

BEYOND MOWING THE LAWN



WE EARNED IT

“Have you considered the contribution Army Officer Candidate School (OCS) had in building your success?”

That was the question my friend, fellow officer and public relations executive Bob, asked when informed of my recognition as the ‘2016 Distinguished Alumni’ of Everett Community College (EvCC).

EvCC is a regional college founded in 1941 (the same year OCS began) and has more than 244,000 alumni. For the last 10 years, one male and one female have been recognized as the distinguished alumni. I am honored and humbled to be selected for 2016.

The school describes the selection criteria as follows: “In recognition of outstanding achievement, citizenship, and leadership in professional life and furthering the reputation of Everett Community College.”

Interestingly the criteria are the same for OCS which “will always remain constant: train selected personnel in the fundamentals of leadership, basic military skills; instill professional ethics.”

You cannot buy an OCS education; you have to earn it and earn it we did.

One of our first bonding teamwork exercises involved moving as a group through a series of obstacles. They were formidable and at first glance impossible. One of the obstacles involved crossing a gap between two landings. An easy assignment except the three planks supplied would not span the gap. John Lee figured out the key. Cantilever one plank and use it as landing for the others.

Jump ahead twenty years and I am on a county committee to start a tourism bureau from scratch. We had examples from other jurisdictions, knew the needs of local venues, and had other pertinent information. However, we didn’t have anyone with direct experience. The problem was the same as the obstacle course. We had the pieces, knew the goal, but didn’t have the formula.

The same principles used 20 years before of working together, thinking out of the box, and taking a chance resulted in the creation of the tourism bureau. It worked! Today tourism has grown into a billion-dollar industry in our county.

Remember “Prior planning prevents piss poor performance?” You’ve heard that phrase and repeated it countless times. The guidance has proved helpful in many endeavors. It was our motto on the volunteer committee charged to guide the design, construction, and build the business model for our school district’s aquatic center. The project took six years of considering options down to the level of powder coating metal bolts. Today the center is a success and a world-class salt water swimming facility costing more than \$22 million. I gave the dedication speech and in my thoughts were ‘Thank you OCS for instilling P-P-P-P-P-P principles’.

Mentoring makes it possible to pass along the OCS values and principles which result in building a better world for all.

OCS lessons took many forms. Mentoring between the candidates changed lives. Vernon Hartline mentored me and I became a better person during our tenure as roommates. Mentoring is the basis of my life’s work. I’m a certified public accountant, own several small businesses, and am a community leader but those are secondary.

Since 1978, kids have clerked in my offices and each has been mentored and encouraged to reach to find their potential. This work has enabled many of the students to become professionals. The others have a better understanding of themselves and their positive qualities. This led to the most satisfying moment of my life.

Heather, a senior manager at Ernst and Young (EY), called with a lunch invitation. She worked through high school and college in my office. After college graduation, she joined EY, earned her professional license, and has grown into an outstanding CPA. At lunch, she thanked me for mentoring her and added, “Without your encouragement, I’d be a checkout clerk at Albertson’s.” Sweet success!

Mission accomplished Army OCS!

Bill Fulton



Bill Fulton pinned the gold bars on his niece at her commissioning as an Army officer in June 2016.

Bill Fulton is a graduate of OCS Class 24-69. Shortly after Mr. Fulton was recognized as the 2016 Distinguished Alumni of Everett Community College, he wrote a letter to the Secretary of Defense attributing his success to the experiences he had at OCS and as an Army officer.