
LEADERSHIP: 2000 AND BEYOND

Second Edition | Volume I

FOLLOWERSHIP ♦ COMMUNICATIONS ♦ DRILL + CEREMONIES
ROLE OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER ♦ LEADERSHIP TRAITS



June 2004

LEADERSHIP: 2000 AND BEYOND

Second Edition

PREFACE

Cadets may study this second edition or the original 1993 edition to complete leadership laboratory requirements.

This two-volume text is used by CAP cadets to study the art of leadership. For details on how the leadership laboratory is implemented in the CAP Cadet Program, see CAPR 52-16, *Cadet Program Management*, available at www.cap.gov.

Nearly identical to its predecessor, the second edition maintains the fundamental goals and plan of the original 1993 edition. However, the editors have slightly modified the text by:

- ▶ Clarifying the learning objectives and revising the end-of-chapter study aids;
- ▶ Simplifying the text and focusing solely on leadership content, to include removing CAP policy guidance and promotion requirements best described in other directives;
- ▶ Updating the images depicting airpower pioneers and removing art that did not advance the text's educational goals;
- ▶ Organizing the chapters into two volumes instead of three (one volume for enlisted cadets and one for cadet officers);
- ▶ Keeping the narrative intact for the sake of consistency, except for editing the grammar and style in a few instances.

Most of the edits described above were needed because the cadet grade structure, promotion requirements, and CAP policy described in the 1993 edition have evolved since its publication. By focusing solely on *leadership*, the second edition does not reiterate perishable information already explained in other CAP publications.

Therefore, with no fundamental changes to the text's content, cadets may study either the first or second edition of *Leadership: 2000 and Beyond*. Their choice will have no adverse effect on their ability to pass achievement tests and milestone exams.

Leadership: 2000 and Beyond contains many valuable leadership insights. However, this second edition will also be its last. The next edition of the CAP cadet leadership text will be completely redesigned through a partnership with senior CAP leaders and cadet program experts, members of the USAF Air University faculty, and HQ CAP education managers. That text will continue to introduce cadets to Air Force leadership concepts.



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in Volume II.

THE CADET OATH

I PLEDGE that I will serve faithfully in the Civil Air Patrol cadet program, and that I will attend meetings regularly, participate actively in unit activities, obey my officers, wear my uniform properly, and advance my education and training rapidly to prepare myself to be of service to my community, state and nation.”

An oath is a custom, dating back to the Romans, of publicly committing yourself to do a task. It makes you and others know you are really serious about doing what the oath says you will do.

THE CIVIL AIR PATROL MOTTO

“Semper Vigilans”

The CAP Motto, “Semper Vigilans - Always Vigilant” reflects the ever-ready status of Civil Air Patrol. It means every member, cadet and senior, must be prepared to respond effectively to any situation.

Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION

Up to now you have done a good job following. You are ready to learn about the ABCD's of leadership and the NCO's role as a supervisor. You will learn more about the importance of leadership and listening. Counseling and feedback basics also will be discussed.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Cadet NCOs have opportunities to lead and teach. New NCOs serve as flight sergeants, while experienced NCOs serve as first sergeants, or even temporarily assume cadet officer duties.

There are many responsibilities for a cadet NCO. We will discuss these in this and the next three chapters. In drill, you may serve as a guide. The guide sets the direction and cadence of the march. The guide of the leading flight of a squadron in column sets the direction and cadence of march for the squadron. If your unit decides to authorize a flight guidon bearer, the guide doubles as the flight guidon bearer. The person chosen for this dual role needs to do the duties discussed in this section, and perform guidon drill found in the AFMAN 36-2203.

ABCD'S OF LEADERSHIP

The ABCD's of leadership are: abilities, behavior, characteristics, and dynamics. Perhaps some of these are inborn. Our surroundings form them unnoticed, early in life. Undeveloped, they limit your ability to better yourself. You develop them through conscious effort.

To become a leader, you must generally possess certain abilities. Some of these are: mental alertness, high level of abstract thought, supplying professional leadership knowledge on a certain subject or in a certain situation, communication to others, and the ability to work with superiors, equals, and subordinates.

As a CAP leader, show the personal characteristics of respect for authority, discipline, integrity, patriotism and loyalty.

As a dynamic leader, you must be accorded the respect and "fellowship" of the unit, otherwise you are not a leader; you would merely be an official authority figure. To earn leadership status in the eyes of your cadets requires sensitivity to the unit and the cadets in it. Be flexible; adapt to the changing climate of the unit and skillfully marshal individual efforts into a united group effort.

Two factors other than the leader influence the exercise of leadership: the unit and the mission. The unit is a factor in leadership called "dynamics." To best exercise leadership, you will study these factors more, complementing your self-study and self-development.

LIST THE ABCD'S OF LEADERSHIP.

EXPLAIN THE NCO'S DUAL ROLE AS A FOLLOWER AND A LEADER.

Leadership is learned through study and experience. And through the demonstration / performance method, the leader's actions have a ripple effect that can be seen in the followers.

You can continue the alphabet with "E" and "F". Enthusiasm and Flexibility. There are many more areas of varying importance, but the ABCD's are the major points to consider.

ROLES OF LEADERSHIP

When you supervise other cadets, you have a dual role of leader and follower. Although these roles are separate and distinct, they can be, and often are, done simultaneously. The separation happens at the level where you are operating. For instance, if you are helping a subordinate cadet with a job-related problem, you are functioning as a leader. If, at the same time, you are coordinating the matter with your supervisor, you are also functioning as a follower. Your ultimate goal in either role is to get the job done. To reach this goal, you must develop and show abilities in technical skills, managerial skills, and human relation skills.

The officer and noncommissioned officer need to work together to accomplish the mission. Here is how the officer and noncommissioned officer roles relate to each other:

Cadet NCOs

- ▶ The NCO conducts the routine business within established orders, directives, and policies of CAP.
- ▶ The NCO focuses on individual training to enable the unit to get the job done.
- ▶ The NCO is primarily concerned with training individual cadets and teams.
- ▶ The NCO concentrates on developing officers and NCO's
- ▶ The NCO gets the job done.

Cadet Officers

- ▶ The officer commands, establishes policy, programs the work of CAP.
- ▶ The officer concentrates on unit training to develop unit capacity to get the job done.
- ▶ The officer is primarily involved with operations, training and related activities.
- ▶ The officer pays particular attention to the standards of performance.
- ▶ The officer creates the conditions so that the NCO can get the job done.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE LEADERSHIP ROLES PLAYED BY CADET NCOs AND CADET OFFICERS.

THE NCO AS A SUPERVISOR

Supervision is directing, inspecting, and continuously evaluating first-hand the specific activities of others. The amount of supervision you do depends on several things. The most important factors are the abilities, training, and experience of both you and your people. Here are some other factors:

- ▶ Your ability to understand your duties.
- ▶ Your ability to state directives clearly and concisely.
- ▶ Your training and experience with your cadets on the job.
- ▶ Your training and experience in your assigned job or activity.
- ▶ Your cadet's discipline while on the job.
- ▶ Your knowledge of your cadet's training, experience, and dependability.

IDENTIFY THE SEVEN RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SUPERVISOR.

Putting the Right Person in the Right Job

Before giving a job to someone, interview candidates to find out their qualifications. Make follow up interviews after the assignment to decide how good the placement was and to correct it, if necessary. Place people so you can use as many of their abilities as possible; this is called *homogeneous assignment*. Reassign them only if necessary.

Stimulating the Will to Work

A person's will to work is closely related to their skill. Start them correctly. Their first impression influences their attitude toward you considerably. Greet them cordially. Show you are sincerely interested in them; make them feel they are important to the unit. Discuss what their part is in the unit, their place in the organizational chart, and their job descriptions. Introduce them to their coworkers. Select fully qualified persons to teach them their new duties. Do not forget them after the first day.

Provide a positive atmosphere and conditions. Select positive incentives on an individual basis. Know your people well enough to understand what particular incentive appeals to each. Avoid negative incentives whenever possible. Promote teamwork by identifying with your people. You need to know their joys and problems and to understand those joys and problems. Keep lines of communication open. Allow decision participation that is, ask for opinions and suggestions before making decisions or changes that will affect them.

Increasing the Ability to Produce

Do this by training. It helps to increase efficiency on a present job and qualifies you for a more responsible job as you progress. Recognize training needs promptly, conduct a training program, and use the training efficiently. Helpful methods are on-the-job instructions groups, conferences, seminars, and vocational schools. Training never stops; it lets you "grow" in the job and prepare for more responsibility. Take care. Persons become frustrated and discouraged by not having the tools to do the job or by getting in over their heads. People should be challenged by gradually increasing the scope and difficulty of responsibility.

Increasing the Availability for Work

Develop a way to check attendance and assign someone (an element leader, for example) to find out why a person is absent. See if it relates to unit or general causes. If a cadet does not come to a meeting, someone should find out why. It may be because the cadet has no ride, has another commitment, or may be ill. On the other hand, maybe the cadet is losing interest, may not feel fairly treated, or may not have the right information about where or when the meeting was to be.

Sometimes, if the unit knew the reason for the absence it could do something about it. It could provide car pooling, plan to meet on a day other than the conflicting event, make the meetings more interesting, find out the nature of the misunderstanding, publish a newsletter, or follow up with a phone call if meeting times have been changed.

A job description is another form of checklist. The key items are:

- ▶ Interview
- ▶ Follow-up Interview
- ▶ Plan to "maximize" your people's abilities.

You cannot always satisfy personal preferences. Counseling the prospective job-holders on how their job contributes to the overall mission helps set proper attitudes.

To make a positive first impression, show sincere interest by asking specific questions. Assign important tasks; expect results on time.

"Catch" them doing things correctly!

Use follow-up training to:

- ▶ Reaffirm proficiency
- ▶ Teach new skills

The more you know about an individual the easier it is to interact. Keeping a person available for work means the workload does not have to be shifted or redistributed.

Using Individuals Fully on Essential Tasks

The word “fully” means absolutely no slack or idle time while on the job. The word “essential” means what is necessary to the mission of the organization. Give cadets meaningful work. Individuals want to be busy and “grow” on the job. It should be a safe workload. One that is not too easy and boring, but not beyond their physical or mental limitations, whether real or imagined. Work that is too hard will make cadets too preoccupied with frustration, anxiety, and stress to be productive. This results in behavior that is disruptive to the organization.

Scheduling Subordinate Tasks Efficiently

If subordinates wait for you to “get around” to them, your scheduling is inadequate. Schedule the task so you are there when needed, and not in the way when your cadets are doing their job effectively. *Span of control* means how many people you can effectively supervise at once. Keeping the right span of control helps you get around to all your people. *Delegation of authority* means you are holding other people accountable to see that a job is done. This also affects scheduling because when others are supervising for you, you have time to “get around” to other subordinates.

Reviewing the Need for Tasks

You may find there are jobs that are not essential or not worth the time and effort. You may find that there are some jobs that crowd out more important tasks. An example is the supervisor who requests reports from subordinates only to throw such reports away without using them. If a task cannot be justified, eliminate it.

Find examples of how knowledge can affect a relationship. Look for ways similar vocabulary, emotional appeals, non-verbal signals, etc. can contribute to mental understanding. Also, use specific follow-up questions to verify that needs are being met. Insist on progress. That is how you show you care about the person!

Answer these questions “Do you have a job at your unit?” “Do you feel useful?” “Is your job useful?” “Why or why not?” “Is there a way to make your job easier?” “Is there a relationship between feeling useful and job usefulness?” “Are subordinates fully used?” “How would you improve the situation?”

LISTENING

At 8:00 p.m. on 30 Oct 1938, six million people heard the following announcement on their radios: “The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Wells and the Mercury Theater of the Air in The War of the Worlds by HG Wells.” The now famous radio play was interrupted twice by similar announcements and ended with a statement that this broadcast was fictitious. This is where at least one sixth of the listeners did not use their listening abilities to discover the truth. Only the words “invasion” and “Martians” caught their ears. As they found out, hearing is not listening. Hearing is only defined as being aware of sounds striking our eardrums. Listening is much more than that. It takes concentration and willingness to put effort into the process. It involves three basic elements: attending, comprehending, and remembering. In Chapter 1, we covered several “DO’s” for good listening. Here we will look at some of these ideas in detail.

DISCUSS THE ELEMENTS OF LISTENING

Getting Ready to Listen

Prepare yourself mentally and physically. Physically you should put away all potential distractions like an interesting picture, etc. Think about the subject and what you experienced with the subject (establish a common core of experience with the speaker).

Taking Responsibility to Comprehend

To do this, concentrate. Concentration is “Close mental application, exclusive attention.” Good concentration generally leads to good memory of what you heard. When listening, think about your own experiences that illustrate the speaker’s point. Mentally apply the point to your own situation. Rephrase the speaker’s examples, too. This helps you understand and remember the speaker’s points.

Attending

This means being mentally alert to the other person. Good attending means having no physical distractions. Let the other person know you are giving your undivided attention. This tells you are interested and you care. Good attending helps non-verbal as well as verbal communication.

Concentrate! What does attending include?

Comprehending

This means understanding what is said. There are two ways to comprehend: receptive or reflective. Receptive means you understand the literal meaning of what is said. The reflective way means you are able to catch the full meaning of what the speaker is saying. It means hearing what is said and trying to see the problem through the speaker’s point of view. Reflective listening requires paraphrasing, checking perceptions, and withholding judgment.

IDENTIFY THREE STEPS THAT AID IN COMPREHENSION.

When you paraphrase a statement, you put it into your own words. This ensures that you and the other person are on the same page and you understand each other.

When you check your perceptions with “I” messages, you are really saying “I am interested in what you are saying and how you are feeling about it.” To do this effectively, you can use “I” messages. “I” messages clarify ideas by telling someone what their behavior is and how it affects you. Examples of using “I” messages are: “I feel you are frustrated with the way this project turned out.” “When you shouted, I felt intimidated because loud noises scare me.” The use of “I” messages takes practice for you to become proficient and comfortable with them. As you progress into counseling and interviewing, you will find these messages extremely helpful.

Withholding judgment. Do not interrupt or make snap decisions based on half the information. Get all the facts about a problem before offering an opinion. In the same way, keep an open mind toward the person you are listening to. Treat your subordinates fairly and as individuals.

Listening to Understand Rather than to Argue

Analyze but do not argue with the speaker. Without trying to get the speaker’s message, you cannot be informed enough to evaluate the ideas effectively. Critical listening is necessary for making informed, intelligent decisions.

Controlling Your Emotions

Keep barriers from building between yourself and the speaker. By identifying and understanding barriers, you can force yourself to react to speakers’ ideas rather than just their words. You will learn more about this in later chapters.

Listening for Main Ideas

By having a mental picture of the main ideas, you can weigh how important one idea is to another. By listening intelligently, you can benefit from the research, experience, and thinking of speakers who are knowledgeable in many fields.

Being Mentally Agile

Concentrating throughout a speech is a challenge, because you are likely to think faster than the speaker can speak. This difference gives you the chance to review what was said and predict what will be said. You have time to repeat mentally, summarize and paraphrase the speaker's remarks. This increases your comprehension and memory.

Taking Notes

We often want to take notes on what we hear because we do not trust our memories. Trying too hard to take good notes, however, turns into a race between your pencil speed and the speaker's rate of speech. Make up a system to stop this. Be in place and ready before the lecture starts. Your notes should include the main idea and enough supporting ideas to make the main ideas clear. Also use abbreviations and key words rather than complete sentences. Definitions of words are all you should take down verbatim. Review and expand your notes as soon as possible after the lecture. Going over your notes will help you "relive the experience" and strengthen your memory.

Remembering

Remembering what you have heard is one of the most difficult tasks of listening. The key lies in how interested you are in the information. Being a mature and objective listener means you can appreciate what is said no matter how strong your interest is in the subject.

Taking notes does two things: It helps you use another sense besides listening and gives you a permanent record of the information.

To take better notes, abbreviate, use phrases and use definitions.

To remember better, associate ideas with pictures or tasks that you know.

Ask one cadet to read a list of items out loud. At the end of the list, ask the cadets to write all the items they remember. Discuss the results.

COUNSELING

As an NCO, you must learn the basic principles of counseling to be an effective leader. For our purpose, counseling is helping people to help themselves. You will be counseling your cadets to help them develop their potential, help their decision making, resolve problems, improve their effectiveness, and improve their ability to cope. Listening is the most important thing in counseling.

One of your counseling goals is to develop your cadet's potential. Know your people, counsel them on career development, promotion progression, and motivate them to reach their potential. The NCO's role as a counselor falls into three categories:

- ▶ Performance Counseling
- ▶ Career Counseling
- ▶ Personal Counseling

Performance counseling deals with improving or maintaining performance. Career counseling deals with training, promotions, and the development of potential. Personal counseling deals with personal matters such as school conflicts

IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE THE THREE TYPES OF COUNSELING.

and family problems. Although you can handle many problems it is just as important you be able to recognize problems that you cannot handle yourself and refer them to a more advanced cadet or senior member.

Counseling is a way of helping your subordinates to achieve their goals. Counseling is not “chewing out” or reprimanding. You counsel to motivate and give guidance as well as to help with problems. Chapter 6 will cover other aspects of counseling.

Since your cadets’ welfare is the most important thing in your counseling, develop skills and attitudes that will enable you to help them. You want your cadets to learn how to do their jobs most effectively. The previous definitions imply a behavior change and improved performance are the desired results of counseling. As a supervisor and leader, you should establish these two goals when counseling.

FEEDBACK

After listening and focusing on how your cadets can improve on the job, you need to share your ideas with them and listen to their reactions to your ideas. Speaking to them and listening to them in this way is called feedback. It is part of a two way process between you and your cadets. Keep talking openly with them to provide feedback on important information about their behavior and performance. In doing this, you can decide the cadet’s success and can explain any additional performance and behaviors they must meet. They also must talk openly with you to discuss progress and problems in meeting job standards and discuss ways to change behavior for professional growth and personal improvement. Remember, feedback is not always negative. It is very important for a supervisor to praise the positive things the cadet does. It lets them know that the job they do is important and appreciated.

**DESCRIBE WHAT FEEDBACK IS.
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO
LEADERS?**

DRILL AND CEREMONIES

Study the manual of the guidon and the movements below, as explained in AFMAN 36-2203. Also, study the principles of the command voice and be prepared to command a flight in close order drill .

Fall In
Prepare for Inspection
Facings, flanks, and columns
Column of files

STUDY AIDS

1. Identify the ABCDs of leadership. Describe each in your own words.
2. Explain how a NCO can have a “dual role as a leader and a follower.”
3. Compare and contrast the leadership roles played by cadet NCOs and cadet officers.
4. Identify the seven responsibilities of a supervisor.
5. Discuss the elements of listening.
6. Identify three steps that aid in comprehension.
7. Identify and describe the three types of counseling.
8. Describe what feedback is. Why is it important to leaders?

Learning Exercises

1. Work with an experienced cadet to develop your command voice. First, practice calling commands without actually leading cadets in drill.
2. After gaining some confidence about your command voice, lead an element in basic drill and focus on calling the commands on the correct foot.

SPECIAL READINGS

USAF ACADEMY DUTY CONCEPT by Maj Larry A. Smith

From *Contrails*, Vol. 3, United States Air Force Academy

Duty is understanding and doing what ought to be done, when it should be done, without being directly told to do so. It involves a selfless devotion to others first, whether they are members of your cadet squadron or the people of the United States who have placed their special trust in you as a military professional.

At the Academy we teach duty along with other military virtues and ideas, in military education and training programs as well as academic courses. In both arenas, military virtues are discussed under the concept of professionalism. The cornerstone of duty is the responsibility that obligates each military member to the mission above all else. This commitment to duty is at the very heart of the military profession and is the focus of your development as an Air Force cadet.

Duty is not as easy a concept to define. *The Honor Code Reference Handbook of the Air Force Wing* defines it as a system of values which sets the unit's mission and the interests of the country above personal convenience. This is not a transient commitment; it permeates every part of an officer's public and private life. General S.L.A. Marshall's description of a man with integrity clarifies this further. "A man has integrity if his interests in the good of the service is at all times greater than his personal pride, and when he holds himself to the same line of duty when unobserved as he would follow if all of his superiors were present." Marshall further states, "A man of honor holds himself to a course of conduct because of a conviction that it is in the general interest, even though he is well aware that it may lead to inconvenience, personal loss, humiliation, or grave physical risk." The essence of these statements is the sense of obligation to service above self.

A solid "duty concept" not only requires the ability to decide the right course of action but also the will to follow it. Developing the ability to decide is, in large part, an institutional responsibility fulfilled through education and training. However, creating the will to follow the proper path, although influenced by the institution and the example of those who represent it, is a personal responsibility. In short, doing your duty involves personal choices for which you'll be held accountable by your commander or your conscience—probably both.

In this context, what is the proper action, especially when there are competing demands? Do I, as a cadet, do my duty as an element leader when I also have a duty to study for a graded review?" "What duties take precedence?" "If they are all equal and I share my time among them, how much effort is enough?"

The answer is not easy. There are and always will be many demands on your time. That is the nature of modern society, especially for those who seek to preserve it in the military. In the final analysis, you must establish your own priority system within an Air Force framework. However, you should always base your priorities on a hierarchy where the good of the service comes before convenience to self. If you do, the words of the *Cadet Prayer*: "I ask courage that I may prove faithful to duty beyond self." will have full and rewarding meaning.

EDDIE RICKENBACKER

From *Webster's American Military Biographies*

Eddie Rickenbacker was born on October 8, 1890, in Columbus, Ohio. With little formal schooling and a succession of jobs behind that, he began working for a railroad car manufacturing firm in 1905. There he developed a deep interest in internal-combustion engines and engine-powered vehicles. He began driving racing cars at sixteen (he became a regular at the Indianapolis 500 from its first year, 1911). By the time the United States entered World War I, he was internationally famous as a daredevil speed driver and held a world speed record of 134 miles per hour.

In 1917 he enlisted in the army and went to France as a member of Gen. John J. Pershing's motor car staff. With help from Col. William Mitchell, he secured a transfer to the Air Service in August. Took pilot's training, and early in 1918, with the rank of captain, was assigned to the 94th Aero Pursuit Squadron. The 94th, which adopted the famous hat-in-the-ring insignia, was the first U.S. flying unit to participate actively at the front, fighting the "flying circus" commanded by the German ace, Baron Manfred von Richthofen. In May 1918 Rickenbacker succeeded to command the 94th in the temporary rank of major. By the end of the war the 94th had downed 69 enemy craft, of which Rickenbacker, the "ace of aces" accounted for 26 (22 airplanes, 4 observation balloons). He earned nearly every decoration possible, including the Medal of Honor, awarded in 1931 for his lone attack on seven German planes, two of which he downed, on September 25, 1918.

His *Fighting the Flying Circus* appeared in 1919. Returning to the United States a hero, he organized in Detroit the Rickenbacker Motor Company. The company was dissolved in 1926, and the next year he bought a controlling interest in the Indianapolis Speedway, which he retained until 1945. He later worked for the Cadillac division of General Motors Corporation and then was associated with a number of aircraft manufacturers and airlines. In 1935, he became general manager and vice president of Eastern Airlines. Three years later he became president and director of the line.

His experience and technical knowledge prompted his appointment as special representative of Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, to inspect air bases in the Pacific theater during World War II. In October 1942, on his second mission over the Pacific, his B-17, crashed some 600 miles north of Samoa, and he and seven men (one of whom died) were set adrift on rubber rafts with only fish and rain water to sustain them. After 23 days he was rescued, and after a two-week rest, he resumed his tour.

After the war he returned to Eastern Airlines, where he remained, from 1954 as chairman of the board, until his retirement in 1963. He died in Switzerland in 1973.



EDDIE RICKENBACKER was America's Ace of Aces during World War I. In later years, he served as chairman of Eastern Air Lines.

BESSIE COLEMAN

Bessie Coleman was born January 26, 1893, in Atlanta, Texas, one of 13 children. Her mother was black and her father was of American Indian and black descent. Her father left when she was seven and her mother did her best to raise the family alone. The children helped by picking cotton, and the girls, as soon as they were old enough, helped with the washing their mother took in to make ends meet.

Bessie had a drive to better herself and became an avid reader. By using the traveling library that came through two to three times a year, Bessie managed to finish high school (not a small achievement in those days). Although her mother let her keep her earnings from washing and ironing, Bessie could only afford to attend college for one semester. She was determined to get ahead, and show the way to others, handicapped by what she believed were the evils of racism, sexism, poverty, and ignorance. Shortly after World War I, she made a firm decision to learn to fly. She read everything she could on the subject. She tried applying to one flying school after another, but was quickly turned down. In those times (1919 and 1920), her race was an obvious reason and her sex was another for her being denied.

She did not stop there. With the help of an editor and publisher of the Chicago Weekly Defender, Bessie learned French and contacted an aviation school in France. There she learned about the hazards of flight and in 1921, earned her license from the Federation Aeronautique Internationale. She was the only licensed black woman pilot in the world. Bessie became one of hundreds of high-spirited stunt-flyers. They flew World War I Jennies and DeHavilands. When a female parachutist failed to show to perform a stunt, Bessie made the jump. She always did what she thought had to be done. She also dreamed of opening a flying school so she did stunt-flying and barn-storming. While on the barn-storming circuit, Bessie's plane went into a nose dive and Bessie was thrown from the plane to her death.

Shortly after her death, Bessie Coleman Aero Groups were organized by William J. Powell and on Labor Day, 1931, those flying clubs sponsored the first all-black air show in America. Bessie's dream of a school for black aviators finally became a reality in 1932.



BESSIE COLEMAN, the first black woman to earn a pilot's license.