



Who's Gonna Fill Your Shoes?

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Those of you who enjoy classic country music are familiar with a song written by Troy Seals and Max D. Barnes and recorded by the late George Jones titled, *Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes*. I had just listened to the song recently and while the lyrics to the chorus were on my mind, I thought about those of us who hold leadership positions within the VFW and asked myself, "Who's gonna fill our shoes?"

If you hold an elected or an appointed position in your Post, who will step up and be ready to take your place some day? Don't wait! Start to take steps now to develop those who will one day "fill your shoes."

Shortly after I was elected Chaplain of my Post, I started to look for individuals whom I could call on to step in and take my place at events if I was not available. That day arrived quicker than I realized. I happened to be out of town one time when I received a call from a family asking if I would be available to conduct a funeral for their loved one who was a veteran. I explained that I would not be available, but that I would be able to send two individuals to conduct the service. The family accepted my offer. I contacted the two individuals, wrote out the funeral service and emailed it to them. Together they conducted the funeral service, and the family was very pleased. In fact, one family member commented that he wanted them to officiate at his funeral when that time came.

I now have six individuals in my Post, and a number of others throughout the State of PA, that I can call upon as needs arise.

I encourage you to look for others who you could train and call on to help in the work that you do, particularly at the Post level. Churches call it "discipleship," and in business they call it "mentoring." Regardless of what we call it, I believe it is a good investment of our time, and it multiplies our ministry. Begin by surfacing one person that you sense could one day take your place. Here is a simple plan to develop ministry helpers.

Step One involves Modeling: “You Watch Me”

Spend time with the individual and take them along with you to the hospital and to funerals, etc. Talk about what you do and model character traits and skills. Introduce them to several articles and resources that are available on my Chaplain’s page at vfwpahq.org.

Step Two involves Participating: “We Will Do This Together”

In time, have the person participate with you by taking a small part. Remember to praise them for what they do. As they develop confidence and their skill level increases, have them take more responsibility.

Step Three involves Doing: “You Do it and I Watch You”

Encourage them and realize they may not do everything exactly as you would.

Developing Future Post Leaders

It has taken some time, but in my home post we now have assistants (comrades in training) for several of the elected positions such as quartermaster, and for all the appointed positions. We started holding monthly leadership/trustee meetings about a week before our Post meeting, and the assistants are present for those meetings. They are observing and learning what is involved in their respective area and what is involved in running a VFW Post. They are also observing how the trustees review the financial report each month and how an audit is conducted. They see how the leadership interacts with one another, and they participate in developing plans for the future.

Remember; don’t try to force people into positions. First, get to know the comrades in your post. Find out where a person’s interests lay, their natural talents, and what they are passionate about. Then, try to look for a natural fit and where that person will function naturally.

Blessings as you serve those who served,

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