Gung Ho!
By Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles
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By Ken Blanchard
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Gung Ho!

Ken Blanchard / Sheldon Bowles

William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York
Dedicated to the memory of

Andrew Charles Longclaw
1940–1994

and

his beloved wife, Jean,

and son, Robert,

tragically killed

September 1965
THE GUNG HO STORY

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
   But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
   And miles to go before I sleep. 

—ROBERT FROST  
“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

I’d been set up.  
Me, Peggy Sinclair, head-office rising star!  
I should have realized it when Old Man Morris  
told me I’d been named General Manager of Walton Works #2.  

The excitement of getting my own plant blinded  
me to what must have been obvious to everyone else.  
I’d never been in operations before. Always in a staff  
position. I knew the theory all right but I’d never  
done it. I wasn’t trained or ready to run a plant. Even  
one doing well. And this one wasn’t.
I thought I’d been forgiven for the staff study I’d authored which concluded that Old Man Morris’s new strategic plan had a fatal flaw. He wasn’t happy. But he acknowledged the problem and this saved the company $1 million. I thought Walton Works #2 was my reward. It was—just not the way I had it figured.

Tuesday, September 4, 8:00 A.M., I arrived at the Walton Works #2 plant full of energy and enthusiasm. By quitting time it was clear that I’d been had. Everyone knew the plant was the worst in the system. But I had never imagined anything this bad. The plant survived only because of the antiquated way our head office cost-accounted, and that was changing. This plant was in major trouble.

Six months, a year at the most, and it would be closing. Gone! And I’d be going with it. The perfect scapegoat for Walton Works #2.

It didn’t take a genius to see why productivity was so low. The company treated the raw material piled in the yard better than it treated the workers.

As I met with my management team, only one bright spot: the 150-person department. In spite of the problems with Walton Works #2, no other department in our two-plant system was so efficient! That said, 10 percent of this plant’s workforce were gone—rest appeared to be lumps of coal stuck in Neanderthals intent on self-destruction.

Then, when I met with the Division Manager for whom the manager of the finishing area reported, I was told all wasn’t well, even there.

“You’ll want to get rid of the operators there fast,” the Division Manager advised.

“Really? Why?” I questioned. I also saw why this was my responsibility and not his, so then I was mainly interested in why the ops manager should be fired.
As I met with my management team, I found only one bright spot: the 150-person finishing department. In spite of the problems with Walton Works #2, no other department in our whole thirty-two-plant system was so efficient! That meant about 10 percent of this plant’s workforce were gems. The rest appeared to be lumps of coal managed by Neanderthals intent on self-destruction.

Then, when I met with the Division Manager to whom the manager of the finishing department reported, I was told all wasn’t well, even there.

“You’ll want to get rid of the operations manager there fast,” the Division Manager advised.

“Really? Why?” I questioned. I also wondered why this was my responsibility and not his, but right then I was mainly interested in why this operations manager should be fired.
“Andy Longclaw is bad news. Indian guy, you know. Now, I’ve nothing against Indians and this one’s a bright brave. No doubt about that. Got an MBA even. But he’s a troublemaker. Real thorn in the side. That department will be even better once he’s gone. Indians!” he added with evident distaste. His next comment was far worse.

I didn’t know if Andy Longclaw was a troublemaker or not. But I did know this Division Manager wasn’t going to last while I was around. I might be fired myself in six months, but I didn’t have to spend it in the presence of narrow-minded fools like him.

At day’s end, come 4:30, the office emptied out so quickly you’d have sworn the fire alarm had gone off. I hung around another half hour, then left myself.

There was still plenty of daylight decided to take a long walk. I started down Street. I didn’t have a destination. I was wandering and thinking. I noted the two supermarkets, two drugstores, and a small theater that I hadn’t noticed before. Inside the library. Reading the in-class notes I discovered that unlike the statues in my neighborhood, the sculptures in the town didn’t honor a famous warrior or politician, but instead an artist. Apparently, the town had been home to Andrew Payto, an American wood-carver, who had won international awards for his beauty of the carvings.

I continued to Seventh and crossed the A green field led to the river edge and sat looking across the river to where the river was grim and lifeless. A good metaphor, I thought, of what was happening inside.

I started down toward the bench didn’t have any idea of how to turn around. I knew I was a fast learner. It was positive I could think of. Trouble was, I didn’t know where to begin.
There was still plenty of daylight left, so I decided to take a long walk. I started down Main Street. I didn’t have a destination. I was just wandering and thinking. I noted the town had two supermarkets, two drugstores, and a statue in front of the town library. Reading the inscription I discovered that unlike the statues in most towns, it didn’t honor a famous warrior or long-dead politician, but instead an artist. Apparently Walton had been home to Andrew Payton, a Native American wood-carver, who had won a number of international awards for his beautiful wildlife carvings.

I continued to Seventh and crossed the bridge. A green field led to the river edge and a lone bench sat looking across the river to where the factory stood grim and lifeless. A good metaphor, I decided, for what was happening inside.

I started down toward the bench, thinking I didn’t have any idea of how to turn the factory around. I knew I was a fast learner. It was the only positive I could think of. Trouble was, I didn’t even know where to begin.