

# commentary

from our viewpoint...

## By all our standards Jeff Vignery is a hero

Jeff Vignery says he is no hero. Maybe he's right. He says he's just an ordinary guy. He was smart enough to do well in school, make it through Navy officer training and pilot's school, but thousands of men and women have done that. He wound up in the wrong place at the wrong time, thrusting him into international attention he was little prepared for. That's happened to more than a few people, though most of us are able to live our whole lives out of the limelight.

What makes a hero, anyway? Prowess in athletics? We pay football players, basketball players, baseball players exorbitant sums to entertain us. The best of them are fantastic performers, tremendous competitors, guys like John Elway or Larry Walker.

But in the end, it's just a game. The players go home and live lives much like the rest of us, if you don't count all the money. Some of them aren't very good role models.

Great presidents? World leaders? History suggests leaders are shaped as much by the burdens of office as much as anything. We account Harry Truman as a great president today, but he was an accidental chief, a compromise candidate chosen as vice president because he was bland and non-controversial.

He accepted the challenge of the times, acquitted himself well and steered the country through the end of one war and into the next. He may not have been a great leader when he was sworn in — there is no evidence of that in the historical record — but he became one.

And maybe that is all we can ask. Other great presidents are remembered because they served at critical times in the nation's history — Lincoln during the Civil War, Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and World War II. Often these men were wracked by self-doubt and worry. But they came through in their hour of crisis.

Then there is the police officer who rescues an accident victim, the fireman who pulls a someone from a blazing building. They are trained to do that, yes, but few actually ever get the chance. It is the ones who happen to be in the right place at the right time to save a life or prevent a disaster we call heroes.

Lots of heroes wind up dead: The soldiers who didn't come home, the cops and firemen who died in the line of duty. If they could, most would tell you they were just ordinary guys, doing a job and trying to make it through the day.

Sometimes ordinary people become heroes when thrust into an emergency. They save a drowning child, run down a thief or save the day for someone. They get their picture in the paper, maybe a medal from the city council. Ordinary people can be heroes. Lots of them are.

Lt. j.g. Vignery and his wife Julie were charming in their spirit and modesty Saturday when they accepted the welcome and praise offered by his hometown. Jeff said facing death had made him appreciate life all the more.

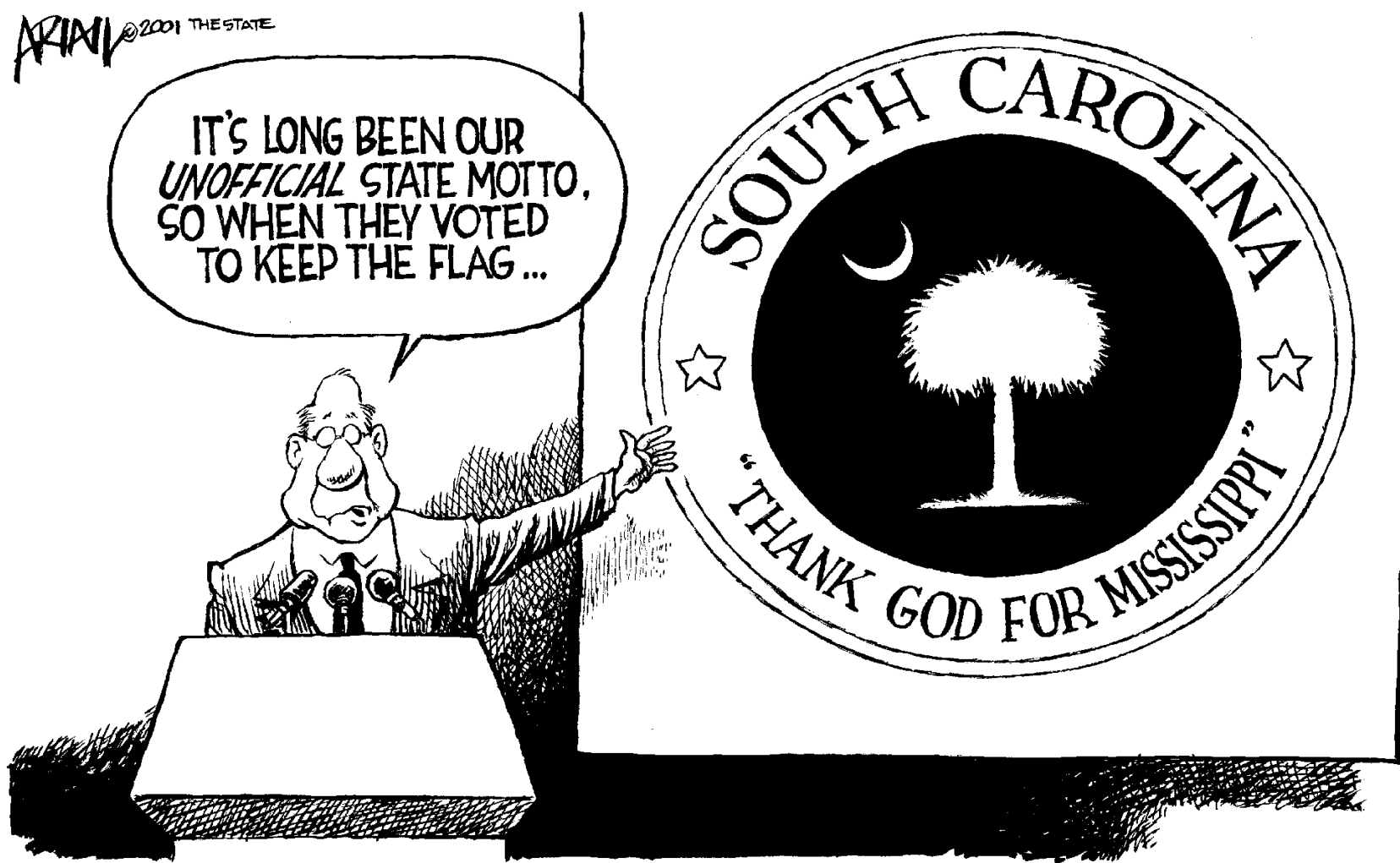
"Don't let a day go by that you can't tell someone that you love them," he said. You never know... you might not have that chance again. He paused. "I'll hug everyone here."

What is Jeff Vignery, but an ordinary guy, like he said, one who had the good fortune to grow up in a strong family in a town full of good people, steeped in western Kansas values of hard work, friendship and good will.

A guy who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, but one who acquitted himself with intelligence, valor and integrity. And yes, modesty. A guy who went way beyond the call of duty.

We liked the way Rep. Jerry Moran put it: "No matter what he says, he's a hero."

Amen to that brother. Amen. — Steve Haynes



## It was great day for Jeff, friends and the Navy

The program may have been a bit longer than expected, but the hundreds of Goodland citizens who showed up to welcome home Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery didn't seem to mind.

Their hero accommodated them by shaking hands, signing autographs and hugging many who came forward to give their personal touch.

Asked if this would bring the events of the past month to a close, Jeff's father Ron said, "Yes, I think it gives us all a chance to cheer him and let him know how much we care. I expect us all to go back to normal and get about our business after this."

"I know Jeff is anxious to get back to his job, and get on with his career."

May is a banner month for Jeff. Not only has he been honored by his state and his hometown, but his wedding anniversary is later in the month and he is due for promotion to full lieutenant near the end of the month.

The salutes and talk of being a hero continue to roll off of the young Navy pilot, who insists he was just doing his job when circumstances and a Chinese fighter changed the tune.

He speaks very calmly about the events of that harrowing day and how he and Lt. Shane Osborn suddenly found themselves in a "somewhat inverted" position after Jeff watched the Chinese fighter clip the propeller on the inside left engine



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of their P3 Orion reconnaissance plane over the China Sea on April 1.

Once the word got out about the collision and the forced landing on Hanin Island, the media descended on Goodland and the Vignery family with all the aplomb of a tornado. Ron and Judi handled it well, and set a very good example for their son, family, community and state.

There was plenty of media present Saturday, and both KLOE radio from Goodland and KSN television broadcast the entire ceremony. There were also cameras from KAKE, KSNK and KBSL of Goodland.

There were reporters from Hays, Salina, Wichita and the Associated Press office in Topeka, plus of course KLOE, KGCR and *The Goodland Daily News*.

Once the audience had their chance to shake Jeff's hand or get a hug or autograph, he climbed the stairs to face a bank of television cameras and reporters questions both about the collision and the detention and the events since he has returned to

the United States.

"It was amazing," he said. "I was overwhelmed by the number of people who were here today. It is always good to come home."

Asked if he liked the Navy and would make it a career Jeff said, "I cannot say enough good about the Navy and how they have treated me and my family. I have been very happy in the Navy and like it."

His wife Julie also had high praise for the Navy and the way she and other family members of the crew were kept informed as the days wore on.

"We bonded together," she said, "and were in contact with someone from the squadron on a daily basis about what was happening."

Jeff dodged questions concerning specifics of the security procedures and what done about all the high security equipment on the surveillance plane.

"We had a check list for all that," he said, "and we completed the check list."

He also dodged some of the questions about details of the mission or whether there had been encounters with Chinese fighters on any of his other flights.

He told his father that since returning from China, he has shaken the hand of seven admirals, when in his four years in the service he had met not one.

It was a great day for Jeff and the Vignery family, for the people of Goodland, for honoring all veterans and for the United States Navy.

## Looking for motivation? Open the books

This column is not focused on your own motivation. Instead, it's directed at small-business owners who struggle with keeping associates inspired and motivated.

I've worked with more than 2,000 business owners, and typically, they guard their personal information closely. They feel that they are the only ones who need access to the books. They often do this for one of two reasons: 1) they don't want others to know how "much" they make, or 2) they don't want others to know how "little" they earn.

Usually, this results in employees assuming their boss is making a ton of money, and therefore they make no attempt to find ways to improve the business or eliminate waste. And, because they have no sense of ownership and can't see how their effort — or lack thereof — affects anything that happens in the business, they do only that which is demanded of them.

The owner, who has access to good management information, can't understand why the employees don't show more motivation in helping the business prosper. The employees, who know nothing about the operations, can't understand why the boss is always in a stew about something.

### The open-book solution

Some savvy business owners have found that they can accomplish a great deal more if their employees don't think of their work as a job, but as a game. Like all games, businesses have rules. Like all games, businesses must have objectives or goals.

In tag, the goal is to tag another player. In football, it is to carry the ball across the goal line. In business, the goals may be to increase sales, grow



don taylor

• minding your own business

profits, reduce expenses or open another location.

Open-book management gives employees access to business information relevant to their goals and objectives. And, it can provide incentive to accomplish the goals.

For example, if a small business earned a net income of \$40,000 last year, the owner might challenge her employees to increase that by \$20,000 and offer to give 25 percent of the increase back to the employees as a bonus. Next year, the owner might offer to share 30 percent of all profits over \$60,000. The goal is improvement; the reward is higher earnings.

### Critical points

Here are some key concepts to making this management tool work.

- Everyone must understand the game. Every player must know the rules and understand his or her responsibilities.

- Everyone must be able to see the score board. In business, employees must have access to the information they need to determine how they're doing.

- Goals must be specific, achievable and measurable. Everyone must know what they are trying to achieve.

- Good directions are critical. Employees must

know what to do and how to do it.

- You must provide incentive. The carrot in open-book management is usually giving employees a percentage of the increase.

In this game, everyone becomes an entrepreneur. It can be a great adventure knowing that you have some control over how well your company does and your own earning power, too. It's a good strategy and might work for you.

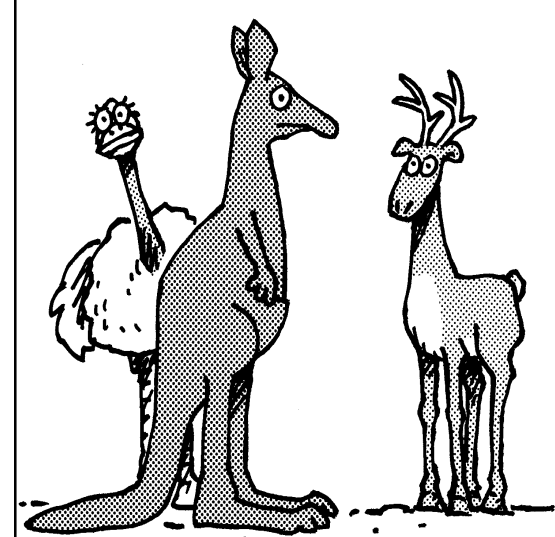
To learn more, I'd suggest these two books: *Open-Book Management* by John Case (1995, Harper Business) and *The Great Game of Business* by Jack Stack with Bo Burlington (1992, Doubleday/Currency).

If you're looking for good books to motivate yourself, I'd recommend Zig Ziglar's *See You at the Top* and its sequel *Over the Top*. You should read Dennis Waitley's *Seeds of Greatness* and Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. I'd also highly recommend, *Winning Everyday* by Lou Holtz and *The Success System that Never Fails* by W. Clement Stone.

*Don Taylor is the co-author of "Up Against the Wal-Marts." You may write to him in care of "Minding Your Own Business," PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.*

## berry's world

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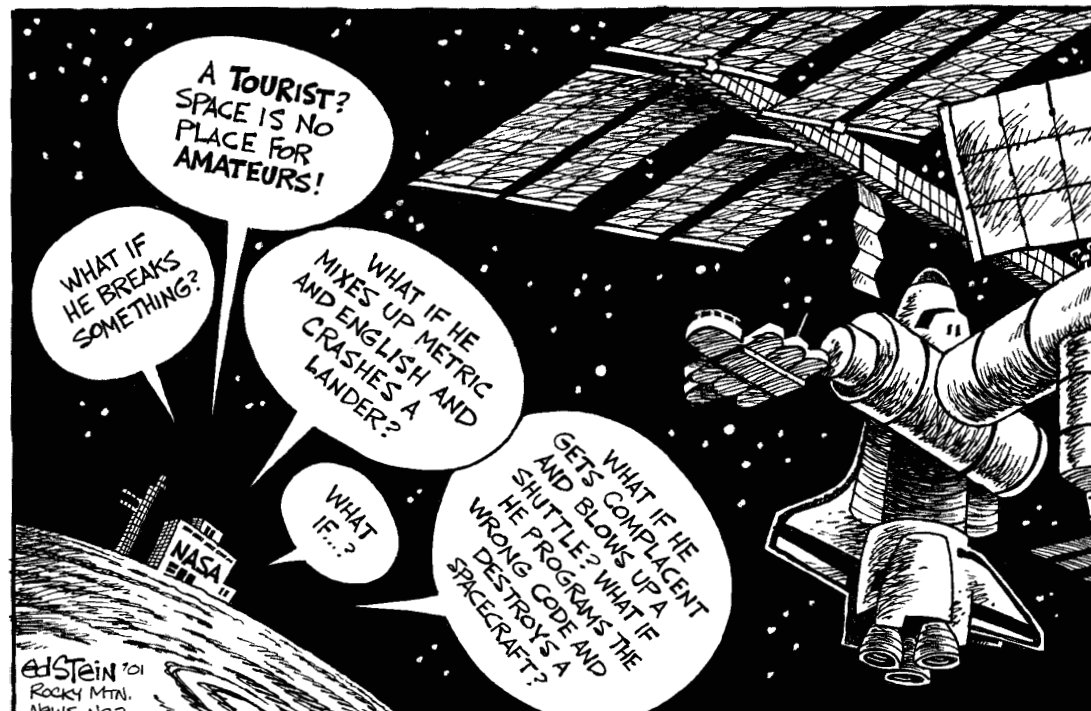
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