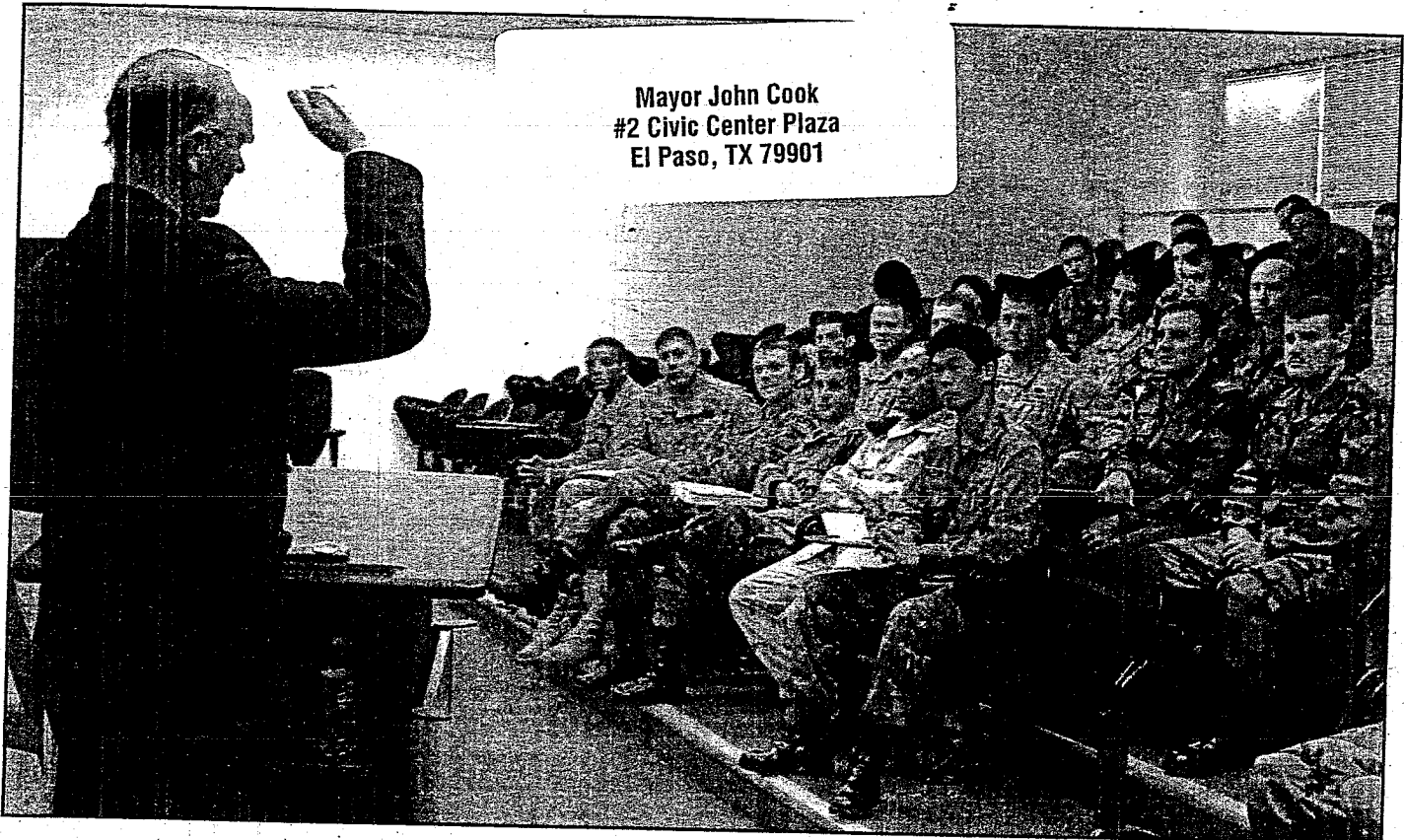


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Students attending the Captains Career Course listened to El Paso city Mayor John Cook speak about his life of learning about leadership.

WILSON A. RIVERA

Mayor speaks on leadership

Captains Career Course students share views

WILSON A. RIVERA

Monitor Staff

The mayor of El Paso, John Cook, took the opportunity Monday to speak about leadership with Soldiers attending the Captains Career Course here.

Cook explained his growth in leadership starting with his school days at Immaculata High School. Because of his Brooklyn accent, he was directed toward taking multiple language courses in Latin, French and Italian. He then worked for a refining company where he met a former Marine who became disfigured after a Napalm strike hit him during the Vietnam War. After asking if he would do it again, the man said yes.

After leaving his job with the refining company to join the Army, an assessment test for an occupational specialty determined Cook would be best fitted to take a job as a foreign language specialist. With the Vietnam War going on, he was sent to Fort Bliss to learn Vietnamese. It is here where Cook set up roots by meeting his instructor's sister during a lunch-in at a local restaurant. They married after writing letters to each other while he was serving in Vietnam.

As Cook talked about his life, he told the students they can learn many things that may help them in leadership roles as they go through life.

"Whether in the Boy Scouts or in the Army, the biggest lesson is if you want to be a leader you have to be somebody other people can look up to, admire and that they'll have confidence in your decision making," said Cook.

Cook said he never imagined his

experiences would lead him to become the mayor of the 22nd largest city in the U.S., a city that was started as a small fort and is now the No. 1 installation in the U.S. and the world, according to Cook.

Part of leadership is not just telling people what to do, but listening, gathering information and deciding what it is that is need to be done, Cook said.

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Mayor

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He recalled one time when his grandson joined him at one of his budget hearings, when he was the District 4 representative, and the zoo director was speaking about Sunny the sea lion being sick and living in a fresh water pool-size exhibit. Cook's grandson raised his hand and asked, "Why doesn't Sunny have any friends?" The council looked into what he asked and improved on the inadequate facilities, which now hold four sea lions.

A good leader will learn how to listen as the council did to his grandson, Cook said.

"It was an excellent opportunity for officers to talk to a community leader regarding El Paso's two major issues: education and where one should live," said 1st Lt. Anthony Falcon. "I wish we had more time for him to come visit us again."