In January 2013, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) released the Navy Leader Development Strategy (NLDS), which outlines the key elements of professional development for all sailors, from E-1 to O-10. This top-level emphasis echoes the sentiment of former CNO Admiral Arleigh Burke, as quoted above. The strategy defines a career-long Navy Leader Development Continuum that integrates four core elements: experience, education, training, and personal development. Since its launch, the NLDS has been embraced widely as a clear and concise tool that individuals and commands can use to help craft development paths tailored to their specific needs. In January 2016, CNO Admiral John Richardson maintained the momentum by calling on all hands to “strengthen and broaden leadership development programs to renew and reinforce the Navy Team’s dedication to the naval profession.”

The NLDS identifies personal development as one of the four core elements of leader development, and recommends that all sailors engage in professional reading to improve their knowledge of Navy traditions, roles, and missions. The CNO Professional Reading Program has purchased and distributed leadership-relevant books throughout the fleet, including the following (several of which were profiled separately in previous “Reflections on Reading” Columns):

- *A Sailor’s History of the U.S. Navy*, by Lieutenant Commander Thomas J. Cutler, USN (Ret.), speaks eloquently about the value of studying the past to illuminate the future and the importance of understanding the heritage of one’s chosen profession. Award-winning author Cutler provides a series of interesting and informative vignettes about the honor, courage, and commitment of our Navy’s remarkable sailors. In the preface he argues that,
regardless of how busy sailors may become in dealing with the pressing issues of the day, they are well served by finding some time to consider the path that led them to their current situations, and that a knowledge of history often shows that the solution to today’s problems may have roots in the past.

• *In the Shadow of Greatness*, by Naval Academy graduates Joshua Welle, John Ennis, Katherine Kranz, and Graham Plaster, is a fascinating book that provides a glimpse into the lives of some members of the post-9/11 generation of warriors. The stories drawn from the Naval Academy class of 2002 are representative of an entire generation of sailors and officers who volunteered for service with the knowledge that they would serve in combat. Each story provides a glimpse into the lives of modern-day military officers who faced unique challenges, yet succeeded.

• *Navigating the Seven Seas*, by retired master chief Melvin G. Williams Sr. and Vice Admiral Melvin G. Williams Jr., showcases important leadership lessons from the first African American father and son to have served at the top in the U.S. Navy. In addition to the engaging biographical content of the book, the authors identify what they call “the Seven Cs of Leadership”: character, courage, competence, commitment, caring, community, and communicating. Each quality is explained through vivid examples that will help guide all sailors to successful lives and Navy careers.

• *Leading with the Heart: Coach K’s Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business, and Life*, by Mike Krzyzewski and Donald T. Phillips, provides entertaining and informative lessons on how to build a culture of success. Duke University basketball coach Mike “Coach K” Krzyzewski’s story is a great example of living the American dream through hard work and dedication. The son of working-class Polish immigrants, Krzyzewski earned a scholarship to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he first played and later coached basketball. His secrets to success are communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring, and pride. The parallels to a military leader’s challenges, such as building teams, dealing with high organizational turnover rates, and overcoming defeat, are readily apparent.

• *The Trident: The Forging and Reforging of a Navy SEAL Leader*, by Jason Redman and John Bruning, tells the story of Lieutenant Redman’s odyssey as a Navy SEAL and wounded warrior. His experiences as an enlisted man who rose through the ranks and earned a commission demonstrate the inspiring courage, dedication, and commitment he showed throughout his career. Redman received severe wounds in a firefight in Iraq, then earned national attention when he posted a sign on his hospital door at Bethesda warning all
who entered not to feel sorry for him because of his wounds. In his introduction to the book, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates writes, “This story, though, is not just about a SEAL on the Iraqi battlefield, but a SEAL at war with himself and his ultimate victory. I believe his story will inspire the reader, just as it did me.”

There is no single path toward leadership excellence, but reading about the successes and challenges of other leaders can help shape your personal leadership style. Former president Harry Truman put it best: “Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers!”

JOHN E. JACKSON