

**90. A Powerful Relationship Building Tradition (2:43)**

Hello. I'm Eric Storch, Coast Guard Aviator number 3384.

The leadership molding experience I'd like to share comes from when I was a young boy watching my father who at the time, I suspect, was a Lieutenant Commander.

As he sat at our kitchen table working meticulously at cataloging Christmas letters along with the names and addresses of people and families we'd received cards and letters from throughout the holiday season. I couldn't have been more than 10 or 11 years old but I clearly recall thinking two things from that day.

One - I wondered why in the world my dad was spending so much time at what seemed to be such a mundane task. And two, I thought who is this guy Les High and why in the world would this one guy write a class letter with a personal note to my dad each year at Christmas. How could he possibly write this letter with a personal note not only to my dad but to each of his 100 plus classmates from the Coast Guard Academy class of 1965?

Well, my answers would come years down the road as I followed in my father's footsteps and Coast Guard Service as a second generation Coast Guardsman. Throughout my Coast Guard career I came not only to understand how but more importantly why these letters were written each year and the significance of those letters.

I learned about the power of a personal handwritten note both through letters received and through letters that I wrote and delivered. I learned that personal notes are a powerful tool to help reconnect with people, to acknowledge people and a powerful tool in building trust and relationships.

To this day I have a shoebox full of personal letters I've kept and on occasion I'll pull out that shoe box and pull out a letter and read it. And to this day, I still look for opportunities to write and deliver a handwritten note or letter.

As a young boy, it was Les High through my father who introduced me to the power of the personal letter and for adding this tool to my leadership toolbox. I'm grateful. Thank you Les [Music]

**Related Primary Leadership Principles**

Capacity to Care	Example
Recognition	Connectivity
Team=Building	Information
Military Core Values	