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The GeoCurmudgeon: PRODigies

I'm so old, I remember watching the 1978 Mike Douglas show where a two-year-old Tiger Woods showed Bob Hope how to drive a golf ball and putt. Say what you will about the man, Tiger grew up to be an amazing golfer, principally because his father, Earl, loved the game, introduced Tiger to it *really* early on, and thereby gave Tiger an opportunity to excel if he wanted to.

He wanted to.

Most geoprofessionals I know became so because, as children, they respected a parent, relative, or friend who loved a technical pursuit in general or a geoprofessional pursuit in particular. They evidently thought, "I'll give that a try, too." None was a geoprofessional prodigy like Tiger was a golf prodigy, because – face it – learning how to evaluate earth/structure interactions, environmental conditions, or construction quality is not something even the brightest kids can pick up by age two. As such, if you wanted to give your children a chance to excel at geoprofessional practice, you'd have to do nothing special at all: Just let your kids know how much you love doing what you do. Your kids would move forward from there, by taking the courses required to learn what the geoprofessional practice was all about.

Would they excel? That would totally be up to them. Or would it? Could you, like Earl, become an "excel-erator" and thereby give your children more of an opportunity to become not just above-average geoprofessionals, but top-rung geoprofessional leaders? Could you help them become geoprofessional leaders like George Washington, the father of our nation, or Herbert Hoover, a geoprofessional whose leadership skills took him to the U.S. presidency, too?

From all appearances, one might conclude that history is not going to repeat itself; that the geoprofessions and top-rung leadership don't mix any more. True, geoprofessionals are engaged in a variety of societal pursuits, but few seem to love leadership so much they are willing to risk a fall in pursuit of

the top rung. There's Jim Suttle, P.E., the mayor of Omaha, NE, and Tim Leavitt, P.E., the mayor of Vancouver, WA. And that's it. How many people are there on the pro golf circuit, do you suppose, all willing to accept bitter losses as the price they must pay for just one sweet victory?

So here's this radical thought: Because geoprofessionals who love what they do realize it's unnecessary to push their kids into the geoprofessions – that will happen all by itself – how about pushing them into community leadership to create more top-rung geoprofessional leaders who could do our nation proud? For that to happen, geoprofessional parents will have to encourage their kids early on to be outgoing with others; to speak in public, first in front of the family, and later in front of a classroom.

How about helping them experience the satisfaction derived from helping others, by chopping carrots at a food bank or assembling a group to raise money for one worthwhile cause or another? Maybe you could also reward your kids for reading, for asking questions, for taking an interest in what others have to say, and for having their hand in the air before the teacher ends

the question, "Who'd be willing to...?" Run for class president? Absolutely!

True, there's more to leadership than that, but, fortunately, you wouldn't have to do that much special to instruct them about the most important leadership attributes of all. The importance of honesty and hard work are lessons most geoprofessionals I know teach by example every day.

How could you not want to enhance the possibility that their kids could one day become geoprofessionals who also were leaders of a city, state, or nation, realizing that – if that dream didn't pan out – the instruction would still be of supreme value? Just think what could happen were you to



take the same kind of initiative Earl Woods did. You'd help create a whole generation of geoprofessional leaders coming of age in 2050.

How about pushing them (kids) into community leadership to create more top-rung geoprofessional leaders who could do our nation proud?

Of course, to really make leadership guidance pay off, you'd have to demonstrate it yourself and show your kids how you love leadership, too. Don't roll your eyes! It actually wouldn't be that difficult, because you already possess most of what it takes, like integrity, love of nation, community concern, and the ability – and genuine desire – to solve problems. You could apply that, learn more, and in just five or ten years become a top-rung leader on your own. Please give it some thought. Because I can't wait for your kids.

Like I said, I'm old.

AUTHOR

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