

# INSPIRED, NOT RETIRED

Leaders are developed over time and with great care. Regardless of the leadership position, without the necessary tools to influence, support, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate, leadership can become a burden. Investing adequate time and care in someone can make the differences between good and bad leadership, success, and failure.

Great leadership inspires us throughout our lives, and retirement marks the successful completion of only the first half. Inspired, Not Retired examines the bond between a father and a son, a profound mentorship that provided leadership lessons used throughout the son's successful 32-year military career. This book provides tools and insights for everyone from the emerging leader to the retired person who wants to make an impact. Mentorship can ease the transition into civilian life and inspire continued service. Relationships fuel lives, but leadership drives the car.

In this book, Dr. Randolph illustrates how positive parental influence through mentoring can cultivate a declared introvert into a highly effective and successful leader. Leadership should inspire us to begin another chapter while continuously serving others. Mentorship can provide understanding along the way.

“Real leaders grasp that excellence in the Leadership craft doesn't just come from experience. If you want an aid to reflect and learn about leadership, buy this book, read this book, and use this book. Your team, your peers, and your boss will thank you.”

*Vincent E. Boles, Major General (MG), US Army (Retired), founder, Vincent E. Boles, LLC and author, 4-3-2-1 Leadership: What America's Sons and Daughters Taught Me on My Way from Second Lieutenant to Two-Star General*

“With this book, Dr. Randolph challenges leaders to think deeper, driving better decisions on how to be a more effective leader. By using storytelling and real-life experiences, he breaks down the process, allowing for easier execution. A must read!”

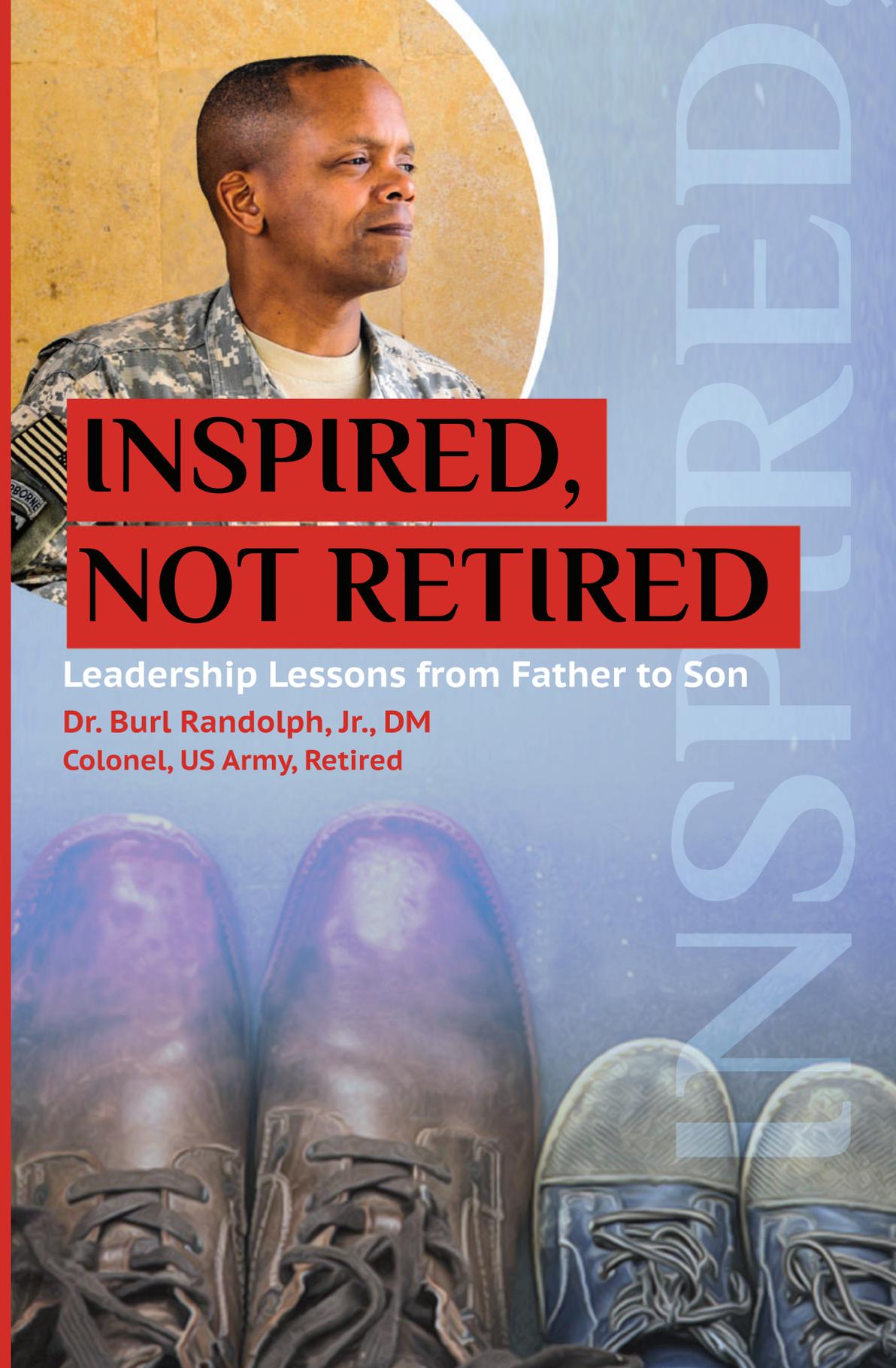
*Michael J. Parejko, Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center*



## Biography

Dr. Burl Randolph Jr. is a Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership, a retired Army Colonel with nearly 32 years of service, and a decorated combat veteran. Inspired, Not Retired takes readers on an odyssey through a mentoring relationship between father and son that resulted in a lifetime of leadership lessons learned. From junior manager to Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Randolph shares his story through whimsical and poignant real-life experiences.

Inspired, Not Retired - By Dr. Burl Randolph, Jr., DM



# INSPIRED, NOT RETIRED

Leadership Lessons from Father to Son

Dr. Burl Randolph, Jr., DM  
Colonel, US Army, Retired

# And Then, It Was Over

Everyone dreams of retirement,  
I think.

Retirement makes work in the formal sense, a thing of the past. The *daily grind*, the old *give-and-take*, *the toil*, all phrases used to describe working the J-O-B. Well, I do not believe in retirement at too young an age. This is because it is one of the most difficult transitions in life regardless of when it occurs. When Dad announced he was going to retire I could not believe it! It was around January 1976 and I was in the second semester of the seventh grade. I felt like the Grinch from Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*: *"Puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags."*

Dad simply announced that he was retiring, and that was it. It was all over. He seemed excited about his decision, and I do not know if he had discussed it with my mom, but I just could not understand it. Dad was only 62 years old. At the time, retirement age was typically 65. My mind raced: "What does he think he's doing? Who retires at 62?" "What is he going to do now?" "What about us?" "How will we live?" The inscription on the back of his retirement watch read: "29 years and five months." Seeing this, I had to ask him, *"You mean you can't do seven more months to get 30 years? I will never forget his answer:*

*"When it's time to go, it's time to go."*

Although I lived by that principle throughout my nearly 32 years in the Army, I did not and could not aptly apply it when it came time for me to retire. I think it was because I saw what Dad had gone through, how he felt, and the advice he passed on to my brothers and me over the ensuing years. I also remembered that retirement meant starting over.

## The Insight: A New Life

People may not believe it, but retirement creates a new life. Nothing was the same after Dad retired. He had his retirement party in May, right before his birthday I believe. There was a cake, food, punch, presents, and tons of laughter and joyousness. At least that is what it looked like from the pictures we saw. The company had unexpectedly organized a party, and since it was during school hours, my siblings and I couldn't go.

As an informal or sought leader, Dad was loved and respected by his coworkers and even by the owners of the company. Carter and Water was a construction material firm in the heart of Kansas City, MO. Dad was a "hi-lift operator" which apparently is not the same as a forklift operator. After working for that long, in the same position, with very few days missed at work, in addition to being an excellent worker, the owners wanted to send Dad out with a bang. I do not recall him being so happy before or after as he was when he retired. His new life began immediately.

First, Dad drastically altered his wake-up time. Gone was the morning routine of waking Mom at 6:00 am, hygiene at 6:30 am, breakfast at 7:00 am, departing for work at 7:30 am to be at work by 8:00 am. Now he'd awake up at the crack of 8:00 am, saunter to breakfast at 8:30 am, and begin reading his paper by 9:00 am. During the school year, I do not believe I would see him until I came home. What a life! We continued our normal routine of yard work, fishing, visiting and the like, but the pace was much slower than before. It was more relaxed, easy going, and without urgency. Only being around 13 years old at the time, the slower pace was killing me, but I understand now what I could not then:

Know when it is time to go, no matter what position you are in.

Whether you're 22 or 62 it does not matter. When you lose your drive, determination, and/or desire, you are no longer an asset to the organization. You may even be a liability. As I delved further in to my Dad's decision to take an "early retirement," I discovered that it was well thought out, using many variables most of us ignore. I also discovered that education is not required to be smart. Being smart in this instance meant:

If you don't leave when it's time to go, you begin to lose your effectiveness.

## The Inspiration: Determining When It's Over

I realize that I have already made three statements that could be inferred as the Inspiration for this chapter:

- A. *“When it’s time to go, it’s time to go.”*
- B. *Know when it is time to go, no matter what position you are in.*
- C. *If you don’t leave when it’s time to go, you begin to lose your effectiveness.*

No matter what position you are in or how important you think you are, when it is time to go, it is time to go. Violating this principle can impact your effectiveness in that position. I will explain this painful truth in “The Application” below.

Always being a Curious Quint, I needed to know the decision-making process Dad used to make this lifechanging choice. Although this is the first time, I have placed this formula on paper, it has swirled in my mind for 36 years – my military and retired time. I always used it, and it always worked, whenever I was ready to leave a position.

**1. Know *what* your end goals are.** For every position I ever held, I always knew what I wanted to accomplish, achieved it, and moved on. *Do you know what your end goals are?*

**2. Know *when* you have accomplished your end goals.** Some people do not establish end goals, so they may always feel like something is unfulfilled. The end goal may be in time, talent, or treasure, but it must be tangible. Dad’s end goal had components that I was unaware of. *What is the Measure of Success (MoS) for your end goal?*

**3. Know *how* you will attain your end goals.** Dad’s end goal of treasure had the bonus of time. Dad discovered that a financial incentive was offered for early retirement, so he took it. That was the treasure part. Because he retired three years early, he gained more time to enjoy retirement. *How will you attain your end goal?*

**4. Know *why* your end goals are your end goals.** Although knowing when it’s time to go is the premise of the insight and the inspiration, knowing why is even more important. Dad felt that he had given all he needed to by working all those years – physically, mentally, and emotionally. Three years less wear-and-tear on his body was an additional bonus. *Why is your end goal important?*

As you survey the landscape of your life, what still lives, and what has withered away? I use this poetic prose because writing about work can

be mundane. To keep it real and in the right perspective, people do not always have end goals toward retirement, they act like a Nike ad and they “Just Do It.” Think of some of the more practical aspects of knowing when it’s time to go:

**A. Getting up for work becomes a monumental chore.** Once the job or position loses its luster, no matter how lucrative or important you think it is or you are, it’s time to go!

**B. The landscape of the office has changed.** Because people transition in and out of organizations, you are now senior in the company: physically, mentally, emotionally, and in status. You may feel as if you no longer fit in.

**C. You have already attained the maximum amount of monetary incentive you can achieve.** In short, you have maxed out on the pay scale.

**D. There is no more upward mobility.** You cannot be promoted. You have peaked, reached your top, risen to your level of competency (or incompetency).

**E. You cannot make yourself or the organization any better.** Personal and professional growth are important, and if you cannot attain either within the organization, why stay?

**F. Alliances shift.** This one may not be as obvious, but when leaders change, alliances shift, and your top cover may have just bottomed out. If you are now considered bottom sod, not topsoil, it is time to go!

**G. Priorities shift.** What was important when you began, or even just last year, may shift and no longer be important.

You can test these practical aspects against any position, in any organization, to determine from a real-world perspective when it is time to go. Our emotions play a role in all of this. Perhaps you’re tired of the same-old-same-old, fed-up with your coworkers, expected to do more work for the same pay, and feel the pace of change is too great. Dad had the distinct advantage of meeting all the requirements to retire: the right age, the right years of service, the right amount of savings, and a living wage to retire on. *Do you meet all the requirements to retire? How much longer do you have? Can you see the light at the end of the tunnel, or is it just another train?*

## The Application: Follow Your Own Advice

Knowing when it is time to go will save you and possibly the organization the turmoil that eventually ensues from unhappy workers. If any of the scenarios above sound familiar, maybe it is time to consider moving to a new position within the company, moving to a new company, or moving back to your childhood hometown after retiring. There were two instances when I failed to follow a few of the practical aspects of this formula: when I was the Battalion Commander and when I was Brigade Deputy Commander, which are CEO positions in the Army. Both times I extended my tours “for the good of the unit” with diminishing returns for myself, my family, and likely my career.

I clearly violated practical aspect E: Not making myself or the organization any better. When you are good at something, you believe that it is perpetual. But nothing lasts forever. I truly believe I was a great Battalion Commander for the first 24 months. The last 12 of the 36 months were some of the most grueling of my career. The unit was highly successful and everyone wanted to be a part of it. In my first 24 months I only removed, through mutual agreement, two Assistant Regional Managers (First Sergeants). Over the next 10 months, I relieved (fired) 11 Assistant Regional Managers, several Branch Managers, and one C-Level officer. This was not good. Because the quantity of removals was so numerous, the focus shifted to my leadership style instead of the true reasons.

A successful organization can be a double-edged sword. On the one edge, those who provided the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice to achieve the success can be justifiably proud. On the other edge, the external perceptions of others were that because the organization was successful, any position would be a cakewalk. This is a fallacy, a myth of epic proportions, and it almost cost me my career.

In the second example, staying on as the Deputy Commander when all others had fled was also a mistake of epic proportions. You cannot always choose who you work for or with in the Army, and sometimes moving on when you can may be the best action. No matter what I tried, there was little else I could do to improve the unit. Sometimes it is just best to allow people to fail on their own, instead of trying to bail out a sinking ship.

I also failed to consider practical aspect G: Priorities shift. When I decided to begin my doctoral program, I should have concurrently submitted my retirement paperwork or at least submitted it a year later.

As Dad mentioned, “When it’s time to go, it’s time to go.” I knew that I would not be promoted to General Officer. The Army’s priorities had shifted, and the Army Chief of Staff guidance had been issued on Colonel-level CEO positions. Based on that guidance, my window had passed because I was considered too old. Room needed to be made for the new Colonels who were still young enough and hungry enough to sacrifice everything for the Needs of the Army.

Although I thought that I had always served the Needs of the Army, I had not necessarily sacrificed to meet those needs. I only had one tour without my family in the 20 years since I had created one. I took advantage of certain Army programs designed to help disadvantaged family members, which kept us together. I rebuffed a certain deployment request, Bosnia, because I believed that I had served my time during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This miscalculation accelerated the retirement process for me. Thank God everything else was in place.

Over the years, part of my duties were promotion notifications. One of the less pleasant duties was notifying those who were considered but not selected for promotion. The positive notifications were always fun, and I had no problem allowing the first line supervisors to make the notifications after the big Army announcement was made. Just because the Army released a promotion list did not mean that everyone on the list knew they were promoted. It was one of the better kept secrets in the Army.

After a couple of emotional notifications, I decided as the CEO to personally notify everyone not selected for promotion. This is important because people sometimes make split decisions that impact whether they stay until retirement. For some people it was as the title indicated and then, it was over. Others had options and opportunities and had weighed those against a hasty departure.

Though many may dream of retirement, it is normally on their terms and in their time. But life surprises you. When it came time for me to make that decision, fortunately, Dad had also instilled in me what most have said is my greatest quality, personally and professionally: patience.

*Gonzales-Osler, 1989*

**INSPIRED,  
NOT RETIRED**



**Dr. Burl Randolph, Jr., DM  
Colonel, US Army, Retired**

I hope you enjoyed your free sample of *Inspired, Not Retired*. Mark your calendars - my book is coming soon!

If you enjoyed this chapter, please consider sending a review my way!

**Thanks for your support!**