General Wally Johnson: I’m Walter F. Johnson III. Most people called me Wally, I live in Georgetown, South Carolina right now, that’s between Charleston and Myrtle Beach but I was born in Charleston, South Carolina. Most people in Charleston call me Walter especially my mother and my wife and the people in Georgetown call me general so I have a lots of names. Anyway I was born back in the 39 in Charleston, South Carolina in an area called Backdagreen, not the T-H-E-green, D-A-green, Backdagreen. It was in public housing in the projects and I had a tremendous life back then. My parents gave me some very strong values that we’re reinforced by my relatives, my neighbors, my ministers that I encountered.

 Obviously the teachers in my middle, my grade school, middle school and high school. Might a few people, I went 14 years to school in the same building, a lot of friends asked me why 14 years but I started out in premier. I mean in kindergarten and we had premier, and we had first to 12 all in the same building, I went to Immaculate Conception School in Charleston, South Carolina run by some nuns out of Baltimore, the Oblate Sisters of Providence catholic school and the priest were the holy ghost fathers out of Pennsylvania but I had a real solid education. I was somewhat of a jock, I was a captain at my high school basketball team of senior year. I was pretty good football player but I realize very early on that some of the values that my parents gave me had to be altered.

 I had to alter my lifestyle in order to meet some of kinds of values that my parents taught me. The three values that my parents taught me then and I still embody today are very simple. First is, trusting the Lord and the power of prayer, the second was get your education and the third was hard work, hard work. Hard work, hard work. Well, I wasn’t the best student around, at least initially I wasn’t the best student, I was a jock as I said and middle school I held my own. When I got to high school my priorities were a little backwards I say. I would say my first priority was basketball, the second priority was football, the third was track and then maybe a girl, I’m not sure about that initially and then school work.

It was clear to me that if I wanted to get the education that my parents told me I needed to get because none of them had graduated from school. A matter of fact I need to let you know what as I lived in the projects, when I lived in the projects I never forget I use to dream a lot. I dream that one day I’m going to have a big white house. I want to make two cars and I want a swimming pool in the back because we live in the projects and my parents always talked about getting out of the projects, going in to a home.

We were walking on a street one day and my mother turned to me and asked me what I want out of life and I didn’t know. I told her I want to be a football star something and she went on and told me about these values and my dad reinforced those values. Getting in out of the project very important but I also knew that education was important because my uncle, when he heard me that I want those big white house and these two cars and the swimming pool, he said to me “Who do you think you are? You’re living in these projects, your dad ride a bicycle to school. I mean to work and your mother has a 4th grade education”.

My mother heard him said that and he never said that to me again. A matter of fact that particular guy avoided me the rest of the time. He saw me coming here but I don’t know what my mother said to him. I knew based on that and based on what I’ve heard my mother and father talked about the education was very important. When I got in high school, even though I’m making decent grades, my priority was all wrong and I said I must go to college and so I reordered my priorities and put education first. I did get out of high school decently with good grades and then I went to college.

Then I went to college I realize that oops, I don’t know how to study and because I was from Charleston a lot of people didn’t understand me. We have accent on there and a language called Geechee and we live out the helping verb. Where you going rather than where are you going. Coming here with the terminology and I didn’t realize that I had this bad accent, not only that, I didn’t speak good English although I could write good English, I didn’t speak very good English. People would tease me, they would call me Geechee boy. I was really embarrassed one day when we were in a cafeteria and I leaned over and said “Would you pass the con flakes?”

One of the guy in the table says “Wally say that again”. I said “Pass the con flakes”, and the guy says “See this thing says C-O-R-N, not C-O-N”. He’s eager to speak English. I was so embarrassed that I spent an awful lot of time making sure that I spoke at English not just what came to mind, what came to my mouth, and I grew up for around people who spoke that way and so it wasn’t different. When I got to college I had to learn how to speak good English and I had to learn how to study but a lesson learned here. I didn’t stop when I realize that I spoke poor English, I corrected that.

I didn’t say that “Well, that’s too bad. I’m from Charleston”. It just so happen that President Kennedy was on the scene and he had a heavy accent. He spoke in English but he had a good accent so I didn’t worry about the accent as much as I worried about being able to speak good language. I took, the lesson learn is don’t give up. Correct mistakes when you see them and I corrected that mistake. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. I couldn’t study, I didn’t know how to study, I asked my roommate, he says, “They taught us how to study but you need to go to the library and they have some study aids up there”.

I went to the library and told the librarian and one of the librarian said “I need somebody to help to study” and she directed me to somebody and that person taught me how to study. I started studying and I was determining to get out of school in four years. While I was there I took this thing called reserve officer training Corpss better known as ROTC and I graduated as a second lieutenant. I was commissioned in the Medical Service Corps in 1961. Believe it or not when my priorities changed to insure that I had education as my number one priority, I finished college in four years.

I went in to the military, lessons learn. I was asked, I went and found me a mentor. An individual who had graduated from college two years ahead of me and he would happen to be a fraternity brother. I said “I want to be best officer around. How do I get to do that?” He says “Well, first thing you need to do is go to Airborne school”, and I just said “Airborne school, what is that?” He says “You’re going to jump on an airplane?” I said “What is that airplane going to be? I hope not flying. He says “It’s going to be flying at about 1,200 feet and you’re going to jump with a parachute”. I said “Are there any alternatives?” He says “You said you’ll want to be the best, that will make you the best”.

Believe it or not I had to go overcome my fears, I went into Airborne. Then the second thing he said to me was “You need to get a masters degree”, and I go golly when I left college I thought that was it. I didn’t think I’d ever have to go back to school again. Was in a year I’ve graduated from college I took a course working toward my master’s degree and I was in Airborne. I didn’t want to do those things but if I was going to succeed, I did that. Let me tell you, two years that I was in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, except the stage for me for the entire 27 years that I was in the military, they had very very high standards.

For instance if it took four people to move a weapon around, they insisted that it will only take three Airborne people. If there was for to take the hill within 2 hours, they will say “Well I’ll be up there in an hour and a half. I’ll be up there in an hour and 15 minutes”. Everything exceeded the requirements, those are the standards that I learned in the 82nd Airborne Division. My next assignment was in the 8th Division in Germany and because of those high standards, my battalion command that made me a [community 00:08:57] command I was the lowest ranking guy there. Those standards put me heads and shoulders above the people in that particular division that I was in and I was in the medical battalion.

Those standards trying to get, the first but the most is started out as a second lieutenant in the 82nd. I had to overcome that fear of jumping out of aircraft while it was a [inaudible 00:09:18] aircraft while it was in flight. I’ve spent some good times in the military, I went to Vietnam and I spent there in Vietnam. While I was in Vietnam my responsibility was doing the buildup in the 7, 68 time period was when the president and the commanders decided that we’re going to have another major unit come over. Let’s say a division which is about 15,000 men and women but mostly men doing that time period.

My job was to determine what kind of medical support is required to support that division. Now you would say “You need to a hospital, you need this”. Let me tell you what kind of medical support would be required to support a division in combat no matter where that division is deployed and then in employed. Sure you need a hospital, you need a surgical hospital, a combat type hospital that’s very close to the line. Yeah, and also in that area you have teeth so you need the dentist. You need to get the food inspected, who inspects the food in the military? Would you believe the veterinarians inspect the foods?

Show me a combat zone, I’ll show you dogs and cats and animals and I’ll show you men who adopted these cats and dogs as pets. The veterinarians take care of them. Preventive medicine, we’re in an area where there’s a lot of malaria. How do you protect the troops against malaria, so we have to have preventive medicine organization so there’s a variety of healthcare organization that support that 1,500 division plus its tails so to speak all the support behind it. That was my job in Vietnam and I love the job. I just loved it because we would have exercise, what if we put two divisions over here, what if we put five divisions over here? What if we put one division? What if we put half division?

My job during that period was to insure that we had the right medical support. Now that sounds like a easy job. It wasn’t easy in a way. You see if the division requires 1,500 and they want to go bring over 2,200 troops, well the medic is going to need some spaces. The transportation is going to need some spaces, the quarter master who brings the food in going to need some spaces, the maintenance, the finance who gives the pay, all these people are going to be required to be a part of that other 7,000 so you compete for them because you’re not going to get everything you want.

Some commanders going to make their decision that we’re going to take two of these, three of these, none of these and none of these and so you want to make sure you got the best support. In Vietnam it was really great because our job in Vietnam as medics is that we wanted to put hospitals strategically around Vietnam so that the soldiers if they would be get hit with a round, got shot, they would be no more than half hour from a medical facility by helicopter. That was our job to try to get them to the hospital as fast as possible, as you well know in the medical field, the sooner the better.

Once you get a patient in the hands of the doctors, treating him the better chance to survive and we had a tremendous survival rate in Vietnam. Well after Vietnam I went down [inaudible 00:12:44] Academy at Health Sciences and then I went to school early. I was supposed to go to, they have a school called Commander Jones Staff College that normally go from, when you have eight years in the service to 12 years in the service and I had seven years in the service and my council asked me “Where do you want to go from here?” I said “I want to go to Commander Jones Staff College”, he said “Well you got about three or four more years to go there”. I said “Well, you asked me where I want to go and that’s where I want to go”.

Believe it or not my first year of eligibility, I went to Command and General Staff College. Now remember here is the guy who got in a high school with the priorities, football, basketball, truck, education with the last had to re-author those priorities. Education wasn’t my best bet, when I got to college, I told you that I have to learn how to study. Well, I learn how to study and when I learned how to study, work became easier. Education wasn’t at sure for me so when I got to command a general staff college they said that “We have a new program that if you finish in the top 5% of your class, you can go get a masters degree in anything that you want”.

I go “Wow, I want to be in the top 5%” and I got in at top 5% and I was sent for a masters degree immediately at the commander out of staff college. Then my boss called me while I was in the graduate school and he says, he was my boss in Vietnam. He says “Son, I want you to come to the Pentagon”, I said “Sir, I have five kids, one on the way. I couldn’t make it in Washington DC. I don’t have that kind of money that pay for the houses in the Washington DC, I’d rather go to Korea” and he said “Okay son”. He hung the phone up and I talk to my wife and my says “You know him, he would probably sent you to Korea” so I called him back and said “Where am I going when I live graduate school?”

He says “You want to go Korea”, I said “Okay, I’m on my way to Pentagon”. Believe it or not I stayed in the Pentagon from 1972 until 1988 except for one tour and a command of a medical battalion in Korea and I had another in the arm forces, the national walk college at the industrial college of the arm forces. My kids, I have six kids, five of them graduated from the same high school so that’s pretty good for a military because usually you have five kids, six kids and they all graduate from different schools. I was in the Pentagon, while I was in the Pentagon for 17 plus years, I had about 16 different jobs. I just kept moving up to line.

I would say if there’s any one thing in the Pentagon that helped me out was, at one time there was some consideration doing in Nixon administration that is, maybe we should look at in cutting down healthcare. Use some of the military hospitals to help with healthcare and the civilian community. I was in forced develop in the same job that I had in Vietnam and I did study and rather than say we need five hospitals or 25 hospitals of this type and 30 hospitals of this type of so many [avail 00:15:59] on units.

I decided to break it down in terms of how many neurosurgeons, how many orthopedic surgeons and where they would come from because they would come from the reserves and reserves are the people who are providing care to our citizenry in the United States. When I did that study I went to my boss and said “Sir, I got a little different tactic on how we should approach this because if they want to use our facility we will be using, and these are the same people that’s going to have to go to war we’re going to be using the same people twice, I counted them twice”.

He says “Wally, you take care of it”, I say “Sir, can I go to the next higher level boss because we are going to be talking with members of OMB, the office of management and budget, the old HEW, health education and welfare and the secretary of defense, assistant secretary of defense I said “I need a little cushion here”, so I went to the next higher boss, he says “Wally, don’t worry buddy. Now I’m going to brief these high ranking people, I was a young major, just I graduate school and I’m briefing and I’m saying “Boys, you’ll hope this thing is, I’m not saying the wrong thing”.

Anyway after the briefing I went back down to my office. I was in a sort of a cage, it was a highly classified where we worked and we get all kinds of people coming through there but we never had a general because a bunch of, we had a think tank back then, a bunch of young majors. All of a sudden we heard tench-hut everybody was jumping up and I says “Why are they doing that? Ain’t nobody of any rank I’m becoming, I’m not going to jump of some colonel because they’re coming back here” so I just keep on sitting down. Somebody says “Wally, look around”, and I looked around there was three stars looking at me and he said “Wally, that briefing you just gave”, he says “What do you think about it?”

 He says “Can you back that up?” I said “Yes sir”. He say “You may have just saved all the medical departments of the military”, and believe it or not from there that once I was there when I made two stars and he wanted me to come work for him, another one star came in, he made two star, he wanted me to work for him, the two stars made three stars if I wanted to work for him and that’s how I got my stayed in the Pentagon essentially in the army office of the surgeon general for almost 17 years except for the two years that I left. Anyway, all of the sudden I’m a not a chief of staff of the army surgeon general’s office and believe it or not this is very interesting.

I was going to retire but my boss in Korea insisted that I stay on active duty and I’ve told him I said “I already have a job with the America Hospital Association. He said “Think about it for a couple of months and come back to me”. I said “Sir, I already got a job, it’s a nice paying job, he said but I said “I’ll think about it for two months”. He came back two months later, put his arms around me and he said “Well, just stay for a friend?” He was the surgeon general. I said “You not hear the guy. I said a friend without a friend now” so I stayed on active duty. Then now the chief of the Medical Service Corps, he was a one star general.

5,000 officers working and this one general. Our corps is most diversified corps in the army. We have three types of people in the medical service corps. We have theaters such as social worker, side colleges, optometrist, podiatrist then we have all other scientist, virologist, immunologist, biochemist. Then we have all the operators, all the aromatically in fact helicopter pilots, all the administrators who run the hospital all alone those stations, information text knowledge in people. Three major different categories, one general for 5,000 officers. This one general was moved up to the secretary of defense’s office and left the person who’s going to replace him as a full colonel.

There are 254 colonels out of the 5,000 officers. Normally the person who got promoted to the general officer was one of the top five people, they had about 28, 29 years service. I had 173, I was numbers 173 on the list of 250 so I didn’t worry about it. Surgeon general who asked me to work for him, he then retired, new surgeon general comes in. Comes to my office after the board and says promotion board for chief of the medical service call and he says “Guess who’s going to be the new chief”.

I said “I’ll tell you something, that full colonel who is going to be the chief, those other 10 or 12 full colonels who are competing, they’re going to make sure his life is miserable so he’ll never get promoted to general”. When his time comes for general it would be dead on arrival. He said “Name the people who will be the next general”, I name the number one guy and then number two, number three, number four and number five, it’s just no … I said “I can’t help you”. I said “I can’t think of who it is but whoever it is, is dead on arrival, DOA. He’s never going to make general.” He says “You”, I said “It can’t be me, I’m 173”. I said “I just made colonel last year.

He said “No, it’s you”. I said “Why you’re going to disrespect with all the secretary,” everybody’s not laughing, like he’s really messing with your head. He said “No, no”. He went in the office, came back and showed me the paper and said “Hey, you got promoted”. Anyway I got promoted to chief of the Medical Service Corps and then eventually within the next year I got the one star. I was the first African American, first and the youngest ever to held this position as chief of the Medical Service Corps.

I was happy with that. The surgeon general comes along and he says “I’m going to give you a second job”. I said “What is that?” You’re going to be director of healthcare operation in addition to being chief of the Medical Service Corps. As director of healthcare, the worldwide healthcare operations I was the first African American, the youngest the first none physician to hold that job and the first to hold two jobs simultaneously in the surgeon general’s office.

That’s my career. Now, I’m a young colonel, I have another about six years ago before I get out of the military and as the highest I can go I can’t get the two stars, what am I going to do? I clearly knew that I was going to retired after my third year as a general. I wasn’t going to wait around, I know I couldn’t make a two stars because we’re maxed out at one star at a time. I decided that I’m going to retire after three years in the military and I took a job as director of health of the American Hospital Association in Dallas. We had nine regions, I was a regional director in region seven in Dallas that took in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana.

When I got to the job, I asked the person who is the number two guy, I said “What do you do here?” Here says “Well, we go to meetings with the hospital associations at the state level, at the metro levels and we, if anybody wants information on what’s going on in policy wise in the hospital we tell them what’s going on”. Well, I knew what was the job, I said “What about membership?” They said “That’s why you would a member to call us”. I said “How do you get to … To go the Houston hospital association? Oh, we fly. I said “When we go to Louisiana, to New Orleans, how do we get there? Oh, we fly come back the same day”.

I said “Okay folks let me tell you what the new job is. The new job is when we go to Houston, we’re going to take the Houston route to get there and we’re going to visit every hospital between in there and then when we come back we’re going to visit, the Westernhood we’re going to visit every hospital”. Well you don’t really mean visit all hospital, only American Hospital Association hospitals. I said “No, we’re going to visit every hospital, whether in memo or not and we’re going to tell them the advantages of being for the non members are being, are part of the American Hospital Association”.

We got more new members in 18 months and one region that they had in other eight regions combined for the last six years or so. When I took the job they asked me if I wanted to be one of the vice president, they had a vice president job opened, I don’t think that was a good fit for me. It’s one of those wrong picks in the square whole and I want to get out of the headquarters, I want to go to the field where I can, I don’t want people to say “Well, this general need a lot of people around them in order to survive. He’s not going to work, he’s got a retirement fee”. As a semi to the field, I’m going to assure I’m going work.

I said “With that two jobs there I can do, I want the senior vice president job in operation and you had an executive vice president job”. I said “I want you to look at me and when I earn that position those jobs become available consider me”. 18 months later I got a call from the president. He said “Do you remember you had told me about the senior vice president job? I said “Yeah”, she says “Do you want it?” and I says “Oh, I said I got a cavy eye”. She said “What do you mean?” I said “I looked at the salaries that you gave everybody around me and all but the other hospital administrators are making in my region and you got me for nothing”.

I says “I’m a military person I don’t know what salaries are.” I thought it was a great salary but I realize that that wasn’t the kind of money all my colleagues are making. I said “For me to come up to you to be that senior vice president, you’re going to have to double my salary”. The comment was “Can you be up here on Monday?” Obviously I should have said “Can you triple my salary?” but anyway I jumped over five vice presidents became a senior vice president. Stayed in the job for a couple of years and got a little antsy and told him I wasn’t going to leave. I just always complained when I was in the executive committee meetings, I said there are no females here.

Nothing about white males and I know minorities accept me. A matter of fact the joke was “Here comes Wally, we have some diversity, let’s get started”. When I said I wanted to retire the president convince me that I should form a foundation for the American Hospital Association for the college of healthcare executives and for the national association to help minorities and woman get executive positions in hospitals. I form that organization 15 years ago or so, actually 16 years ago and I stayed in that job for two years. I was living in Atlanta. A matter of fact he told me when I retire, when I told him I want to retire he said “You run the job out of Georgetown where you live”.

I became so successful, I had to get to a big city so I move to Atlanta. I really got about that real fast and at the right old age of 56 I decided that I want to be an entrepreneur, 56 years old. I didn’t know anything about, I knew management, I knew a little business. I had a lot of experience, a lot of education but I wasn’t a business person. Prior to the start a company I realize “Hey, you know you can’t write right business plan”. I went on the internet, I went up to local university and ask for help and I got a business plan finally put emplace. Once I got the business plan emplace I realize I had two specs against me.

One, I didn’t have enough capital and two I didn’t have enough, I didn’t have good credit. Two big specs, no capital, very little capital, not a lot of money. My wife and I talked about it, do you really believe? I really believe, that’s hack the house. We had a house in Atlanta, we sold it. A house in South Carolina, we hacked in. My parents left me house in Charleston, hack that. Still needed money, got this third mortgage on the house in Georgetown. I had a little yacht, I said if we are successful we can big yacht, sold the yacht. I believed that I can make it or we can make it because it’s a team effort. The company is rolling, we’re doing marvelously, making good money and I’m a big goal setter.

I mean one of another lessons learn, a teaching point, it is set solid goals and objectives, achievable goals and objectives and put a plan emplace to achieve those goals and objectives and our first goal was to get a million dollars in revenue and when we go closer to million dollars, I said “The new goal is $2 million” and then we got now $2 million and new goal was $4 million and I realize that the culture had taken when we got the contract we had $16 million. No we had, yeah we had $16 million, $15 million in contracts and the contracts, we just had gotten the contract that got us to the $15 but they increase the number of that contract by 700,000 that put us over to 16,000 so we had reach at $16 million goal.

My business manager came to me and he said “So, guess what, we reached our goal of $16 million”, I said “You know what that means”, he said “Yeah, the new goal is $32 million”, I said to myself “They understand”. We are going to be never be satisfy. We’re going go as far as it’s going to take us and we’re kept on rolling. Then we are call the train as a subcontractor to establish train equip an army in United Arab of Emirates. Great country, that was the big ticket, that was the lotto. That was the 14 year contract, big money. When we started Eagle Group, I said it will become Eagle Group International because I believe then and I said “We’re going to be an international company”.

I said “This is the international in Eagle Group International”. We got the contract and the person who was the contractor, would say to me “We were paying on quarterly basis … He say “Well, he says you know I’m new at this and can I give you a $2 million on the $3 million that I owe you” and I said “No sweat, this is long term contract” and the next quarter he would say “Can I give you $3 million on a $4 million I owe you” then “Can I give you $2 million on the $6 million that I owe you?” Finally my son who handles finance came to me said “Dad, we are $10 million in a hold and we’re about to go bankrupt”, and I go “Oops”. Seriously he says “We’re in the verge of bankrupt, we cannot hold $10 million of credit. We just don’t, we can’t do it”.

I travel over to United Arab of Emirates. I’m walking, I’m negotiating but they were paying the contract in advance, the contract that was the one who was an American wasn’t paying me. They were paying on time and it was clear that I was fighting a losing baler because it wasn’t them who weren’t paying, it was a primary contractor who live here in the United States. I’m walking along and I’ve got this, come on in the Apple, God come on in Apples and looked at the TV, the second plane flew into the world tower, trade center. I was over there on 9/11. Stayed over there for another month, came back to the company, we were sucking a lot of wine, we had a $10 million bogging, lots of problems going on all over the place.

I said “We got to go back to basics” so I said “I don’t want anybody in this room for the next three or four months”, that’s all we’re talking about was the contract, contract. I said “That spill me up, I don’t want to hear it anymore”, I said so that stop from now on in my meetings I don’t want to hear anything about the contract, the middle east contract. I said “Let’s go to the first thing on the agenda, the middle east contract”. Everybody is laughing at me, I said “Okay, we scratch that and we keep on going”. We hear all kinds of rumors that we may be paid or whatever and so we got a call from the embassy. We want to talk with you, so we went to the embassy, gorgeous place.

On the other side of the table it was UAE lawyer, an English lawyer and several accountants and other executives from the UAE and on my side of the table it was me and one of my son, I have two lawyers sons. Lawyer [inaudible 00:32:47] his son who handled the finance, he didn’t come with the other lawyer son came and he sat next to me and we are talking. I’m explaining that I had a very successful company that I let him know, I said, “I started out on welfare so to speak and I made it against all odds,” and I said “I have family company”. I said 24 different kinds of members, a family company, we grew Eagle Group, we wanted to family group.

I encourage people, I didn’t believe in nepotism because you see if you hired your son to come for me, that son is going to be work very good because you’re not going to hire a son that’s going to embarrass you or daughter is going to embarrass so I encourage everybody hire cousins and uncles in staff. We had a lot of family members so we’re not going to explain how I came from nothing almost and I made it against all odds and we’re doing real well and this contract is causing to retire as a loser. My son next to me put his head down and started shaking. I thought he was crying so I started crying and the UAE of lawyer got jumped up, don’t worry about it gentlemen, come come. He pulled me aside and said “We’re going to take care of you”.

He did and we signed a contract that said “I can’t tell you how much you paid me but I was satisfied. I was a happy camper”. Now we got Eagle Group rolling, we’re doing extremely well. A matter of fact I’ve turned the company over to my two lawyer sons and one was the MBA Georgetown, the other one was a lawyer out in Kentucky. They’re running the company, I’m back home, feeling good and happy because we’re back on track. We got everybody back rolling along and then the presidential camp being starting and this senator from Illinois called Barrack Obama said if I became president, I’m going to cut defense contracting.

This is all reaction to [inaudible 00:34:33]. Two months later the other candidate McCain says that “If I become a president, I’m going to cut defense contracting”, that’s when I’ve told my sons, we need an exit strategy and we’ve thought of looking for suitors to buy the company. The company was bought, we grew the company to a $150 million on revenue so we had the company for only 12 years. Sold it to Lockheed Martin, one of the world largest contracting companies, defense contracting companies.

I’m in Charleston, I’m in Georgetown South Carolina, I’m retired. I’m on about a very little bit for 12 to 14 boards back in forth, medical university, the hospital board, Brookgreen Garden and both the cultural center. I give back a lot to the community because you’ll see I have this thought very early on that success is incomplete unless you’re sharing that success with others and I teach my kids that. Since we sold that company we have given just so many charities and to people who are less fortune to us.

I mean my wife and I who’s been married for 53 years, we’ve been together for 60 or almost 60 because we dated first before we got married. We have 14 grandkids and whenever we pray at the meals we always remind everybody that is our responsibility to share God’s love and blessing with others. It is our responsibility to help those who are less fortune at the West and about six to seven years ago it played back to me wonderfully. Yes, when I was a kid I got the things that I was going get many than in Christmas holidays.

My dad believed in Christmas and I was a little materialistic because I wanted good things for Christmas and my dad give me a bike, give me skates or whatever, those kinds of things so Christmas is a big deal. I’m talking to one of my granddaughters and I said “What are you getting for Christmas?” It’s about two days before Christmas. She says “I don’t know”. I said “Didn’t you send a list to Santa Clause?” She says “Well, not really”, and she said “But you know what we picked out two families and we’re going to give them a bike, we’re going to give them skates, we’re going to give them clothes”, and the tears are coming to my eyes because I knew that they got it.

They understood that the most important thing is sharing and giving to others. I said “If it got through this kid, it got to the older kids to the adults”. We do a lot of charity work right now, we are giving back to the community as best we can and sharing God’s blessing with others.

Speaker 2: Tell us about the yacht.

Walter: Well when we saw the yacht, have you recalled I said that I had a little 39 foot yacht and I says “If we make it big, we can get a 45 foot yacht, a 60 foot yacht. Well we got a 120 yacht and we traded it down to 75 and after the inauguration we went to Washington DC and went to the Bahamas for a week and we realize that on a 120 foot yacht we had a chef and on a 75 foot yacht we didn’t have room for chef and my wife cook for six people plus a crew for a month while we were in the Bahamas and it was clear to me that that was, she was not a happy captain even though she never complain and so we ended up getting another yacht, a 160 foot yacht which we have now witch a room for a chef. Five state rooms.

Speaker 2: What else you’re up to?

Walter: Well, I’m on a lot of charitable boards. I give back, a matter of fact my wife always told me when I was on active duty and even when I was retired with the American Hospital Association and when I had my company, she said “You know no moderation”. She said “You were workaholic, you’re an admitted workaholic, you work 12 to 14 hours a day, always working. You need to cool down and don’t take on so much”. Well, when I got to Georgetown, when I retired I said “I’ll work, give back to the community”, I work in a couple boards and what happens is when people find out that you are willing to give back, they asked you to sit in their boards.

 I’m on the West doing a state board, foundation board, I’m on Allen University board, the governor appointed me to the South Carolina State University board which I have gotten I have since resigned from that board then like what was going on, on Brookgreen Garden board I am chairman of the local AMI kids board that help the linguine kids go to an alternative school to get back in the community. We’re trying to rebuild a facility in South Carolina. There are no facilities for girls right now. The boys get a second change, the girls do not so we’re going to rebuild a facility for girls and because of that they asked me to sit on the national board.

 Then it turned around to me last year and said “Would you chair the foundation board and by the way we only have $30,000 in a foundation and we really need to raise it to $25 million”. I go, “You’re not asking me to do much to you”. You can see I sit on a lot of boards and I enjoyed but as it’s getting to be too much. Right now I am in meetings at least three or not four times a week in various places in the United States and then not boards where I get money. Most of those boards required me to give them money. Well, the trusting a lot in the power of prayers one, and then the education is two and then the third is the hard work and when you think you’re working to you need to work some more.

Speaker 2: The gentleman that was like brother two years ahead of you, who is that?

Walter: It’s Sergio Hawkins.

Speaker 2: What happens to Sergio Hawkins?

Walter: Sergio, when we were together in Germany and I never saw him afterwards. I think he retired as a lieutenant colonel. By the way he didn’t go to airborne school but he said “You asked me and I told you”.

Speaker 2: I guess with all this, is there anything that you didn’t get a chance to do? As busy as you are, is there anything you didn’t get a chance to do?

Walter: I think it’s extremely important that, well I am workaholic my wife took care the kids, took care the family and not only that she take care the kids while I was working in the Pentagon and all over the place and going to the field and the rest of that. She took care of it a year for herself while I was in Vietnam and then when we had four teenagers and I’m in Korea. It’s very important that I give my wife, offer a lot of credit for holding the fourth dawn and she’s been my partner like I said almost 60 years.

Even though I worked hard, my boys knew and my girls knew that on Saturdays I was theirs because I didn’t bring any work home unless I have to because I got there 6:00 in the morning and left at 7:00, 8:00 at night. I did all my work in the office, I didn’t bring any work at home so on Saturdays they knew that dad was going to be there for their soccer, for their football, for their basketball, for their cheerleading and I use to tell them on Saturday morning I put my little cap on, I say “This is my taxi gab cap, okay”. I became the commissioner of the football leagues, I go get the field marks off and I took my first kid to football and I come back doing the half and take a kid to another one and pick another one up.

I mean the only game I would say at the end of the day was the last game of the day when I got all the cheerleaders and all the football players together and we went back but the one thing I think my kids would always remember about me is that when we got through with the last game on Saturday I said “Where do you want to eat?” You always teach your kids be independent. Don’t play football because your brother plays football. If you’re a good soccer player, do what you like to do best. Don’t be a cheerleader because your sister wants to be a cheerleader, maybe you want to be in gymnastics team.

On Saturday afternoon, I said “Where do you want to go to eat? I want to go to Kentucky fried, no I want Mexican food, no I want Chinese food” and dad would take them to each one of those restaurants to pick up their food and we take it back home and I use to tell them, I said “You know what they need here? They need one big area where you can get all these restaurant in one setting”, and I said “If I had the money, I would build one” and I said “It’ll be it”, then food court came along and my kids always tell me “Dad, you invented the food court”, because I wrote a book and the book is entitled I can do that.

I talked to all in the middle schools, I have talked to all at middle schools in my area trying to inspire, encourage them to do well. Don’t wave away you start at the races where you finish your race. Don’t wave away your promise just way you’re going so to speak. I talked to all at middle schools and talked at all high schools, I talked to colleges, ROTC programs are run and so I talked about this. I put different spins on it, for instance when I talked to the middle school and the high school and start off by saying “I was a dreamer. I was a big dreamer that I’m going to get that white house with the two cars and I’m going to get a swimming pool in the back”.

Invariably the first question that comes at anybody’s mouth is, “General, did you ever get the white house?” and I would say “I got the white house and swimming pool”, and they would say “What about the cars?” and I said “Name a car”, and I’m not kidding you now. Invariably they’ll say, [inaudible 00:45:05] I said “I got one” said, “[inaudible 00:45:08] got one, Ferrari, got one”. They go “You’re kidding me.” “No, no I got them.” I said “Dream and make your dreams come true” but remember take God with you. Get that education and don’t be afraid to work. I said “You’ll get that, you got to set the goals on which you want out of life and go ahead and relentlessly, tenaciously”.

I enjoy the kids when I’m talking to the kids and that’s why I can relate to you the things that I do because I talk a lot about that and that’s my ministry so to speak.

