

# Words of Inspiration

## LETTERS FROM LEADERS

The road to success: What inspiration would you offer to young people with dreams of becoming our future leaders? The following words are some of those we have collected for publication in a book to be distributed to aspiring leaders at schools throughout the world. The proceeds will be donated to charity to fund scholarships for tomorrow's leaders in need of financial support as they prepare to begin their journey.

We are certain that you will enjoy the following thoughts and look forward to hearing yours.

The challenges in my life scarcely can compare with those of the world leaders also represented here.

Mine were those of a newspaper reporter and broadcaster. The fate of nations or of great corporations hardly hung on how I confronted them. The decisions I made affected, for the most part, only me – my professional future or perhaps, in the stress of wartime, my survival.

Early in my broadcast career I was hired to broadcast University of Oklahoma football games. To ease the formidable task of identifying all the players on both teams, I devised an electric board by which spotters from the opposing teams would, by simply pressing a button, identify for me the names of those involved in each of the plays.

With utmost confidence in my labor-saving device, I took my seat in the broadcast booth with the top executives of the broadcast station and our sponsors. All were there to wish this neophyte football announcer well; it was an enterprise on which they had risked much.

Their confidence in me and my confidence in myself collapsed with the first play of the game. My spotters made so many mistakes as they punched the identifying buttons on my electric board. The nature of their errors ran the gamut. The broadcast was a disaster.

The station owners and the sponsors were kinder than I deserved. They gave me another chance on the basis of my plan for rehabilitation.

I recruited another station employee, to punch the buttons on my electric machine. He and I memorized the names and jersey numbers, ages, physical characteristics, and home towns of every one of the 30 or 40 members on every squad of every university we played – and, of course, the same for O.U.

We spent three or four hours a day drilling our memories. One of us would call out a single fact about each player – name, or number. The other had to fill in all the details of his football biography.

It was grueling, unglamorous work that began on Monday and went right up to game time the following Saturday. We missed a lot of the partying that accompanied most football weekends. But the practice worked, and our broadcasts were highly successful from that second game on.

This experience early in my broadcast career taught me an invaluable lesson – one that, incidentally, was a Boy Scout motto: Be prepared. For every story I expect to cover, I thoroughly research all the available material regarding the event, the background, and the major persons involved. And I don't design plans or labor-saving machinery that might permit me to skip this essential step in doing my job to the absolute limit of my ability. My motto is: There are no short cuts to perfection.

Walter Cronkite  
Journalist