

Rituals of honor often spark creativity and desire for others to emulate the valiant efforts of those honored. We hope our portrayals of Raymond Weeks and others, as well as highlighting our *Veterans Day Founding History and Character Education Project*, inspire you to take action.

Whether your calling is starting a major life work, preparing as your *best-self*, or choosing a simple idea you can do from the *21-Point Call to Action for a Patriot*, we encourage your beginning and perseverance.

An act of *life leadership* is to write core values in a personal constitution that helps you internalize desired character traits. An act of *best-self leadership* with others is to identify shared values of the team or organization and state, model, teach, and reward desired plans, actions, and results.

Character Education

Some still debate,

“Can we teach values?”

Of course we can — and should!

School Values Illuminated by Veterans Day Founding

Character education is growing in America. Most states have identified core values or character traits to teach in school. Increasing numbers of universities have honor codes. Many companies have added codes of honor or ethics. Students preparing for college or career should know of honor and values, learned through family, school, and community organizations.

The Alabama Legislature voted to adopt 25 character traits to teach in our schools, along with citing the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The State of Alabama Character Education Program “focuses on development of character traits to complement goals” of the Alabama Course of Study. The Education Statute calls for “a comprehensive character education program for all grades to consist of not less than 10 minutes instruction per day focusing upon the students’ development of [these] character traits.” The Alabama Department of Education adopted these traits. We list them, placing first and bolding the five traits on the list supported best by the history of founding Veterans Day:

1. **Patriotism**
2. **Courage**
3. **Perseverance**
4. **Loyalty**
5. **Citizenship**
6. Honesty
7. Fairness
8. Respect for others
9. Kindness
10. Cooperation
11. Self-Respect
12. Self-Control
13. Courtesy
14. Compassion
15. Tolerance
16. Diligence
17. Generosity
18. Punctuality
19. Cleanliness
20. Cheerfulness
21. School pride
22. Respect for the environment
23. Patience
24. Creativity
25. Sportsmanship

Life Leaders proposes adding:

Freedom, Peace, Honor, Trust, Leadership

“The character that takes command in moments of crucial choices has already been determined. It has been determined by a thousand other choices made earlier in seemingly unimportant moments. It has been determined by all those “little” choices of years past—by all those times when the voice of conscience was at war with the voice of temptation—whispering that ‘it doesn’t really matter.’

It has been determined by all the day-to-day decisions made when life seemed easy and crises seemed far away—the decisions that, piece by piece, bit by bit, developed habits of discipline or of laziness; habits of self-sacrifice or self-indulgence; habits of duty and honor and integrity—or dishonor and shame.”

-Ronald Reagan-
Former President of the United States

The history of founding Veterans Day can help teachers and students with at least five of the 25 character traits. And, at least two more traits related to this history, *Peace* and *Leadership*, should be added as powerful teaching points.

Patriotism – Courage – Perseverance – Loyalty - Citizenship
Peace - Leadership

Peace merits addition to character education, especially in Alabama. The founding of Veterans Day is based on the purpose to “perpetuate peace” as well as to honor veterans. Because Alabama led the way to start Veterans Day—supported by General Eisenhower, including his telegram about peace and hoping Birmingham’s efforts would spread across America, we should teach the meaning of *Peace* as an example and resource for the country. Teachers and professors are increasingly teaching and writing on “bullying” that happens on the playground, after school, and in social media. The connections of decision-making such as when to “turn a cheek,” when to seek help, and when to fight apply for youth as they do for leaders seeking peaceful actions between countries. *Peace* needs to be restored as a priority in our Veterans Day celebrations and educational efforts. Veterans Day should be more than a holiday—it should also be a shining opportunity for education and example from our veterans to our students.

Leadership should be added because when extraordinary action is taken, rarely does success come without *leadership*. This Veterans Day founding history demonstrates several forms of leadership important to the mission—combining the perseverance of Weeks with the power of Eisenhower. For youth, the focus should be on *personal leadership* prior to leadership of others, including learning and planning for character development. *Best-Self Leadership* is often overlooked in traditional civilian leadership training though should be the foundation. When teaching patriotism/citizenship/leadership, where else should we start? We also recommend and offer teaching points for *Freedom, Honor, and Trust*.

Values Debate

Some still debate about whether values can be taught. I have been asked, “Do you think we can teach values?”

Answer: *of course we can*. And, we should teach them—at home, at school, at work. We should list them in writing and write a vision statement for each so we and others know what success looks like. That is the core of a personal constitution. Why? For the same reasons the U.S. has a constitution: to identify, inform, internalize, and implement our highest values.

Values that make the lesson plans will get debated though we should create a list anyway. We can teach what values mean and let parents and student adopt the ones they “value” most. Start with common ground and add to the core. Parents can emphasize those chosen by schools they believe most important to their children and add. Students will learn a core from home and school, and some will get support for those and more from athletic team coaches and club leaders.

Plans for Life Boost Character

In the future, good schools will help students write plans for life. Good literature on development and achievement already recommends plans—citing concepts like constitutions, mission statements, goals, time priorities, and action. Few educational organizations seem to teach these best practices, though more will. Attitude, attendance, and achievement will improve.

Parents and teachers who help students write plans that include their mission, values, and goals will leave a greater legacy. For example, a student who writes the value, “courage,” and writes a sentence or more (vision statement) describing his or her best-self *living courage* will prove more likely to internalize and act on that value.

Parents and teachers who read the plan of a student, even if that plan is only the length of a school paper, will understand the mindset and needs of the student better and faster and will

be able to mentor more meaningfully. I have seen this work with great impact—especially in cases where students need to identify and reconcile internal conflicts often caused by life questions and misunderstood teachings from adults. This leads to greater peace of mind and motivation.

My research shows, many students and professionals assess themselves with a “C” level of *courage* and *confidence*. The number one correlation between level of *courage* and *confidence* is sense of *calling* (whether they have purpose and plans). Addressing values more effectively earlier can enrich results like attendance, attitude, achievement—and graduation rates.

The next level of preparing students will include schools adding lesson plans connected to courses and grades for a *plan for school and life* component. A written plan of even the length of an average school paper will help a student increase focus and state intent with parents, counselors, and teachers. This plan and writing assignment can start in elementary school and continue through high school, proving to be one of the most valuable assignments with impact beyond graduation.

Instead of a student discarding the paper when the grade is assigned, this paper/plan continues to improve from course to course, year to year, and guides the student in career and college choices. Students, parents, and counselors will prove more effective identifying and acting on values, academic plans, and actions for the *Seven Areas of Life*, including college and/or career options. The best universities will add instruction and requirements building on plans to enrich the collegiate experience and have graduates better prepared and valuable.

Systems to Mirror Values Needed

Teachers in Alabama invest time daily to instill values into students. The 25 values intended to develop traits have been signed into law to move from *recommendation* to *requirement*.

Visionary leaders who are effective over time are more likely to put systems in place to *reward people for doing what is important*, increasing chances of forming habits. Teachers, administrators, and others who fulfill this requirement exhibit *best-self leadership*. Expect more in this generation.

The traits valued list “Courage” and “Perseverance,” consistent with the first and seventh *Life Leadership* best practices we recommend. “Courage” is part of *Lead Your Life* because both development and achievement start with decision, which requires *calling and courage* to try new things and grow to new levels. “Perseverance” is part of *Renew and Improve*, which includes renewing our *minds, bodies, spirits, service, and stewardship* to want—and be able—to persist.

The values listed: *Patriotism, Courage, Perseverance, Loyalty, Citizenship, Freedom, Peace, Honor, Trust, and Leadership* are interconnected. We will value and act on those traits more if we identify and develop our *callings, sense of stewardship, and desire* to serve people and ideals bigger than ourselves.

Patriotism is more than waving the flag and feeling *loyalty* for country—it requires action related to good *citizenship* and often *courage*, not only fighting back against attackers but also taking risks to serve at a higher level. *Confidence* to expand our “comfort zones” comes from *commitment* to expand our *capacities*, plus *courage* fueled by discovering our *callings*.

The following pages include short summary teaching points based on the history of founding Veterans Day through the lens of the five character traits in Alabama most closely associated. We also address five additional core character traits recommended for learning and teaching.

Patriotism – Courage – Perseverance – Loyalty – Citizenship
Freedom – Peace – Honor – Trust – Leadership

Patriotism

The core of the definition of *patriotism* means “love of country.” The founder of Veterans Day was *patriotic* to feel there should be a holiday to remember and honor veterans of all American fought wars. Our research indicates, many veterans and civilians had a similar idea after WW II.

Raymond Weeks was willing “to do something about it.” He took massive and sustained action to transform his idea into a concept that was enacted. He became a *Patriot in Action*.

Patriotism and *Citizenship* share the same meaning. A good citizen is patriotic, develops and uses himself and his resources wisely, and serves his country. A *true patriot* does more than “feel” patriotic—he or she plans and acts to identify and act on *callings* that fulfill *personal leadership* leading to good citizenship.

Courage

Weeks served in the U.S. Military (Navy) during World War II, like millions of other Americans. Enlisting to risk your life for a noble cause takes courage.

Identifying, planning, and taking action on a calling also takes courage—especially when success requires a year of planning and convincing a general to support a movement to start a National Veterans Day. Some people talk themselves out of acting on ideas because of fear of hardship or failure. Many parents and teachers wish they could instill more courage into children—and themselves.

Weeks was in a sense an ordinary man because he did not come from privilege or power through military rank or social position. His *personal leadership* made him extraordinary. He could have justified not taking action on his calling by focusing on barriers—time and money as well as influence needed to succeed. Yet, he planned and worked for a year before he traveled to Washington, DC, to persuade General Dwight

Eisenhower to support his dream. He also gained support from the United Nations and led a first-ever two-day national event in Birmingham, Alabama with the eyes of America on the city.

Perseverance

From concept to national law, Weeks persevered nine years—1945 until 1954. He launched the concept with General Eisenhower, then went to work directing annual Veterans Day events in Birmingham while continuing national efforts.

He worked toward his vision under the official name, National Armistice Day (unofficially National Veterans Day), until America made the change of name legal. Weeks petitioned Eisenhower again, this time at the White House after General of the Army Eisenhower took office as President of the United States. Seven years after he directed his first national event to honor veterans and perpetuate world peace, he was able to call Birmingham events, National Veterans Day.

Loyalty

Mr. Weeks served his calling and country until he could no more—40 years from concept in 1945 until death in 1985. He served as director of National Veterans Day until the end of his life—giving the last full measure. He was married to one woman, Jennie, until her death, which came only months after she accompanied him and their daughters, Barbara and Brenda, to the White House to be honored by President Reagan.

Another example of loyalty is Colonel Bill Voigt (USAFR Ret), who became president of National Veterans Day after Raymond Weeks died. Bill served 25 years until a heart attack hastened his retirement. He said of stepping down, “I didn’t get tired of it; I just got tired.” Bill’s loyalty fueled his perseverance to serve as long as he felt he should—until Mark Ryan, a civilian, offered to take over the reins of service to lead National Veterans Day.

Citizenship

U.S. President Ronald Reagan invited Raymond Weeks to the White House on Veterans Day in 1982 to present to him the Presidential Citizens Medal on national television.



Excerpts from President Reagan's Speech

"...This morning we're honoring an American patriot, Raymond Weeks, of Birmingham, Alabama. For more than 50 years, Mr. Weeks has exemplified the finest traditions of American voluntarism by his unselfish service to his country. As director of the National Veterans Day Celebration in Birmingham for the past 36 years, Raymond Weeks, a World War II veteran himself, has devoted his life to serving others, his community, the American veteran, and his nation. He was the driving force behind the congressional action which in 1954 established this special holiday as a day to honor all American veterans.

It's a pleasure for me to present Mr. Weeks the Presidential Citizens Medal, given to those who have made outstanding contributions to their country. And, Mr. Weeks, in honoring you, we honor the ideals that we hope to live up to. Your country is mighty grateful for what you've done."

President Reagan understood the principle, *reward what you value and want repeated*. Through this award presented in front of the nation via television, he encouraged millions of people to fulfill good citizenship.

Mr. Weeks inspired President Reagan and many others of his day. If you pass on the history and meaning of founding Veterans Day to others, you can help us inspire this and future generations to identify and fulfill their callings.

Freedom

What is Freedom? That was the title of a paper I wrote for an assignment in junior high school. My teacher entered me into a citizenship speech competition, and that led to some of my life work over 40 years later. While I was a young teen learning about "freedom" from teachers and books, co-author Colonel Dunn, 10 years older, was *fighting for freedom* in Vietnam.

Our paths came together in 1993. Our first book, inspired by the September 11, 2001 attacks on America, is *Professionalism Under Stress*. We recommend best practices for professionals and leaders who serve "under stress" in military and civilian life. *Freedom* requires preparation for times of war and peace.

Freedom is defined as, "The power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without restraint." Another definition is, "Absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government."

John Hornsby recognized that Birmingham has contributed uniquely to America's freedoms. Founding Veterans Day supports the contribution of veterans for *freedom of life and liberty*. Birmingham as a major historical city for the civil rights movement, as well as Montgomery and Selma, supports *freedom of civil and human rights*. Because of these freedoms earned and protected, students and adult citizens for *free to flourish*.

Birmingham founded its Civil Rights Institute to advance civil and human rights education internationally. In 2013, the City celebrated "50 Years Forward" to build on freedoms achieved. Mayor Bell and Renee Kemp-Rotan launched "Freedom School," which offered history and character education that applies to Civil Rights as well as Veterans Day.

"Freedom of the City" is a centuries-old term that meant a person or group had earned *trust* for *free* access and passage in the castle or land. Modern-day leaders present a "Key to the City." Earning trust adds freedom and empowerment.

Peace

“I am not an Athenian, or a Greek, but a citizen of the world.”
~Socrates~

Our views on *Peace* are affected by how we see ourselves—a citizen of the world wanting what’s best for the greater good or one only looking out for his own territory.

When General Eisenhower wrote to Raymond Weeks about establishing Veterans Day emphasizing “world peace,” he expressed a sense of mission. Imagine how he felt after commanding troops in a massive world conflict in which millions of people died—and then the country felt “peace!”

We need to remember the purposes of Veterans Day include *honoring veterans and achieving peace*. No one wants peace more than the warrior. We can add education to develop good citizens who take action to achieve and perpetuate peace.

Peace is about more than conflicts between countries and ideologies. It is about relationships on school grounds, at work, and in families as well. Peace begins within each of us.

If you are a student reading this, you might wonder how ideas about grownups deciding whether to go to war applies to you. The principles that influence decisions of world leaders on how to handle conflicts are based on the same ones that relate to you if in conflict in the classroom, on the sports field or playground, or in social settings—even social media.

Teachers and professors are increasingly teaching and writing on “bullying.” The connections of decision-making such as *when to turn a cheek, when to seek help, and when to fight* apply for youth as for leaders seeking peaceful actions between countries.

Hitler was a bully. He believed he could force his will on others and did so in very inhumane ways before the U.S. and other world powers had to choose to fight to stop him from killing.

Young people who anger easily and fight quickly often carry those characteristics forward to adulthood. The results include more legal battles, divorces, and military atrocities. Sometimes, it is easy to merely adopt the “turn the other cheek” philosophy, and that will defuse many conflicts. However, sometimes, it takes great discernment to know when to seek peace at any cost and to know when to fight—usually a *harder right* decision. Veterans and educators can work together to teach how.

We believe Veterans Day has a potential third purpose. Veterans can assist to teach character education, including self-control and decision-making about courage and resolving conflict.

President Reagan believed the greatest need for peace is to be strong to discourage those who would take advantage of weakness. Whether in national strength or in *personal leadership*, the goal is to be our *best-selves*—anticipating the best and also prepared just in case the worst challenges us.

Peace begins as a state of mind envisioning the world. If we view ourselves only as Americans, we will be the equivalent of somebody who honored only his or her school and disliked others. We gain perspective when our lives expand to include friends from those formerly competitive schools and teams who are now with us in our university, profession, or community.

A true patriot is a citizen of the world considering the *greater good* in the betterment of one's life and nation. We are not an aggressor nation building an empire around the world. Most of us know we need to do a better job with what we have as we help others who need us. We are Americans. We are citizens of the world. We are *patriots who take action* doing our best as individuals and serving to make our families, teams, organizations, communities, and country the best we can be as part of a worldwide community.

Honor

MAJ Jeff Brown (Ret), veteran of the Army and Marines, teaches in character education talks: “courage” will take you to the battle, though “honor” will keep you there. He internalized in combat (Vietnam) that one must “honor the leader who told you what to do and honor your comrades that you would never disgrace by leaving the battlefield before the battle is over, no matter what the circumstances are. That is why those who sacrificed in battle deserve our respect because they have demonstrated the character quality of honor.”

Honor is at the root of the phrase, “the harder right,” a term learned from Colonel Dunn, a graduate of West Point, when we were writing our books. “Duty-Honor-Country” is the imbedded motto of the United States Military Academy and representative of the commitment of all our military academies.

Trust

Colonel Dunn believes “Trust” is the most important value on the list because, “without it, none of the others work well.” With trust, in self and with others, great accomplishments, relationships, and joy are possible—without it, expect decreased harmony, creativity, and fulfillment along with increased stress, conflict, and losses.

Trust is a firm reliance on the integrity, ability, and character of another person *even when they are under stress*. Trust is a “state of readiness for unguarded interaction.” Stretch says, “When you trust someone, you are genuine and spontaneous with them. You can be yourself without feeling a need to be guarded.” But, extending trust is not like “turning a switch from Off to On.”

Seminars on trust and empowerment taught in recent decades often failed because they suggested trusting others more without providing a process for deciding when to trust and how to communicate expectations. Trusting is based on a person’s willingness to risk trusting others and a belief the other person

can do what is needed (is competent) and is a person of character (has your interests at heart as well as his). Professionalism Under Stress (Dunn/Dyson) includes a model for earning and delegating empowerment through trust.

Leadership

This story of Veterans Day illustrates different forms of leadership. In this history, three types were needed.

Raymond Weeks was an *entrepreneurial leader*—a visionary and catalyst for action, good at getting things started. He led through inspiration, time, and energy. He developed his influence over time because he persevered long enough for his vision to take root. Weeks worked in strategy as well as details of planning, communicating, and implementing.

President Eisenhower contributed *leadership of power* to work with Congress. After his first work with Weeks in 1946, Eisenhower was promoted to General of the Army (5 star) and served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. When he was elected president, he was the one with power to sign legislation making Veterans Day a legal federal holiday. His investment in preparation, action, and leadership over the years put him in position to approve the recommendations of Mr. Weeks.

Colonel Bill Voigt provided *leadership needed for continuity*. After the vision is cast and traditions established, the second generation of leadership often determines if the purpose of the founding will continue. After Raymond Weeks died, Bill Voigt kept the annual programs going, often with 1,000 guests at the banquet and luncheon, plus more at the parade.

Each leader provided what was needed at the time. Each demonstrated “uncompromising commitment” to a deeply felt calling to honor veterans for their service to the nation as well as standing for peace. Each served most of their lives fulfilling:

patriotism, courage, perseverance, loyalty, citizenship, freedom, peace, honor, trust, leadership.