough to be effective. Having no drive to lead but living the traits of leadership can make you an incredible Sheepdog, but not the Alpha Dog.

There must be a determined and conscious choice to lead. This decision must be made after careful consideration of your pure cause and out of a pure heart if you wish to be a true Alpha Dog. You must choose to be willing to set yourself as an example to your peers. You must be willing to take the responsibility that your decisions will affect the lives of your pack as well as your own.

When a soldier passes from the Enlisted Corps to the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps in the Army, to the rank of Sergeant, it is the first big step into leadership. Our unit made a practice of the newly promoted Sergeant reading aloud the Non-Commissioned Officers Creed in front of his new subordinates, his peers and his leaders.

The creed is an important step in the career of a new leader. It is the oath taken by the new Sergeant that lays out the expectations and indicates the understanding of the responsibilities of leadership.

I believe that this creed, while military focused, can and must be applied and understood by our future Law Enforcement leaders. If you wish to be a leader of Sheepdogs, an Alpha Dog, this must be your creed as well.

From the Army Study Guide, the following is that creed adapted by me for the new Alpha Dog, the new leaders in Law Enforcement:

“No one is more professional than I. I am an Alpha Dog, the leader of my Pack. As an Alpha Dog, I realize that I am a member of an elite

group who has chosen to willingly take the mantle of leadership. I am proud of my chosen path and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon my peers, my superiors and my Pack regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind -- accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Pack. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as The Alpha Dog. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. My Pack is entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Pack and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Pack and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

My superiors will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and

confidence as well as that of my Pack. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Alpha Dogs, leaders!"

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