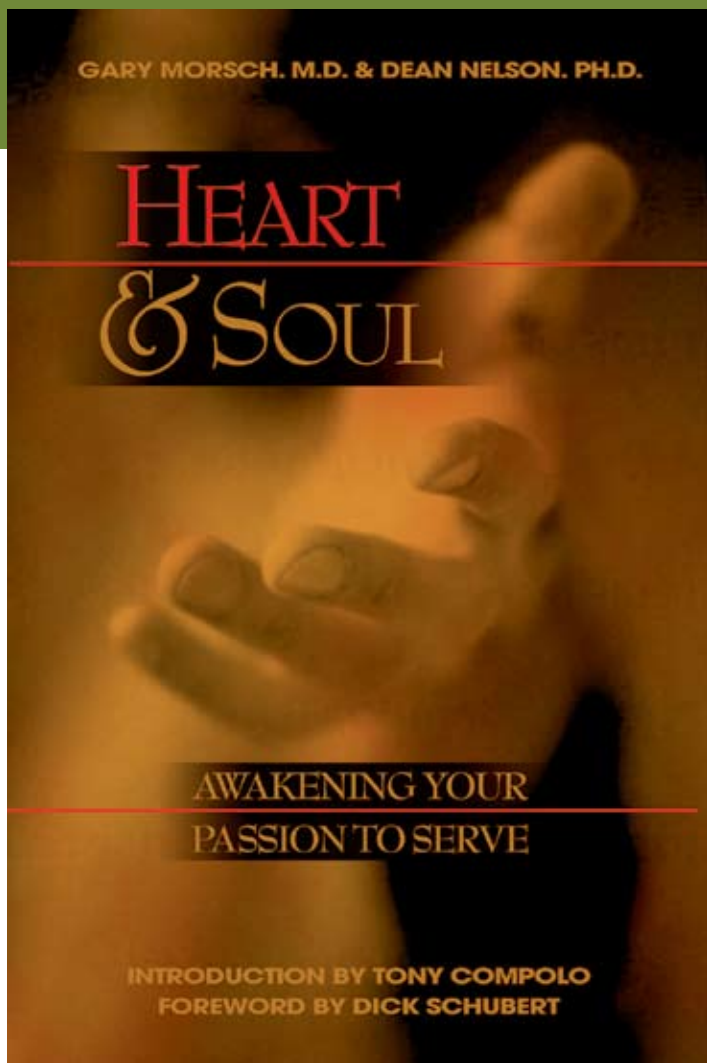


The following excerpt is from
Heart & Soul
“Awakening Your Passion to Serve”



Told from the perspective of Dr. Morsch in regards to the Vietnam airlift in 1995, this excerpt shares the incredible story of how Heart to Heart became one of FedEx’s preferred charities. It also tells the inspiring story that everyone has a network and can help change the world.

“I Know a Man with Planes”

Bob Lewis is a logistics guy. As a special operations officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, he served two tours in Vietnam. He made colonel there.

Now retired, Colonel Bob came to a few meetings where I explained that we made millions of dollars in medicine and medical supplies that we wanted to distribute in Vietnam. Ever the Marine, he saw logistical problems with our mission. The biggest problem with our idea was that there was no inexpensive way to transport the supplies to Vietnam and there was no way that Heart to Heart could even dream of paying for the shipping of these medicines in such a politically charged project.

Bob spoke up at one of our meetings. “I know a man with planes,” he said. “Who?” I asked.

“His name is Fred Smith. He’s at FedEx.”

I was well aware of Fred Smith, the CEO of the world’s leading package transportation company.

“Freddy was in my platoon when I was a Marine lieutenant in Quantico, Virginia,” Bob said. “I’ll ask him.”

Freddy? They hadn’t spoken to each other since the Quantico days, which were before both served in Vietnam. Nearly 25 years. But I encouraged him to do whatever he could.



He wrote a letter to “Freddy” Smith, excerpted here:

I have a proposal for you that may be of commercial benefit as well as personally rewarding to an old Marine company commander. I’m donating my time to an organization called Heart to Heart International, that delivers medicines to stricken areas of the world...

We are going [to Vietnam] in May, and you should be with us. It would be a chance to visit the country, not the war. One reason that I support Heart to Heart is that rather than sending medicine--they take it...

[T]he greatest reward will be actually delivering medicines, not to the government, not to some nameless bureaucrats, but right to the doctors in the hospitals...

I suspect everyone would like to see your FedEx tail number arrive in Da Nang. You would bring special credentials to the mission, both as a Marine and businessman of equal distinction. Few of us can do that. If we are ever to really treat Vietnam as a country, not a war, the impetus will have to come from men like you...

Semper Fidelis,

Bob Lewis,
Col. USMC (ret.), late of Co. C

Once I read this very simple appeal, I didn’t think Fred Smith would ever respond.

But one week later, at about 8:30 p.m., Colonel Bob Lewis got a telephone call from Fred Smith.

They talked for about five minutes, Bob said. Mr. Smith just had one question: Did Bob really think it was the right thing to do?

Fred Smith didn’t ask about the cost or the business benefit to FedEx. He only wanted to know if it was right.

Bob told him that enough time had passed, and that this was as good a way as any to change the way our countries dealt with each other. Bob said that a non-governmental agency like this could do far more than the governments could.

But what was most convincing to Mr. Smith was Bob’s overriding mission.

“The people of Vietnam are in desperate shape since the war,” he told Smith. “It is not my desire to see them continue suffering.”

“Tell me what you need,” Smith said.

Fred Smith got us the airplane and the pilots—two men who had previously bombed the very city where they were to land. Only this time we were coming to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to heal wounds, not create them.

Bob’s statement, “I know a man with planes,” taught me a valuable lesson: Everyone has a network. Everyone has a

sphere of influence in which he or she lives and interacts—even if the sphere existed 25 years before, as it did with Col. Bob Lewis and Fred Smith. And the network can be used to meet the needs of others and transform us into instruments of hope.

