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## Character in Action: The U.S. Coast Guard on Leadership,

Laura Miller

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are barely touched upon, so readers who are familiar with them will not learn anything new, and readers who had not heard of them will know little more.

No doubt the day will come when someone will write the book that truly reveals the face of naval battle in all its dimensions, but this is not the day. Taken as a whole, Reeves and Stevens have created a work of interest and merit that is able to stand on its own. It is a significant contribution to an increased understanding of history and the contribution of the Royal Australian Navy. Readers who do not expect more will not be disappointed.

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Phillips, Donald T., and James M. Loy. *Character in Action: The U.S. Coast Guard on Leadership*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2003. 178pp. \$22.50

According to the opening chapter, the Coast Guard manages to achieve a complex mission on an annual budget that is smaller than 2 percent of all the other services' combined budgets. Phillips and Loy identify a twelve-part mission that includes responsibilities ranging from boating safety to homeland defense. Thus they argue that the Coast Guard provides a valuable case study for leading a complex organization because it achieves so much with limited funds.

Using a variety of approaches, including historical examples, anecdotes, and organizational philosophy, Phillips and Loy illustrate sixteen principles that they believe are foundations for a well run organization. For example, the first

principle they posit is “define the culture and live the values.” By discussing exactly how the Coast Guard achieves this goal, they then set forth how this principle can also be successfully implemented by other organizations.

The authors are uniquely positioned to examine Coast Guard leadership. Donald Phillips has written ten books on leadership, including the best-selling *Lincoln on Leadership* (Simon and Schuster, 1992), and spent twenty-five years as a manager in major corporations. After graduating from the Coast Guard Academy in 1964, coauthor Admiral James Loy served in the Coast Guard for over thirty years, culminating in four years as commandant. Upon his retirement in 2003, he assumed the post of administrator of the Transportation Security Administration.

Overall, this book has many points to recommend it. Unlike many management books, this one is written in an easy-to-read fashion. The aforementioned sixteen principles are grouped into four parts: Set the Foundation, Focus on People, Instill a Bias for Action, and Ensure the Future. Readers can thus focus on groups of principles that are of specific importance or interest in their own organization. In addition, while leaders may be reluctant to read a management book that discusses “sea stories” over the latest theories, the authors do an excellent job of linking the Coast Guard experience to leadership and management principles. Every chapter closes with a summary of the important leadership points behind each principle.

The leadership principles presented here will resonate with federal civilian and military managers alike as many relate to issues they currently face. The

chapters that cover “Promoting Team over Self” and “Instilling a Commitment for Action” in part 1 will assist those federal leaders who work in a team environment. In part 2, “Focus on People,” there are discussions of such principles as “Eliminating the Frozen Middle,” “Cultivating Caring Relationships,” and “Creating an Effective Communication System.” The Coast Guard experience in this area may be a source of ideas to federal leaders who are currently struggling with workforce planning issues such as recruitment, retention, and motivating a large population that is or soon will be retirement eligible. Part 3, “Instill a Bias for Action,” also proves helpful in thinking about current issues. For instance, chapter 12’s “Give the Field Priority” will provide ideas to both military leaders working to implement network-centric warfare and a State Department leader working to improve communication between Washington and the field. Other chapters in this section, “Make Change the Norm” or “Encouraging Decisiveness,” may seem self-evident, but they are actually cultural changes needed to bring the federal workforce into the twenty-first century. Lastly, part 4’s discussion of “Ensure the Future” may also seem obvious, but a recent management survey noted that most workers want to hear “thank you” above all other rewards. Chapters on topics of “Spotlighting Excellence” are also important reads.

*Character in Action* does have some limitations. Due to a publication date that preceded the Coast Guard’s merger into the Department of Homeland Security, readers may find themselves wondering if the book’s lessons still hold true. For an answer to this question, see the

Spring 2004 *Review* article “Change and Continuity: The U.S. Coast Guard Today,” by Admiral Thomas H. Collins.

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Funabashi, Yoichi, ed. *Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2003. 240pp. \$19.95

Asia’s brutal colonial and wartime history has left wounds that continue to shape the region’s politics and international relations. Traditional approaches to international relations say little about how to overcome lingering animosity and to replace it with trust and harmonious relations. Time alone is never a solution. Nor, as Japan has discovered repeatedly, are apologies enough. Even need, as that between developing China and economically and technologically advanced Japan, is insufficient. The contributors to this volume demonstrate that the path to reconciliation is different for each country, requiring unique blends of a wide range of political and social ingredients, many of which are in short supply.

This volume is the result of a conference sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace, which includes chapters on intrastate (Taiwan, Cambodia, East Timor, Australia) as well as interstate relations (Japan-China, Japan-Korea, North Korea–South Korea, and an appendix on Germany-Poland). Its timing is propitious as reconciliation itself is a growing phenomenon. South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the UN-led war crimes tribunals for Bosnia and Rwanda have elevated world