

Chapter 12

ALTAR CALL

[Situation] Given a few minutes [Constraint] on Sunday morning to share a bit of my Air Force teaching at SimuFlite, with some ole friends in Adams & Eves, [Learning Capability Verb] state the [Object] pedagogical issues of how to give an altar call to my students without really making it a religious or Bible event, so that my ole friends [Action] hear and understand the term “What Will Your Verse Be?”¹

There may be a test...

Thanks for asking me! This is truly a fortuitous and propitious moment – for me – and there are only 60 days left till the Sooners play some football!

I thought maybe no one would come today....Now, I hope no one will leave.

This reminds me of a recent email of a Baptist marquee:

ALL SINNERS WELCOME

ESPECIALLY

PILOTS!

Having festooned myself in Paladin Black a “champion of a cause” or “a trusted military leader” I pray my ebullience will not exceed my impetuosity.

[Only a perspicacious OKIE would use those words]

However, this talk will not be a lugubrious or mournful presentation.

Key words - Class is called F.O.I. for Fundamentals of Instruction – “Lieutenants” – (G. Heart Country)

Since January 1998

224 Classes

869 Students

Every 3 weeks

Five days of academics

Three simulator periods

Active Duty AF pilots

Upgrading to Instructor Pilot

40 Hours – Teaching FOI, Systems Review, Mishap Prevention, Airmanship, Leadership, Crew Resource Management using: System Tests, Personality Tests, Brain Test, Lectures, Movies, and Small group discussions.

¹ Gagné, R. M., Briggs, L. J., & Wager, W. W. (1992). *Principles of instructional design* (4th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Really I teach Discovery Learning through ANDRAGOGY (teaching of adults) and PEDAGOGY (teaching “teaching”).

Mantras: **BE ALL YOU CAN BE** **IMPROVISE, OVERCOME, ADAPT**

Movie Clips: “Twelve O’ Clock High,” “Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo,” “The Great Waldo Pepper,” “Strategic Air Command,” “Paper Chase” “Heartbreak Ridge” “Apollo 13” & Robert Duvall as Col Kilgore or “Big Duke 6” in “Apocalypse Now.” These clips show examples of leadership, history, crashes, and LIFE.



Autobahn speed sign: there are **NO LIMITS** in this class.

Will show three clips from “Dead Poets Society” which hold the true philosophy of the teaching and place the greatest demand on the students with the unannounced class punchline (not even published till this very moment):

Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives

even one iota of what they were capable?... Carpe diem...Seize

the day, boys...Make your lives extraordinary”.

The Glory of the Day

One day in the sim I had a ‘ping’ and immediately had it checked out with a treadmill and a nuclear treadmill test. Later at home while waiting for the doctor to call me on the results I went down the hill to check my mail and noticed the clouds...the wind, and the day. It was quite nice in spite of the waiting and I decided by my ownself “It just don’t get no better than this – even if I have to have a four-way/by the way, or whatever way, heart bypass...I didn’t. Later when I got the word it was just...*glory*.”

This is best said by my most favorite Marine and shooter Jeff Cooper – I have seen his school north of Prescott, AZ. He writes this short clip titled “Bighorn” in his book.

“But the day came. The morning was as usual foggy and dismal, but we rode up to the edge of the timber...we broke through the overcast. There I saw for the first time the Canadian Rockies in all their legendary glory. The sight is too much for my pen, and could only be described in great music...this had to be the day.

At that hour, on that day, I experienced an awakening of the soul that enriched my life forever. Like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, I got the word – and the word was *glory*...I sat here on that hilltop, rifle

across my knees, in the ineffable splendor of the wilderness, and watched amazed at the circling of a hunting hawk far below...What mattered now was grandeur – and there it was for my overwhelmed delight. This was a sudden, unanticipated, unmistakable gift of the divine to the mortal...I have been in battles and hospital and jails, and I know about pain. But I have never lost the capacity to glory in the moment, one of very few who could rejoice in the spray of a hundred varicolored flying fish exploding from the bow waves of a fighting warship, or in the unbelievable sight of Savo Island towering above the sinister waters of ‘Iron Bottom Bay.’ I have known comrades to express astonishment at this. ‘How can you enjoy things like that at a time like this?’ But I can, and I do so on purpose. I could take pleasure in the dawn if they led me to the scaffold. I cannot share this, but I thank God for it” (*Another country*, pp. 53-54)².

Kern’s War Letter³ – two days after 9/11

“This will not be linear warfare, there will be no clear ‘centers of gravity’ to strike with high technology weapons. Our vast technological edge will certainly be helpful, but it will not be decisive. Perhaps the perfect metaphor for the coming battle was introduced by the terrorists themselves aboard the hijacked aircraft – this will be a knife fight, and it will be won or lost by the ingenuity and will of citizens and soldiers, not by software or smart bombs.

We must also be patient with our military leaders. Unlike Americans who are eager to put this messy time behind us, our adversaries have time on their side, and they will use it. They plan to fight a battle of attrition, hoping to drag the battle out until the American public loses its will to fight. This might be difficult to believe in this euphoric time of flag waving and patriotism, but it is generally acknowledged that America lacks the stomach for a long fight...

Every American citizen was in the crosshairs of last Tuesday’s attack...

The will of the American people will decide this war. If we are to win, it will be because we have what it takes to persevere through a few more hits, learn from our mistakes, improvise, and adapt...

Keep faith in America, and continue to support your president and military, and the outcome is certain.

If we fail to do so, the outcome is equally certain.

God Bless America.”

² See this URL on the Battle of Savo Island:

<http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/wwii/first-battle-of-savo-island-the-u-s-navys-worst-defeat/>

³ His letter was posted at one time where we could all read it but there is a copy on Snopes – if you care to go there.

Post Turtle



Four Things You know:

He didn't get there by himself.
He doesn't belong there.
He can't do anything while he's up on the post.
And you just want to help the poor little &%\$~ get down.

However,

Someone gave him a lift.
Someone gave me a lift (well, more than one actually).
My job now is to lift students.
My job now is to teach students to lift others.

"What a friend(s) we have in our 'lifting' instructors..."



Sisyphus

Sisyphus



The Myth of Sisyphus⁴

“The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor...the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing...

The myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious...The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus...knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory...I fancy Sisyphus returning toward his rock, and the sorrow was in the beginning...this is the rock's victory, this is the rock itself. The boundless grief is too heavy to bear. These are our nights of Gethsemane...

All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained inside himself. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing...At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting, he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by his death.

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again...The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart.

One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

⁴ Selected from:

Camus, Albert. (1955). *The myth of Sisyphus and other essays* (J. O'Brien, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

GETTING OLD – You can laugh - or cry

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, "Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly."

The other man said, "What was the name of the restaurant?"

The first man thought and thought and finally said, "What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know...the one that's red and has thorns."

"Do you mean a rose?"

"Yes, that's the one," replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, "Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?"

Think it was Woody Allen that said, "I'm not afraid of dying, I just don't want to be there when it happens."

Will Rogers, one of my top five Oklahomans, lamented:

"If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die, I want to go where they went."

COLONEL DON CONROY'S EULOGY – by his son.

(aka "The Great Santini") – and played by Robert Duvall in the movie.

The children of fighter pilots tell different stories than other kids do. None of our fathers can write a will or sell a life insurance policy or fill out a prescription or administer a flu shot or explain what a poet meant. We tell of our fathers who land on aircraft carriers at pitch-black night with the wind howling out of the China Sea...

Your Dads ran the barber shops and worked at the post office and delivered the packages on time and sold cars, while our Dads were blowing up fuel depots near Seoul...

You don't like war or violence? Or napalm? Or rockets? Or cannons or death rained down from the sky? Then let's talk about your fathers, not ours...Our fathers made sacred those strange, singing names of battlefields across the Pacific: Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, The Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh and a thousand more. We grew up attending the funerals of Marines slain in these battles...

We have gathered here today to celebrate the amazing and storied life of Col. Donald Conroy who modestly called himself by his *nom de guerre*, The Great Santini. There should be no sorrow at this funeral because The Great Santini lived life at full throttle, moved always in the fast lanes, gunned every engine, teetered on every edge, seized every moment and shook it like a terrier shaking a rat. He did not know what moderation was or where you'd go to look for it.

John Boyd

I read the yellow high light but this whole ending is worth reading.

Boyd never achieved the one thing he wanted most. He died thinking the people in his hometown never knew of his contributions to national defense. He died thinking he would be remembered, if at all, as a crackpot and a failure, as a man who never made general, and a man whose ideas were not understood and whose accomplishments were not important.

All his life Boyd was pursued by enemies real and imagined. He reacted the only way he knew how: by attacking. The rank or position of his enemy, the size or significance of the institution, none of it mattered. He attacked. And when Boyd attacked, he gave no quarter. Time after time he outmaneuvered his foes and sent them down to ignominious defeat.

The men around Boyd, those who knew him longest and best, say he stood fast against the blandishments of big money. He was a profane puritan who held himself and others to the highest standards. He lived in a world of black and white, of right and wrong, of good and evil. He never broke the faith and would not tolerate those who did. He was an incorruptible man in a place where so many were corrupt. He was a pure man at a time when pure men were needed but so few answered the call.

All this and more the friends of John Boyd remembered that dreary day in the chapel at Arlington National Cemetery. Then it was over and they slowly walked out of the chapel and huddled in small groups against the rain and mist. They were angry at the Air Force. More should have been done to honor the man who had given so much.

If the U.S. Air Force was conspicuous by its absence, the U.S. Marines were conspicuous by their presence. In fact, had anyone passed by who knew military culture but did not know John Boyd,

they would have been bewildered to see so many Marines at the memorial service of an Air Force pilot. Particularly noticeable was a group of young lieutenants — rigid, close-cropped, and hard young men from the Basic School at Marine Base Quantico. These were warriors-in-training. From their ranks would come the future leadership of the Marine Corps. Then there was a senior Marine colonel who wore the ribbons and decorations of a man who had seen combat in many places. His presence awed the young lieutenants and they kept their eyes on him.

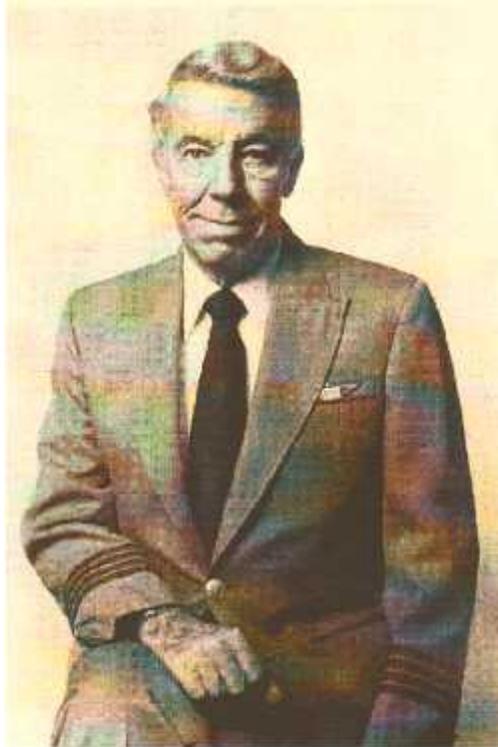
The colonel's command presence made him stand out — that and the fact he marched alone as the crowd walked down a rain-glistening road between endless rows of tombstones. The damp air muffled the rhythmic clacking of the horses' hooves and the sharp snap of metal taps on the gleaming shoes of the honor guard.

On a green and windswept slope, the cortege halted. The grass was wet and the air was clean and sweet. The crowd gathered at Section Sixty, grave site number 3,660. The Marine colonel took from his pocket a Marine Corps insignia, the eagle globe and anchor. He marched out of the crowd, kneeled, and placed the insignia near the urn containing Boyd's ashes. Someone took a picture. In that frozen moment the light of the flash sparkled on the eagle globe and anchor, causing it to stand out sharply against the bronze urn and green grass. The black insignia drew every eye. As one, and without a command to do so, the young lieutenants snapped to attention. Placing the symbol of the U.S. Marine Corps on a grave is the highest honor a Marine can bestow. It is rarely seen, even at the funeral of decorated combat Marines, and it may have been the first time in history an Air Force pilot received the honor. This simple act is an expression of love — love of the deceased, love of the Truth, love of country, and love of the Corps, all wrapped up together. It signified that a warrior spirit had departed the flight pattern.

A seven-man rifle squad fired three volleys and a lone bugler played the ever-melancholy "Taps." The service was over. Some of those at the funeral turned and walked away. But the young Marine officers remained at attention, a last, lingering sign of respect. Like the Marines, Boyd's friends were reluctant to say good-bye. They tarried in the mist and talked. High overhead they could hear a flight of F-15s prowling around and looking for a way to let down through

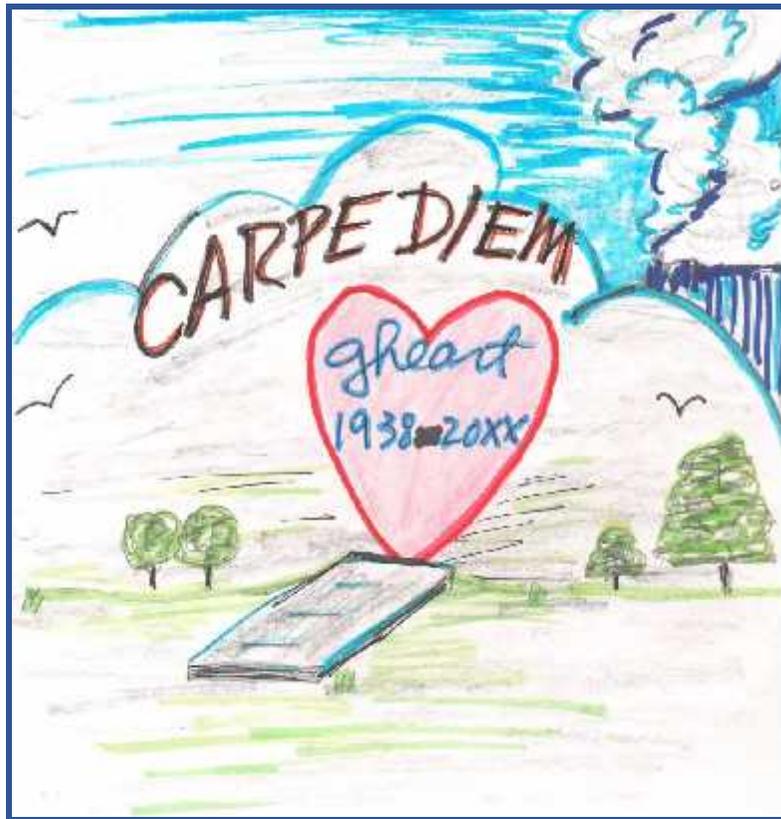
"the clouds and

the clouds and make a flyby over Boyd's grave. But it would not happen; the clouds were too thick. Boyd's friends huddled their shoulders against the rain. Around them, in one of America's most majestic and solemn places, were the graves of thousands who fought and died for their beliefs. It was the proper resting place for the mortal remains of John Boyd. But somehow, some way, his grave should have been set apart from the others. For while America likes to believe that it often produces men like John Boyd, the truth is that men who embody a warrior spirit combined with sweeping and lasting intellectual achievement are rare not only in America, but in any country. They seldom pass among us. And they do so only when there is a great need.



Morgan, A. G. Leonard ("Len"), 82, died March 11, 2005 in Palm Harbor, Florida. He is survived by Margaret May Morgan, his beloved wife of 61 years, a son, Terry Len Morgan of North Carolina, a daughter, Juliet Kathryn Morgan of Palm Harbor, Florida, a brother, Michael John Morgan of Birmingham, Alabama, two grandsons, three granddaughters and two great granddaughters. Morgan was born in Indiana and educated in Georgia and Kentucky. After graduation from high school he enlisted for pilot training in the Royal Canadian Air Force and arrived in England a week after the Pearl Harbor attack. He transferred to the United States Army Air Forces in Egypt and flew Air Transport Command routes in Africa and the Middle East. Upon return to the States in 1943 he was an instructor at Reno Army Air Base. Following the war he served with the 123rd Fighter Group, Kentucky Air National Guard. In 1949 he began a 33-year career with Braniff International Airways at Dallas, Texas, during which time he flew domestic and international routes as well as on military charters to the Far East during the Vietnam War. Morgan wrote hundreds of articles on aviation topics, authored and/or published more than 30 books and was a contributing editor of FLYING magazine. Len requested that no funeral or memorial service be held. The family requests that memorial donations be made to the Salvation Army.

The one comment on Len – who was as good a pilot, writer, and person as there was – had no service (as you can see) but I guarantee if he had had one there would have been a ton of folks attending.



Rose Hill Cemetery - (Old Division/127/16 - Ardmore, Oklahoma)

Having drawn the bucolic landscape with green Cedar trees and a menacing thunder storm to the north (actually it is a “Wooly Bigger”) I point out this resting place is on the south east side of Ardmore just about one mile south from where “I was jerked up” in southern Oklahoma – on the sunny side of the Arbuckle mountains. And then I draw my heart – not many folks will have a heart tombstone – I then place 1938 dash 20...and looking back over my shoulder to make sure everyone is looking...and then add the two xx’s.

I ask “So what is the most important item on my tombstone? How about any tombstone? Is the day we were born...the day we die? Which is it?

A small lesson then, short but a lesson. The number of years is what is important.

Yes, it is what you do between those years that counts! It is the dash! Regardless of when or for how long.

You must live your dash.

Then I have one of the lieutenants read the poem below as I have been known, even before my wife died, to get a little emotional.

THE DASH...

The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak
at a funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth
and spoke of the following date with tears,
but said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
that she spent alive on earth...
and now only those who loved her
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own;
the cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard...
are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
(You could be at "dash midrange")

If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real,
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,
and more often wear a smile...
remembering that this special dash
might only last a while.

So when your eulogy's being read
with your life's actions to rehash...
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you lived your dash?



THE FUSE IS GETTING READY TO BE LIT

The movie *Dead Poets Society*⁵ was suggested early in this class – just like some of the other movies shown “for pedagogical reasons” - as the lieutenants were seeing things in the class that reminded them of existential examples in life, movies, and books. Tip of the hat to them for bringing up teachers like Dr. Keating so the wisdom could be passed along.

Actually, the motion picture first came up when I found myself standing on top of the classroom table boldly and brashly making a point “When you get to GO, you don’t have two seconds to decide to GO or REJECT the takeoff - that decision was made at GO!” An astute lieutenant calmly said “You need to see the movie *Dead Poets Society*.”

Although not shown in class until about the third day during my ‘Altar Call,’ this movie profoundly exhibits three fundamental and andragogical pieces to G. Heart Country: extraordinary lives, WWYVB, and a tribute to each class with Dr. Keating’s final words.

⁵ Haft, S. & Weir, P. (2006). *Dead Poets Society*. USA: Touchstone.



“O Captain!, My Captain!”

”Mr. Pitts (a rather unfortunate name Keating said earlier) would you open your hymnal to page 542 and read the first stanza of the poem you find there.“

Gerard Pitts: "To the Virgins to Make Much of Time?"

John Keating: “Yes, that’s the one...Somewhat appropriate, isn’t it?” The student reads about ye Rose-buds and then Dr. Keating says:

“O Captain, My Captain!

Who knows where that comes from? Anybody?

Not a clue? It's from a poem by Walt Whitman about Mr. Abraham Lincoln.

Now in this class you can either call me Mr. Keating,

*or if you're slightly more daring, **O Captain, My Captain!**”*

And then, just like Keating does in the movie I took the stance and began:

“Let me dispel a few rumors before they turn into facts.

Yes, I too attended the Air Force Pilot Training program – and I survived: was first in flying!
And no, I’m not the mental giant you see standing before you. I was the intellectual equivalent of a 98 pound weakling⁶.

I would go to the beach and they would kick copies of the T-38 Dash-One in my face.”

Then I read:

*GATHER ye Rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying:
And this same flower that smiles to day,
To morrow will be dying.*

The Latin for that sentiment is Carpe Diem. Who knows what that means? Of course, everyone knows it means “Seize the Day!” In the movie he gathers the boys to look at pictures from “ghosts from the past.”



⁶ For the background on this look for Charles Atlas or The 98-Pound Weakling – from a long time ago, by the way.



Carpe diem

“They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts.

Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster.

They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you.

Their eyes are full of hope, just like you.

Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable?

Because you see, gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils.

But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to

you. Go on, lean in. Listen. You hear it?... Carpe... Hear it?...

*Carpe...Carpe diem...Seize the day, boys...**Make your lives extraordinary.**”*