

Commander's Comments

By Col. Shawn Campbell, 10 ABW

Midnight's moon cloaked Mount Vernon in cold December light, a quiet "'Tis well" was uttered from patient to doctor, either late on the thirteenth or early fourteenth, and at a time not recorded with historical certainty, George Washington breathed his last. Reflecting on his fellow Founder's life, on 2 January 1814, Thomas Jefferson wrote; "He was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good and a great man ... the whole of his character was in its mass, perfect ... And may it truly be said, that never did nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great, and to place him in the same constellation with whatever worthies have merited from man an everlasting remembrance."

Collecting my own thoughts about this man, who has been so venerated and lauded across many generations, necessarily evokes great lessons. Many thousands of pages have been written about Washington; for me, author James Thomas Flexner's *Washington: The Indispensable Man* stands dynamically apart. This offering is a great historical read and compelling biography, but one much more applicable word captures the golden thread lacing together that volume, leadership.

Countless tomes about leadership exist. Shelves at Barnes & Noble (and yes, they do still exist in brick and mortar form!), any library, and pages upon pages of available missives on Amazon advance numerous strategies, catch-phrases, formulas and/or word devices discussing the topic. Risking my own thinking to be lost in this informational sea, I offer the following based upon years of study, contemplation, and practice ... Leadership is as simple and as powerful as our **ABC's** ... sketch, study and share them; Accountable, Bold, Committed.

Accountable. Our Air Force is steeped in accountability, referred to in various executions as integrity, compliance, ownership, responsibility, and loyalty. Accountability should emanate from the very core of who we are as "Big A" Airman; military, civilians, retirees and family members. While it should be unnecessary to voice this concept, we are all responsible for our actions and, far more importantly, our thoughts. That which we think can be suppressed for only so long before our actions belie our words. Therefore, it is incumbent on every leader to be accountable to both word and deed.

Bold. Oft mistaken for brashness, bold here refers to moral courage; not the absence of fear, rather the willingness to act regardless. Courage is the action fire's spark, boldness is the continuing fuel. I subscribe to and advance the notion that we target not compliance or production; rather both are necessary to realize mission success. Today's Air Force faces seemingly inestimable, but I assert surmountable, challenges. Boldness of thought, planning and action are essential to ensuring we remain the world's preeminent air and space force.

Committed. This need not be some ethereal or intellectual exercise. One of the best tidbits of advice a longtime senior military mentor gave me was to, "come in every day, work hard and never quit". The power of those nine words is indeed profound. They offer a simple way to demonstrate commitment. Some days, tasks and responsibilities will stretch us beyond what we conceive as within our abilities. Other days will try our resolve and push us to the outer limits of energy, focus and desire. The difference between success and failure is simply commitment. Be willing to tackle the challenges, embracing them as opportunities and ever endeavoring to accomplish.

Legendary college basketball coach John Wooden sums these principles up, at least in my application, as a matter of character, writing "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are." The amazing kernel of truth here is, if we embrace and exhibit being Accountable, Bold and Committed, both our character and our reputation will be beyond reproach. The incalculable blessings of American liberty were first secured by leaders like George Washington. His character, as a leader and across all facets of his life, permeates his reputation. Real leadership ability is available to us all by knowing and applying our leadership ABC's!