

# Brother John Wallace Isom Jr.

The U-Can! Man LLC

**This salute is located in The U-Can! Man book Return To Honor: A Soldier Story**

## **Special Salute to the U-Can! Man Coach And Mentor (CAM), Coach Carla**

She is a leader in management of one of the world's leading successful business stories, Wal-Mart. She works at the Valdosta, GA Super Wal-Mart store by Interstate 75. In September 2004, I was assigned by the Army to lead the 1<sup>st</sup> Recruiting Brigade Chaplain Recruiting Team. I was going to be the station commander once again. After you read this book, you will see what this job meant to me. My wife Karen and I hoped that I would truly get to be a leader in this position, unlike in the positions I'd held between October 1997 and February 2001 in Charleston. Karen's aunt Mary had been working at Wal-Mart, and we talked about it while I was home on vacation that June. I asked Mary what she thought the key was to successful leadership at Wal-Mart. She replied, "That's easy, they lead with you, they are in the fight with you daily. You feel like they're one of you, and they really are." I asked Mary who I could speak with to find out more, and she quickly replied, "Carla! She's in management, working at the Norman Drive Wal-Mart Super Center. Carla is the best, John, and I do mean the best!" That day I went to Wal-Mart (another love of my bride Karen's life ☺ ) and as I entered the store a woman walked up to me and smiled. I told her I was looking for Carla, the store manager, and she said, "Look no further, I'm here." I said, "WOW! That was quick." She asked how she could help me, and I told her about Mary and our conversation.

Carla smiled and said that Mary was a very nice person and an excellent team player for Wal-Mart. Then, I asked the big question. I said, "I am going to go lead and manage an Army Chaplain station. What advice do you have, from your management perspective?" Her response changed my life forever. Carla said, "First of all, come with me." She then walked from employee to employee, speaking with them and asking them how they were doing. She would stop and offer some ideas and suggestions, always with a smile on her face. If something wasn't right, she would take a few seconds to correct it, or to alert someone else. Carla spoke to the employees just as she would the customers. She said that this was her common procedure; she'd always go to the different departments to speak to the employees, or "associates" as Wal-Mart calls them. When we finally ended up at the store's front door and the greeters saw her, she asked how they were doing with that smile Mary had told me about.

Having finished her rounds, Carla said, "Hope that helps you out at your new job." "But what about my question?" I asked. "I was hoping you could give me some advice on leadership from the perspective of someone in management." Carla replied, "I thought you realized that I was answering your question. I can show you better than I can tell you. John, we call this 'Coaching By Walking Around' (CBWA). This is how we've been trained to lead. It keeps us in the KNOW and SHOW (KAS).

cell 229.588.6112  
office 229-244-5991

theucanman@yahoo.com  
www.geocities.com/theucanman



And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Ezekiel 34:26

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My advice to you, when you meet your new team, is to have this kind of attitude from day one. You will be one of the best leaders the Chaplain Recruiting Team has ever seen. I believe you can and will do it. Now, I have to go.”

“Let me guess,” I said, “you have more Coaching By Walking Around to do.” Carla smiled. “You got it. Now, remember, stay in the KAS by CBWA. Good luck, and I’ll see you next time.” I took Coach Carla’s advice, and whenever I came home I would stop by to let her know that her style of leadership was my style too now, and I am a CBWA believer.

To date, that team made our assigned mission my last 11 quarters in the Army, 33 consecutive months. We were the first Chaplain Recruiting Team to make our assigned mission by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter in 2006. I was blessed to earn the highest award in Recruiting Command, the coveted Glen E. Morrell Award. Army Chaplain Recruiting reached all kinds of new marks from 2004-2007, led by Chaplain (COL) Kenneth Beale and Chaplain Assistant Master James Peters. This success for me and our team can be traced back to that awesome day in September 2004 when Coach Carla from Wal-Mart took about 5 minutes to give life-changing advice to a customer. To this day, I still shop at that store, and whenever I see Coach Carla she is always in CBWA mode with a smile. And she is still my coach. Thank you, Coach Carla.

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