

What I Learned About Leadership by Serving in Asia

By Joseph Schroeder (September 2006)

For many years I wanted to be a member of the ALERT battalion. My oldest brother had gone through Unit 3, so my family knew of ALERT from the beginning. When I did become a part of the battalion, I realized, it's not important what you belong to as much as to whom you belong. This was driven home to me in Basic, Emergency Response training and Advanced training.

I would like to focus on a deployment during my last ten weeks in the Battalion as I served as a Unit Leader at the Malaysia ATI conference in Melaka, Malaysia in September 2006.

The greatest lesson I learned was about leadership. Leaders have a difficult role to fill. Leadership spans many different topics and forms, such as:

- a father over his wife and family,
- a boss over the employees,
- governmental leadership from the township councils to the president of the country,
- the missionary to the people,
- a Sunday school teacher to the students and,
- the pastor over the church.

The difficulties of being a leader are really only understood once you have actually been in that leader's shoes, or in a similar position of leadership for a long period of time.

I was placed as a Unit Leader over a group of 48 young men involved in the 2006 ALERT Cadet Challenge in Malaysia. I had been a Unit Leader for the 2006 Big Sandy ATI conference and ALERT Cadet Leadership Training Corps camp in Big Sandy 2006, but this challenge was unique. In America I could rest assured that my squad leaders could keep their young men together and knew how and when to instruct them in the disciplines of the ALERT Cadet program. Singapore was different. These young men were starving for leadership. Leadership seemed to be looked at, in their culture, as something that could not be learned but rather something looked on as a gift or natural ability only few people had.

As a unit leader I was to instruct and assist the squad leaders as they led their squads. Since my squad leaders didn't understand leadership it was my responsibility to teach them leadership on the go as well as supervise their men while their leaders learned. One of the most difficult aspects of leadership is setting a proper example. Squad leaders are to lead the squads through each event demonstrating each event's safety/complexity and the lesson to be learned by successfully completing the event. Unit leaders are set there to be an example of endurance, encouragement and to set a standard so that the participants might achieve excellence.

I'd like to share with you a humbling story, which demonstrates a high standard for excellence. I led my unit to the formation field awaiting our mid-day snack. I laid my backpack down as an example to the squad leaders and the squad leaders to the squads that this was meant as free time to be used wisely. For me the wisest use of time would be to rest as I was still tired from my 19-hour plane ride to the other side of the world. This was not a good example to the Cadets; both they and I had Scripture to

memorize and puzzles to complete. So I leaned against my pack, which was more of a relaxed and lazy position, but I compromised and kept my head up so that I could supervise the Unit. Major Farr came by and gave me the encouragement to finish the day strong as would be the proper example for my men. Leadership requires more than simple wisdom or general understanding. Leadership comes with her twin sister responsibility, and the Bible says "...to whom much is given much is required." I was given the responsibility of 44 young men and four squad leaders hence, there was a lot expected of me by Major Farr.

While in Malaysia, I learned that leadership is more than carrying on when you are tired. It is being a constant example to the young men you are serving. I must not only "know the way", but I must also "show the way" and, "go the way" personally. Leadership is "knowing and doing what both God and other are expecting of me." This is a lesson I will remember for a long time! I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the ALERT Cadet organization and Major Farr.