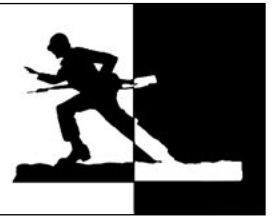


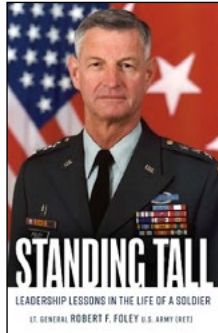
Book Reviews



Standing Tall: Leadership Lessons in the Life of a Soldier

By LTG (Retired) Robert F. Foley
Philadelphia: Casemate,
240 pages, 2022

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Rick Baillergeon



The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, "The whole is greater than the sum of the parts." It is a phrase which has been utilized numerous times in a wide variety of circumstances. This is a phrase which clearly characterizes LTG (Retired) Robert Foley's volume, *Standing Tall: Leadership Lessons in the Life of a Soldier*. It is a book which perfectly meshes various parts (focus areas) to form a superb whole (book).

Readers will find that the "individual" parts of *Standing Tall* serve several purposes for Foley. First, this is a memoir which concisely captures the 37 years of commissioned service he provided his country. Second, it is a vehicle in which he pays tribute to those who were instrumental in his success in life. Third, he utilizes the volume to provide his views and historical contexts on several events in which he served. Finally, it is a means to share leadership lessons he learned from others or experienced himself with readers. Let me address each of these, but remember they are effectively blended throughout the volume.

Regarding the memoir portion of the book, there is unquestionably much for Foley to address. Let me provide a succinct look at Foley's career for those who may be unfamiliar with him and his service. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, NY, in 1963 and retired from the U.S. Army in September 2000. During that period, Foley's assignments included serving as a mortar platoon leader and company commander in the Vietnam War, commanding both a battalion and brigade with the 3rd Infantry Division in Germany, serving as the 2nd Infantry Division assistant division commander in Korea, serving as commandant of cadets at USMA, and culminating his career as the commanding general of Fifth Army.

In a career of this magnitude, there are obviously many highlights. Clearly, the one which will stand out for readers is the fact that LTG Foley was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism on 5 November 1966 while serving as a company commander in Vietnam. A portion of his Medal of Honor citation reads, "His outstanding personal leadership under intense enemy fire during the fierce battle which lasted for several hours inspired his men to heroic efforts and was instrumental in the ultimate success of the operation."

Those who know LTG Foley characterize him as being an extremely humble person. This humility is highlighted in the volume's discussion of the Medal of Honor. Foley does not spend significant time discussing his actions which led to receiving the nation's highest medal for valor. In fact, the preponderance of this discussion focuses on the actions of his Soldiers during the battle. There is no question readers will want to seek further information on Foley's actions that day from other sources.

Within the volume, Foley makes it a point of emphasis to acknowledge the people who had such an impact in his life and were instrumental in his success. This includes the Soldiers he served with, both those he led and leaders he served under. Most importantly, throughout the volume, he stresses the sacrifices of his family and the support he received from them during his career. This volume is a tribute to their enormous role in his career and life.

Standing Tall also provides Foley with a forum to provide his thoughts and historical overviews on events he was involved in. In particular, Foley devotes an entire chapter to the Vietnam War. Within the section, he offers a concise, yet highly informative, synopsis of how and why the United States became involved in Vietnam. He additionally provides his own opinions on this involvement. In total, this chapter truly sets the conditions for when Foley addresses his own involvement in the Vietnam War.

Finally, as the title suggests, this is a volume which addresses leadership. However, I found it unique in how he focuses on this subject. Many leadership volumes are organized as chapters related to specific topics and normally accompanied with bullet comments related to the topic. What Foley has done so effectively is interject his leadership lessons as they relate to events in his memoir. I found this approach far more relevant and effective than others I have seen.

The leadership lessons Foley offers are certainly relevant and value-added from civilian to military, from private to general officer. They are a mix of lessons he received or learned from others and those he gathered from personal experience. They run the gamut of subjects and relate to both combat and garrison environments and life in general. In summary, there is something to be gleaned for everyone.

There are several strengths in the book which greatly contribute to its quality. The first is the outstanding readability of the volume. *Standing Tall* is crafted in a highly conversant style. Additionally, I found no agendas (hidden or not) within the volume. Foley did not write this book to inflate his ego or deflate others. These factors combine to make this a volume which will entertain as well as inform.

The second strength is the supplementary material he has

placed within the book, which greatly personalizes the experience for readers. This starts with an outstanding photograph section inserted in the volume. Foley has placed more than 30 photographs to complement his written words. These key on significant events in his career, the Soldiers he served with, and his family.

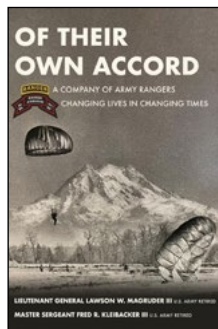
Another important addition is the outstanding appendix section at the end of the volume. It is filled with items enabling readers to better understand and appreciate Foley's career. These include his assignment history, Medal of Honor citation, and citations and press releases for several other prestigious awards Foley received. Readers would benefit from reading the appendix section first. This would provide an excellent background of the author prior to delving into the main portion of the book.

In summary, for those expecting a standard-fare memoir or leadership primer, you will not find it in *Standing Tall*. What you will discover is a volume which is part memoir, part historical commentary, part tribute, and part leadership discussion. These elements combine to make this a superb book and provide another example of validating Aristotle's premise. It also affords a new generation of readers the opportunity to learn and value the career of LTG Robert Foley.

Of Their Own Accord: A Company of Army Rangers Changing Lives in Changing Times

By LTG (Retired) Lawson W. Magruder III and MSG (Retired) Fred R. Kleibacker III

Fred Kleibacker, 332 pages, 2024



Reviewed by SFC (Retired) John C. Simpson

Let me begin the review properly by saying that I'm not going to be able to contain my enthusiasm for this book. It was obviously a labor of love for the two authors, and we're fortunate that their combined vision was so well executed that they created a text that will serve future generations of Soldiers whether read for individual study or used in a professional development forum.

In the interests of full disclosure, I served with author Fred Kleibacker in B Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Devens, MA, in the 1970s into the 1980s.

I won't be going too much into the biographies of the authors since I'm a firm believer in judging ideas on their own merits and not their pedigree. With that said, however, you should know that these two authors served together in the 2nd Ranger Battalion with then-CPT Magruder serving

as the first Bravo Company commander of that organization and Kleibacker starting as a team leader and then a squad leader in 3rd Platoon, B Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion, 75th Infantry. (That's right, before there was the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 1970s saw the organization and training of the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions.)

The book begins with the historical context of the realities of the post-Vietnam Army and how Army Chief of Staff GEN Creighton Abrams came up with the idea to arrest the rapid slide of his beloved Army into ineffective oblivion with a bold idea: to create a unit that would be a shining example and standard setter going forward. To this end, he issued what became known as the Abrams Charter in 1974:

The battalion is to be an elite, light and the most proficient infantry battalion in the world.

A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone.

The battalion will contain no "hoodlums or brigands" and if the battalion is formed from such persons it will be disbanded.

Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best.

The authors then go on to relate the experiences of those initial members of the battalion prior to their joining, their time in the unit and afterwards, and then how their military service shaped their post-service careers. From the foreword, "The intent of this book is not to recount war stories (of which we have more than a few), but to share the positive impact our time together many decades ago had in shaping how we lived our lives in the future."

To that end, the chapters are divided by recurring themes that were identified while interviewing 40 former Bravo Company Rangers over the course of 70 hours. These include Service, Accountability, Physical and Moral Courage, Honor and Integrity, Competence, Becoming a Good Citizen, and Heroes at Home. These are all followed by an epilogue, a very welcome glossary, and a comprehensive biography of all of the witnesses to the story. Another aspect I was impressed with was the space devoted to discussing the role of spouses in the lives and careers of these early Rangers. And I mean, in a book written about Rangers, the wives were interviewed for their insights as well.

I stated that I was enthusiastic about everyone reading AND re-reading this book, but there are a couple points that jumped out at me that I had to highlight.

In chapter 10, "Leading Others" recounts a story of a squad that failed a major evaluation and what measures the chain of command took to fix the problem. That account ends happily, and lessons learned are expressed as simple statements of fact: "Humility, listening to your men, and understanding their strengths and weaknesses are the key ingredients of exceptional leadership."

I was further struck on the Rangers' emphasis of doing things "by the book." Given the treatment of that concept