

THE

# EVOLUTION OF AIRMEN

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS OF THE AIR FORCE







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# PREFACE

Fifty years ago, our Air Force made a significant step forward. Our senior leaders recognized the need for an enlisted voice on the headquarters staff and, after a significant vetting and interview process, selected Chief Master Sergeant Paul Airey to fill this role. Paul Airey became the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force on April 3, 1967. In the 50 years since, 17 Airmen have worn the chevrons, championed enlisted development and retired knowing the enlisted force had moved forward. I'm extremely humbled to follow in their footsteps and serve today as the 18th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

This book is more than a recognition of our past Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. It's a celebration of enlisted Airmen and an acknowledgement of their considerable evolution. It's a story about our 70 years as a separate service, told through the lens of Airmen who have served every step of the way. It's an example of breaking barriers... since 1947.

I invite you to read through the interviews and reflect on their stories. I expect you will discover your own story in these pages. I hope you'll also find insight into the issues we've faced over time and inspiration in the challenges we've overcome.

As we celebrate our 70th year as a separate service, let us look to the past and reflect on the barriers we've broken to become the world's greatest Air Force.



**CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENLISTED FORCE

The Air Force may be the youngest of the US military services, but through the years, it has become the most capable and feared aerial force in the world. While Air Force officers have made significant contributions to this success, so too has the enlisted force. The Airmen who come to work with stripes on their sleeves have served as the backbone of the Air Force for several generations. Maintainers, cooks, security policemen, radio technicians, medical professionals, and many other enlisted Airmen have played a crucial role to accomplish the mission and keep aircraft flying, fighting, and winning in the skies above. Over the last 70 years, the enlisted force has evolved into the most educated, experienced, and professional force the world has ever seen by taking significant, purposeful strides within the realms of experience, professionalism, diversity, education, and training.

## THE BEGINNING

In 1907, just four years after Wilber and Orville Wright took flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the US Air Force of today first established its military roots as the Aviation Section of the US Army Signal Corps. The division was created to take “charge of all matters pertaining to military ballooning, air machines, and all kindred subjects,” according to notations by the Air Force Historical Research Agency.<sup>1</sup> The Aviation Section was built up during modern aviation’s early inception and initially only had stewardship over 10 hot air balloons. A year later, the Army began flight testing airplanes at Fort Myer, Virginia. One pilot, Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge, died in a plane crash during the testing stage, but the early aircraft, a Wright Model A, was improved upon. Subsequently, “Airplane No. 1” was adopted into the Army’s aerial arsenal on 2 August 1909.

The Aviation Section was initially authorized an enlisted force of just over 100 men. To work in the newly created job field, the Army desired that the service members—pulled from those already active in the service—gain a solid technical knowledge of the aircraft. By 1914 the Aviation Section had created a training structure for the enlisted members. In order to receive job certifications, the early “Airmen” required a degree of comprehensive testing and specialization; they had to show they were proficient in airframe maintenance and repair, as well as engine construction and maintenance. As an added incentive to complete the training, certification came with a specialty title of Air Mechanician and a 50-percent pay raise.

OVER

70  
YEARS  
OF FLIGHT

This upgrade process was in place until 1926. In *Generations of Chevrons: A History of the USAF Enlisted Force*, Janet Bednarek speculates that the timeframe between 1917 and 1942 represents one of the biggest jumps forward in early aviation technology. During an era of ever-growing aviation advancements, enlisted maintainers had to grasp the technical details of each type of aircraft: from the Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny” [1917], a wood and fabric biplane with a 90-hp OX engine, to the more complex Boeing B-29 Superfortress [1942], an all-metal long-range heavy bomber, sporting four 2,200-hp radial engines.<sup>2</sup>

# TESTING THE BATTLE METTLE OF EARLY AVIATION

Ready to apply the aerial capabilities of its newest section, the Army wasted little time before sending aircraft on missions. As early as 1916, the 1st Aero Squadron—the first air combat unit of the US Army—was rallied to the skies to help in the search for Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionist who had led a raid in Columbus, New Mexico, killing 17 US citizens. This mission marked the first time the United States had ever placed a “tactical air unit” in the field.<sup>3</sup> When the 1st Aero Squadron reached the Mexican border with eight JN-4Ds in tow, the unit was made up of 11 officers, 84 enlisted men, and one civilian mechanic. Although their pursuit of Villa was unsuccessful, the 1st Aero Squadron was able to gain “valuable field experience from operating under ‘combat’ conditions” while navigating over the mountainous terrain of northern Mexico.<sup>4</sup> It was training they would tap into sooner, rather than later, when the United States declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917. Leaving New Mexico behind, the unit traveled to France and became the first US squadron to enter World War I. The squadron’s original role was that of an observation unit, initially flying a two-seater recon plane—the French Dorand AR.1 and AR.2.<sup>5</sup> By then, the US Army Aviation Section consisted of 131 officers, 1,087 enlisted men, and fewer than 250 airplanes. Twenty-four squadrons had been added to the aviation arsenal by early 1917; however, only the 1st Aero Squadron was fully equipped, manned, and organized by the time of America’s declaration of war.<sup>6</sup>

Enlisted mechanics became a valued commodity in the Aviation Section, but it wasn’t the only job offered to enlisted Airmen in the early days of the Air Force. Other career choices were available, including photo reconnaissance and radio. Within a year of its activation in Germany, the Aviation Section began to set up technical schools and institutions for enlisted members to develop their technical skills. As noted in the *Airman Handbook*, two of the largest schools were in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Kelly Field, Texas. Later, mechanics and other enlisted specialists received more training while deployed to the fields and factories of Great Britain and France.<sup>7</sup>



**CURTISS JN-4D “JENNY”**  
A WOOD AND FABRIC BIPLANE





# JOIN THE ARMY AIR SERVICE BE AN AMERICAN EAGLE!

**CONSULT YOUR LOCAL DRAFT BOARD. READ THE ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET AT ANY RECRUITING OFFICE, OR WRITE TO THE CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER OF THE ARMY, WASHINGTON, D. C.**

The Army's aviation branch changed in name and structure over the next 30 years as it continued to grow into its own distinct organization. Toward the end of World War I, the Aviation Section was redesignated as the Air Service via an executive order given by President Woodrow Wilson on 20 May 1918. In its few months of combat action, the newly established Air Service conducted 150 separate bombing attacks, dropping roughly 138 tons of ordnance—some as far as 160 miles behind enemy lines in Germany. All told, the Air Service downed 756 enemy aircraft and 76 enemy balloons, while losing 289 airplanes and 48 balloons from the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Military aviation and the enlisted force continued to evolve. On 2 July 1926, the Army unit was once again redesignated, this time as the Army Air Corps; it was redesignated again in 1941 as the Army Air Forces. Throughout this era of constant change, enlisted Airmen became more specialized. By the 1930s, the Army Air Corps had organized all of the force's enlisted specialty codes to fit within 12 categories: airplane and engine mechanics, aircraft radio mechanics and operators, aircraft instrument mechanics, clerks, stewards and cooks, aircraft metal workers, aircraft armorers, meteorologists, parachute riggers, auto mechanics, aircraft machinists, and aircraft photo technicians. The Army Air Forces expanded upon this structure by adapting a more detailed training regimen that enhanced specialization. In *Foundations of the Force*, Mark Grandstaff gives an example by describing the classification scheme for mechanics, which included eight functional groups and 47 subclassifications.<sup>9</sup> The Army also created new jobs in the areas of electronics, radar, and medicine. Enlisted members assumed more responsibilities; a few even crossed into careers mainly dominated by officers.

Though low in numbers, enlisted Airmen have served in unique positions throughout the history of aviation, to include brief stints as pilots.<sup>10</sup> When the Air Force split from the Army in 1947 and became its own distinctive service, two enlisted pilots—Master Sgts. Tom Rafferty and George Holmes—remained on active duty. Throughout the service's history, the employment of enlisted pilots has been debated several times. In *Generations of Chevrons*, Bednarek states that ultimately “the Air Service, the Army Air Corps, the Army Air Forces, and the U.S. Air Force retained the elite vision of pilots that precluded the otherwise qualified enlisted members from finding a permanent role as enlisted pilots.”<sup>11</sup> The idea remained relatively untouched until 2015, when the Air Force announced a differentiation from that standard by outlining an initiative to integrate enlisted remotely piloted aircraft pilots into the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission. In a 17 December 2015 press release, Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James discussed the decision to accept enlisted pilots into the RQ-4 Global Hawk community:

Our enlisted force is the best in the world and I am completely confident they will be able to do the job and do it well. The RPA [remotely piloted aircraft] enterprise is doing incredibly important work and this is the right decision to ensure the Air Force is positioned to support the future threat environment. Emerging requirements and combatant commander demands will only increase; therefore, we will position the service to provide warfighters and our nation the capability they deserve today and in the future. This action will make the most of the capabilities of our superb enlisted force in order to increase agility in addressing the ISR needs of the warfighter. Just as we integrated officer and enlisted crew positions in the space mission set, we will deliberately integrate enlisted pilots into the Global Hawk ISR community.<sup>12</sup>



# A SEPARATE SERVICE

On 18 September 1947, the Air Force officially became an independent branch of the US military after the National Security Act of 1947 became law. Once separated from the Army and considered a coequal branch, the new service began to adopt its own set of regulations, customs, and training requirements, creating their own individual structure and eventually a unique heritage of aviation excellence.

Due to the Army Air Forces's heavy involvement in World War II, much of the early structure had already been established at the time of the service's independence. According to the Air Force Historical Research Agency: "Before 1939 the Army's air arm was a fledgling organization; by the end of the war the Army Air Forces had become a major military organization comprised of many air forces, commands, divisions, wings, groups, and squadrons, plus an assortment of other organizations."<sup>13</sup>

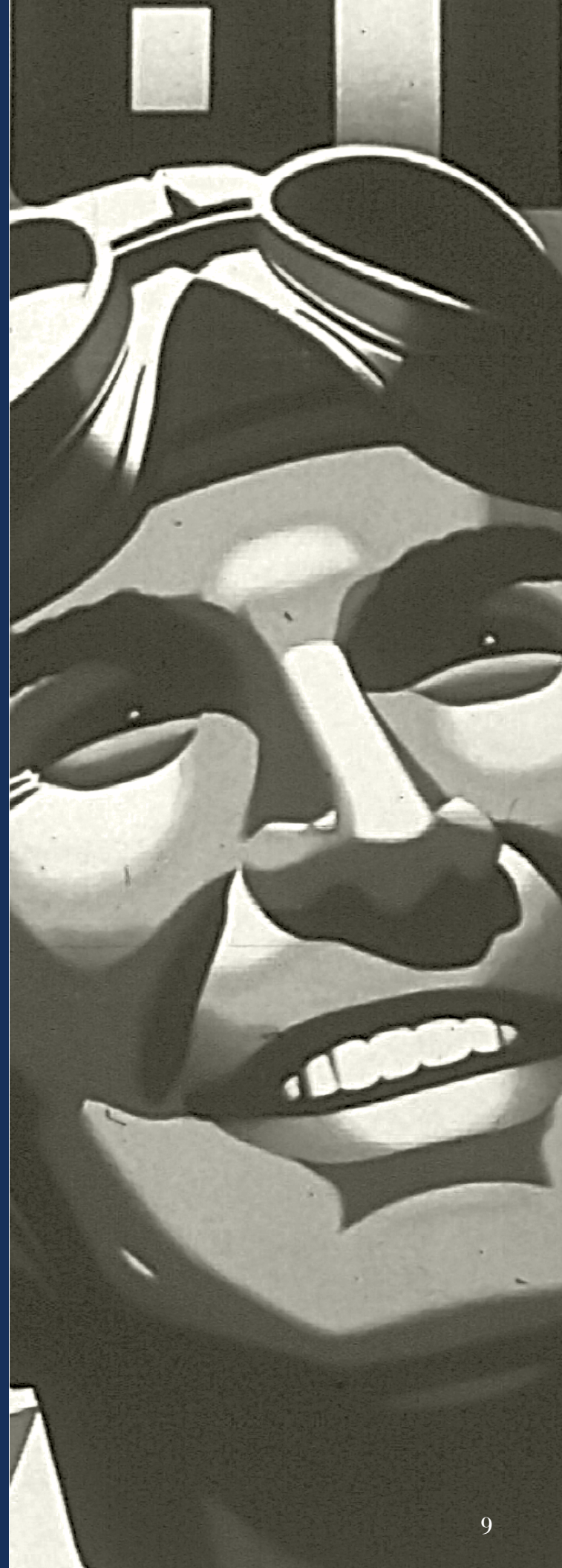
For the first decade, the Air Force fundamentally remained much the same as it had been prior to 1947, with the exception of a few notable changes. In 1950 Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the second Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), officially introduced a new term, Airman, to distinguish Air Force enlisted personnel from the Soldiers, Marines, and Sailors of other services.<sup>14</sup> Playing upon this term two years later, the Air Force made another change, this time to their rank system. Initially, the Air Force had carried over and used the Army's enlisted rank structure, but in 1952 it changed the lower four ranks from Soldier designations like "private" and "corporal" to more aviation-centric terms: (starting with E-1) airman basic; airman third class; airman second class; and airman first class.<sup>15</sup> The rank structure continued to evolve as the Air Force progressed. The young services' technical expertise also began to grow, both in training and in career options. As the Air Force diversified its combat capabilities over the decades, more career opportunities were created—by 2015, the number

of available enlisted Air Force specialty codes surpassed 130.<sup>16</sup>

The Air Force continued to distance itself from the Army in 1959 when it discontinued the warrant officer program. Since becoming a separate service, the Air Force had struggled to find a place for warrant officers. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Donald Harlow once commented that warrant officers were "neither fish nor fowl."<sup>17</sup> According to Air Force Regulation 36-72, Officer Personnel, 2 June 1953, warrant officers filled superintendent Air Force Specialty Codes and positions that required qualifications beyond those of master sergeants. However, warrant officers were often not available to fill the superintendent positions, and master sergeants assumed the duties.

A year earlier, in 1958, Congress had granted the Air Force permission to establish two new enlisted grades: E-8 and E-9. Prior to the change, the highest rank an enlisted Airman could attain was an E-7 master sergeant. This led to an abundance of E-7s; master sergeants often supervised master sergeants who supervised master sergeants. By approving the two new grades, Congress hoped to delineate responsibilities in the enlisted structure and resolve enlisted retention issues due to a lack of promotion opportunities. On 1 September 1958, 2,000 Airmen were promoted to senior master sergeant, and the first chief master sergeants were promoted from that group the following year.

The two new grades led the Air Force to reconsider the warrant officer position. The Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. Curtis LeMay, initiated a review of the position by forming an ad hoc committee in 1958. The committee determined that warrant officers amounted to an added layer of supervision between officers and noncommissioned officers (NCO) that was unnecessary for mission accomplishment, and that using E-8s and E-9s to







fill superintendent positions was significantly less expensive than using warrant officers to perform similar duties.<sup>18</sup> The following year General LeMay approved the recommendation and officially announced the decision to discontinue the warrant officer program.

The creation of the senior and chief master sergeant ranks also marked the very beginning of the transition to a professional enlisted force. Senior NCOs assumed leadership positions and began to focus on leadership skills. Although the transition to a professional force would slowly progress over time, the first CMSAF commented that the transition can be traced back to a greater focus on leadership: “In the late 1950s, we started the United States Air Force as we know it today. We started to lead people, not drive them, and it was a decided change that slowly but surely evolved.”<sup>19</sup>

As the Air Force continued to evolve during its first two decades as a separate service, the recruitment and retention of highly skilled enlisted Airmen became a priority. Air Force leaders began to focus on quality-of-life issues and ways to make a career and benefits in the military comparable to those in the civilian sector. Leadership began to address several key issues, such as competitive pay, retirement options, medical care, and housing. As Bednarek points out in *Generations of Chevrons*, “At points, progress would be made. But then larger forces—the Vietnam War, inflation, fluctuating defense budgets—often contributed to a renewed decline in conditions.”<sup>20</sup>

The elimination of the selective service draft and the introduction of the all-volunteer force in 1973 put quality of life issues back at the forefront. It also had arguably the greatest impact on the quality and professionalism of enlisted Airmen. Although the Air Force did not have to draft enlisted Airmen, many of its members had joined the Air Force to avoid joining the other services. According to CMSAF Eric Benken, the transition to the all-volunteer force was “when we started . . . the beginnings of all of the talk about the professional force we have today. Because now you have people who are volunteers. So now first sergeants don’t have to focus every day on the discipline issues. They don’t have to focus on kicking people out of the service and all that. Now they can focus on quality of life.”<sup>21</sup>

In the 40-plus years since the all-volunteer force became a reality, enlisted Airmen have developed into the most professional NCO corps around the world. There are many reasons for the professional development, including the implementation and evolution of the Weighted Airman Promotion System, Enlisted Professional Military Education, the Community College of the Air Force, and the Enlisted Evaluation System.

# THE DIVERSE MAKEUP OF THE US AIR FORCE

Modern diversity within the Air Force, still a work in progress, has come a long way since the branches' earliest inception. To get to where it is today, the service had to first overcome many barriers, especially concerning the integration and equal treatment of African-Americans and overall inclusion of women in the Air Force.

The Tuskegee Airmen, decorated African-American pilots from the Army Air Forces, are famous for breaking down many of the racial barriers experienced by black people in the military. At the time, African-Americans were segregated into their own squadrons. Treated differently, they did not receive many of the same career opportunities and resources awarded to other ethnic groups. The contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen were further compounded by other enlisted African-American Airmen, who during their early history in the service demonstrated that skin color had nothing to do with proving a person's capabilities.

As a move to cut down on intolerant practices within the US military, Pres. Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on 26 July 1948. Under the order, Truman declared that, from then on out, there would be "equal treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."<sup>22</sup>

A few months earlier, the Air Force had begun to study the impact of segregation on its ability to accomplish the mission effectively. Lt. Gen. Idwal H. Edwards, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, directed Lt Col Jack Marr, a staff officer in the office of Air Force personnel, to study the issue. In the end, the study found waste and inefficiency in only employing African-Americans in certain capacities.

The study influenced Gen. Carl A. Spaatz, the first CSAF, to issue a statement on integration in April 1948. Spaatz promised that Air Force African-Americans would soon be "used on a broader professional scale than has obtained heretofore." He stated that all Airmen would be guaranteed equal opportunity regardless of race and that "the ultimate Air Force objective must be to eliminate segregation among its personnel by the unrestricted use of Negro personnel in free competition for any duty within the Air Force for which they may qualify."<sup>23</sup>

A year later, on 11 May 1949, the Air Force officially released letter No. 35-3 stating, "There shall be equality of treatment and opportunity in the Air Force without regard to race, color, religion or national origin." Integration of units began immediately, and on 1 June 1949, Air Force basic training officially ended racial segregation, assigning recruits to squadrons by gender and time of arrival only.

Thomas N. Barnes joined the Air Force in 1949 and was in one of the last segregated flights of basic training. He became an aircraft maintainer specializing in hydraulics and was the first African-American in his unit. Twenty-four years later, he became the fourth enlisted member appointed as the CMSAF and the first African-American to hold the position. While in office from 1973-77, Barnes made many notable contributions to the evolution of the enlisted force, but in many ways he is known for his greatest passion: working to ensure equality among the great Airmen comprising the US Air Force. One of the most common questions Barnes heard during his early tenure was, "What programs will you implement for blacks?" To which he recalled replying, "None. I told them I worked for all blue suiters."<sup>24</sup>

Barnes was anything but alone in his conviction for an inclusive Air Force. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Air Force was still combatting echoes of racial discrimination but also began to purposefully move toward gender equality. In 1948, the Women's Armed Service Act of 1948 allowed women to lawfully serve in the armed forces, but they could only make up two percent of the service and only could serve in a handful of jobs. In 1967, when Paul Airey was appointed the first CMSAF, there were only 5,000 authorized enlisted women positions in the Air Force.<sup>25</sup>

As time progressed, women were given more career opportunities, and their numbers rose to 10 percent of the force by 1979. Still, there was more to be done to fully integrate women into the service.







For the most part, this was supported by the Air Force's highest enlisted leadership. CMSAF Robert Gaylor was one of the many supportive voices:

People should have the opportunity to do that for which they have been trained and prepared, and which fits their desires. . . . I think we just have to ensure our people are given an opportunity. If they can't cut it, regardless of race, creed, color or sex then someone else should be in there, but they should be given a chance to show whether they can do it or cannot do it.<sup>26</sup>

In the past decade, the Air Force—along with the entire Department of Defense—has gone to great lengths to make sure service members from all backgrounds and demographics feel included and valued. Some of the biggest initiatives in recent years were the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” in September 2011, which allowed gay military members to serve openly in the armed forces. To better support military mothers, the Air Force extended maternity leave from six weeks to 12 weeks and extended deferments for deployment and physical fitness tests from six months after childbirth to 12. Another momentous change came on 3 December 2015, when Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that, beginning in 2016, all military occupations and positions would be opened to women. According to Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, this declaration opens up 4,000 jobs for females in the Air Force across six career fields.<sup>27</sup>

According to James, progress has been made in this endeavor to welcome diversity, but “We (the Air Force) can do better,” she said.<sup>28</sup> To cement their commitment to improving upon conditions for tomorrow’s Airmen, Air Force’s top leadership in 2015—CSAF Gen Mark A. Welsh III, CMSAF James A. Cody, and Secretary James—signed a memorandum on diversity and inclusion that read in part:

Across the force, diversity of background, experience, demographics, perspective, thought and even organization are essential to our ultimate success in an increasingly competitive and dynamic global environment. As airpower advocates, we must be culturally competent and operationally relevant to effectively accomplish our various missions. As Airmen, whether military or civilian, we must continue to build and maintain our commitment to diversity, inclusion and the associated promise of enhanced mission performance. These concepts infuse innovation and forward thinking into our culture and mission areas and resonate within our service’s core values demonstrating that integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do are part of our character.<sup>29</sup>

Though it continues to be a young service, the Air Force and its enlisted Airmen have made a name for themselves over the years as an aerial force to be reckoned with. They are professional Airmen, committed to service in the profession of arms that requires a commitment to dignity and respect for all who choose to serve. Enlisted Airmen have evolved from the first mechanics working on the Wright Model A to today’s enlisted force made up of 395,000 professional Airmen in the active duty Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve.<sup>30</sup> Each conflict or war entered into by US Airmen—from the first air missions in World War I through Vietnam, the Cold War, Operation Desert Storm, and up to today’s Global War on Terror—have provided the experience and knowledge to strengthen the force of the future. The combat experience of today’s enlisted Airmen, combined with their professional development gleaned through training and education, highlights just how far the enlisted force has evolved since its inception and just how far Airmen can carry the force into the future.

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# AN WRITTEN BY CMSGT TIMOTHY HORN UNFINISHED JOURNEY

## AIR FORCE ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

The strength and capability of our enlisted corps is the envy of nations around the globe. There are countless requests through the Department of State each year asking the Air Force to send representatives to foreign nations to share our enlisted developmental master plan. How do we produce such capable Airmen? We put our enlisted Airmen in challenging jobs and hand them responsibilities that most militaries reserve only for their officers. We can do this because we recruit talented young men and women and deliberately develop them through training, education, and experience. While technical training is a key ingredient to our success, our investment in education and professional development separates the US Air Force enlisted corps—specifically, our enlisted professional military education (EPME).

Education has not always been a strength of our enlisted Airmen. Early in our Air Force's history, we were laser focused on training and experience. It is impossible to objectively answer why this was the case, but there are several

intuitive reasons. First, compared to contemporary standards, we recruited from a pool of less-educated young men and women. Second, our technology and weapon systems were far less complex. Consider the career of our first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). When a young Paul Airey entered the Army Air Corps in 1940, our primary bomber was powered by propellers. Compare that with our Air Force in 1970, the sunset of Chief Airey's career. Jet engines, long-range missiles, mission capabilities in space, and computer technology defined an entirely different and much more tech-savvy Air Force.<sup>1</sup> Third, the geopolitical environment itself was simpler. The Cold War was the manifestation of a bipolar world; it was no less frightening, but much simpler than the numerous rogue nation states and potential threats that loom over us today. That meant Airmen enjoyed a level of predictability in everyday operations that lent itself to the strengths of training versus the more nuanced capabilities that come with education.



Furthermore, the size of the force meant most enlisted Airmen could focus on their core job. Only the most seasoned and experienced noncommissioned officers (NCO) were assigned leadership responsibilities, and very few had any education beyond high school. Years later, as the Cold War came to a close, the force began to dramatically reduce our enlisted manpower. Leadership responsibility, by necessity, was pushed further down to more junior Airmen. Suddenly mid-level NCOs were expected to lead.

Over time, our world has grown more complex, and our Air Force has responded accordingly—particularly in the increasing demands we have placed on our enlisted Airmen. While training was absolutely critical to the demanding and often highly technical duties our Airmen executed on a daily basis—and remains essential to our success today—education became more necessary in order to prepare Airmen to operate in an ever-changing and unpredictable environment. Over time, our Air Force began to deliberately encourage and reward off-duty education. When Chief Rodney J. McKinley became the CMSAF in 2006, for example, he highly encouraged Airmen to earn their Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) degree earlier in their careers. The number of enlisted Airmen with an associate’s degree has doubled in the past 20 years; the number of baccalaureate degrees has also doubled. The CCAF is conferring record numbers of associate’s degrees and has recently reached a milestone of 450,000. While this is an impressive trend, it is imperative we shape this educational investment toward competencies the Air Force values and needs. Over time, EPME has done just that.

## THE BIRTH OF EPME

The birth and evolution of EPME paralleled the increasing trends for postsecondary education. In 1951 Air Training Command split flying and technical training into two distinct organizations to meet the increasing demands due to the Korean War. The technical training component became the Technical Training Air Force (TTAF). One year later, a letter from Headquarters TTAF established the requirement for NCO leadership development within the technical training community. There was increasing recognition that “technical skill . . . alone did not meet the overall qualifications for noncommissioned Airmen.”<sup>2</sup> TTAF’s initiative, however, was not the first of its kind; this historical distinction belongs to the US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). Established in 1950, the Academy of Leadership and Management in Wiesbaden, West Germany, educated and developed enlisted men and women throughout USAFE. While there were several other similar experiments across the Air Force at the time, TTAF’s effort was the seed corn for EPME as we know it today.

During the 1950s, numerous organizations throughout the Air Force created their own schoolhouses and academies. Commanders and other leaders began to more fully appreciate the benefit of investing in our NCOs by providing them with these professional



**General Curtis E. LeMay**  
Commander of Strategic Air Command





developmental opportunities. Perhaps the most celebrated Air Force leader to get behind this effort was Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, then commander of Strategic Air Command (SAC). On 26 January 1953, General LeMay issued SAC General Order 10, creating an official command-wide EPME program. The April 1955 edition of Air Force Magazine featured a full-length article on one of SAC's NCO academies. It described a school that was notably more "military" than the education-centric programs we have today. The students endured numerous room inspections, uniform assessments, and hours of drill practice in addition to classroom lectures and other activities. When the students were asked if the Air Force should expand the NCO Academy program, their response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic.<sup>3</sup> While the Air Force as an institution was not quite ready to make such an investment, other major commands (MAJCOM) were unwilling to wait and began following SAC's example. Soon there were leadership schools and NCO academies throughout the Air Force. By late 1955, academies had been established at six Air Force bases around the globe.<sup>4</sup> Curriculum at these schools, however, continued to be locally developed; quality and content varied wildly.

Major commands tended to develop lesson plans suited to their unique mission requirements or aligned to their organizational culture and priorities. NCOs might attend a school accentuating drill and ceremonies in one command, while their peers were getting a heavy dose of personnel management in another. This model met the needs and desires of respective commanders, but it wasn't long before savvy Air Force leaders realized the need for consistency. Centrally developing and assigning specific course content eliminated disparate priorities and established standardization and professionalism. Furthermore, it eliminated the often redundant educational experience that Airmen received when moving from one command to another. In 1955 one particular innovation provided a wellspring for all future EPME courses: the creation of a formalized enlisted force structure, complete with defined responsibilities for each tier and rank. Never before had such clear roles and responsibilities been articulated. Later that year, Air Force regulation 39-6, The Enlisted Force Structure, was approved. The Enlisted Force Structure has had a profound influence on EPME curricula ever since.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) Gen. Nathan F. Twining signed Air Force regulation 50-39, Air Force Enlisted Professional Military Education, on 30 January 1957. The new regulation was the starting gun for a decade of increased standardization. The content of AFR 50-39 was largely the result of a conference the year prior, attended by representatives from several of the major NCO academies. The overarching theme of the conference was eliminating the inconsistencies of course curriculum. While MAJCOMs continued to develop their own EPME courses, the policy revision in 1960 limited the curriculum to only the specific topics listed in the regulation.<sup>5</sup>



The one notable exception to this rule was the establishment of an Air National Guard (ANG) NCO Academy at McGhee Tyson ANG Base in Knoxville, Tennessee, in the late 1960s. This entire effort was the brainchild of Maj. Gen. I. G. Brown, the first ANG director. In 1966 General Brown was invited by the NCO Academy at Hamilton AFB, California, to be their graduation speaker. He came away so impressed by the experience—and by the vice commandant, CMSgt Paul H. Lankford—that he hired the chief as part of a team to create an NCO academy specifically for the Guard.<sup>6</sup> Both the general and the chief have become part of our rich total force heritage; their legacy lives on through the Paul H. Lankford EPME Center and its parent organization, the I. G. Brown Training and Education Center—both located at McGhee Tyson ANG Base.

As the drive for standardization settled into a more incremental pace, other efforts began to emerge that further institutionalized EPME across the Air Force. For example, an update to AFR 50-39 authorized graduates from PME to receive an official letter of recognition and entitled those Airmen to wear the NCO Academy Graduate Ribbon (the ribbon was created in 1962, but clear approval of who could wear it did not occur until 1970). Several schools that had been shut down due to conflicting budget priorities were reopened, including the NCO Academy at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. This particular schoolhouse was reopened by a senior NCO who would go on to become the fifth CMSAF, Robert D. Gaylor. Chief Gaylor had been an honor graduate of the same academy in 1965, then went on to serve as an instructor until it closed the following year. Less than two years later, he was called upon to reopen the schoolhouse doors.<sup>7</sup> These fits and starts were, unfortunately, typical of the time.

Another CMSAF, from an earlier time, featured prominently in our EPME heritage. In 1967 Chief Paul Airey was trailblazing this brand new position called the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Among many important enlisted issues of the time, he decided to take on the expansion of PME, articulating the need for a higher level of development through a Senior NCO Academy (SNCOA). According to Chief Airey, Air Force leadership did not embrace this effort and were emphatic in their position, citing a lack of available funds.<sup>8</sup> Three years later as the CMSAF baton was passed from Chief Airey to Donald L. Harlow and again to Richard D. Kisling, the environment was growing ripe for change. “We had become too sophisticated and centralized,” said Chief Kisling. “We expected people to be highly technical specialists, supervisors, and NCOs, without the benefit of adequate training and experience. We needed to develop our NCOs like our officers. . . . We needed a first-class PME system for our enlisted force.”<sup>9</sup>

Chief Kisling finally worked through the funding challenges and received approval to establish a SNCO Academy; however, he still had one hurdle to overcome. There were certain voices advocating for the new academy to be for first sergeants only—a decision he thought “would be wrong for the entire Air Force.”<sup>10</sup> Finally, once this battle was won—and the original intent was made clear—he saw the plan come to fruition. In 1972 CSAF Gen. John Ryan signed US Air Force Decision Number D-72-8, formally establishing the SNCOA. (In 1986, the main building that housed the SNCO Academy was named Kisling Hall in his honor.)<sup>11</sup>



**CMSAF Richard D. Kisling**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





This became the highest level of EPME until the creation of the Chief's Leadership Course in 2005, over 30 years later. In a post retirement interview, CMSAF Don Harlow proudly spoke of his hard work and advocacy toward this effort. In his final assessment, "I thought it was the greatest thing we ever did."<sup>12</sup> The inaugural class graduated on 3 March 1973. Among the 120 graduates were three future CMSAFs: Thomas N. Barnes, James M. McCoy, and Sam E. Parish.

Although new policies helped institutionalize EPME, the early 1970s were still a time of measured growth and uneven grass roots efforts across the Air Force. In fact, future CMSAF Robert D. Gaylor was transferred to USAFE in 1971 for the sole purpose of building an ad hoc professional development experience for their NCOs. Chief Gaylor recalls this effort:

"I would have preferred to activate a full-scale NCO academy in USAFE, but we had neither the funds nor [the] facility. As an interim [measure], we established the Command Management Center at Lindsey Air Force Station [Germany]. We renovated an old building to house students and presented a sixty-hour course of instruction on leadership/management skills, communicative skills, and contemporary issues to hundreds of USAFE NCOs from throughout the command."<sup>13</sup>

The demand for the education was unmistakable. Chief Gaylor noted that "our reputation was so high that NCOs were begging for a slot. Our center was the forerunner to the eventual opening of the USAFE NCO academy in 1975."<sup>14</sup>

The introduction of AFR 50-39 advanced the ongoing effort to develop a more homogenous curriculum. It specified required subjects, and established educational objectives and samples of behavior for each of the five levels of EPME. Individual schools still wrote their own curriculum, but it was mandated that course content support the required educational objectives and samples of behavior construct. This not only impacted content but also introduced a level of academic rigor that had been previously absent. In many ways, EPME began to look very much like we know it today. Additional supporting policy changes were also underway.

On 1 June 1976, as a requirement to assume NCO status, senior airmen were required to complete the NCO Orientation Course during their first year as an E-4 (this was when the Air Force had two E-4 ranks, senior airman and sergeant). PME was no longer a "nice-to-have"—it was woven into the fabric of an enlisted Airman's career.<sup>15</sup> The NCO Orientation and NCO Supervisor Course [PME 1 & 2] became the first serious effort to regulate curriculum from a centralized organization. To enable this new undertaking, the Air Force established the NCO PME Division at the Leadership and Management Development Center (LMDC)—later renamed the Center for Professional Development at Air University—and charged it with writing the course curriculum for the entire force.



Later, in the mid-1980s, the Air Force combined PME 1 and 2 and created a preparatory course for E-4s with a focus on supervision and leadership. The course also was notably more challenging, with the introduction of formalized testing and more stringent graduation requirements.<sup>16</sup>

## THE EPME CONFERENCES OF 1980 AND 1985

There have been symposiums and conferences throughout the history of EPME, but two major conferences during the 1980s were particularly pivotal in shaping significant policy decisions that defined EPME for decades to come. The first, heralded as the 1980 Biennial NCO PME Conference, addressed a staggering 116 recommendations, ultimately approving 37 for implementation.<sup>17</sup> The conference goals were varied and aggressive; attendees were asked to establish annual requirements for in-resident attendance at all EPME schools, develop manpower standards, optimize quota sharing between MAJCOMs, better integrate EPME with other training requirements, and adjust curriculum based upon the typical tasks that enlisted members perform at various levels in their career progression. While the EPME enterprise still consisted of individually owned schools across the major commands, the rule sets, policies, and curriculum became increasingly centralized.

CMSAF James M. McCoy participated in this conference. He had much to offer, as he had held multiple EPME jobs throughout his career, including instructor, commandant, course developer, and staff action officer. When he was assigned to headquarters, SAC, he established and provided oversight to the SAC NCO Academy and NCO Leadership programs. As CMSAF McCoy closed the conference, attendees reviewed some of the approved changes “to include allowing more members to attend, to more evenly space PME throughout a career and to minimize redundancy between phases.”<sup>18</sup> They also approved the development of a formal awards and recognition program. Numerous initiatives, on the other hand, were rejected outright, including awarding promotion points to graduates, administering reading tests prior to attendance, giving volunteers preferential selections, developing a distance learning program for the NCO Leadership School, and providing special duty pay for instructors. Many of the issues raised in this symposium were discussed and debated further in a conference that took place five years later.

One of our future CMSAFs—Jim Finch—taught enlisted PME as a young NCO during this time. Chief Finch started as an NCO Orientation Course instructor in 1980 and eventually became the director of education at the Homestead PME Center. As an instructor and faculty member, he became very familiar with the issues from the 1980 conference; in fact, the Homestead PME Center hosted a similar conference in 1984. One specific topic became a major concern through the 1980s: the accreditation process.







Some schools, such as Homestead, had already been independently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; they lost credit hours once they were centralized and became affiliates of CCAF. While the evolving affiliation process eventually led to a much better result, the growing pains were frustrating and required hard work and effort.

CMSAF Finch's contribution to EPME continued throughout his entire career. After writing local curriculum for the Homestead NCO Leadership School, he worked at Air University—first writing course content, then teaching at the instructor course. In 1988 he became the Air Force PME functional manager and worked many of the issues discussed in these conferences. One of the more important policy efforts he worked on was finding a way to make the SNCO Academy a master sergeant school. While initially successful, a growing promotion rate and increased attendance from Total Force and sister service members made continuing the policy problematic. There simply was not enough capacity, and the cost was too high. The idea of moving SNCO Academy attendance “to the left” continued to be both a desire and a challenge for many years. In his very next assignment, Chief Finch put the policies he had been working on into action as the commandant, Pacific Air Forces NCO Academy at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.<sup>19</sup>

In 1983, while Jim Finch was still learning the ropes as a director of education, Chief Sam Parish became the CMSAF. Two years later, he put his stamp on EPME through the 1985 NCO PME Policy Conference, hosted by the very NCO Academy that CMSAF McCoy helped establish. The core of this conference was the debate over whether students who failed to meet the 70-percent academic standard should be eliminated from the course and, subsequently, no longer eligible for promotion. As mentioned previously, the Air Force was beginning to levy more leadership responsibilities on mid-level NCOs around this time. To that end, the “whole person concept” was born, stressing the importance of learning more than one's primary job. An enlisted leader must also gain expertise in leadership, supervision, communication, and other elements of professional development.

Several other topics with long-term implications were addressed as well, including opportunity rates for in-resident attendance. The momentum was shifting from a capacity-based model to one centered on Air Force needs. The attendees recommended a goal of 95-percent opportunity for E-5s to attend NCO Leadership School by their ninth year of service and 89-percent rate for E-6s to attend by their 15th year. Other issues included decisions on the weight management program, the overseas EPME quota process, standardizing course length across the MAJCOMs, and using the academic models of psychomotor and affective domains developed by the renowned education expert Norman Gronlund.<sup>20</sup> This last decision demonstrates the increased sophistication in course development that would strengthen EPME in the near future.



Although not part of the 1985 NCO PME Conference, there was one more noteworthy change in the mid-1980s. Established largely thanks to the advocacy of CMSAF Parish, the John Levitow Award is perhaps the most recognized honor among enlisted Airmen. A1C John Levitow received the Medal of Honor on 14 May 1970 for his heroic actions during Vietnam. When President Richard Nixon presented Levitow with his medal, he was the only enlisted Airman to receive this honor since the Air Force became a separate service. For Chief Parish, naming this award after Airman Levitow accomplished two goals. First, it created an appropriately professional level of recognition beyond honor graduate. Second, he thought “it would be a great way for the enlisted force to learn a little of our enlisted history—and to get his name known by all enlisted members.”<sup>21</sup>

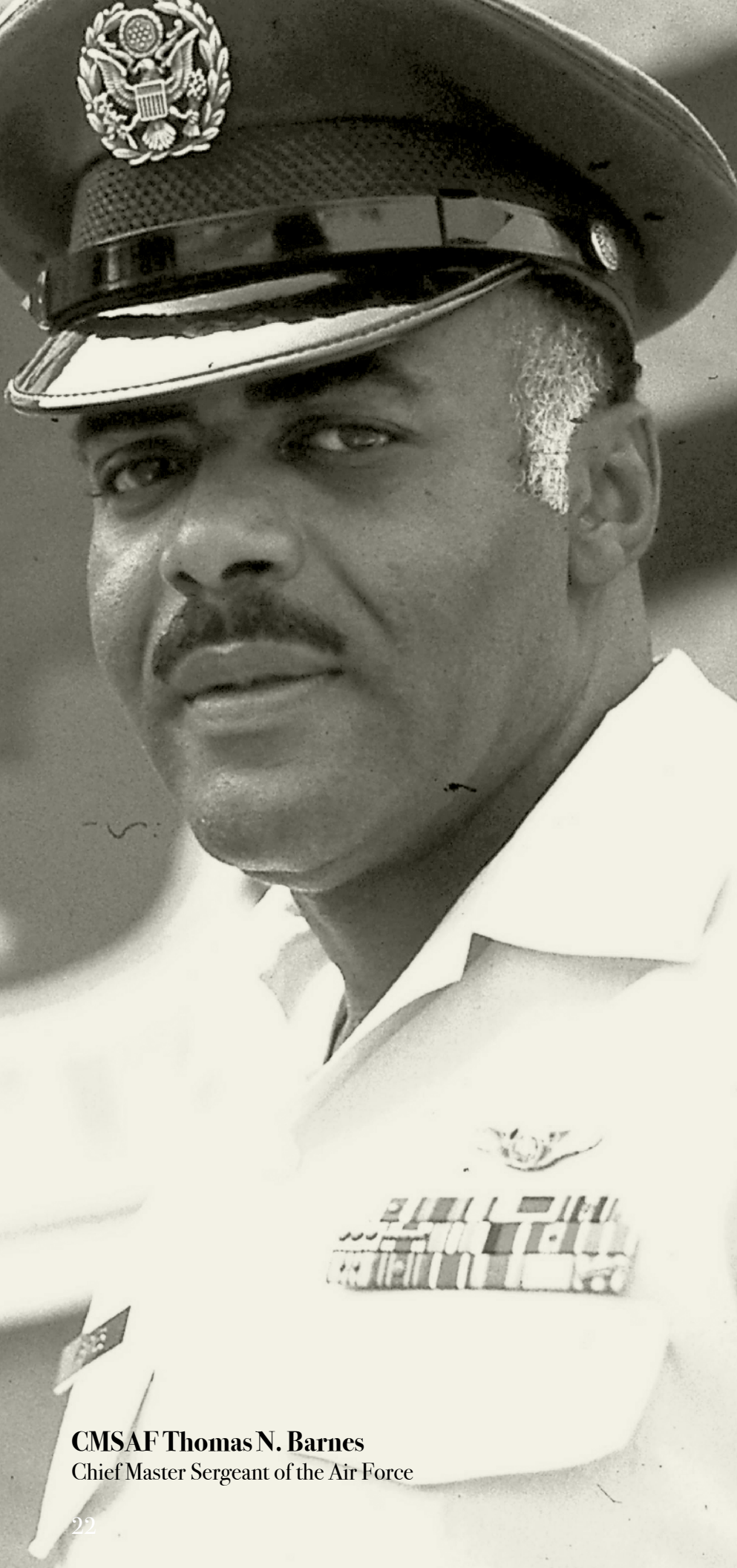
## ELEVATED STATUS AND FOCUS ON CURRICULUM

The 1990s brought legitimacy and an elevated status to EPME. There was a flurry of activity and an enterprise-wide spotlight on enlisted programs. One key initiative—the result of the 1990 NCO PME Conference hosted by CMSAF James C. Binnicker—combined the first two levels of EPME, removing the NCO Leadership School and replacing and expanding the NCO Preparatory Course with Airman Leadership School (ALS). (Not coincidentally, renaming the first level of EPME came on the heels of eliminating the E-4 sergeant rank.)<sup>22</sup> All senior airmen were required to graduate from ALS before assuming the role of supervisor with rater responsibilities. The initiative also mandated 100 percent attendance to resident PME. Resource streams previously unavailable suddenly broke free. Schoolhouses around the Air Force began to receive the funding necessary to finally upgrade computers, classroom equipment, and furniture. Enlisted PME schools across the Air Force were beginning to look and feel more professional. In short, it made a difference. One year later, Air University stood up the College of EPME (CEPME), today called the Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education. This was a wing equivalent organization, much like Air War College or Air Command and Staff College. Suddenly, EPME was a near-peer to their officer counterparts. The new organization was officially assigned the responsibility for standardized curriculum and governance across the Air Force.

Although CEPME stood up in 1991, the MAJCOMs continued to own and operate NCO academies well into 1992. MAJCOMs controlled production rates and owned the seats, which forced students to travel further to attend their MAJCOM-owned facilities rather than attending a perfectly good school nearer to their home station. This was a problem during the 1980s and continued into the early 1990s. In an attempt to offset these costs, the Air Force hosted annual “quota sharing” conferences to trade seats and save money. By 1990 these became “quota distribution” conferences, and in 1992, the Air Force automated the process to further shift the focus on cost and efficiency. Numerous audits of the NCO PME program indicated waste in temporary duty dollars due to MAJCOM desires to fill their own NCOA seats. Consequently, there was considerable pressure to develop centralized curriculum and put the NCO academies under one command.







**CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

In 1993 this became a reality for the continental United States NCO academies when they were officially realigned from the MAJCOMs to Air University.<sup>23</sup> With centralized control finally secured, the next area of debate was course content. What should we teach our enlisted Airmen?

As one might imagine, the answer to this question was contentious and discussed with vigor by our most senior leaders—both officers and enlisted. There are dozens of lessons that existed in 1990 that are no longer taught in our classrooms. Topics like “Respect for the Flag,” “Communism,” and “Drug and Alcohol Abuse” reflect the culture and geopolitical environment of the time. Other subjects were timeless: “Standards and Discipline,” “Professional Relations,” and “Leadership and Management.”<sup>24</sup> The Enlisted Force Development Panel—part of the Air Force corporate process—wrestled with a list of educational outcomes but came to realize there should be a separate process whereby certain institutional competencies are assigned to Airmen based on their current or projected grade. These competencies—for all Airmen—have matured and evolved. They are now part of Air Force Instruction 36-2618, The Enlisted Force Structure, and have been folded into our Air Force leadership doctrine, becoming the engine that drives EPME content. All competencies are integrated into each course so Airmen develop the competence, confidence, and courage to execute assigned responsibilities mandated by The Enlisted Force Structure.

From an organizational and structural point of view, EPME has remained fairly stable over the past 15–20 years. Nearly every base still has an Airman Leadership School; there are a dozen NCO academies across the globe; and there is still the one and only SNCOA, established in 1972. A few programs, however, have sprung up to augment and round out enlisted development. One such program that still exists today was the NCO Professional Development Seminar, a legacy of CMSAF Eric W. Benken in the late 1990s. As for PME, there were certainly discussions about policy and content, but, for the most part, it was characterized by consistency, becoming part of our Air Force culture and an essential building block to a successful enlisted career.

## **CMSAF ADVOCACY AND THE WAY AHEAD**

The consistent involvement of our top enlisted leaders in EPME clearly demonstrates the importance it has had—and continues to have—in enlisted development. It is impossible—and beyond the scope of this chapter—to properly pay homage to each CMSAF and the role they played in the advancement of EPME. “Firsts” and major organizational and policy changes dominate the narrative because there is a tangible historical record to reference.

When CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes assumed his responsibilities as the CMSAF in 1973, he found an Air Force that lacked a real commitment to EPME. In his estimation, the entire effort was put on hold during the Vietnam War. Of his exhaustive list of contributions to the Air Force during his tenure, Chief Barnes was most proud to be a champion for EPME. Decades later, during the budget crisis of 2012, CMSAF James A. Roy passionately protected and defended enlisted force development programs from potentially devastating cuts. His advocacy ensured EPME survived the ill effects of the Budget Control Act of 2011.

Other changes, though significant, are often known only by a few people. For example, CMSAF Gerald R. Murray's impact on EPME was profound but less direct; he ensured our enlisted Airmen had the right training and cultural mind-set to take on the increasing expeditionary nature of the Air Force in the early 2000s. He did not accomplish this through specific policy changes but through leadership. His influence on EPME curriculum was noteworthy and had a substantial effect on enlisted Airmen. Depending on the challenges and priorities at the time, just keeping the schoolhouse doors open could be considered a notable accomplishment.

When CMSAF James A. Cody was selected as the 17th CMSAF in 2013, he was serving as the Air Education and Training Command command chief. Consequently, he already had a deep understanding of EPME. In fact, Chief Cody had already set into motion the most transformational change the PME enterprise had experienced in decades. He sought a new model and new supporting policies that would accomplish the following objectives: (1) take advantage of recent advances in technology and distance learning; (2) deliver relevant education to our Airmen earlier in their careers; (3) facilitate broader Total Force participation; (4) focus the resident program on more experiential and relevant learning models; and (5) design an architecture that can more readily adapt to ever-changing fiscal environments.

Perhaps the most tangible and noteworthy benefit is the implementation of the blended learning model. Students in the NCO Academy and SNCO Academy now meet their core education requirements through a distance learning (DL) course. The DL portion is followed by a completely reinvented in-residence course. Now called the Intermediate Leadership Experience for NCO Academy, and the Advanced Leadership Experience for SNCO Academy, students no longer sit for hours listening to podium instructors, having learned the material in the DL portion. Instead, they dive headlong into student-led projects and problem-solving activities based on real-world issues they bring from their home units. Further, they work in multiple team environments; many students come away with the most candid and powerful peer feedback they have received in their entire careers. The material is challenging and, from an academic perspective, taking our senior NCOs to higher levels of learning than ever before. Most importantly, students have repeatedly given high praise for the relevance of the course content.

What is next? Only time will tell. One vision is to further modularize the DL content and spread the material out over an Airman's career, making the courses easier to digest and less a series of "mountain-top experiences." Ideally, there will be greater flexibility and choice, as long as enough EPME credits are achieved by certain milestones, Airmen may have a say in which modules they take and when they take them. Smaller, more-focused modules are easier to update. Further, delivery methodologies can vary; course developers can match their lesson content with the delivery option that makes sense for that topic. For example, some lessons may lend themselves to a mostly narrative style of delivery for self-study, while others may benefit from a more interactive online interface where a cohort of students can share experiences and online instructors can guide the conversation.

This is just one possible future. Clearly, this is an unfinished journey.

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# TH 1967 TO 2017 CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE A BRIEF HISTORY WRITTEN BY CMSGT LEE E. HOOVER JR.

Two decades after the US Air Force became a separate military service, momentum began to grow for a new type of leader—an enlisted Airman who could represent and inspire the enlisted force from the highest levels of the Air Force. During the decade that saw promotion stagnation and confusion following the Korean War, combined with the ever-increasing reality of a lengthy war in Vietnam, enlisted Airmen felt they needed a voice.<sup>1</sup>

As early as March 1964, the Air Force Association's Enlisted Council recommended the Air Force establish a "Sergeant Major of the Air Force." The individual would advise the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force and be a representative to whom the enlisted Airmen could "freely express their opinions and recommendations on matters ranging from mission effectiveness to personal problems."<sup>2</sup>

The proposal was turned down. Air Force leaders felt the position risked undermining the chain of command, but a year later, it became clear that actions from other services and elected leaders on Capitol Hill would force their hand. In 1965 the Army established the Sergeant Major of the Army (the Marine Corps had established the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps in 1957), and the following year Cong. L. Mendel Rivers (D-SC), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, introduced a bill that would mandate each service create a senior enlisted advisor position to "advise the leadership on the morale, welfare, and career opportunities of the enlisted men and women of their respective service."<sup>3</sup>

Although the necessary votes for the Rivers's bill failed to materialize, Air Force leaders recognized the momentum and enthusiastic support for the position from the enlisted force. Gen John P. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, began to solicit advice and consider his options, and in August 1966 adopted the idea by announcing the "Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force" (CMSAF). The position "was to be filled by an individual who will become the highest ranking enlisted member of the Air Force."<sup>4</sup>



**CMSAF Paul Airey**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





## **“WE WERE AT THE START OF A PERIOD WHEN THE LEADERSHIP REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT THEY NEEDED BETTER COMMUNICATIONS”**

The Air Force established selection criteria for the position, which whittled potential nominees down to 2,200 chief master sergeants from the more than 5,900 chiefs on active duty. Candidates had to have at least 22 years of active-duty service and two years' time in grade as a chief master sergeant. They also had to have a high school diploma and represent the highest standards of integrity and performance.

Commanders nominated 21 chiefs, and a selection board narrowed them down to three finalists: CMSgt Conrad Stevens of the Military Airlift Command, CMSgt Jefferson “Red” Marsh from Pacific Air Forces, and CMSgt Paul Airey of the Air Defense Command.<sup>5</sup> In January 1967 Gen. McConnell announced CMSgt Paul Airey would be the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Airey assumed the role on 3 April 1967 during a ceremony in the Secretary of the Air Force's conference room.

“We were at the start of a period when the leadership realized suddenly that they needed better communications,” Airey said, reflecting on the time years later. “Many people say that's the reason this job was established: to give enlisted people a route right to the top without going through the various channels, so that they would have somebody up there representing them.”<sup>6</sup>

Although the position was established and Airey was given an office in the Pentagon, the influence and impact of the CMSAF did not arrive overnight. Airey had to establish relations and build influence, often needing to press against the notion that enlisted Airmen should have no bearing on Air Force decisions. In an interview with the Air Force Historical Research Center in 1981, Airey reflected on the lessons he learned in the first few months in the position:

“Being Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is 90 percent common sense and 10 percent knowledge. You have to try and get along with the Air Staff. That's whom you are going to be working with. You have to try to get along with certain people in order to best represent the force. There are people who will make a patsy out of you, both officer and enlisted. There are people who will use you. There are people, I am sorry to say, who have axes to grind. Or they will ask you for a favor, and you will look into it and find they don't have a good reason, and because you tell them that, they don't want to hear that, then you are no good.”<sup>7</sup>

**Congressman L. Mendel Rivers**  
Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee





**CMSAF Donald L. Harlow**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





**CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force



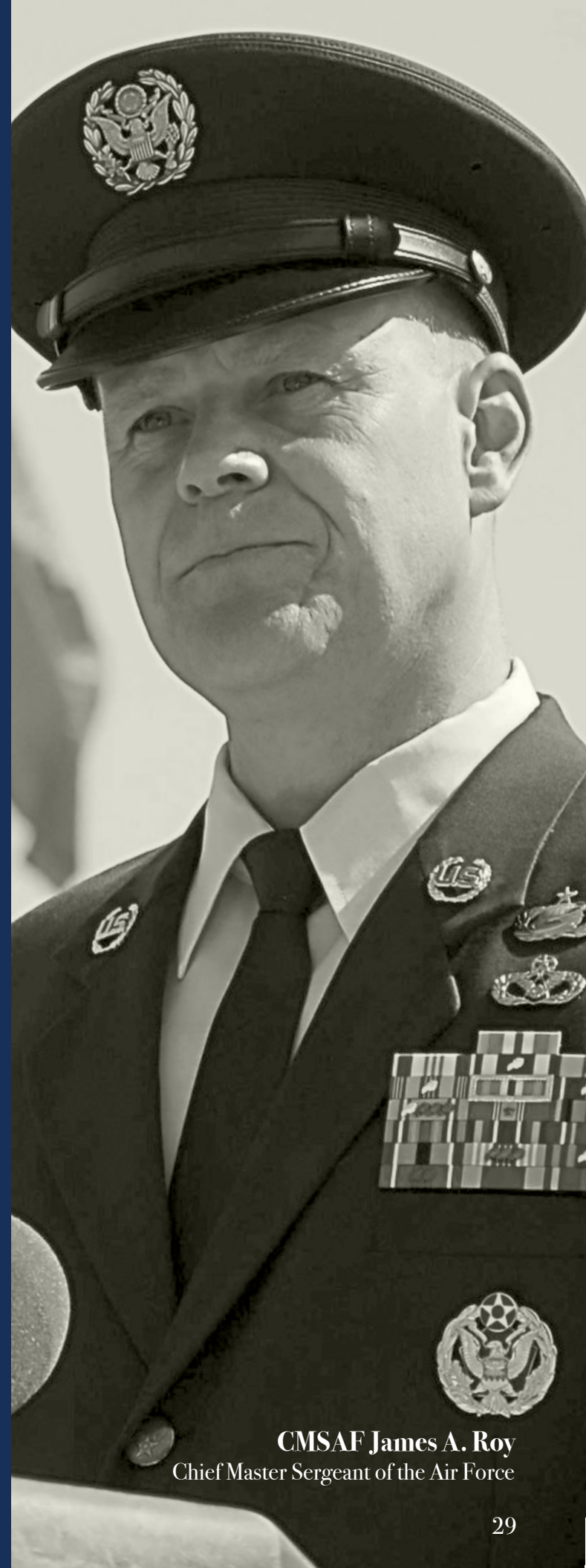
## **“I THINK WE ALL HAVE THE DUTY TO TOUCH THOSE THINGS THAT DIRECTLY IMPACTED THE DAY-TO-DAY LIVES OF THE ENLISTED FORCE”**

Airey had the fortitude and patience to calmly build credibility in the position. By the time he passed the baton to Donald L. Harlow, the influence had begun to grow. In *The Enlisted Experience*, Harlow recalled that full acceptance and influence did not come until years later:

“There was an awful lot of opposition. Even CMSAF Dick Kisling ran into it. It wasn’t until later on that the leadership started to realize that it was a good position. We had no authority; we couldn’t sign anything. When Paul and I were asked to comment on various issues, usually through staff summary sheets, we gave our input. As each one of us got into the position, the job increased in importance and significance. Those who followed served on more committees and got to go over to Congress to testify on various issues. The position became more visible, and I think that was great.”<sup>8</sup>

As the position became more widely accepted and commanders began to realize the importance of an enlisted Airman on the staff, commanders began to hire their own senior enlisted advisors. It began in major commands, then down to the wings and other commands where the position still exists today. The position is called the Command Chief Master Sergeant, a title introduced in 1998 during CMSAF Eric W. Benken’s tenure.

In the 50 years since Airey first stepped in as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, the Chiefs have heavily influenced the direction of the enlisted force. Airey was involved with the first efforts to standardize and centralize enlisted promotions and helped develop the Weighted Airman Promotion System. All the chiefs have pushed for better professional development through enlisted professional military education, establishing the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy and evolving the delivery of professional military education over the years. The chiefs have also addressed social issues, working to build an environment that better supported racial and gender equality among the force, and have had a significant impact on recruitment and retention, especially following the transition to an all-volunteer force. They have advocated for positive changes to quality-of-life initiatives, including pay, housing, fitness, wounded warrior care, education, and more. They have also been through times of adversity, leading the enlisted force through budget cuts, promotion freezes, and force draw downs. Each CMSAF has left his mark and moved the enlisted force forward. Today the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force continue to count on the CMSAF to influence policy changes that better support the enlisted force.



**CMSAF James A. Roy**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





**CMSAF James C. Binnicker**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

## “BEING CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IS 90 PERCENT COMMON SENSE AND 10 PERCENT KNOWLEDGE.”

“I think we all have the duty to touch those things that directly impacted the day-to-day lives of the enlisted force,” CMSgt Thomas Barnes said in *The Enlisted Experience*. He summarized that the Chiefs have a say on many things, from uniform changes to budgetary decisions:

“There were the opportunities to initiate things. There were review activities associated with the budget cycle where the hardware and the people issues occurred. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was not excluded. You went in and had a chance, if nothing else to say your piece and understand the process.”<sup>9</sup>

In many ways, the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force has truly embodied the communication channel first envisioned when the position was created. Although Airey was adamant not to become the Airmen’s inspector general, he did understand the value of travel and face-to-face communication with enlisted Airmen around the world.<sup>10</sup> Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force have often travelled up to 300 days a year visiting Airmen to hear concerns firsthand and help shape the culture of the enlisted force. They have also taken advantage of communication mediums as technology has evolved. The rise of the Internet and e-mail has allowed direct messages from the CMSAF in a variety of forms. CMSAF James A. Cody communicated with Airmen through social media channels and originated a CHIEFchat web-video series to engage with Airmen and address questions on enlisted programs.

Although today’s challenges differ from those present when the position first emerged in the 1960s, the top enlisted leader’s primary role—supporting and shaping the enlisted force by advising the secretary of the Air Force and chief of staff of the Air Force—has not changed. Aviation technology has continued to modernize in a digital age. Career specialties have evolved to encompass the newer realms of space and cyberspace. Technology and structure have changed, but Airmen, the people who voluntarily serve their nation in the US Air Force, continue to be the Air Force’s most important asset. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force continues to represent them all and confidently takes on the challenge to lead them into the future.

### NOTES:

1. Janet R. Bedarnek, ed., *The Enlisted Experience: A Conversation with the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, July 2012), 9.
2. Air Force Association, *Air Force Fifty* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company, January 1998), 30.
3. Charles Lucas, “Chief Airey,” *Air Force Magazine* 80, no. 9 (September 1997): 62.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Bedarnek, *Enlisted Experience*, 123.
7. H. Amman, “Interview of CMSAF Paul W. Airey,” *US Air Force Oral History Program*, March 1981.
8. Bedarnek, *Enlisted Experience*, 124.
9. Ibid., 131.
10. Amman, “Interview of CMSAF Paul W. Airey.”





**CMSAF James A. Cody**  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **PAUL W. AIREY**

**APRIL 3, 1967 - JULY 31, 1969**

Paul Wesley Airey was born on 13 December 1923 and was raised in Quincy, Massachusetts, a predominately Navy town just across the Neponset River from Boston. As a boy, Airey always planned to enlist in the US Navy. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, he dropped out of high school to pursue that goal. However, after a bad experience with a Navy recruiter, he changed course, deciding instead to enlist in the US Army Air Corps on 16 November 1942.

Airey served for more than 27 years in various roles, including aerial gunner, radio operator, first sergeant, and personnel sergeant major. During World War II, his B-24 bomber was hit by flak shortly after bombs away in July 1944. Airey and his crew bailed out over Vienna, Austria, and immediately became prisoners of war (POW). It was Airey's 28th combat mission.

On 3 April 1967, Gen. John P. McConnell, the chief of staff of the Air Force, selected Airey to be the first Air

Force senior enlisted leader—the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. He immediately tackled tough issues such as assignments and promotion, firmly establishing the value and importance of the new position. Following his tenure, Airey returned to Tyndall AFB, Florida, as the first sergeant of a combat crew training squadron before retiring on 1 August 1970. He passed away on 11 March 2009.

The Air Force Historical Research Center interviewed Airey on 23–24 March 1981 in Panama City, Florida. During the interview, Airey discussed his childhood and military career, including details on his experience as a POW and his tenure as the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. The complete interview can be accessed on the Air University Library's online research center.<sup>1</sup> Portions of the interview are printed below. The order of some of the questions and answers has been adjusted to depict a chronological reflection on the life of Paul Wesley Airey.

## DID YOU HAVE A PRETTY NORMAL CHILDHOOD?

Yes. I believe I had a pretty normal childhood. Some of my earliest recollections were of New Bedford.<sup>2</sup> As you know, in its heyday, New Bedford was the whaling capital of the world and was still a busy seaport when I was a child. I can remember going to the whaling museum, in which I took great interest as one of my grandfathers was a whaler. We moved to Quincy, Massachusetts, while I was still very young, and I grew up there until enlisting in the Army Air Forces.

## WHAT COMPANY DID YOUR FATHER WORK FOR, OR DID HE WORK FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE ALONG THE WAY?

He worked for many companies. He had a bad time during the Depression—like so many thousands and thousands of people. He worked for hotel chains. In his latter years, he wasn't in the auditing business. I think he just did things like working around a supermarket just to keep busy after he retired.

## HOW DID THE DEPRESSION AFFECT YOUR FAMILY?

We about lost everything, as my dad lost his job and our home. Those were pretty rough days. We really didn't start seeing things looking better until World War II came on the horizon.

## DID YOU LIKE SCHOOL AS YOU WERE GROWING UP?

I am afraid in my first several years, I was no scholar and did not apply myself. I played all the sports—baseball, basketball, and football—and of course, we played sports that nowadays are just becoming popular, like hockey and soccer. I played soccer, which at that time was only played in that part of the country. I did not finish high school until well after I came in the service. But I had a normal upbringing in Quincy, Massachusetts.

## DID YOU DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE YOU ENLISTED?

Yes, shortly before.

## WAS THIS TO ENLIST?

That was the main reason. After Pearl Harbor, I wanted to come in, and I enlisted 16 November 1942.

## WHERE WERE YOU ON PEARL HARBOR DAY?

This was Sunday, 7 December, and I had been to a local semipro football game. Sometime just near the end of the game we received some type of word, but I still didn't realize it until I got home, and of course, by then the radio was filled with the news that the Japanese had struck Pearl Harbor. Most people were saying, "Where is Pearl Harbor?"

## DID YOU KNOW WHERE PEARL HARBOR WAS?

No, not really, if I recall right. The point I am trying to make is, there was a definite sense of purpose. The country was—at least we thought the country was in danger and Hitler had to be stopped. And of course, the Japanese had angered all of us.

## DID YOU HAVE ANY FEELING IN THAT SENSE, THAT THE GERMANS WERE WORSE OR BAD, OR THAT THE JAPANESE WERE WORSE?

I thought the Japanese were the ones that really set us off. They were the ones, "the day of infamy" so to speak. We overreacted to some degree, but there is no doubt, as military historians have said, if the Japanese had followed up on Pearl Harbor, they could very easily have taken Hawaii, and God knows what next. What I am trying to describe or say is that the country was not only alarmed, but it caused us to accelerate even more the buildup of our armed forces. We needed all the people we could get, and personnel from all walks of life were coming in with the draft or from enlistments.

## AS YOU WERE GROWING UP, WAS THERE ANY ONE THING THAT YOU HAD PLANNED TO DO AS AN ADULT?

Strange as it might seem, even then I had an inclination toward a military career. In those days the area that I grew up in was predominantly Navy. In Quincy, we had the huge Fore River Shipyard, which produced many capital ships for the Navy, such as the famous carrier *Wasp*, and even the cruiser the *Quincy* was built there. Both ships went down fighting the Japanese later in the war. In addition, Boston was a great Navy town. My plans as a young boy were to eventually go into the United States Navy.

## WHAT HAPPENED?

I haven't told this story very often, but I went into a Navy recruiting office, and there was an old chief petty officer sitting there. He gave me a bad time about he couldn't fool with me that day and made some remarks about, "We only want men, and we don't want to screw around with you today, and come back later"—just one of these belligerent types that really turn you off, the type that we try to keep away from recruiting offices. So I went down the street and joined the Army Air Forces. I owe that petty officer much for what he did for me by making me change my mind.



## **WAS THERE ANY ONE THING THAT YOU WANTED TO DO WHEN YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE?**

I wanted to be an aerial gunner. I didn't ask for radio. I had no intention of wanting to be a radio operator, but upon enlistment, I went through basic training in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which was one of coldest winters I ever spent in my life. The entire town of Atlantic City was taken over by the Army Air Forces for basic training. All of the hotels were used by various squadrons. We used to drill at Brigantine Field, which was on the outskirts of town. I don't know whether that particular plot of ground is still there. From there, upon completion of basic training, I was sent out to Scott AFB [Illinois].

## **WHAT KIND OF BASIC WAS THIS?**

### **DID YOU LEARN TO HANDLE WEAPONS OR ANYTHING?**

Yes. It was a speeded-up course, as the Army had a lot of catching up to do. We had the regular close order drill, the customs and courtesies, and all of the various subjects that go into the making of a soldier. As you know Atlantic City is right on the Atlantic Ocean, and at that time we were losing many ships at sea to German submarines. And we had complete blackouts on the coast to prevent our ships from showing up as silhouettes out on the water. Due to this action and also due to the fact that the Germans had landed some spies on the East Coast, we also trained to patrol the famous Atlantic City Boardwalk from a German landing. What bothered me is that they did not give me any ammo for the rifle.

## **YOU WENT OUT TO SCOTT. WHILE YOU WERE THERE, THEY DECIDED YOU WERE GOING TO BE AN AIRBORNE RADIO OPERATOR?**

Yes.

## **HOW DID YOU ACCEPT THAT?**

I wasn't that keen about becoming a radio operator. I wanted to be an aerial gunner. In those days, on both your B-17s and B-24s, which were heavy bombers, you had a crew of 10—four officers and six enlisted. You had the engineers or the aviation mechanics and the armament types and one radio operator. I really had more preference toward being an armorer, but they sent me to radio operators' school.

## **DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE LEARNING MORSE CODE OR ANYTHING?**

No, the code wasn't that difficult, just repetitious.

## **HOW FAST DID YOU HAVE TO COPY?**

Airborne operators in those days could never do more than 10 or 12 words per minute in the air. I think we had to graduate with 18 words a minute. That's sitting on the ground with ideal conditions, but up in a plane, we never did more than 10 or 12 words a minute. Blinkers gave me trouble. We used an Aldis lamp.<sup>3</sup> I forget how many words a minute it was that we had to pass. I think it was four words with the Aldis lamp. That gave me a lot of trouble until I learned the proper eye coordination.

## **YOU CAME DOWN HERE TO TYNDALL AFB, FLORIDA THEN FROM SCOTT?**

Yes.

## **HAD THERE BEEN A BASE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME WHEN YOU GOT HERE?**

Tyndall was started in 1941. Ground was broken on Pearl Harbor day. I came here, and the gunnery schools were in full swing.

## **YOU ARRIVED HERE IN JUNE 1943.**

Yes.

## **THEY TRAINED YOU IN GUNNERY. WAS THIS GOING TO BE THE .50 CALIBER, LOCATED AT LIKE THE DORSAL FIN OF THE B-17 OR B-14?**

They trained you in the various positions. You had turrets that were mounted on the backs of trucks. You started off training just like at a carnival with a .22, rifle shooting ducks that came by. That taught you to lead, and then you went into shotguns and skeet. From skeet you went into your machine guns on the backs of trucks and in turrets. Then they also had turrets where you shot skeet. Your shotguns were mounted in a turret, and you tracked the skeet with a turret and shot it. Then you stood in a harness in the back of a truck and went down these dirt roads, and skeet would be coming at you from various positions. It was an excellent school.

## **HAD YOU EVER DONE ANY SHOOTING BEFORE?**

Just rifles and shotguns. I really liked the aerial gunnery school.

## **WAS THERE QUITE A DROPOUT RATE AT THIS POINT?**

They had a certain elimination rate, yes. This could have been for many reasons. They started weeding people out early. There was a certain amount of fear of flying, which we still have today in some people. The pressure chamber eliminated a certain number—altitude chamber. Poor gunnery eliminated others.

## **WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TROOPS THEMSELVES? DID PEOPLE GET ALONG IN THOSE DAYS, OR DID YOU PAIR UP WITH PEOPLE OF COMMON INTERESTS AND COMMON HOMETOWNS AND THAT TYPE OF THING?**

I think everyone found someone, pairs or groups, somewhat to the degree like we have today. Of course, there was a war going on, and I find it very difficult to put in words or describe the atmosphere. We were going at total war for the defense of this nation, and we were taking a hell of a licking at the time I came in in 1942. The Japanese had swept all over the Pacific. Hitler had conquered most of Europe and had invaded Russia and had made sweeping victories. The Japanese had shelled a place out on the West Coast.

## **JUDGING FROM TODAY'S STANDARDS (IN 1981), IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY THERE WOULDN'T BE ONE CONFLICT AFTER ANOTHER, BUT YOU SAY THERE WAS THIS COMMON PURPOSE.**

Common purpose, plus the fact there were a lot more mature people around, grown mature, family men who were drafted or enlisted. We were drafting up to 35. In fact, I think they drafted above 35 if you didn't have any dependents—and they later reduced it to 35. Of course, discipline was harsh. That was what they call the “old brown shoe days.”

## **WOULD THE NCOS [NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS] TAKE A GUY OUT AND ILLUSTRATE?**

Yes, that was certainly done. I believe, also, we had much more respect or fear of authority. In addition, the thought of being placed in Spartan barracks kept many of us straight. Spartan barracks was a form of punishment that was passed out for many different reasons—failure to obey, late for duty, missing a formation, etc. You were put in a special barracks, and you double-timed to chow. You doubled-timed everywhere. You were restricted to that particular barrack, and your day was monitored. In other words, you did your duties and the rest of the time you spent listening to lectures and double-timing and exercising. It was pretty damn rough.

## **DID YOU EVER END UP IN ONE?**

No, I never ended up in one.

## **DID YOU GET ANY LEAVE DURING THIS PERIOD BACK TO MASSACHUSETTS?**

After graduating from aerial gunnery school, my class was sent by troop train to Salt Lake Army Air Base, Salt Lake City, Utah, for crew assignment and refresher training in radio operating. When this training was completed, we received a 10-day leave. When I returned, the crew that

I was assigned to went to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, for B-24 transition training. Evidently that's where Jimmy Stewart, the movie actor, had trained some months ahead of us. Stewart, they say, was the only famous movie actor that actually rose to a command position of leadership in the war. He later on led the entire Eighth Air Force on missions into Germany. After Boise we reported to Fairmont Army Air Base, Nebraska, and helped form and activate the 485th Bomb Group, which after completion of training we were assigned to the Fifteenth Air Force.

## **WHAT GUN POSITION DID YOU COVER IN THE B-24?**

The radio operator normally had the left waist. The first engineer had the right waist, the waist guns not being as important as the turret gunners because they were hand-held .50 caliber. The idea was, if it was necessary for the radio operator to be at the radio or the engineer to be someplace, those two positions had less priority, and they were more maneuverable. Getting in and out of a turret, particularly the ball turret, took time.

## **DID YOU HAVE A PRETTY GOOD CREW?**

Yes, outstanding. The pilot stayed in. His name was [Lt Col] James Francis Hogan. He was a captain when I joined the crew, which is a little bit unusual because most of them were lieutenants. He had been around a while and was a pretty experienced pilot. He became Regular Air Force after the war and was killed in a chopper accident years later. I was the only enlisted man to stay in. The bombardier stayed and became a master sergeant and then retired as a major. He was recalled during the Korean War. The tail gunner was a fellow by the name of SSgt Jack Lindsey from Shreveport, Louisiana. The tail gunner on another crew was wounded, and he was assigned to fill in one morning that we weren't flying, and he was killed on that mission. So we ended up with a replacement for him. They are pretty well scattered now. I haven't heard from them in years.

## **WHAT DID YOU ACTUALLY DO AS THE AIRCRAFT RADIO OPERATOR? WERE THERE NOT VOICE COMMUNICATIONS THAT THE PILOT HAD ACCESS TO BETWEEN AIRCRAFT AND THE GROUND, OR DID YOU HANDLE ALL THE COMMUNICATIONS? HOW DID THAT WORK?**

The pilot really only had voice conversations between him and control towers or between him and other aircraft. This was only for a relatively short radius. Any kind of distant voice the radio operator had to do, and he couldn't do too well. I remember we had the old trailing wire antenna, had a S-pound lead weight we called the fish.

## **YOU REELED THAT OUT?**

You just let it go out.



## HOW MUCH RADIO OPERATING WOULD YOU DO ON A FLIGHT?

Actually, on going overseas, I worked continually trying to keep in contact with stations, getting weather reports, and letting people know where we were at checkpoints. Actually, in combat very little. There were times when my plane was the element leader, and I would have to get a bombs-away report or get landing instructions, but actually, very little.

## ACCORDING TO YOUR BIOGRAPHY, YOU WERE SHOT DOWN ON YOUR 28TH MISSION, IS THAT RIGHT?

That's right.

## DID YOU EVER TAKE HITS ON YOUR AIRCRAFT PRIOR TO GETTING SHOT DOWN?

Oh, yes, on several occasions, we had been hit.

## WHAT WAS THE THING THAT YOU FEARED THE MOST, THE FIGHTER IN THE SKY OR THE AAA [ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY] ON THE GROUND?

Flak was the most frightening or the most frustrating because you could do nothing about it except watch it come at you. Many tales and jokes have been told about flak being so thick you could walk on it; however, I have seen it so thick that it darkened the sky, almost blotted out the sun. You take a heavily defended target, such as Wiener Neustadt—New Vienna—which was an industrial area with oil refineries and aircraft plants, could really put out a massive amount of flak. The Germans knew your altitude and shot off what was called box flak. In other words, they shot a large amount of flak into an area and let you fly into it. Once a formation hit the initial point, there was no evasive action. You just held formation and flew to the target. Flak took a terrible toll, and many thousands of casualties could be attributed to flak. Thousands of POWs could testify that flak was what got them.

## WHAT HAPPENED ON THIS MISSION?

The target was the Floridsdorf oil refineries, which were on the outskirts of Vienna also. The aircraft was hit by flak shortly after bombs away. I can recall the pilot's feathering one of the engines and then the other. By this time, we were well across the Danube over Hungary. Of course, Hungary was an ally of the Germans. I can remember when the oil pressure in the third one started going down, he said, "Get out. If that third engine goes, this thing is going to go down like a lead sled." We all bailed out. I can remember making this statement—I have seen planes go down over a target. I have seen B-24s go into a spin. I have stood there at that window praying for chutes to come out, and no chutes would come. Centrifugal force prevented them from bailing out. I told this story, and I don't think some people believed it. I saw a B-24, not a spin, it was doing

a complete flip-flop, flip-flop, just like you take a toy. It was going over and over. You figure the Fifteenth Air Force put up 500 to 800 planes on a maximum effort raid. They would lose 25 or 30 or 40. You say to yourself, "The odds are pretty good." But you multiply that by the number of missions you have to fly, and the odds start going down.

## YOU DIDN'T SEE EVERY DAY AS A NEW DAY THEN? YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT STATISTIC THEN?

No, I didn't believe that. What I had said to myself was, "This could very well happen to me. I just hope and pray that if we do get hit, we will have the opportunity to get out." That's what bothered me more than anything. I have seen them go down and just stood there looking at them. You know, "Get out! Get out!" And no one did. That's a sickening and demoralizing sight to see them go down, down, down. I have seen airplanes just completely explode. I have seen guys bailout and come barreling right through a whole formation of airplanes. So when that pilot said, "Go," there was no hesitation on my part. Right out the camera hatch I went.

## DID ALL OF YOUR CREW GET OUT?

Yes, all got out. One broken leg, the copilot's, on landing. No direct wounds from flak or fighters. We all bailed out at a fairly high altitude. One of the reasons we went down is because we went over the target at only 18,000 feet, as that's all the altitude the lead ship could get, and we all went over at this height. The pilot was the last to leave the ship, and we were scattered over a few mile radius. I remember getting the psycho card from my flight suit leg pocket and tearing it up in small pieces and scattering it to the wind. This card, of course, was the code the operator uses to encode and decode messages. I had no sensation of falling as we had bailed out so high. I also remember reaching in my pocket and finding my smokes and then lit a cigarette.

## AS YOU WERE COMING DOWN?

Yes. When that ground starts coming up, it starts coming up fast. I could see these woods off in the distance, and that's where I planned to go. As I got down closer, I could see them coming from all over. I never got out of the chute. I never got out of my harness. I landed, and they were waiting, all the farmers, and I got the hell beat out of me. They were irate, angry. We were rounded up and taken to a local town jail for the night.

## HAD YOU BEEN TOLD WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU WERE SHOT DOWN?

Yes. Of course, we had escape kits with currency in it and a little compass and maps, etc. They didn't pull any punches. They told us in certain areas you could expect pretty rough treatment if picked up by certain people.

## **DID THIS KIND OF LEAVE YOU IN SHOCK, ALL OF A SUDDEN HERE YOU WERE IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY?**

Yes. The Germans had a favorite expression, “For you the war is over.” I heard that several times from them. I think the biggest thing, it suddenly dawned on me—here you are in the airplane with all that noise and excitement going on, the adrenaline flowing, the pilot finally gives the word to bail out, and you bail out and that rush of air. Then that chute opens, and all of a sudden the plane you bailed out of is gone, and what other planes were in the air are gone, and there is that complete utter silence. It’s an eerie feeling. There you are alone.

## **WHEN YOU GOT TO THE POW CAMP, WHAT HAPPENED THEN?**

The first thing that struck home was the fact that I knew so many people who were already POWs. I ran into men whom I had gone through training with and several from my own outfit. We were at that stage in the war suffering some very high losses. To a degree it was comforting to be around old friends even if we had to meet under those circumstances.

## **HOW BIG OF A CAMP WERE YOU IN?**

Stalag Luft IV, which was up at Gross Tychow [Poland] near the Baltic, must have had 10,000 Allies—maybe 8,000—or somewhere in there. They had four lagers, which must have had 2,000 or 3,000 a piece or in that vicinity.

## **DID THE GERMANS GIVE YOU MUCH OF A BRIEFING ON WHAT YOU WOULD DO?**

Yes. When you say a briefing, they gave you a long list of dos and don’ts, such as, “Escape is impossible and foolish and could result in death. Intercourse with a German girl could result in being shot.” They also went into a long talk on such subjects as sabotage, for which the penalty could also be death. Sabotage could be interpreted as breaking a windowpane, cutting a tent rope, etc. They also said how well we would be treated and some additional propaganda.

## **WAS THERE A STRONG ATTEMPT TO KEEP MILITARY DISCIPLINE IN THE CAMP?**

Yes. We had some pretty tight rules. Our orders were to have a total, complete hands-off policy. The decision was made, “You do not fraternize with them. If they ask you questions, you give them a military answer. When they try to get close to you—and they had guards that were specifically designed for that purpose, ‘ferrets’—don’t barter with them, don’t offer them a cigarette from your Red Cross, don’t give them any, and keep away from them.” This was the policy we had. I later got to a camp that was mostly British. They had the Germans completely under their thumb, totally corrupted them. They were afraid if they said anything, they would get shot.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR AVERAGE DAY LIKE? DID IT CHANGE AS THE WAR GOT WORSE FOR THE GERMANS?**

The average day was up early in the morning and do the daily chores, such as cleanup details. Many spent much of their time reading and walking around the camp. Much time was spent in the discussion of food, as for the most part you were hungry. The twice-a-day roll call by the Germans could take a considerable amount of time until they could account for everybody. All in all it was not too bad; it was just trying to stay in shape. The day we received Red Cross parcels was a big event for us. We were supposed to get one parcel per man each week. However, it often had to be split four or more ways. If it had not been for these parcels, we would have lost many from starvation. As the war progressed, things got worse. Keeping in mind and trying to be fair about it, the Germans were in pretty bad shape at the latter stages of the war as far as food and supplies. If the German soldier wasn’t doing that well, the POW was going to do a little worse, that’s all there was to it. You asked about morale. I don’t think there was a doubt in anyone’s mind that we were going to win the war, and it was a matter of just surviving until that time. Unlike other wars, unlike the Korean War, unlike the Vietnam War where people were prisoners six, seven years and didn’t have any idea what was happening. The big thing was, there was no doubt in my mind, there was no doubt in anyone else’s or any POW that I knew of, that we weren’t going to win in a matter of months or a year. That was all there was to it. I think that is the big difference.

## **HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOUR FOLKS FOUND OUT THAT YOU WERE STILL ALIVE?**

The first time they officially knew—actually the first time the Americans knew what camp I was at—is when my folks received a letter from me. They asked my folks to send it to them, and they determined somehow that it was Stalag Luft IV.

## **DID THE GERMANS TRY TO HARASS YOU OR ANYTHING WHEN YOU WERE SETTLED ORIGINALLY IN THE POW BARRACKS?**

No, not really. There were a few incidents. For the most part guards were older people. Some of them were unfit for active service. A few of them had been badly wounded and were not fit to go back to the front lines. The bad times came when we marched out of the camp on 6 February, as the Germans did not want us to fall into Russian hands. Ninety days later we were still marching, with a short layover at Stalag 357. It was cold, miserable, no food or medicine. The Germans herded us around. People got sick; some died. We, of course, were being constantly harassed by the Germans. Much has been written about this march. All in all, it was not very pleasant.











## **HOW WAS YOUR HEALTH WHILE YOU WERE A POW, INCLUDING “THE MARCH?”**

In the march I got dysentery, and I lost a tremendous amount of weight. In fact, I was probably below 100 pounds when I was liberated. I was real sick.

## **DID A LOT OF PEOPLE DIE ON THAT MARCH?**

Yes. Several died from disease, the cold, and from exhaustion. However, there were other deaths due to error and mistakes. For instance, POWs were marched in columns of threes. This was to let all the forces, both enemy and friendly, know what their status was. It was at the tail end of the war, and we were marching when two RAF Typhoons came out of the sky, made a sweep over a column, and let loose with some gunfire, killing five or six British troops. The bitter irony of it was that these men had been POWs for several years and had come so far and been through so much to come to this end. By the time we marched past, they were getting volunteers for the burial detail.

## **HOW MANY GUARDS DID THEY HAVE; DID THEY HAVE A LOT OF GUARDS ON YOU?**

Yes, a hell of a lot of guards and dogs.

## **THEY WERE JUST LITERALLY KIND OF MARCHING YOU AROUND FOR WANT OF SOMETHING BETTER TO DO?**

Let's see, we marched west and across the Elbe River once. We came back across the Elbe again. Let's see, from 6 February—and they liberated us 2 May. That report says 80-some days. I think the interim period we were at Stalag 357.

## **NEAR BERLIN.**

Yes, and then we marched again until we were liberated by the British Second Army on 2 May 1945.

## **THEN IT SAYS YOU TOOK A 3-MONTH RECUPERATION LEAVE?**

Yes...I was back in the states in June. We spent several days in France prior to embarking.

## **HAD YOU INTENDED TO STAY IN THE MILITARY AT THIS POINT?**

Yes. Even as a prisoner of war, I was giving it much consideration about staying. I liked it. There was something about it I wanted. I came back from that recuperation leave and reenlisted.

## **DID YOU WANT TO STAY IN THE RADIO OPERATOR BUSINESS?**

Yes. I liked flying, but the day of the flying operator was rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Right after World War II, they started coming out with equipment where the pilot could do more just by pushing a button. They sent me back to school through courses, and I became at that time a 30170, which was a radio/navigational equipment, nonflying. Of course, by this time I had made master sergeant. That's a story, too, I guess, that's of historical significance.

In 1946 they came out with a policy that former prisoners of war who met certain criteria could be promoted one stripe. I fell under that criteria, and lo and behold, orders came out to promote me to master sergeant. Fifteen months later, it was determined that the promoting authority was erroneous. In other words, the authority to promote was not at that level. It should have been at Air Force level. The end result is we were reduced without prejudice, and I owed 15 months' difference in pay. Things are different nowadays. You can go have it taken out of your pay in installments, but in those days they took it out in large chunks, everything you had coming except your wife's allotment. I was reduced without prejudice but was promoted on the first cycle of master sergeants that came out. I still owed the difference in pay.

## **YOU GOT MARRIED 2 FEBRUARY 1946. HAD YOU KNOWN YOUR WIFE FOR SOME TIME THEN?**

Yes. We had gone to school together. After the recuperation leave, I went back and we married in February.<sup>4</sup> I was in the training system for five years, and then the Korean War broke out, and I was sent to Okinawa.

## **ACCORDING TO YOUR BIOGRAPHY HERE, YOU WERE IN RADIO REPAIR AT THAT POINT.**

Yes.

## **AND YOU DEVELOPED THIS CORROSION CONTROL ASSEMBLY LINE. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?**

I arrived at Okinawa, and I noticed a tremendous, terrible deterioration due to moisture, fungi on electronic equipment, equipment that was not prepared at the factory for tropical use. You have a salt problem in Okinawa. It's nothing I invented; the process was there. It tells you how to do it, and I just ordered the equipment and set up a program and got the job done. I am not going to take any credit for that. But the end result, someone thought it was great. I didn't invent a damn thing. The process was there. All you had to do was read it. I dug it out and set it up. They claimed millions of dollars of electronic equipment was prevented from deteriorating due to salt and corrosion.

## **WERE YOU ABLE TO BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG IN THOSE DAYS?**

I was there a year, and then Shirley and the two kids got there for a year. Then they sent me back to Scott again in the training system.

## **WERE YOU AN INSTRUCTOR NOW?**

Yes, for a short time—I started to be an instructor, and I was pulled up to the training headquarters. By this time, I was asked how I would like to be a first sergeant, would I volunteer for a while anyway? I did, and 12 years later, I was still a first sergeant.

## **THESE WERE ALL ELECTRONIC OUTFITS. YOU ENDED UP IN THE CIVIL ENGINEERING SQUADRON DOWN HERE BUT—**

At Scott when I was a first sergeant, it was student squadrons, large student squadrons. At Keesler it was student squadrons. I then went to Japan as the first sergeant of a radar site up in the mountains. Then I came back, and I was first sergeant of a CAMRON [Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron] squadron at Grand Forks, North Dakota, and then the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Grand Forks, then a civil engineering squadron. Then I was selected as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

## **DID YOU LIKE THIS TYPE OF WORK BETTER?**

Yes. Of all the jobs I have had in my career, I think first sergeant was probably the best. I liked it. I liked the discipline part of it. I liked being able to counsel and lead. I liked the first sergeant duty.

## **IN THOSE DAYS DID THE AIR FORCE SEND YOU THROUGH A LOT OF PME [PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION] ON HOW TO BE A FIRST SERGEANT?**

We had no PME in those days. You became a first sergeant after years of experience in other career fields. You picked up the ball from there. We didn't have professional military education as we know it today or first sergeant academies. However, we did have MAJCOM [major command] academies.

## **IN THE TIME PERIOD OF THE EARLY 1950S, MIDDLE 1950S, WERE THERE EVER ANY THOUGHTS OF GETTING OUT AT THIS POINT?**

No. I never had any idea of getting out. I was happy. I enjoyed it. I think particularly as a first sergeant, unlike—electronics or working on the flight line can get kind of repetitious. As the first sergeant you never knew what was going to happen day or night.

## **OBVIOUSLY, YOU WERE IN THE MILITARY WHEN THE E-8 AND E-9 POSITIONS WERE CREATED.**

In 1958.

## **DID YOU SEE THAT AS A POSITIVE THING INASMUCH AS THERE WAS A NEED FOR THIS?**

Oh, yes.

## **OF COURSE, THEN YOU HEAR THE OLD ARGUMENT THAT, RATHER THAN CREATE MORE ENLISTED GRADES, WE SHOULD HAVE MORE WARRANT OFFICERS. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?**

I think one of the wisest and best things the Air Force did was to do away with the warrant officer program. Our senior NCOs have taken the place of the warrants. To me the warrant officer was an extra rank in the chain that was not needed. In other words, you can be a chief master sergeant with many years' service and be in charge of a section or shop or whatever, and the moment a warrant officer appears on the scene, you no longer are in charge of that section. In other words, the warrant officer dilutes from the prestige and authority of our senior NCOs.

## **THE OTHER ARGUMENT WOULD BE, RATHER THAN COMMISSIONING THEM, GIVE YOUR E-8S AND E-9S A MORE AUTHORITATIVE POSITION IN THE RANK STRUCTURE.**

Of all the armed forces today, I think the chief master sergeants in the United States Air Force have broken into more positions of authority than any other of the armed forces. We have chief master sergeants who are doing all types of commissioned officer work, or what was once commissioned officer work, far more so than the other services. A chief master sergeant in the United States Air Force has a lot of authority, and what they don't realize, more so than any of the other armed forces. I am talking about being able to sign for money, thousands and thousands of dollars, or being able to operate a shop, being able to close a contract that deals with maybe millions of dollars, being a finance officer, being a motor pool officer, being all types of officers that require a commissioned officer in the other armed forces.



**WE WILL JUMP UP TO 1966, THE AIR FORCE STARTED TALKING ABOUT THIS POSITION OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. DID YOU EVER GET INVOLVED IN PUSHING FOR SUCH A CONCEPT OR ANYTHING ALONG THOSE LINES?**

In 1966 the *Air Force Times* was giving a little coverage to the position.

**THERE WAS A SENATOR PUSHING LEGISLATION FORCING THE AIR FORCE AND THE DOD [DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE] TO CREATE THIS POSITION.**

L. Mendel Rivers [D-SC] was the congressman who worked with it.

**IF THE AIR FORCE DIDN'T CREATE THE POSITION, HE WAS GOING TO FORCE IT BY LEGISLATION. I HAVE A NOTE HERE, "A BILL SPONSORED BY MENDEL RIVERS WOULD CREATE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. IT WOULD BE 4-YEAR TERMS, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE. ENLISTED ADVISOR ON EM [ENLISTED MEN] MORALE, TRAINING, PROMOTION, AND RELATED MATTERS." NOW THAT BILL WAS NOT PASSED, BUT IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HE SIMPLY PRESENTED THIS LEGISLATION IN THE SENATE TO FORCE THE AIR FORCE TO DO IT.**

The position did become a statutory position after I was appointed due to Rivers. As soon as I heard about it, I thought, "What a great honor that would be." I don't want to sound like I am being falsely modest or anything, but I never figured that I had the slightest chance. "Whoever gets that job," I thought, "is really going to have to go through a lot. What a great honor it would be." But I didn't think I had any chance of being selected.

**WHO URGED YOU TO APPLY FOR THE JOB, OR WHY DID YOU APPLY? HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT, CHIEF?**

Nobody urged me. As soon as I heard about it I thought, "What a tremendous honor it would be for anyone to get that position or be appointed to it." This was back in 1966, and of course there wasn't much said about it. The *Air Force Times* came out with something every so often. A blurb, "Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force position is being considered and so forth."

**OH, THIS WASN'T COMING DOWN THROUGH—**

There was very little coming down through military channels on it, and finally they came out with the criteria, and the criteria was, basically, any chief master sergeant who had a minimum of 22 years of service, two years' time-in-grade, never been court-martialed could become the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. The job description, basically, hasn't changed one iota—"Would aid and advise the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force on all matters pertaining to enlisted personnel." Then the process—there were 2,200 chief master sergeants eligible for the job at the first selection.

**THERE WERE FOUR NOMINATED FOR THE TOP AIRMAN JOB, AND THEN BY FEBRUARY, IT WAS DOWN—DWIGHT HARRINGTON, WILLIAM LAWSON, LEE RODGERS, AND PAUL AIREY—TO CONRAD STEVENS, PAUL AIREY, AND JEFFERSON MARSH. HAD YOU EVER GOTTEN INTO THE—WITH YOUR CONTEMPORARIES EVEN BEFORE YOU BECAME CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE—WAS THERE ANY KIND OF—**

Speculation about the job?

**SPECULATION FOR NEED FOR SUCH A POSITION?**

Yes. I ran into a lot of people who said it was going to be a phony position. There were people who thought that. There were people who said it was something to placate the enlisted force. There were people who said they wouldn't have it because it wasn't going to do what they advertised it as. I couldn't believe this. I had enough faith in the system that I liked to think—and did think—it was going to be set up in all good faith to do something for the enlisted force, to make it an avenue of communication, to try and make it a better Air Force, which I, to this day, believe the job has accomplished.

**YOU WENT UP THERE, AND GENERAL JOHN P. MCCONNELL INTERVIEWED YOU FOR THE JOB?**

Yes, and the vice chief was General [Bruce K.] Holloway.

**WHAT WERE THEY INTERESTED IN?**

That's getting to be a long time ago. It seemed to be in the general line of subjects. What would be expected of you, and do you think you could handle it, etc.? There was talk going around that General McConnell did not favor the position. I don't know really how strong he was for or against it. I do know this, after a few months in office, I could not have asked for a better supporter. He was great to me and was always easy to talk to and always put me in a position whereas I felt comfortable in his presence.

## **WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS WHEN YOU WERE SELECTED AT THE FIRST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE?**

I am not trying to sound humble, but when I look back at the time, there were 2,200 eligible to be Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, and I can honestly say of the 2,200 I never will be convinced that I was the most qualified or the best. I ended up with the job so you go out and do the best you can.

## **WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING NOW THAT YOU HAD TO DO? PHYSICALLY, THERE WAS NO SUCH OFFICE EVEN EXISTING BEFORE. DID THEY HAVE TO SET UP AN OFFICE FOR YOU SOMEPLACE AND GIVE YOU HELP? WHO DID ALL THAT KIND OF MECHANICAL WORK FOR YOU?**

When I got there, I was in a temporary office while mine was being finished. I reported to the chief of staff at my installation ceremony, and it was General McConnell of course. He said, “Okay, you have got the job. You have got the ball, run with it. I caution you to be careful of”—you know, being Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is 90 percent commonsense and 10 percent knowledge. You have to try and get along with the Air Staff. That’s whom you are going to be working with. You have to try to get along with certain people in order to best represent the force. There are people who will make a patsy out of you, both officer and enlisted. There are people who will use you. There are people, I am sorry to say, who have axes to grind. Or they will ask you for a favor, and you will look into it and find they don’t have a good reason, and because you tell them that, they don’t want to hear that, then you are no good.

## **WHEN YOU FIRST TOOK OVER THE JOB THERE, YOU SAY YOU SET UP THE OFFICE. WE HAVE TALKED TO SECRETARIES OF THE AIR FORCE, AND THERE IS NO STATUTORY REGULATION OR AIR FORCE REGULATION OR ANYTHING THAT SETS UP THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE AND THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE. IT HAS TO BE PERSONAL RAPPORT THAT THEY BUILD. YOU EITHER GET ALONG, OR YOU ARE GOING TO FIND YOURSELF ODD MAN OUT. WERE YOU ABLE TO BUILD A RAPPORT WITH MCCONNELL?**

The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force can only be as effective as the Chief of Staff wants him to be. That’s 100 percent right. If he ever loses his support, then he is losing ground for the enlisted force. For the first several weeks, I don’t know if General McConnell was just observing, waiting to hear reports from the field, but after 90 days or so, we had a much closer rapport. I got the distinct feeling it was a sweating-out period or an observation period, trial period.

## **THE VIETNAM WAR STARTED HEATING UP IN 1966 BEFORE YOU BECAME CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT. HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT PEOPLE RUNNING OFF TO CANADA AND GETTING IN THE AIR FORCE AND THEN DESERTING? WHAT WERE YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS?**

I have extremely strong feelings on it. We were in Vietnam; we were invited; we had a right to be there. We weren’t invaders. These people who fled certainly have my complete contempt. I know the war was unpopular. I hope we never get into one like it again or like the Korean War. If we ever go to war without the intentions of going to win it, then I think we have made a serious, serious mistake. Who was it that said, “Those who fail to learn by history are doomed to repeat its mistakes?” However, we were in it, and our country was in it. All we could do was back it.

## **WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU SAW HAPPENING IN THE AIR FORCE TO THE ENLISTED STRUCTURE—NOW THIS IS BEFORE YOU WENT UP TO WASHINGTON—WAS ANYTHING AT YOUR LEVEL INDICATING A NEW TYPE OF ENLISTED MAN, A MALCONTENTED ENLISTED MAN, OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT COMING ALONG?**

No, absolutely not. I did not notice anything in that way at all. In fact, the four times I got to Vietnam or Southeast Asia, twice with the Chief of Staff and twice on my own, I found the morale topnotch. This was the 1967/68/69 period. They would work hard and go all out. I found morale was just fabulous in all ranks.

## **ONE REASON I ASK ABOUT MORALE AND EVERYTHING, IN JANUARY 1966, THERE WAS A NOTE THAT FIRST-TERM REENLISTMENT RATE WAS THE LOWEST IN 12 YEARS. I WAS WONDERING AT YOUR LEVEL WHETHER YOU SAW ANY REASON FOR THIS AT ALL, OR IF THIS WAS SKEWED BASED ON ONE PARTICULAR COMMAND THAT MIGHT HAVE HAD A LOW REENLISTMENT RATE?**

No, I don’t think the Vietnam War had too much to do with that. We were trying to get 25 percent of the enlisted force to reenlist. In order to do that, we allowed some to reenlist that weren’t too good. A few years prior to Vietnam, retention was a big subject. I don’t really think the Vietnam War at that time had anything to do with it. I think the economy was good. The pay was only mediocre. You have to remember . . . the Air Force has some far-flung areas that weren’t popular. We had remote radar sites all over the world. Certainly, our northern tier bases weren’t the most popular. Promotions are something I want to talk about.



## **PROMOTIONS ARE BASED AGAINST SKILLS. THE SKILL LEVELS WERE FROZEN, THEN CORRECT?**

Various career skills were frozen. When I went on the job as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, the two biggest problems I had—number one was promotions, and the second was assignments. Let's talk about promotions. We had frozen career fields. We had embittered people. This is one of the reasons Rivers got involved. We had enlisted personnel who were so embittered, and Rivers was the chairman of the House Armed Forces Committee. He was receiving 15,000 to 20,000 letters a year from embittered enlisted personnel on promotions. The result is he formed a subcommittee to investigate the enlisted promotions in the armed forces.

The end result is the Air Force was severely criticized on their promotion system. At this time, they brought some pretty smart people together, some full colonels, some chief master sergeants. I had a certain basic input. I don't want to put my input out of proportion to what it was worth. But the end result was they came out with a weighted Airman promotion system [WAPS], which today is still in effect and is by far the fairest, best, most equitable promotion system of any of the armed forces for the enlisted men. It was a year or two ago, and I was over in the House, and there is a man by the name of John Ford. He is a counselor to the House Armed Forces Committee. I said, "Mr. Ford, you remember how L. Mendel Rivers was getting 15,000 to 20,000 letters a year on enlisted promotions?" He said, "I sure do, Paul." I said, "How many are you getting now from Air Force enlisted people?" He said, "We don't get half dozen or so a year." Now this is success that the Airman can see. In other words, the biggest problem I faced was the promotion problem. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force job remains the same. Problems change. This is one problem none of them have had to face.

## **IN 1967 NOW THERE WAS TALK OF THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY, WHICH EVENTUALLY CAME INTO BEING DOWN AT MAXWELL.**

Right.

## **WAS THERE A GENUINE NEED FOR IT, AND WHO PUSHED IT?**

Yes. [Lt Gen John W. Carpenter III] was commander of Air University [AU] when I first went on the job. I can remember talking to General Carpenter about a senior academy, which would be at Air Force level, but it was his belief Air University would be the ideal place. I had no strong feelings for or against where it was; I just wanted one. I didn't think we would get one. I was very, very surprised that General [John D.] Ryan, when things were getting lean, when we started hurting for the dollar, approved the senior academy.

## **THAT CAME INTO BEING IN 1971. WHAT DID YOU SEE THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY WAS SUPPOSED TO DO? WHAT WAS ITS PURPOSE IN YOUR MIND?**

I looked upon it as the top level of professional military education for a noncommissioned officer. I looked upon it more as an inducement, something to really strive for. I even thought we would see the day you would have to graduate before they could be considered for chief, but it hasn't developed into that, and possibly, it shouldn't. But it would be the tops in professional military education, and one who went through it should graduate with much pride.

## **WHEN YOU WENT TO A BASE, WOULD THERE BE A NOTICE POSTED IN THE DB [DAILY BULLETIN] THAT CMSAF PAUL AIREY WAS GOING TO BE THERE AND ANYBODY THAT WANTED TO SEE HIM COULD SEE HIM AT SUCH-AND-SUCH A TIME?**

Yes. It happened in that way, but usually they had set up meetings at the base theater or clubs. I always requested a full itinerary that would keep me busy and one that I would be able to meet the maximum amount of troops. At most bases I would be the guest speaker at a dining-out or dining-in. In addition, I normally wanted to receive the command briefing. In that way I knew what was going on at the activity I was visiting.

## **DID YOU EVER FEEL YOU WERE GETTING THE DOG AND PONY SHOW?**

Oh, yes, but you know, you have to be pretty stupid not to know when that's going on. They would take you to this particular barrack. You would say, "Well, let's go see this one." "Well, this is the one"—Well, just for the hell of it, we will see both."

## **IN RETROSPECT HAS THE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR POSITION AND THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT AND THE SERGEANT MAJOR ALL ADDED UP TO A BETTER ENLISTED CORPS IN THE AIR FORCE?**

By having these positions, I think it has led to the betterment of the NCO corps. The fact that we have NCOs in a position where they work directly for the commander and represent the enlisted people in that organization has increased the prestige of our NCOs. Of course, we have several people who bad-mouthed the job. Some are jealous of it. We must, however, pick the best possible chief for these jobs. He must be someone the young Airmen look up to and respect and one who projects the proper image. In addition, he must be the type that the young Airmen will approach with their problems.

## **WHEN YOU LEFT THE OFFICE OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, YOU DIDN'T RETIRE DID YOU?**

No, I stayed on for 1 year to the day.

## **AND YOU CAME BACK DOWN HERE TO TYNDALL?**

Yes.

## **WHAT JOB DID YOU TAKE DOWN HERE?**

I was in a combat crew training squadron.

## **CAN YOU REALISTICALLY COME FROM THAT JOB TO ANOTHER ENLISTED JOB IN THE AIR FORCE?**

I see some very few select positions or assignments that a former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force might hold, but they are few and far between. To return to the mainstream of the Air Force would be a mistake. It was a mistake for me. I was actually looking for—pending a special assignment that never really came about. In addition, I wanted to do the 30 years. Then, also, I wanted to probably finish up my career with a tour in Vietnam. But to make a long story short, I really feel that the Air Force wants you out. There is really not that much place for two Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force at any one time. And rightfully so. Everyone who followed me retired from the job.

## **WHAT DID YOU FIND AS AN NCO THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER AND, OBVIOUSLY, AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE THAT MAKES MORALE GOOD VERSUS A LOWERING OF MORALE? DID YOU EVER SEE ANY NUMBER OF THINGS THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD MORALE?**

I think there are a lot of things. Number one, leadership is the key to everything. If you don't have leadership, you are not going to have morale. Also, mission, job fulfillment, but number one, go right back to that key word, leadership. You can have mediocre facilities, you can have a remote area to be stationed at, you can have all types of things that aren't that good, miserable climate and everything else, but if you have leadership, you can get good morale.





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **DONALD L. HARLOW**

**AUGUST 1, 1969 - OCTOBER 1, 1971**

In the late 1930s, after dropping out of high school to support his mother, Donald Harlow found himself working in a department store for “one of the greatest bosses I ever had.” He learned the value of hard work and the hard reality that no matter how good you are, there are always others who can do the job just a little bit better. As a teenager whose father had died when he was just two years old, he valued the guidance and opportunities to learn.

Harlow was born on 22 September 1920 in Waterville, Maine. Twenty-two years later, in August 1942, he was drafted into the Army Air Forces and reported to basic training in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Following World War II he was discharged but remained in the inactive reserve, knowing that if he ever decided to serve again he wouldn’t have to start all over. In August 1950 that proved a wise decision. He was recalled to the active duty Air Force and began his career in personnel.

Nineteen years later, after serving as a first sergeant and personnel sergeant

major, Gen John D. Ryan selected Harlow as the second Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). On 1 August 1969, he replaced Paul Airey and immediately began to clarify the role and purpose of the position. He focused on many problems brought to him by the young enlisted force serving in a time of war, including racial tensions and assignment concerns. He also championed the Weighted Airman Promotion System, which was fully implemented in 1970. After his two-year tenure, Harlow retired from the Air Force but continued to serve as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, always focusing his efforts on improving the quality of life of enlisted Airmen. Harlow passed away on 18 June 1997.

The Air Force Historical Research Center interviewed Harlow on 9–10 December 1980, in Washington, DC. During the interview, Harlow discussed his early years in the Army Air Corps, establishing a unit in Morocco, and his experience as a personnel NCO in the 1950s and 1960s. The complete interview can be accessed on the Air University Library online research center.<sup>1</sup>

Portions of the interview are printed below. The order of some of the questions and answers has been adjusted to depict a chronological reflection on the life and career of Donald L. Harlow.

## **YOUR CHILDHOOD, WAS IT—OF COURSE, OBVIOUSLY, IT PROBABLY WAS A LITTLE MORE COMMON IN THOSE DAYS, I'M GUESSING, THAT CHILDREN WOULD LEAVE SCHOOL AND GO TO WORK AS OPPOSED TO THE WAY—**

Yes, that's right.<sup>2</sup>

## **DID YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAD BEEN SLIGHTED HERE AT THIS POINT A LITTLE BIT?**

Not necessarily. All the time I was in school I had a paper route, and on weekends I would find jobs working, cleaning up basements for people. I always did something to keep busy and earn a little money. We would have heavy snowstorms, and I would take—in fact, I took three days off from school one time in a heavy snowstorm, and I earned considerable money in those days. I think it was a total of \$15. I had to do a lot of shoveling in those days. That meant a lot to me to pick up that extra money to use at home on whatever little thing we needed. So I have never been one to just enjoy things. Well, I have enjoyed working. I am not a workaholic, but I have to keep doing something. I have to have something to do. I can't just sit around.

## **DID YOU FEEL LIKE AN ONLY CHILD GROWING UP IN THE SENSE THAT YOUR BROTHER AND MOST OF YOUR SISTERS WERE GONE?**

No, not necessarily, because most of the family—sisters and brothers-in-law—lived around the area. I enjoyed, at Christmastime, as I used to go around and visit on Christmas Eve. I was working in the department store. On the way home, I would visit several of my sisters and brothers-in-law who had young children. I would stay there for Christmas, probably get home at six o'clock in the morning, so I never really felt alone.

## **YOU WERE OBVIOUSLY VERY YOUNG AT THIS LATE 1930S AND EARLY 1940S PERIOD. DID THE WAR IN EUROPE AND THIS KIND OF THING, WAS IT OF ANY INTEREST TO YOU, OR EVEN SOMETHING THAT ATTRACTED YOUR ATTENTION IN ANY DEGREE?**

The war attracted my attention to this extent. In 1939, as you recall, they had a peacetime draft for the first time in this country. One

night at the inn, I remember there was a young lady who was staying at the inn. I guess it was about nine o'clock one night, she came in and was crying. I said, "What's happened? What's gone wrong?" She came down to Fort Devens [Massachusetts] to visit her fiancé. At that time, he had just about served his year. Because of the happenings in the world, he was extended, indefinitely. Of course, that was a big shock to her and to him also. That was the first time, I think, that I had any real impact of what was really going on in the world. I knew right then and there that it would be soon, and I would be drafted. I wasn't about to volunteer.

## **YOU GOT DRAFTED INTO THE AIR CORPS?**

After graduation I went to work for General Electric Company in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. I worked there for only about six months when [Pres. Franklin D.] Roosevelt sent me greetings. So I was drafted out of Massachusetts and went in at Fort Devens in the Army Air Corps—well, it was the Army, really, then in August 1942. However, at that time they were screening everybody to determine whether they would go to the Army or the Army Air Corps—yes, it was the Army Air Corps at that time—and I was selected to go to the Army Air Corps. From there, I went to basic training at Atlantic City, New Jersey, and then I was sent to tech school at Buckley Field, Colorado. From there I was sent to Eagle Pass, Texas, to become an instructor in armament and gunnery for the cadets.

## **ATLANTIC CITY, WHAT INSTALLATION WAS AT ATLANTIC CITY THAT YOU HAD BASIC TRAINING AT?**

Actually, they took many of the hotels on the strip, on the boardwalk.

## **OH, YOU WERE IN ONE OF THOSE?**

They stripped the hotels down to nothing, and that's where we did our training. They just put GI bunks and a footlocker in the rooms.

## **BUT AS FAR AS ACTUAL COMBAT INFANTRY TRAINING, YOU NEVER WENT THROUGH THAT BECAUSE YOU WERE IN THE AIR CORPS?**

Yes.

## **THEN THIS BUCKLEY FIELD. WHERE WAS THAT IN COLORADO?**

That was not too far, probably about 10 miles from Lowry [AFB].

## **THAT'S WHERE YOU TOOK THIS ARMAMENT TRAINING? WHAT DID THEY TRAIN YOU ON, THE .50 CALIBER?**

20 millimeter, .50 caliber, various armaments that we had at that time. The 37 millimeter cannon and guns like that. Then of course, when I went to Eagle Pass, I taught those guns in ground school to cadets.



## **WERE YOU TRAINING THEM IN, LIKE THEY HAD DEUCE AND A HALF WITH SIMULATED GUN TURRETS FROM AIRPLANES AND THAT KIND OF THING?**

No. It covered the actual field stripping and putting the guns together, adjusting them, also in the synchronization, because in the plane you fired the guns through the propeller so you had to synchronize them with the propeller. When I went to Matagorda Island [Texas], I was doing the same thing in the ground school—only this time they were graduates. They were second lieutenants out of flying school.

During my tour there, I also wrote and prepared tests. They had never had any real lesson plans or tests in those days. Everything was fast and furious because the time element was something else. They were more concerned with mission and training, so I wrote the first test that was ever given at Matagorda Island to the second lieutenants. I took it over to the ops [operations] officer, a lieutenant colonel, and I will never forget him. He looked at the thing, and he said, “Sure glad I don’t have to take this test.” That is when I got interested in academics, because I found there was so much opportunity there. There was so much you could do to help people. Then in the spring of 1945, the hurricane came along, and we got blown off the island. We had to evacuate.

## **WERE THEY USING THAT FOR A BOMB RANGE, TOO?**

Bombing range, training, yes. At that time, we got transferred to Foster Field, Victoria, Texas. I thought I was pretty smart then; I finagled a couple of three-day passes so they couldn’t catch up with me and put me on KP [kitchen police]. When I came back from the second one, I decided I had better do something. So I went to the sergeant major in personnel and told him I would like to go to work in personnel. They put me in the personnel processing section.

At that time, we had the old form 20 and the service record and the medical record and others. We had 12 different records, really, that we handled. I had one desk, and I was handling the form 20. I wanted to find out what they did with all the other records, so I visited around—I had two stripes at that time, was a corporal—and I found out what all the other people did with each one of their records. It so happened that about three or four months later, as the war started to wind down, the staff sergeant in charge of the section was going to be reassigned. The captain, our boss at that time, called me in and said, “I understand you are the only one who knows all of the desks here.” I said, “Yes. I don’t know if I am the only one, but I do know what everybody does.” He said, “Fine. When the staff sergeant leaves, you are in charge.”

In those days—it is interesting when you compare it to today—the captain was a pilot; he was assigned to us as the officer in charge of the processing. He spent most of his time in the training phase and in flying, and he used to come in the office at nine o’clock in the morning and leave

at 10, come in to sign papers or answer any questions or anything else, and then he would come back in the afternoon, maybe about 1:30 or 2, and he would stay until about 3. He said, “This is the way you can always get in touch with me. In the meantime, you are in charge.” Well, here I was with two stripes, and I was in charge.

I only recall one time when they had a problem where a colonel from the hospital came in and raised a little hell, and I couldn’t satisfy him, so I had to call the captain. Otherwise, everybody knew I was in charge, and I didn’t overextend myself to that point, but we got the job done.

## **WAS THIS PRETTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR ALMOST ANYTHING ON THE BASE WHERE THEY WOULD ASSIGN A COMMISSIONED OFFICER TO AN OFFICE AND, REALLY, HE LET THE NCOS RUN IT THEN?**

For the most part, that was very true during the early days of the Army Air Corps. The officer was a policy decision maker, and the NCO ran the program. As I remember many a time that the officer would say, “What do you think?” And I would say, “According to the Army regulation, we are supposed to do it this way.” He was not that much concerned with the details. He was concerned about making the decision, and he depended on me to provide him with the facts on which he could base that decision.

## **ONE THING, YOU MENTIONED YOU WENT OVER TO GET INTO PERSONNEL. WHY HAD YOU CHOSEN PERSONNEL? WHY NOT, LET’S SAY, STAY IN ARMAMENT OR GO INTO THIS OR GO INTO THAT?**

I saw a lot of misuse of people, and I was always fascinated with how did they ever develop? How did these policies come out? Why do things happen? I was an inquisitive person, like I still am today. That’s the reason I thought personnel would be the most—and I figured from personnel I could get back into training. But that didn’t quite happen.

Anyway, I enjoyed my tour at Foster Field, Victoria, Texas. Then the war came to an end in 1945. Before that, prior to the war ending, we had a WAF [Women in the Air Force] major who was chief of the Personnel Processing and Order Section and other types of programs that is now divided up between the director of administration and personnel.

On the first of the week of Thanksgiving, we had over 500 cadets transferred to Foster Field, Victoria, Texas, and we processed them all in on Monday and Tuesday. It so happened that on Tuesday evening, just before I was getting ready to close up, she called me over, because the captain was on a flying mission, and said they had just gotten orders down from ATC [Air Training Command] Headquarters, at that time, where these cadets were being reassigned to various bases throughout the United States.

In fact, they were not cadets; they were actually lieutenants—graduates. She said, “By next Monday, we are going to have to get going on these orders and cut them and get these people out of here.”

I had always felt this way, and I always knew, throughout my career and even on my job today, you do a little bit more than what your job probably is if you really want to get somewhere, if you really want to do something.

So on Wednesday, I talked to some people in processing, and I found out there were about three of four who were going somewhere for Thanksgiving. So I said, “If the rest of you will come in and work with me, we will process all of these records and get them all booked up and mail them out to these bases,” because we wanted to actually put them in the mail on Friday. “Then on Monday, these lieutenants can come in, and we will just give them their orders, and they can leave.” So we did. We worked Thanksgiving and up until about seven or eight o’clock that night, finished them all up, got them all wrapped and ready to mail.

On Friday morning, we took them to the post office, mailed them out. On Monday, the major called me over to her office. It was in the next building. And she said, “I don’t want you doing anything else today. We are not going to send anybody over there to process in or out. I just want you to get those records closed out and in the mail not later than tomorrow. I said, “I’m sorry, major, they are already gone.” She looked at me and said, “What do you mean?” I gave her the receipt—for all the orders—that they signed at the post office, because we sent them out certified.

As a result of that, a couple of months later, promotion quota came down for that base, and she insisted that if I didn’t make staff sergeant, she wouldn’t cut the orders. So I got promoted.

It was one of these types of things that, hell, we didn’t have anything to do on Thanksgiving. It is just these little extra things that you do that makes the difference between a good job or a mediocre job.

I stayed there at Victoria, Texas, and Foster Field. The war was over. Of course, all these people had enough points for discharge (including me).

## **DID YOU MAKE ANY CONSIDERATION WHILE YOU WERE ON ACTIVE DUTY IN WORLD WAR II ABOUT MAKING THE MILITARY A CAREER OR ANYTHING?**

No. The only thing, during the outbriefing at Fort Sam Houston [Texas], the sergeant said, “When you get out and get discharged, that does not mean that you are not eligible for recall. If something happens in the next 10 years, you are subject to recall, and if you get recalled, you start all over again.” He was selling us the Reserve program. He said, “If

you sign up in the Reserve, at least you can be guaranteed coming back with the rank that you have.” At that time, I thought, “Well, hell, if I’ve got to come back, I don’t want to come back and start all over again.” So I said, “Okay, I’ll sign up.”

I signed up in the Reserve and came back home, back to Massachusetts actually. My wife, Dottie, was living with her folks. Then we went up to Maine, and I got into the GI Bill, not to go to school but to take advantage of what they called the training program under the GI Bill. I went to work for a drug concern. They had about three stores in my hometown. It was primarily to be near my mother. She was ill. After my mother died, I wasn’t too happy up there, because everybody in town remembered me as a little kid that used to do figure skating. The drug business wasn’t that exciting to me. In the meantime, my wife’s folks were thinking of moving to California.

## **(DID) YOU (SPEND), ACTUALLY, ANY TIME IN ANY RESERVE UNITS? WERE YOU GOING TO MEETINGS OR ANYTHING?**

No, I was strictly a Reservist. The funny part of it is, not too far from Long Beach, California, I was talking to a gentleman who was in the Reserve, who used to participate in the Reserve program at the Long Beach Airport, and he got recalled about the same time that I did. He was a tech [technical] sergeant.

He got recalled as a captain only because of his participation in the Reserve. I didn’t participate at all so I got recalled as a staff sergeant, but I had built up quite a portfolio at that time with the business machine company, plus the College of Commerce. When I was recalled, I was recalled in armament again.

I went to Travis AFB [California]. When I walked in, of course, they were processing people like mad. The sergeant at the desk said, “You are going to be in armament; you go down to hangar so-and-so and report to so-and-so.” I said, “Before I go, I would like to talk to the personnel officer.” I went in to see him, and I handed him the portfolio, and I told him, “I haven’t seen a gun; I don’t know anything about armament. I would like to have you take a look at my portfolio, and then let’s discuss it.” He looked through the letters, and he got up, and he said, “Wait here.” He walked outside his office, and I heard him say to the sergeant out there, “Get so-and-so and get a desk and a chair and put it right here outside my office.” He turned around to me, and he said, “You are going to be my sergeant major.” So I moved right into the sergeant major of personnel position.



## WERE YOU UNHAPPY THAT YOU GOT RECALLED?

I sort of suspected it, so I wasn't really unhappy. I thought, well, this is—you know, for two years. It was a two-year recall, and with the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act, you could always go back to the company, so there was no problem there. I said, "Well, hell, everybody else is being recalled. They are going to war so I might just as well." But I was determined to get in personnel.

I went up to what was called the 5th and 9th Maintenance Squadron. It was a huge squadron, two squadrons "really, and all maintenance people. I had never seen such a mess in all of my life. It was, of course, during peacetime, and a lot of things happened. They were short of supplies, and people didn't give a damn. It wasn't too efficient. Nobody really cared too much, but when the Korean War started and things got moving, it still wasn't straightened out. The major who was assigned to the group came over one day and was talking to the captain and myself. He said, "You know, you keep submitting this personnel report,"—called the P-I report in those days—"to base headquarters, and we haven't had a right report in there for the last 8 or 10 months."

After he left, I talked with the captain, and I went around and found out what was wrong, what was happening. The fact is, the morning report clerks, the personnel accountability, and the assignment report people were not talking to each other. In those days, the morning report was quite a complex thing. They took it away from the old book. You know, the old book, when I first got in the Army, the first sergeant had the book, and he just had to go down with marks, because that was the roll call. In those days, you had 5th and 9th Maintenance Squadron and hundreds of people.

I got together with the troops, and I said, "We are going to get this straightened out. I'm going to come back here every night at six o'clock, and I want at least two people out of this morning report area and two out of assignments and two out of the records section, and we are going to get this thing straightened out. We are going to work until we do." We did that for two weeks, every night, but at the end of that two weeks, everything jibed. At the end of that month when we submitted the P-I report, that was the first one in nine months that was ever right. The troops, of course, they bitched like they always did, but they were delighted when the major came in, got us all together, and said, "This is great."

I had learned a lot of this in the business world. In a profit and loss situation, you don't fool around. You either get with the program, or you don't have a job.

Then it came about the middle of December, getting ready for Christmas, had the Christmas tree and everything on it, and I got notification that this one captain who worked in group and myself and a master sergeant had been tagged by SAC [Strategic Air Command] Headquarters to help form a new outfit.<sup>4</sup>

## YES, THE 5TH AIR DIVISION.

It was the 5th Air Division. Of course, the worst part of it was we had to leave the day before New Year's. Again, my wife was unhappy, but we made arrangements for her to go back to Long Beach, California, and found a place for her and the children. So one weekend we got them back down there, with what few belongings we had, and got them set up. I had a sister and brother-in-law in Long Beach, California, so that helped. They did have somebody near. In the meantime, her folks were unhappy in California and went back to Massachusetts.

At Travis, I amassed a pretty good record in personnel. At that time, there was a big political action going on. Every once in a while they would get word from SAC Headquarters that the 5th Maintenance Squadron or the 5th Squadron was going to Korea. Then a little while later the word would come down that they had decided the 9th Maintenance Squadron was going.

## DID YOU REENLIST FOR A CERTAIN TERM, OR WAS IT AN INDEFINITE REENLISTMENT?

At that time, they had the indefinite, and I did reenlist for an indefinite enlistment.

So I went over[seas], and I was one of the first echelon to help open Morocco. That was fascinating. Our first office was on the French air base. The French NCOs saluted NCOs. I got to know a lot of people over there. I had taken French in school; I liked it.

I had to live in a hotel downtown. I thought, "Well, I had better take advantage of this." So I met a young fellow who worked for the French railroad. He wanted to learn English, and I wanted to learn more French. I would get off the bus downtown, in front of a cafe, and I would have to walk maybe a block to go to my hotel. He was always at the cafe when we got off the bus, having an apéritif at the sidewalk cafe, so I would get off and meet him every night. We would chat back and forth. He would teach me French, and I would teach him English. It was quite interesting. We did that for about, oh, I guess two or three months.

## WAS MORALE PRETTY GOOD OVER THERE?

Oh, yes. The only way we got a club is through the captain that I went over there with who got the troops together. He was great to the enlisted—Capt William S. MacGregor. We didn't have any lower grade enlisted. We all put in \$20 to form the club, so we were all charter members of the club. That is the only way we could get enough to pay the lease and start off. We had slot machines there, and we made good money on them.

## **HOW MANY PEOPLE DID YOU HAVE RIGHT THERE AT THE HEADQUARTERS, WOULD YOU GUESS?**

Well, at the headquarters, I know from the NCO side we had a maximum of 270. That was maximum for NCOs at which probably 60 percent had their dependents there. The rest of them were single. So we didn't have too much of a draw, numbers wise, to the club, but that was the only place for them to go. I remember when we moved over to Agdal [a suburb of the Moroccan capital, Rabat], the club would never open until five o'clock. It was policy. They did not want anybody in there drinking.

It so happened that I had three maintenance people who were on night shift in the motor pool and other places, and they were off duty. So by 11 o'clock they came to the club, and I would serve them. It so happened that one day the IG [inspector general] came in. Of course, he talked to me and was going to write me up. I said, "Fine, write me up, but if these troops can't come in here, they are going to go down to the French bar, and they are going to spend more money, and they are not going to be treated as well." When it got to [Gen] Archie Old, he said, "Forget it."

## **WHY DON'T WE (MOVE AHEAD TO) JULY 1965, ACCORDING TO YOUR BIOGRAPHY HERE, YOU BECAME SERGEANT MAJOR, EXECUTIVE SERVICES DIVISION, OFFICE OF THE VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, HEADQUARTERS US AIR FORCE, WASHINGTON, DC—A VERY NICE TITLE.**

Impressive, isn't it? I was in EUCOM [European Command] in Paris, and I was the sergeant major of the Air Force element. Gen John P. McConnell was really the vice commander at that time of EUCOM. I had a captain who was my squadron commander, and the captain was not too willing to go over and deal with all of the generals. He was more concerned with pursuing his education because he was getting ready to retire. He was formerly enlisted then commissioned. He wanted to teach in a college or a university, so he was concerned with his educational pursuits, which is fine, because we had a small element over there. I told him I had no problems; I would be glad to deal with the generals.

One of the major projects I had in EUCOM was to provide aides for the generals, especially the Air Force generals. Anyway, it came time for the change of command for General McConnell. General [Jacob E.] Smart was coming in to take over. General McConnell's aide called me and said, "Don, we have a flag in here with all the battle streamers on it, but it is old, worn out, and terrible. We need one for this change-of-command ceremony." I had written six months ago and requested the purchase of a new one through the regular supply channels, but we certainly were not going to get it in time for the ceremony. He said, "Do you think you can help me?" I said, "Yes, I think so."

To make a long story short, I was instrumental in getting the flag and hand carrying it over to them for the ceremony. In the meantime, after General McConnell got reassigned back to Headquarters USAF as the vice chief, his aide, Col Bill Frasca, was dealing with a Major Russell who headed the Executive Services Division, which is really the administrative support division for the chief of staff of the Air Force, and the vice chief of staff of the Air Force. They had a senior master sergeant there as the NCOIC [noncommissioned officer-in-charge] of the executive services. Bill Frasca said to Major Russell, "You know, that's a chief's slot. Why don't you have a chief in it?" He said, "Well, I'm hoping that one of my sergeants will get promoted." Bill Frasca said, "Well, I know a chief over in Paris that I think would do a good job for you."

The major called me on the phone one day and wanted to know if I would be interested in working there. He said, "How about coming back TDY [temporary duty] and taking a look?" I said, "Well, I will tell you what I will do. My requirements here are such that I don't feel as if I could come back TDY. If you and Colonel Frasca feel that you need me over there and want me, you take what initiative you need to take, and I'll be there." So going through personnel, they curtailed my tour nine months, and I was reassigned and became sergeant major of the Executive Services Division, in charge of all the administration, all the staff summary sheets, and everything else that flowed through there.

## **DID YOU HAVE ANY—IT WAS DURING YOUR TIME YOU WERE UP AT THE EXECUTIVE SERVICES UP THERE THAT THE CONCEPT OR THE IDEA OR WHATEVER FLOWERED OR BLOOMED TO HAVE THIS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE POSITION. WERE YOU IN ANYWAY ASSOCIATED WITH GIVING THAT IDEA A KICK OR A GERM?**

No. This came up when [Cong.] L. Mendel Rivers [D-SC] was the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. He was the one who was pushing this, and none of the service chiefs wanted it. However, they were told very emphatically that they were going to have a top NCO whether they wanted one or not.



**I GOT THE IMPRESSION, IN READING, THAT IT LOOKS AS THOUGH HE PRESENTED THE BILL OR BROUGHT THE BILL UP TO KICK MILITARY SERVICES. HE SAID, “IF YOU DON’T DO IT ON YOUR OWN, I AM GOING TO DO IT.” THEN HE NEVER PASSED THE BILL, AND THE SERVICE CREATED IT ON ITS OWN.**

That’s right. He had an Army warrant officer aide. Mendel Rivers used to travel a lot, and the warrant officer performed a lot of functions as his aide. Mendel Rivers liked the guy. I think it was the warrant officer, himself, who suggested this after they came into the senior and chief or E-8 and E-9 ranks in the military services, because you know they had a pretty strong structure of sergeant majors in the Army. That was really the seed that was planted. Why not have one sergeant major for the whole?

**THIS RAISES THE QUESTION NOW—I’LL QUOTE YOU AGAIN—THERE WAS, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, NO SUCH THING, EITHER BY AIR FORCE REGULATION OR ANYTHING, CALLED A SERGEANT MAJOR.**

No.

**THAT WAS JUST A FICTION.**

It was a terminology which was used unofficially. Being the ranking noncommissioned officer, working for the chief and vice chief at the Pentagon, when President [Lyndon B.] Johnson had his reception over in the White House. The presidents usually have them every year. I was the only enlisted man from the Air Force, my wife and I, to go as a representative of the Air Force because of that position I held up there, and it was more or less called the sergeant major of the Air Force at that time. It was an unofficial term.

I have got that invitation framed from the White House with President Johnson’s signature because the word sergeant is misspelled. It is embossed printing and beautiful.

**NOW, THIS WAS WHILE YOU WERE IN THE EXECUTIVE SERVICES?**

Yes, Executive Services Division.

**THEY HELD YOU AS THE SENIOR NCO OF THE AIR FORCE?**

At that time and in that particular case.

**THAT’S INTERESTING. I MEAN THIS THING WAS REALLY GROWING ALL THE TIME THEN.**

When I was up there, a bill was passed. It gave the opportunity for the service chiefs to select their own individuals and establish their own criteria. It didn’t stipulate the period of time the individual would serve, nothing.

However, while I was there, they appointed a board of three to come up with criteria for the position, and the exec for the chief of staff happened to be down in our area one day reproducing some things and asked about my being eligible. I was not eligible at that time.

I was asking him about the criteria they were establishing, and he mentioned the fact that it was 18 years, because at that time you could make chief at 16 years of service, which I did. So they established 18 years of service, and I said to the exec at that time, “That’s a mistake.” He was a very arrogant individual in many ways, and I think he resented any enlisted man saying an officer was making a mistake. He looked at me very stern, and he said, “What do you mean, sergeant?” I said, “Colonel, let’s say that you select an individual or the chief selects an individual, and he goes out in the field and somehow he screws up and causes embarrassment to the chief and the secretary. How are you going to get rid of him without further embarrassment? Are you going to direct his retirement? Maybe you would have to put him in the hospital and tell people he is sick, and then people find out he is not sick. To my way of thinking, you can’t select anybody with less than 20 years of service, because if he screws up, he can retire on his own at the suggestion of the chief.”

Well, as the result of that statement, even though he didn’t like it, the next time the committee met he asked me to sit in on the committee. At that time, they were considering a four-year tour. I told them, “Being in an advisory capacity and not a member of the decision-making process, I don’t suggest four years. I suggest a two-year term. Number one, I foresee the travel to be extensive; number two, if it is a four-year term, in 12 years you can only have three. There are lots of noncommissioned officers out there who are chiefs that are damn good. With a two-year term, in 12 years you can have six. I think it is more reasonable to give more people an opportunity to be in that advisory capacity rather than trying to make this a position of some authority or decision making.” So they agreed.

They also established the criteria of 22 years of service. So I felt I was instrumental. Then later on, when it came to selecting the insignia for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, they brought in the blouses and the different insignia, and I modeled them before the chief and his staff. One of the insignia was the current E-9 stripes with another strip above it, which looked very, very—I don’t know, it was too much. The one with the wreath was very dignified and very beautiful, and that’s the one I suggested, and they all bought it.

**WERE YOU IN ON THE PROCESS, THEN, OF LET'S GET EACH COMMAND TO RECOMMEND ONE OR TWO PEOPLE? LIKE SAC, FOR EXAMPLE, GOT TO RECOMMEND THREE AS OPPOSED TO EACH OF THE OTHER COMMANDS COULD RECOMMEND ONLY ONE OR TWO OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.**

The committee itself said, "In order to be fair about this, we should give the commanders the opportunity to make a selection and recommendation." The larger commands, like SAC, could recommend two; the smaller commands could recommend one. They would hold a screening board at Randolph. Of course, I agreed with that because I said, "This is going to be an honor. Even if an individual was just selected by his command, it is a great honor."

**DID YOU SAY THE BOARD MET AT RANDOLPH?**

Yes, the board was responsible for identifying the top three of all those being interviewed, and the records then were forwarded to the chief's office at the Pentagon. In the meantime, they had a more extensive background investigation. Then between the execs of the chief and the vice chief and others, they reviewed the records. Then they called those three into the Pentagon to be personally interviewed by the chief. As a result of that interview, the one individual was selected.

**OBVIOUSLY, ANYTHING THAT IS DONE THERE IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE, FOR WHATEVER REASON, SOMEBODY WHO SAYS WE SHOULDN'T DO THAT. WAS THERE ANYBODY IN THE PENTAGON, OFFICER OR ENLISTED, AT ANY LEVEL THAT SAID, "HELL, WE DON'T NEED THIS SLOT. THIS IS JUST A BUNCH OF CRAP. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?" DID THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE EXIST ANY PLACE?**

Yes, there are always those people, and there were some general officers as well as colonels and others, "We are not in favor of this position." I think they were more afraid of what was going to result from somebody filling that position, fear of the unknown, rather than turning it around to a positive attitude of assisting the individual.

I was very fortunate. I will tell you very frankly. I was perhaps more fortunate than anyone that's been in that position because I served in the Pentagon for four years before I was in the position. I knew the Pentagon. I knew the people; they knew me, and I had a feel for both the political as well as the military operation from that point, from the head shed on down, so I had an advantage over others, those who came from the field who never had that opportunity.

**WERE YOU AT ANY TIME TOLD THAT HERE YOU WERE, IN EFFECT, HOLDING THE OFFICE BEFORE THE OFFICE ACTUALLY EXISTED, IN A CERTAIN SENSE—DID THEY EVER SAY TO YOU, "DON, WE AREN'T GOING TO GIVE YOU A SHOT AT IT THIS TIME. YOU GO OUT IN THE FIELD, THEN THE NEXT TIME AROUND WE WILL"—WAS THERE ANY OF THAT KIND OF STUFF GOING ON?**

No. None whatsoever. In fact, as I said, I was not eligible for the first time because I didn't have the 22 years. I had a little over 20 at that time, so I was not eligible . . . the first time. When the second selection came up, they decided to extend [CMSAF Paul W.] Paul Airey, the first one, to coincide with the chief, who was moving in there in August, which was fine.

I was recommended by my boss, and I had to go over for an interview to Headquarters Command, at that time, and there were three of us there, and I was selected from Headquarters Command to go to Randolph. I was thoroughly pleased and delighted with it, but I'll never forget the first sergeant down there. The old time first sergeant, Chief Dailey, at the barbecue the night before the interview, called me over and said, "Don, do you really want the position?" I said, "That's amazing. Why do you ask?" He said, "Well, nobody really knows you. We know you work up at the Pentagon, but you know, you are not well known out in the field. Although you've got an impressive record, we just want to know what your feelings are." I told him at that time, "Joe," his name was Joe Dailey, "I'm very, very fortunate, and I'm thankful for being selected to come this far, but I work for the chief and vice chief. I don't think I even have a chance of being selected because that would be something against me right from the beginning. They would say"—the people in the field, especially other chiefs—"Why did we go through this whole process when the guy has been working for the chief for four years? Why didn't they just say it, you know?" (laughter) So I said, "No. I am grateful for coming this far. You look around; we have some damn good chiefs here." And there were. There were some tremendous individuals. The competition is fierce.

Anyway, when I went back to the Pentagon, Colonel Elliott called me over and asked me how it went. I said, "Fine, but I would like to say just one thing. That is it. I am going back to work." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Hey, no way I want to get the job. Not that I even expected to be recommended, but having worked here for the chief and the vice chief for four years, you know, I already have a strike against me when I go out in the field." He said, "So you really don't want it if you were selected?" I said, "That's right." He said, "Okay."

I would like to put it in history, because it is a fact. I was not one of the first three that was nominated from Randolph. One of the three individuals that was nominated, through investigation of his background, had in his records that he had a college degree, and it was found that he had gotten somebody in personnel to make that entry in his record.









He did not, in fact, have a college degree. When the chief found out about that, he said, “Send all the records back and let’s start all over again.” So he sent them back to the board, and the board reviewed all of the records again. When they came back, I was one of the three.

## **DID THIS INDIVIDUAL WHO HAD FALSIFIED HIS RECORDS, HAD HE DONE THAT IN RESPONSE TO BEING SELECTED, OR HAD HE DONE THIS YEARS BEFORE?**

I don’t know, and I did not inquire. However, I did not know that my record had returned for consideration. I found this all out afterwards. [Neither] Colonel Elliott, nor anyone else, said anything to me, which I understood. I went back to work, happy as a lark, and knew that was it.

Then one day Colonel Elliott called me, or called my boss, and said, “Have Don come over.” So my boss said, “Colonel Elliott wants to see you.” Oftentimes he would call me for different things, and he wouldn’t bother my boss. I went over and he said, “Come with me a minute.” He opened the door into the vice chief’s office—General [John D.] Ryan was the vice chief, and there was a whole group of people in there.

General Ryan got up from his chair and stuck out his hand, and he said, “Congratulations. You are our new Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.” It so shocked me that I went up and shook his hand and said, “Thank you very much.” I turned around, and I walked out of there.

Colonel Elliott grabbed me by the arm as I was going out the door, and he said, “Wait a minute. We have to have some pictures taken.” It just didn’t sink in what the hell he said.

## **OH, THAT’S A GREAT STORY.**

I will never forget it.

## **THE NEXT QUESTION IS . . . YOU WERE DOWN THERE IN THE EXECUTIVE SERVICES WHEN THE FIRST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE WAS CREATED. WAS THERE ANY CONFLICT BETWEEN WHAT YOU WERE DOING AND THIS OFFICE OF THE CHIEF?**

None whatsoever, because Paul Airey probably had the most difficult job. He had to establish the image of the position and the office itself, and he had to travel extensively, which he did. His primary emphasis was more or less with the senior noncommissioned officers at that time because it was all new, and they didn’t know too much about the position or anything else. So Paul did a great job in establishing the office, establish the image, establish the purpose. It was good.

My following Paul and having been at the Air Force, then I could concentrate on the issues, the policies, the programs, and could get to the younger people, which was necessary at that time.

## **WHEN YOU WERE AT THE EXECUTIVE SERVICES DIVISION, WHAT WAS YOUR OBSERVATION AS TO HOW POLICY FOR ENLISTED MEN WAS CREATED? I MEAN, AS TO, OH, THE PROFICIENCY TESTS AND PROMOTIONS. WHERE DID YOU SEE THESE THINGS BEING GENERATED IN THE AIR FORCE THAT AFFECTED ENLISTED MEN?**

Well, they were generated in the Air Staff. The DCS [deputy chief of staff]/personnel—as far as I was concerned and through my observation—was the only one that I recall that was really effective and really pushed for the enlisted corps while I was assigned to that job, General [Horace M.] Wade.<sup>5</sup>

He was the one that said the limitations on our promotional opportunities, especially at the higher grades, were ridiculous. At that time, I think through the grade of master sergeant it was some 10 percent of the total force. Of course, E-8 and E-9 was limited—2 percent for E-8 and 1 percent for E-9 by law. That was when the grades were established, but the lower grades were very low, and he was instrumental in getting approval from Congress to increase the grade of master sergeant to 13 percent, promotional opportunity.

He was also responsible for keeping the promotional flow going through the implementation of the up-or-out program. Even though today the up-or-out program has to be looked at very carefully because of our lack of resources and our lack of new manpower resources within our civilian communities, but at that time promotions were becoming stagnated. It happens during peacetime when people stay in, and the people at the top don’t get out; then it just filters back down so the promotional opportunities become less and less.

So it was General Wade who developed a study group to come up with this up-or-out program. In other words, if a staff sergeant could not get promoted to tech sergeant at the 20-year point, then he had to go. It was not a good program to the extent that there were an awful lot of staff sergeants whom I saw out there in the field who would have stayed in the rest of their lives. They would have died in the military. They were good in their job; they didn’t have the potential for promotion. They would never go beyond the grade of staff sergeant, and they would never do anything of any value outside of their particular specialty, but they were great. They loved the Air Force, and it was a shame that we had to arbitrarily move them out.

## **HOW DID YOU FEEL THAT THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, ONCE IT WAS CREATED, WAS IT A LONG TIME BEFORE IT ACTUALLY GOT TO THE POINT WHERE IT WAS BEING EFFECTIVE?**

Well, I'll express it in this manner. Each individual who has held that office has had the opportunity of increasing the effectiveness and the overall participation of the individual in the position to become more and more involved in the various aspects of the Air Force people programs. As I say, Paul Airey had a very difficult decision to make at the time he was in because it was during the Vietnam War in which we had a critical shortage of noncommissioned officers, and it was a point of making a decision in calling an E-3 a buck sergeant. That had a major impact on the force, and in some quarters, Paul was accused of doing something that was inappropriate, and another case it was great, but at that time, Paul was the first one, and he had members of the Air Staff briefing him and why it was necessary. I don't think he had any real alternative except to support it.

Since then there have been changes. They didn't like the term "airman second class." So there have been a lot of changes as a result of this.

No, I think the Air Staff at that time got inputs from all over, but I don't think the Air Staff, in a general sense—I say some of them did, but in a general sense—I didn't think they really had a deep understanding of what the real needs of the enlisted people were.

Now, if you recall, we went through a period of time where the noncommissioned officers lost a lot of their authority.

## **WHILE WE ARE ON THE SUBJECT THEN, DID YOU EVER GET INVOLVED IN ANY STUDY OR WHAT YOUR PERSONAL VIEW WAS WHILE YOU WERE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE ABOUT THE IDEA OF WARRANT OFFICERS?**

That has been a sore subject ever since E-8 and E-9 positions were developed. One of the things that both Paul Airey and myself did, and even [CMSAF] Dick Kisling during our tenure in that position was to push for more authority by the senior noncommissioned officer.

See, when they created these two grades, all they did was promote you. They really didn't give you any more authority. You couldn't sign any official documents; you couldn't make any major decisions. There were lots of things you just couldn't do. You just had two more grades to go.

## **BASED ON WHAT YOU WERE SAYING PREVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T THINK THE WARRANT OFFICER POSITION WAS REALLY, EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION, "WARRANTED" THEN?**

The warrant officer in the Air Force really lost the overall concept of what the warrant officer was in the old Army. In fact, even in the Army today, the warrant officer is not what they used to be. The warrant officer used to be a highly qualified specialist who knew the directives, knew the programs, and everything else, and he was more or less utilized as an advisor and a key individual in various policies, programs, and everything else. That has since changed completely.

I will never forget when I was at ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] duty at Southern Methodist University that the Air University put out a flyer as to what a warrant officer was. It said he was neither an officer nor an enlisted man.

## **THAT WAS THEIR DEFINITION. (LAUGHTER)**

He was unique in the fact that he was given a warrant for this position. We had one there, and I said, "Hey, you are neither fish nor fowl. What the hell are you?" (laughter)

We used to joke about it, but this became a very difficult thing. What do you do with a warrant officer in our structure? Now that the E-8 and E-9 positions were created in 1958, where does the warrant officer fit in? Do we have another supervisory level in here?

So it was the decision of the Air Force at that time to look at it very carefully and say, "Do we really need that position?" I suspect a lot of those positions were converted to the officer positions, although the E-8s and E-9s were, supposedly, to replace the warrant. Of course, the Army uses the warrant, primarily, today in flying.



## **HOW DID THE LOWER GRADES OF ENLISTED PEOPLE LOOK ON YOU AND YOUR OFFICE? DID THEY SEE YOU AS PART OF THE ESTABLISHMENT, OR DID YOU REALLY FEEL THAT YOU HAD SOME KIND OF RAPPORT GOING WITH THE INDIVIDUALS?**

Well, my first, probably, six months on the job was difficult in the fact that I had to try to evaluate myself in that position and how effective I was with young people, because I spent more time with young people. I had a crewcut haircut, you know. So to a lot of them that maybe put up sort of a little front—this is a lifer. However, I made it a point to spend time talking and answering questions to groups of young people or talking to them individually. Many of them found out that I also had enough integrity where—I remember talking to an airman first class, three-striper, and I asked him how he was getting along.<sup>6</sup> “Fine, but I’m getting out as soon as I can.” I said, “Why?” He said, “I want to let my hair grow.” I said, “You mean to say you would give up any opportunity you might have for advancement or more experience just to let your hair grow?” He said, “That’s right.” I said, “Then I wish you luck, because I suggest you do get out.” These people around me looked at me, but I was sincere. If that was his only hang-up, we didn’t need him. An attitude like that can hurt a lot of people.

## **THIS HAIR THING. I GUESS I’M JUST OF THE OLDER GENERATION ALREADY. GOING THROUGH THE PUBLICATIONS BACK THERE IN THE AIR FORCE TIMES, THIS HAIR THING JUST—**

It was a big thing. We had a commander over in Hawaii that got chastised, and he finally—they didn’t take any further action except to raise hell with him, but you know, a lot of aircraft came in there with Army, Navy, and all kinds of troops on R&R [rest and recuperation], and he used to go out to these contract aircrafts. He didn’t care if it was Army, Navy, or who it was, if their hair wasn’t right, he would pull them off the damn plane. That only happened a couple of days when the word got out, and they called him up and said, “Hey, you cut that out before you have the whole Department of Defense on our ass.” But he was one of the old school.

## **WHAT WAS THE ANSWER YOU WOULD GIVE WHY HAIR COULD NOT BE LONG?**

Well, in the first place, my basic philosophy was that we are charged with the responsibility of protecting the security of our nation. Secondly, for the most part, the American people have little confidence in the hippies and the people who now in this nation are defying the basic principles of democracy on which our nation was built. Third, if we are going to serve our nation, we have to portray an image that others will

respect, and going around in a clean, nice uniform with long hair, that detracts from the true professional image of what we should be, it is just not right. Just because others do it, doesn’t mean we have to.

## **ACCORDING TO AN INTERVIEW YOU MADE IN THE AIRMAN MAGAZINE, IT SAYS, “THE TWO MOST FREQUENT GRIPE THE ENLISTED MEN HAVE ARE ASSIGNMENTS AND PROMOTIONS.” THIS WAS IN 1969. AFTER YOU SERVED THERE AND GOT OUT, DID THAT STILL REMAIN PREDOMINANT?**

It still is—well, promotions, of course, will always be.

## **YES.**

It’s always a case that, “This guy is a drunk; he spends all his time at the club. He gets promoted, and I am working hard and doing my job, and I didn’t get promoted.” The other thing is the fact that they still think, to some degree, that the WAPS system is not the fairest system, but it is the best system we have ever come up with. The number of congressionals dropped dramatically once we went into that program.

## **WHERE DID THAT WAPS DEVELOP?**

That was developed in the Air Staff, and it was held in abeyance for some time until the Congress got real upset because of the number of congressionals that was coming in. John Ford, the professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee, talked with the people in the Air Staff and said, “We are going to have to hold some hearings on that.” At that time is when they told the Congress that they had developed the WAPS system, and the Congress said, “You had better do something quick,” and they did.

## **IT STARTED OUT IN ALASKA FIRST, IS THAT CORRECT?**

Yes. They tried it out in one command first; then by direction of Congress, they decided to put it in, after some refinements. It has worked out extremely well.

## **WHY WAS THERE A RELUCTANCE ON THE AIR FORCE TO ORIGINALLY IMPLEMENT IT?**

It is like any new program. People don’t like change. They like what they know and they understand even though it is not the best. Something new adds to the problem.

**WELL, DID YOU FIND YOURSELF HAVING TO NOT ONLY SELL THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE AIR STAFF AS MUCH AS YOU HAD TO SELL IT TO THE PEOPLE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE REPRESENTING? WERE YOU KIND OF IN A LONE SITUATION THERE?**

I think it was important for the people out in the field to understand the limitations of the job. I told them I was an advisor. “The things I find here I can take back and relate to the Air Staff some of the problems we encounter. I am not in the decision process; however, there are many policies and programs and papers that come through in which they ask my opinion, and as a result of these visits, I perhaps am in a better position to analyze them and give a better opinion.”

That’s why I worked with the Air Staff in that sense. As I say, with each individual who has filled the job, the importance and the involvement in the programs and everything else has increased steadily. Chief [James M.] McCoy is deeply involved in these programs.

In fact, to be honest with you, there was no such thing as an enlisted man ever going over and testifying before the Congress, absolutely unheard of. You don’t do that, even the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Paul Airey was over there with the Speaker of the House and was introduced, but that was it. It was a new job; it was a new terminology.

After I got into this job and had been over on the Hill and testified several times on several issues of importance to the Air Force, they got to realizing that maybe enlisted men were not completely stupid, and the last two Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force have been over there in testimony. Of course, the Air Force prepares the testimony and tells them what to say, where the difference is that I prepare my testimony. I don’t have to go through the establishment.<sup>7</sup>

I feel I have done the job in such a way that I respect the Air Force; I respect the Congress, and they have shown respect to me. So now, it seems the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force or the senior NCO does have the qualifications and can make a reputable appearance before that distinct body.

**IN 1970 THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE ALREADY, AND OF COURSE, DOING AWAY WITH THE DRAFT. DID YOU, AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, GET INTO THE PROS AND CONS OF THAT IN ANY WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM?**

Oh, yes. In the first place, we have never been a service to have to draft anybody, so it really had no meaning to us in that sense. We felt that by going to the all-volunteer service when they were talking about increased pay and benefits, it would enhance all of the services, including the Air Force, so why oppose something that could better it?

**BUT YOU HAVE TO ALSO ADMIT, THOUGH, THAT WITHOUT THE DRAFT THERE WAS LESS THAN 100 PERCENT INCENTIVE TO JOIN ANOTHER BRANCH OF THE SERVICE OTHER THAN THE ARMY. THAT OBVIOUSLY HAD TO ENTER IN, TOO.**

No, not necessarily. You know, there are some people who are gung ho. They love the Army. That’s their life. They love that discipline.

**YES, BUT I MEAN TO SAY, THE FACT THAT THERE WAS A DRAFT CERTAINLY WAS AN IMPETUS FOR PEOPLE TO JOIN THE AIR FORCE.**

Yes, join the Air Force and also the Reserve. The concern was that we were not going to have those people volunteering for the Reserve, not for the Air Force.

**OH, YOU NEVER FELT THE AIR FORCE WAS SUFFERING?**

I don’t think the Air Force suffered. I felt there would be a very definite impact on those participating in the Reserve. A lot of people joined the Reserve because they were in school, college, or had a job so they wouldn’t have to be drafted, but they would still be fulfilling their commitment.

**YOU SAY THE AIR FORCE DIDN’T BENEFIT THAT MUCH FROM THE DRAFT?**

No, because we still had a lot of people that volunteered for the Air Force because we are a technical service. It was also that period of time in the early 1970s when even getting out of college, go to find a job, they would say, “What’s your experience?” And he didn’t have any. We picked up a lot of people in the Air Force that came in just to get the experience. So my personal concern was not that great.



## **DID YOU, THEN, AFTER THEY STARTED GETTING YOUR FIELD TRIP REPORTS, WOULD THEY CALL YOU DOWN JUST TO TALK WITH YOU AT ALL?**

One time I happened to be going down the hallway and Secretary [of the Air Force, Robert C.] Seamans saw me, and he said, “Chief, how about coming in?” When I say “chief,” there is another thing that I think is very important to put in this history.

When the E-9s were called chief master sergeant, I felt we had to do something because they didn’t really have the importance of the job, it wasn’t significant. It was pay, promotion, and everything else, so I put in a recommendation that all E-9s be called “chief,” and that when E-9s answer the phone, they say, “chief so-and-so.” If it was a matter of being assigned to a joint command where you have Navy chiefs, you just say, “chief master sergeant so-and-so.”

I sent that up to General Ryan. Of course, he gave it to the staff, and finally he came back about a month later and said, “This may be done unofficially, but the regulation will not be changed.” The next trip was over in the Pacific.

Col “Don” Stanfield was the commander over at Ubon [AB, Thailand], hell of a guy with the troops; everybody loved him. [We were] sitting at the club, and I was telling him about this.

I got back from that trip, and as soon as I walked into the office, Mary “Mickey” Mortis said, “Hey, Chief, you are in trouble again.” I said, “Oh, Mary, what the hell is wrong now?” Colonel Stanfield had directed the next day, and they sent me copies of the daily bulletin, in which he said, “All E-9s will be addressed as ‘chief,’ and all E-9s that answer the phone will answer the phone as ‘chief so-and-so.’” And of course, somebody sent it to the chief of staff’s office, and it came down to our office.

Well, I expected a call—never got one, but that is what started it, and it picked up, and now the [regulation] is changed, and an E-9 is a chief. I have got to attribute this not just to my suggestion. I have got to attribute it more to the people who were selected and filled the job as senior enlisted advisors, because they enhanced that opportunity to get the title “chief.”

## **MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THE AIR FORCE KIND OF STUMBLER INTO THIS SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR FOR THE COMMANDS AND SO FORTH. IT SEEMS LIKE ONE COMMAND DID IT AND MAYBE ANOTHER DIDN’T, AND SOMEBODY SAID, “WELL, LET’S HAVE ONE.”**

Okay. Let me give you the background on that. At the time the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was selected, there was a CMSgt

Conrad Stephens who was assigned to MAC [Military Airlift Command].<sup>8</sup> He was one of the top three when Paul Airey was selected. In fact, he was recommended three times for the position, and he made it as one of the top three the first three times.

## **NEVER MADE IT.**

He never made it for reasons I would rather not say. After he was one of the top three the first time, General [Jack J.] Catton was commander of MAC, and General Catton sent a letter in stating he wanted to establish the position within MAC and have Conrad Stephens be called the chief master sergeant of MAC. That went to the Air Staff, and comments were that they felt it was wrong to be called the chief master sergeant of a command because the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was such a new title that it could be easily misconstrued or perceived as being rather confusing.

At the time, I talked to General Ryan and others about having a senior or a chief at the command level. General [Robert J.] Dixon was very much opposed to it, because his concern was that we were going to set up a chain of command like the Army sergeant majors. The Army sergeant majors—I don’t know if they still have it—but they used to have the authority to hire and fire enlisted people, which to me was always wrong.

Anyway, General Dixon shot that down. So the suggestion was processed through. General Ryan said, “Well, I can’t dictate to major commander that they will have one. If they want one, that’s their decision.” At first, several of them didn’t want one, but as others got them and as these proved to be successful, and the four stars went to the Corona conferences where there was open discussion with nothing in writing, several of the generals persuaded the other commands that they should have one. “This is a benefit to you.” So that is how it really got started.

## **IN 1970 AND FISCAL YEAR 1971, TOO, WHAT I WAS ABLE TO DIG OUT WAS THE RETENTION RATE FOR FIRST-TERMERS WAS THE BEST IT HAD BEEN IN OVER SIX OR SEVEN YEARS. DO YOU RECALL THAT AND WHY THAT WAS?**

Well, I think the basic thing was that there was sort of a winding down of requirements at that time in the military, and there wasn’t that many opportunities in civilian life. I think it was the general idea that they wanted to hang onto what they had until they could find something better, plus the fact that we had a pretty good retention program instituted in the Air Force at that time to keep our quality people in. That’s the only thing I can attribute it to.

## **WE TALKED A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IT, BUT IN JULY 1971 THE AIR FORCE STARTED THE UP-AND-OUT SYSTEM. WERE YOU IN FAVOR OF THAT?**

At that time, yes. That was the only program that we could develop and implement at that time that would continue the flow of promotional opportunity.

## **HOW DID THE ENLISTED FORCE TAKE THE UP-AND-OUT?**

Well, the senior master sergeant that had 28 years in and had to leave, he wasn't too happy. He would like to stay till 30 and the opportunity to make chief. I remember briefing some people over in England, and a senior master sergeant got up and talked to me. He said, "I have put in for retirement. I am going to retire when I get back to the States because there is no chance of my making chief and 28 years is coming up, and I am going to have to get out anyway." I explained to him the purpose of it. He said, "Well, I don't like it." I said, "You think you are not going to have the opportunity to make chief. You will be eligible, but you have made the decision to retire. If you didn't decide to retire, and wanted to take your chances to make chief, fine, but you made that decision, so don't turn around and blame the Air Force just because you know that program exists."

## **HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR OPINION OF THE UP-AND-OUT SYSTEM SINCE THAT TIME THEN?**

Only to the extent that we should, which they are doing now, look carefully at the various grades and give them the opportunity to stay on if they are in a critical field that is needed. But you see, if you don't have something that moves people on up, you have promotion stagnation, and when you have promotion stagnation, it usually develops in the staff, tech, and master area. Then you are not going to keep good, qualified, young people, and you have to have a certain percentage of the first-termers and the second-termers in relation to your career force in order to have an effective military.

## **WHAT DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY?**

Yes. I thought it was the greatest thing we ever did.

## **IS THERE ANY DUPLICATION THERE BETWEEN THAT? I HAVE READ THAT IT IS KIND OF REDUNDANT. EACH COMMAND HAS ITS NCO ACADEMY AND THEN THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY.**

No. I think you will find the Senior NCO Academy provides the broader scope of staff work, a broader understanding of the same things the officers are trained for. As we talked before, there were the limitations within the enlisted corps as opposed to the officer corps. I think this—in

fact, I know it broadens the individual and helps them move into that area. I think it is excellent.

Any educational system has to be looked at, at least on a yearly basis to fit the education to the circumstances and the environment that plays a part in it. Everything has to be relative. You can't be teaching something for five years when changes cause you to look at it and say, "Hey, this doesn't apply today," or if it does apply, this is not the method in which you apply it. So there is a constant review and study not only of the Senior NCO Academy but all the NCO academies.

## **LET'S SEE, THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY, IT SEEMS TO ME, STARTED IN ABOUT 1972. IN FACT, THE BUILDING I WAS IN DOWN THERE AT MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA, ONE END OF IT WAS THE ORIGINAL CADRE FOR IT, HEADED BY A COLONEL ROBERT K. MCCUTCHEN, AS I RECALL.**

Yes, Colonel McCutchen. Actually, the first class graduated in January 1972.

## **DID YOU HELP FORM IT IN ANY WAY?**

Oh, yes, I was very much involved in the formulation of that. In fact, I talked with the people in education because I didn't like the term Senior NCO Academy. I thought it should have a little bit more of a higher educational title, like Noncommissioned Officer University or University for Senior Noncommissioned Officers, something like that; however, the reason that was not pushed—even though many people in the Air Force and Department of Education wanted to have a little higher class title given—there was a problem with the Congress, trying to get funding for it. The only way, actually, that funding was approved, the Air Force had to take some of the members of Congress who had questions about it and fly them to Gunter [AFB, Alabama] and actually give them a tour and explain to them why they were pushing for this.

They felt, and I agreed, that we couldn't push it too much if we got the money and could get it going; that was important. Now, eventually down the road, I hope the term will be changed. I hope the title will be more fitting to the classification of the training that is given, but I'm delighted to see that we have it.

## **WERE YOU INVOLVED IN SELECTING YOUR REPLACEMENT IN ANY WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE?**

I was as advisor to the board during the selection process.



## AND THE BOARD WAS?

It was composed of a general officer and, I believe, five colonels with a broad representation, command wise, so they didn't have any feeling that there was any prejudice in the selection process. I was merely sitting there as an advisor. I determined that I would not ask questions of the selectees even though I could. The president of the board said I could if I wished. I said I did not wish to because I did not want to give anyone of the selectees the impression that I was trying in any way to trip them up or cause them not to be considered as fully as any other. Oftentimes, unknowingly, you can ask a question that could, in their answer, be a little bit detrimental to their opportunity, so I didn't.

The only thing I was asked after all met with the board, they asked me if I would like to make recommendations, and I said, "From knowing just about every one of the selectees and my observation and my dealings with them, I would be glad to put on a piece of paper, for the president's view only, the three people I think would be most qualified to do the job," and that was my only participation.

## WHAT WAS YOUR GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE?

I think the greatest disappointment was that so many of the initiatives that the Air Force took and wanted to take were somewhat stymied because of the system. I was very pleased and proud of some of the initiatives that the Air Force was considering and discussing, but the system is such that it has to go through the secretary for approval; then it had to go to OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense]. OSD sends it out to the other services to get their comments, and if they object, then it dies. It doesn't go anywhere.

I also was disappointed in the fact that there was too much of the consideration that "we have to treat all of the services the same." We have a different mission; we have a different management system; we have to have because of our mission requirements, and you can't treat everything the same. This is one of the things that I have been very instrumental in talking with people on the Hill, especially the staff members. They were talking about the Guard and the Reserve technician program. The Army doesn't want the technician program. They want active duty, and yet the technicians in our Air Force and our Air Force Reserve are providing stability and the continuity, which gives us a tremendous degree of readiness, because the weekenders can't keep that up.

## WE MENTIONED THE OTHER DAY ONE OF THE QUESTIONS I USUALLY ASK IN INTERVIEWS—IF SOMEONE HAS A DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP, OR WHAT YOU HAVE FOUND THAT SEEMS TO WORK QUITE WELL DURING YOUR CAREER IN THE AIR FORCE, OR WHAT YOU FOUND—IS THERE SUCH A THING AS LEADERSHIP? CAN YOU TRAIN LEADERS?

Leadership has many variables. True leadership is the ability of an individual to recognize what motivates people and how to get the best out of people. Leadership does not necessarily mean knowing how and doing something yourself and expecting others to follow. Leadership is not something that is subjective in nature. It has to be objective. You can't compare yourself with others; you can't compare anything with anything else. You have to know the situation, and you have to be able to analyze the situation, understand it to the point that you can take advantage of it and not let that situation be an obstacle in your leadership ability.

It's like discipline. The degree of discipline is a judgment factor. Leadership is the same way. You can take a class of students in any school, and you will find that perhaps you will get to a few of them in your teaching methods. But the real art of teaching is being able to recognize the problem with the others that you are not getting to, and to be able to adjust your teaching methods or system or whatever is necessary in order to bring them into the same environment with this other group.

It is a hell of a challenge. Man is the most complex mechanism in the world.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **RICHARD D. KISLING**

**OCTOBER 1, 1971 - SEPTEMBER 30, 1973**

Richard D. Kisling grew up as a farmer's son in western Iowa. Born on 22 November 1923, he grew used to early risings, often milking the cows and finishing other chores before heading to school for the day. He was nine when the Depression began taking a toll on his family. With 10 children to clothe and feed, there was little money to go around. Overalls and a pair of new shoes become luxury items.

Like many men of his era, Kisling was drafted into the Army in July 1944, just one month after the Allies landed in Europe. A year later he found himself in Germany negotiating the repatriation of displaced persons with the Soviet Union. He left the Army in 1946, but quickly rejoined the Army Air Forces in 1947 just before it officially became the US Air Force.

For the next 26 years, Kisling served in a wide variety of roles. As a young enlisted Airman he was a personnelist, then became a first sergeant and later a recruiter. He became

the third Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) on 1 October 1971, selected by Gen John D. Ryan. During his tenure he led the opening of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy (SNCOA) and tackled issues such as housing and pay. He passed away on 3 November 1985, just shy of his 62nd birthday.

The Air Force Historical Research Center interviewed Kisling multiple times from 1982 to 1984. During the interviews, Kisling talked about his experience in Germany following the end of World War II, the development of the SNCOA, and the roll high year tenure played in retention and promotion. The complete interviews can be accessed on the Air University Library online research center.<sup>1</sup>

Portions of the interview are printed below. The order of some of the questions and answers has been adjusted to depict a chronological reflection on the life and career of Richard D. Kisling.

## **YOUR BIOGRAPHY SHOWS YOU WERE BORN IN NOVEMBER 1923, IN IOWA. DID YOU HAVE THIS TRADITIONAL IOWA FARM LIFE OF THE 1920S THERE?**

Absolutely. We were farming with horses. We would get up early. My dad would, I suppose, get up 3:45 each morning, the year round, and about five o'clock he would make sure we were awake. My younger brother—two years younger than I am—and I would get up, and we would help milk the cows and do the chores before we went to school. When we got home from school in the evening, we had just the same old reverse.

Then we would go back to doing the chores. I remember one of the things I fought with my dad about was in the middle of the winter, the fact that we were going out after the evening meal and milking our cows. He thought the cows should be milked on a regular basis—at five o'clock in the morning and seven o'clock at night, but we would never change those. We finally convinced him, I think about 1938 or 1939, that we could do our outside work before we came in out of that real tough weather.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE DEPRESSION? DID THAT REALLY HIT YOUR FAMILY PRETTY HARD?**

Very much so. I guess I really start remembering it about 1932, probably. I remember my dad was raising quite a few hogs, not many cattle. We always had a lot of milk cows, but we didn't have too many beef cattle. He would ship hogs to market, and they wouldn't even pay for the trucking. Corn was selling for two or three cents a bushel. There was no money. Shortly after that the drought started, and that made things worse. I guess we had probably about five years that were very, very depressed. We were lucky to get a pair of overalls in the fall and a pair of new shoes at the start of the school year. There wasn't money for anything. I remember we didn't even have a radio until about 1936. I lost my mother in 1934, which really complicated things for my father and for all of us, that large family.

## **YOU GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, WHEN THEN?**

In 1941. I went in the service in July 1944.

## **HOW DID YOU FINALLY GET INTO THE SERVICE THEN?**

When they changed my draft classification. I went down to Fort Crook, Nebraska—now Offutt AFB—and took my pre-induction physical. I think it was less than a month that I had notice to report. I went up to Fort Snelling and processed through Fort Snelling, up at Minneapolis–Saint Paul [Minnesota]. At that time, I had hopes of getting into the Navy or to the Army Air Corps. They went down the line, “We’ll take you and you and you,” and it just happened to be my lucky day, I guess, that I got into the infantry. (laughter)

## **IN INFANTRY TRAINING, BY THIS TIME THEY HAD INVADDED EUROPE AND THE WAR WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE. DID YOU GUYS THINK YOU WERE GOING TO GET IN ON IT BY THIS TIME?**

We were kind of hoping that maybe the war would end, but no one seemed to think that in the infantry training business. They were dead serious about what they were teaching us.

Along about the end of the basic training, they started trying to get volunteers to go to paratroops. We talked about it a great deal, and finally I decided I would go. They were paying a lot of money to be a paratrooper. Our pay was \$50 a month in those days. We were lucky. I got in when they were paying some money—\$50 a month, and you got a whole \$50 a month extra if you were airborne. The big clincher was . . . I guess they talked us into volunteering through a little bit of coercion. We could have a three-day pass if we would volunteer. Quite a sizable group of us from around the Sioux City [Iowa] area volunteered and went to trooper training down at Fort Benning [Georgia]. Lucky for me, I think, I had a bad appendix. I didn't know it, but I couldn't take the long runs. My side was really bothering me, so I was eliminated out of trooper training.

At this time now, they were moving people over to Europe because of the Battle of the Bulge. They were flying people over. The first time they had flown anyone over. A guy by the name of Emms from Salt Lake City [Utah] washed out at the same time. We were told we were going to be on our way to Europe, and somehow they got us on the wrong orders, and they sent us up to Camp Gordon, Georgia. (laughter)

We never did figure out how we got to Camp Gordon. We were sent to an infantry training company up there. The mission of this training company was giving them four or five weeks training to the people that they were pulling out of the Army Air Corps. At that time they were pulling a lot of people out of the Army Air Corps to train as filler replacements and ship them overseas. I think the second or third day we were there, Emms and I were down at Regimental Personnel, trying to explain to them that we shouldn't be there, that we were supposed to be on our way to Europe, and no way. We stayed there a couple of months and, finally, they decided it was wrong. In the meantime, I had tried a little bit of everything, doing a lot of cooking. I volunteered to be in there; I was pulling a lot of KP and I volunteered to work as a cook. But it took them a couple of months to get this straightened out and get us on our way overseas. It was along in the spring, then, of 1945 before I ever got overseas.



## DID YOU FLY OVER TO EUROPE?

No. We went up to—what is the Army post just north of Baltimore [Maryland]? Fort Meade [Fort George G. Meade]. We went to Fort Meade, and they had us in a holding station there, in the processing station, for about a month. It took a long time. Everything was manual. It took about a month to get us processed, and then they sent us by troop train up to Camp Myles Standish, by Boston [Massachusetts], and we boarded the SS Mariposa. The Mariposa was an old luxury liner that had been commandeered. We set out, without an escort—of course the war was still on, but they were changing course every three minutes. This was good enough, apparently, at that part of the war that we weren't really in danger, although we were under very strict blackouts all the time.

## YOU GOT THERE IN LATE APRIL OR EARLY MAY.

About late April.

## THE WAR ENDED WHEN, 7 MAY?

I think 7 May, something like that.

## DID YOU EVER HEAR A SHOT FIRED IN ANGER THEN?

Yes, we did. In riding this troop train up through France, there were some pockets that had been cut off in the fast movement through France, through the northern part of France, and there were still some battles going on. But personally, I never fired a shot, and I was lucky that I wasn't one of those that was turned right around and sent to the Pacific; the fact that I was married gave me some points. I guess that is one advantage.

## WHAT WAS GERMANY LIKE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WAR HERE?

Germany was terrible. The buildings were all devastated; there was nothing in the shops—very little food. Once in a while you could find a black-market restaurant that was in business. Even the beer wasn't good because it wasn't aging.

When we moved up south of Kassel [Germany] for occupation, we picked up a lot of new people. When we first moved up, we went into a little town of Bad Wildungen, set up our headquarters in an old spa hotel. This is in the area of Germany where they have all the baths. So we occupied one of the biggest hotels there, really a nice place. It hadn't been shelled. We were in there about three days and Corps came along. They said, "Okay, division, you have got to get out. We are going to take this over. This has been our plan." So we had to move out to a very small town about three or four kilometers from there.

## WAS THE ARMY SUPPOSED TO BE FERRETING OUT NAZIS?

Yes. We had several missions. We had CIO [counterintelligence office] and CIC [counterintelligence corps] that were reporting to us, and our division was picked to be the division to establish the repatriation of the displaced persons. My boss, Colonel Spryer—and this would have been late in 1945, probably around September or October 1945—had several meetings with the Russians, and they established the parameters for the exchange of the DP [displaced persons] across this zone up there. It never worked out right. I remember our first exchange—first I should tell you, his first meeting with the Russians, Spryer came back, and he had what looked like an old milk carton that they used to carry the bottles in filled up with bottles of vodka, real Russian vodka. He had taken over whiskey, and they had given him Russian vodka. That was our first taste of vodka. That, with the weak beer, made a pretty good drink. (laughter)

When we got ready for the repatriation, we found that we just could not trust them. We were supposed to exchange, say, 200 people a day. We would process our 200 people, and we would end up getting 400 or 500 or 600 people, and they would say, "They are people that you sent over to us that you shouldn't have sent." So the repatriation really never worked out.

## WHO WERE YOU REPATRIATING?

These were displaced persons who were living in the DP camps. We had a lot of DP camps. I know in the city of Salzburg there was an area, and there must have been a couple thousand people in this DP camp.

## WERE YOU ANXIOUS TO GET HOME AT THIS TIME?

Yes, I was anxious to get home. I thought, "Well, I will get back, and I will get to my old job in the exchange. Then I will see if I am going to become a farmer." And I thought, maybe, I would go back to school.

We were all supposed to step right back into the positions we had before—the same place. I found out that wasn't true either. A guy that I got to be a good friend with, who was probably about the same position in the company when he had gone into the service a short time before—three or four months before I had started there—came back, and he expected to step in at his level, plus other people had been hired expecting to stay at their levels. So it just wasn't that good.

## WHEN DID YOU ACTUALLY GET OUT OF THE ARMY THEN, IN 1946?

I got out the first time in 1946. I went back in 1946 and then got out in 1947 and into the Army Air Forces.

## **DID THIS SEEM LIKE THE CAREER YOU WANTED TO PURSUE?**

Yes, this seemed like the career I wanted to pursue, but after I had met the girl I was going to marry, my second wife, and we got married, I decided what we ought to do was go overseas. There were a lot of good overseas places.

I had a friend [W02 John Uram] who had become a warrant officer, a master sergeant who had become a warrant officer. He was working up at the personnel processing squadron in New York. I had talked to Mr. Uram, and he said, “If you get up here, I’ll make sure you get to Europe.” So I volunteered for the European theater. In those days you couldn’t volunteer for a specific place; you volunteered for a theater. I volunteered for the European theater. I thought I had it all greased with this warrant officer. I got up to the processing station up in New York, and Uram had retired. So suddenly I found myself going to Wheelus Field, Libya, which turned out to be a good assignment for me. I went in there as a staff sergeant, and of course, shortly after that the Korean War broke out, and I was promoted rather quickly to tech sergeant and then to master sergeant. I was there for about six or seven months as the chief clerk in the squadron, and then I moved up to become the first sergeant.

## **WHAT SQUADRON WAS THIS?**

1261st Air Transport Squadron. That just turned out to be a very, very good assignment for me. I had no idea when I went in there I would ever want to be a first sergeant. I got into the job a little bit under pressure. We had a Mexican who was our first sergeant. We got a new squadron commander from New Mexico, and he did not like Mexicans.

Unfortunately, Sergeant Bello was not the world’s greatest first sergeant. I think about the second week this major, at the time, was there—he was very upset over the way Sergeant Bello was handling leaves for our people that were taking their wives or their families with them to Europe. At that time, you could take one leave a year to the continent from Tripoli. They flew you up and back. Some guy and his wife had planned to go and Bello had not processed the leave paperwork in time. It was there in his inbox. He could never explain to the old man how he processed these things. No one else could ever figure it out anyway. (laughter)

He called me in about a day after he had really gotten in trouble with the ops officer, because it was the ops NCO that was going up. He called me in, and he said, “Okay, tomorrow morning you are the first sergeant.” I looked at him. He said, “You are a tech sergeant. You are now the first sergeant. If you can do the job, you are a master. If not, I am going to bust your ass to staff sergeant.” I thought, “What the hell did I get into with this guy?” But it worked out fine. I was able to hack it. So I got into the first sergeant business.

## **HOW WERE THE ENLISTED PEOPLE YOU WERE WORKING WITH IN THESE DAYS? WERE THEY MOSTLY WORLD WAR II VETS THAT HAD STAYED IN?**

Most of them were World War II vets. We were starting to get a few young people but not too many yet. In this air transport squadron, we had a lot of old maintenance people, a lot of old radio operators, kind of like the Jake Schuffert. You know, Jake was a radio operator. The cartoonist, the guy who draws “No Sweat.”<sup>2</sup>

## **WHEN THE KOREAN WAR BROKE OUT, WERE YOU EVER SCHEDULED TO GO TO THE FAR EAST AT ALL?**

Our outfit was alerted to go to the Far East, and we went so far as packing footlockers full. We had our typewriters and office supplies and everything packed into footlockers because we were sure we were going to be moving. Then something happened, and they decided we didn’t need to go, but we were sure we would have to be over there in the transport business.

## **WHEN YOU WENT INTO THE AIR FORCE, WAS THERE QUITE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE?**

When I moved into the barracks at Chanute Field [Illinois], I couldn’t believe it. I moved into this open bay—of course they were all open bays then. But here were master sergeants, staff sergeants, tech sergeants, two stripers, and three stripers, and they were all calling each other by their first name, and they were saying, “We are going to go get a beer. We will go out someplace and do this,” whatever they were going to do. They were talking about their work. It was all on a first-name basis. This was really a shock to me, because in the Army, at that time, you certainly didn’t call anyone of senior rank by their first name. There was no association with them, and you never spoke to one of those unless it was in the line of duty as a question unless they spoke to you first. I couldn’t believe this. I thought, “My gosh, what a change!” I thought they were almost like civilians.

I remember in those days some of the people that were on flying status would talk about their officers, “Pete this” and “Pete that,” whatever it might be. I couldn’t understand this. Then I found out a lot of the crew members called each other by their first names. This was going on even in World War II, I understand. It was acceptable. They were flyers, and they all considered themselves flyers, so they weren’t rank conscious about that. I guess that is when I first started developing some officer friendships, about this time. I saw a lot of this, that officers would invite enlisted people to their homes or to go someplace, and it was acceptable. No one seemed to be concerned about it.



## **WHEN YOU GOT THIS JOB AS FIRST SERGEANT THEN, HOW DID IT WORK OUT?**

It worked out fine. In those days all of the records were in the squadron. All of the personnel was done in the squadron. As chief clerk in the squadron, I attribute my fact to be able to handle this job and do it on the training I received from . . . my couple of years at Fourth Air Force. I didn't know anything about the officer system, but I learned it very quickly.

[After a few years of it], I got to thinking maybe I should do something else, so I put in an application for the Recruiting Service. I went down to Abilene, Texas, for my interview. I was waiting in the office for the interview—at that time you had to be interviewed by a local recruiting station commander and several other people—and a guy came out and said, “You are going to have to wait a little bit. The deputy for air from the Southwestern Recruiting District is in here, and you will have to wait until he finishes with the commander. Then he will see if he can see you. If not, you will have to stay another day.”

About one and a half hours later, the door opened and sitting behind the desk was Col [Philip J.] John who had been the deputy base commander over Wheelus Field in Tripoli. He jumped up over that desk and greeted me like a long-lost friend and wanted to know what I was doing. I told him, and I told him what I was there for. He said, “How soon are you prepared to move?” I said, “Right away.” Ten days later I was on my way to the Southwestern Recruiting District down at Fort Sam [Houston, Texas]. I got down there just in time for Air Force to make a decision to split from the Army. I think I got there in about February, and in about May we moved over to Lackland [AFB, Texas] to set up the recruiting school and the 3504th Recruiting Group.

## **WHEN YOU SAY “SPLIT FROM THE ARMY,” WHAT DO YOU MEAN?**

The recruiting. At that time our recruiting was joint with the Army. Army and Air Force recruiting was all together. We were sharing the same stations and had the same Southwestern District commander; he was an Army colonel.

The Air Force was always the deputy; it could never be the commander under that thing. We were having all kinds of problems in the recruiting business. I had no idea about it until I got there. The Army was trying to syphon off the best they could, and of course, they weren't getting the best people, but they were really putting the pressure on the recruiters to meet the Army quota. It was more important for the Army to meet their quota than it was to meet the Air Force quota. So it was a tremendous opportunity to do something else. I thought I was going down there as a recruiter, but I found as soon as I got there that [Colonel] John intended that I work directly for him. I couldn't do it while we were in Southwestern Recruiting District, but when we moved, then I became his group sergeant major.

## **DID THE AIR FORCE EVER TAKE ANY DRAFTEES AFTER WORLD WAR II? DO YOU RECALL?**

Only a few, and they weren't people that were drafted per se. They were people who failed to meet their Reserve obligations. They were called up, and probably only a handful of these.

## **AND IT WAS A FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENT FOR THE NEW RECRUIT IN THOSE DAYS?**

I think so. That has vacillated somewhat, but I think it has been primarily a three-year or four-year.

## **WAS THE TYPE OF PERSONS THE AIR FORCE WAS RECRUITING A PRETTY GOOD INDIVIDUAL IN THESE DAYS?**

Yes. Far superior to what they were getting in the other services, by and large. Across the board, we were getting good quality.

## **YOU WERE THERE FOR JUST A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS.**

That's right.

## **WAS TWO YEARS THE NORMAL TOUR IN THOSE DAYS?**

No. I was getting very hot to be tapped for overseas, so I decided I would volunteer to go where I wanted to go before I was picked to go. So I decided I wanted to go to Europe and had a chance. By this time you could volunteer for Europe and be reasonably assured you weren't going to go to the Mediterranean or Turkey or someplace.

## **YOU WENT TO THIS 48TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WING.<sup>3</sup> THIS WAS THE FIRST COMBAT UNIT YOU HAD BEEN IN IN THE AIR FORCE. WAS THERE QUITE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE NOW?**

There was a great difference. When I got to the 48th Tac Fighter Wing, our wing commander was [Lt Gen Albert P.] Clark. A. P. Clark was just shortly promoted to general, shortly after I got there. “Big Red” went on to become the commandant of the Air Force Academy.

## **I SEE ON YOUR BIOGRAPHY, THEY USE THE TERM “BASE PERSONNEL, SERGEANT MAJOR.” THE AIR FORCE DIDN'T HAVE SERGEANT MAJORS, DID THEY?**

Yes. We called them sergeant majors. It wasn't a grade; it was a title.

## **WAS THE TITLE EVEN OFFICIAL, THOUGH?**

Yes.

## **I MEAN, ON YOUR ORDERS IT WOULD READ SERGEANT MAJOR?**

Yes. Base personnel, sergeant major. When I got there, I was the personnel sergeant major . . . of the air base group. Then just a few weeks after I was there, we consolidated. We took the personnel records out of the groups. By this time, we had moved the personnel records from the squadrons to the groups, and then we pulled them from the groups and consolidated all of them.

## **IN THIS CONSOLIDATION, DID YOU LOSE ANYTHING PERSONALLY?**

No, I gained really, because I had a small personnel shop under the air base group, but when we placed everyone into the group, then I became the base personnel sergeant major.

## **(BEFORE WE MOVE FORWARD . . . ), YOU WERE IN THE MILITARY WHEN IT WAS INTEGRATED.**

This happened in 1949 if you remember. I was at Hamilton Field [California] at the time, and I should talk to you about that.

Our squadron was right across—not an active running stream but a dry bed, California-type stream. There was a walkover between us and two barracks where the black enlisted personnel were housed at Hamilton. None of us in the immediate area that I was working in had ever worked with any black personnel. We would see them around the base, but we had no contact with them. When the desegregation happened, we picked up, oh, maybe a dozen in Headquarters, Fourth Air Force, and they went to great lengths to try to move them into separate areas in the barracks.

## **RATHER THAN TO HAVE ALL OF A SUDDEN ONE BARRACKS.**

Rather than to have them all in one barracks. Little by little you could see that they tried to move back together again.

## **ON THEIR OWN.**

Yes. I found this to be a problem, then, in the squadrons I had as first sergeant to really work this problem of keeping them separated, because there was a tendency to move together. A lot of first sergeants believed, “Well, if we have desegregation, we are going to have it, but in my outfit they are going to be in one area.” They were really poorly treated. Although we had desegregation, they were really poorly treated.

## **ON A PERSONAL OR AN OFFICIAL BASIS?**

I would say more on a personal basis. There was a lot of official treatment that really was a facade. When a person would walk out of a room, there would be language and things said that should have never been said. So I think it was one of the toughest adjustments—and it was tougher for the black than it was for the white.

## **HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT IT PERSONALLY, ABOUT INTEGRATING THE AIR FORCE?**

I thought it was a good idea. I could not understand why, if they were going to fight, they shouldn't be entitled to the same things that I was. I had been through the South, and I found it very degrading to walk into a place and see a nice water fountain where you could get a drink and then see a sign that said, “Colored Only.” It was a pitiful-looking sight. I found that very hard to accept. Coming from the Midwest, the only black people I had ever seen before were people who worked in the packing house and doing those lower paying jobs in Sioux City. They lived in a very poor, run-down section of town on the west side.

## **AFTER WORLD WAR II THERE WAS THIS DOOLITTLE BOARD—I DON'T KNOW IF THAT WAS THE CORRECT NAME OF IT. BUT THEY TOOK AWAY MUCH FROM THE NCOS' POWER TO DISCIPLINE TROOPS AND TO COMMAND THE TROOPS. IN OTHER WORDS, A LOT OF THINGS THAT, DURING WORLD WAR II AND BEFORE, WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY THE FIRST SERGEANT, NOW YOU HAD LIEUTENANT COLONELS. DID YOU EVER SEE THE AIR FORCE TRYING TO GIVE MORE RESPONSIBILITY BACK TO NCOS AS TIME PROGRESSED, OR WAS IT STILL A CASE OF EVERYTHING MOVING TO—**

Everything was moving to the officers until this time in 1975–76 time frame. What had happened, and I think I can best illustrate it by stating that when the Air Force started out in 1947, we had very, very few nonflying officers in the line of the Air Force. Almost all of our commissioned officers in the Air Force were pilots or navigators. While these people were assigned duties as squadron adjutant or personnel officer or whatever may be, their real mission in life was to fly. So what happened was that the NCO at that time was an NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge]. He was responsible for everything, and he ran the office most of the time. I remember even in the early 1950s, when I started being a first sergeant, many times I wouldn't see my squadron commander until 9:30 or 10 o'clock. He would come by to sign the morning report. He would probably be going off on a flight, and there was no doubt that the first sergeant was really running the day-to-day administrative operation of the squadron, and it was true in all of the sections. It was in the early 1950s, really, that we started bringing in more officers who were not flying officers and started to give these people special jobs—administrative officers, personnel officers, supply officers, and so forth, not additional duty.



We still had our warrant officer program at that time, but the warrant officers were never really recognized as being the man in charge. There was always that stigma that they were neither commissioned nor noncommissioned, neither fish nor fowl, and they just were never really well accepted in the total Air Force, although you will find general officers and you will find senior enlisted people that would tell you that warrant officers did a hell of a good job. Looking back, we did not take, really, our best qualified people to move them into the warrant officer grades. We didn't take all master sergeants, for example. And if the system is working correctly, your best people would have been your master sergeants back in those days. We took a lot of tech sergeants to move into the warrant officer field. Although they were good technicians, they too did not have any real management training.

### **WAS NOT THAT THE THEORY, THOUGH, OF THE WARRANT OFFICER, THAT HE WAS MORE THE TECHNICIAN?**

Yes, and we had some good technicians.

### **HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO COMMAND TROOPS.**

He wasn't supposed to command troops, but I would think he would be expected to be more of a leader along with that, although he was not in command of troops.

### **WHEN DID THE AIR FORCE DO AWAY WITH THE WARRANT OFFICER?**

We just retired our last one two years ago, but we stopped selecting warrant officers in the mid to late 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

### **(GOING BACK TO THE EARLY SIXTIES), WHAT WAS THE RETENTION RATE IN THE AIR FORCE?**

It was fair, but we were getting more and more into the proficiency pay business, and that really was not helping us. That was starting to split the real esprit in some of the units because some people got it. We never, for example, paid our aircraft maintenance people proficiency pay at this time, because they said, "There are too many. We can't afford to pay it."

### **DID YOU HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE BAILING OUT OF THE AIR FORCE SPECIALTY CODE (AFSC) OR SYSTEM THEY WERE IN, TRYING TO GET INTO THESE—**

We had a large number of people who were trying to be cross-trained and get into something where they would get proficiency pay. Many times a field would be open more for promotions because it was a relatively new field, and they would try to get into it. By the time they moved, the field had closed up.

### **ON THIS PROFICIENCY PAY, DID THEY HAVE SKILL TESTING IN EFFECT ON THAT?**

Yes. We had boards set up to check and see if they were proficient, but primarily you would have a technical representative on the board and you would have three or four other people to comprise the board—one of them being the personnel officer. Many times these people were working with classified materials that they could not discuss, so you had to leave it up to the technical advisor to say whether you were technical competent or not. It was a weird system.

### **YOU MENTIONED YOU HAD THOUGHT ABOUT STAYING IN YOUR 20 AND GETTING OUT. WHAT HAD CHANGED YOUR MIND ON THIS IDEA?**

By this time, I had decided that—I had looked around a great deal at what was going on in the civilian job world, and it wasn't that great. A lot of the reported salaries were good, but here again, with no formal education, I just couldn't step out into a good job. By this time now with the two girls, I was beginning to think I had better get serious about trying to build something so we could educate these girls, so they wouldn't have to start out at the bottom of the rung like their dad had. My wife felt very strongly about it, too, that we ought to be able to have some economic stability. About this time the job market was really not too good on the outside anyway.

### **THERE WAS A LITTLE RECESSION THERE.**

Yes. So as a chief master sergeant, I was fairly comfortable. There was no problem. There were very few chiefs at that time, and you were guaranteed you would get quarters, so I decided I was going to stay.

### **THEN YOU GOT THIS ASSIGNMENT TO FRANKFURT, GERMANY.**

I was sitting in my office one day, and I was thinking about where I would like to go. My wife and I had talked about it. I suddenly recalled a man that I had gotten to know by reputation that was in the Security Service. This guy was known as the greatest manipulator of assignments in the Air Force. So I called Hugh T. Smith, who was also a chief master sergeant, and talked to him. He really didn't remember me. I had been stationed at the recruiting group in Lackland when he was in Security Service down the hill at Kelly [Field AFB, Texas]. But he said he would like to help me. He said, "We do have several assignments. We can put you in Turkey; we can put you in Bremerhaven, Germany; we can put you in Frankfurt, Germany, or we can put you in Alaska. How about you calling me back and letting me know which one of these jobs you would like to have?" I called him back the next day, and I said, "I really thought about it, and I don't want to go to Turkey, although it looks pretty good. The brochures looked very good to us. I know I don't want to go to Alaska. I would like to go to Frankfurt, Germany." He said, "Frankfurt happens to be our region headquarters."

Region headquarters and intermediate headquarters. Since I had no experience in that command, it really would be better for me to start at a lower echelon. He wanted me to really think about it. He tried to talk me into going to Elmendorf [AFB], Alaska. I finally called him back and said no. The only thing I would take would be Frankfurt, Germany. Within about 10 days, we had our orders and were on our way overseas.

**YOU WERE OVER THERE FOUR YEARS. THEN I NOTICE YOU CAME BACK TO THIS TITLE OF NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER IN CHARGE, PROGRAMS' AND REQUIREMENTS DIVISION, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, PERSONNEL, HEADQUARTERS US AIR FORCE SECURITY SERVICE. BOY THAT WAS A GOOD JOB TITLE.**

It was a good title, better than the job. We came back. There was really no choice of getting out of the organization, and we even wanted to go to San Antonio [Texas]. We had had one tour before in San Antonio and liked it. We thought it was the logical place to go. We came back and went into the personnel programming shop.

**THE FIRST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE WAS PICKED IN 1967. HAD YOU PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO THIS?**

Yes, from the day that I saw the first announcement in the Air Force Times, I was vitally interested in the program. I remember coming home after reading that Air Force Times and saying, "That's the job I really would like to have." I tried to follow [CMSAF] Paul Airey as well as I could. Basically, it was what I read in the Air Force Times, but little did I realize at the time that I was going to have an opportunity to really start working towards it.

**WERE YOU ELIGIBLE TO BE PLUGGED IN ON THAT FIRST SELECTION?**

On that first go, I was not. I did not have enough service. It was on the second go—when [CMSAF] Don Harlow—that I had enough service.

**YOU SAY YOU FOLLOWED THIS PROCEDURE. HAD YOU EVER GOTTEN TOGETHER WITH OTHER NCOS AS YOUR LEVEL, AT THIS TIME OR BEFORE THIS, TALKING ABOUT SUCH A POSITION OR BILLET IN THE AIR FORCE?**

I recall years and years ago that a lot of us had discussed it because the Marine Corps had always had a sergeant major.

We had always discussed that we felt we ought to have someone up there; we ought to have a sergeant major of the Air Force, and we could not understand why we did not have one. The Marine Corps had one. There was not a great deal of publicity but enough to let the world know that they had one. So when this announcement was made in the *Air Force Times* that they were going to have the position and finally when they selected Paul Airey, there was considerable discussion at NCO gatherings.

In the European Security Region, we had a strong NCO group that got together every month, not only for fun and games but we got together to talk about serious business and what we could. When I got back to headquarters, I found out that this was an offspring of their brainchild because they had a highly structured senior NCO council that got together. This included all of the top three—all the 7s, 8s, and 9s. They would get together once a month. They would have guest speakers. They had a sergeant major of Security Service, primarily administrator, but he did have a rapport with the commander of Security Service. He would run the meeting and bring us up to date on the different things that were going on in the command. So I felt that command was one that was really ready for it.

**I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU THEN. WAS THERE NOT IN EXISTENCE, IN A VERY AD HOC, UNOFFICIAL WAY, A LOT OF COMMAND CHIEFS? IN OTHER WORDS, DIDN'T MOST COMMANDS AT THIS POINT HAVE KIND OF CHIEF SENIOR ADVISORS IN AN UNOFFICIAL CAPACITY?**

Yes, they did.

**THIS WAS KIND OF UNOFFICIAL, WASN'T IT?**

It was sort of unofficial. They called them their sergeant majors. At the time Paul Airey was selected, and I was able to go back and recount all of this because of the correspondence I read later on, there were several major air commanders that came to the chief of staff when they decided to go with this position with their personal recommendations. "Here is my guy, and he is the guy that you should select. He would make an ideal man for you." There were numerous of these letters that I found in the file. People had these people working as sergeant majors.











## **IN 1966 THE FIRST-TERM REENLISTMENT RATE WAS THE LOWEST IT HAD BEEN IN 12 YEARS. DO YOU RECALL THAT AT ALL?**

I recall that very vividly. I recall when Paul Airey moved into office in 1967, one of the first things he set up was a program that every top three should get a junior Airman to reenlist.

## **THERE IS A NAME FOR IT . . .**

I forget the name of the program, but that program was worked and worked well. It was milked until the old cow ran dry, but there was some misinterpretation in that program, and there was a feeling that we were only concerned with the top three grades and the lower three. The midrange NCOs, then, were left out of the picture. The right way to work that was to really work through the chain of command and work through those midrange NCOs to motivate those people to enlist, but because of the way the program was articulated, there was a lot of misunderstanding about that program.

## **(THE) IDEA OF THE NCOS ENCOURAGING FIRST-TERMERS TO REENLIST WAS CALLED THE “TOP THREE PROGRAM.”**

Every top three was supposed to get one, and a lot of people interpreted that not only to get him, but you took him home with you; you took him to lunch and you did all of these things to really motivate him. Well you (know) what happens. Here are all of the top NCOs, and they are dragging all of these young troops around, and the midrange NCOs are saying, “What the hell is going on? He is getting favoritism and all those things.” I don’t think that was Paul Airey’s intent at all, but that came out as his program, and if anyone has to bear the brunt of it being a bad program, well, Paul Airey has to suffer that because everyone referred to it as Airey’s program.

## **WAS IT SUCCESSFUL IN ANY SENSE? I GET THE IMPRESSION IT WAS NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL.**

I don’t think it was too successful. Although we kept some first-termers we might have lost, we demotivated a lot of midrange NCOs and lost some midrange NCOs.

## **PROMOTION BOARDS DISAPPEARED FOR THE ENLISTED GRADES IN 1969. DID YOU EVER GET INVOLVED IN AN INPUT OF (HOW) THEY SHOULD GO OR THEY SHOULDN’T GO OR YOUR IMPRESSION OF HOW THEY WORKED?**

No. I didn’t get involved at that time with it because we didn’t happen to be at a level where we had anything to say. We supported the initiation of the WAPS [Weighted Airman Promotion System] program. We thought that would be a good program particularly for the people of that command. I had been sitting on promotion boards, it seemed like all my life—but for a long, long time. On the command board, it really boiled down to looking for demotivators for promotion when you reviewed the records because they were so good. Most of us would devise a formula—so many points for this and so many points for that—so we could go through these records and try to come up with a reasonable evaluation.

## **HOW HONEST WERE THEY IN YOUR MIND, THESE PROMOTION BOARDS?**

I think by this time the promotions boards we were having were quite honest, because they were at a level above where you knew most of the people individually. You had to know some individually. If you take it back to the old boards that we used to have at the bases years ago, I would like to think that some of us were good at our jobs that got selected, but a lot of it was based on who you knew and how well your reputation was. If you established a good reputation on that base, you had a good chance of being promoted. But you could have been the best guy at Minot AFB, North Dakota, and go to Wheelus Field, Tripoli, and until you established yourself on Wheelus, you didn’t stand a chance of being promoted. So you were really starting at the bottom every time you made a move.

We would look at records and have good recommendations in the records and couldn’t do anything with them because, well, “He hasn’t been on the base long enough. I just don’t know how well he is really going to do. I know this is what the colonel said at Minot, but he has to be here at Chaumont a little bit longer before we can promote him.” That was a lot of it.

Then, of course, the rumors on a base. Bases that were fairly small bases, everyone knew what everyone else was doing, or they thought they knew what everyone else was doing. So promotion boards were really quite vicious in a way. I know I would have been selected a board earlier for master sergeant when I was at Wheelus Field except they had an enlisted man serving on the board, and they asked this enlisted man who he would promote, and he said, “I think you ought to promote him.” “Is he a good friend of yours?” “Yes. We happen to be friends.” “Okay, we will take this other guy.” (laughter) I know that for a fact.

**IN 1968 YOU HAD THE SKT [SPECIALTY KNOWLEDGE TEST], PROMOTION FITNESS EXAMS [PFE], SUPERVISOR'S EXAM. THESE WERE ALL NEW THINGS AT THAT POINT. YOU WERE DOWN AT KELLY. WAS THERE A LOT OF CONFUSION AS TO HOW THESE THINGS WERE GOING TO BE USED INITIALLY?**

I think people were a little bit resistant to accept the fact that they had to have two tests. They had a PFE test, and then they had an SKT test, and why did they have to have all of this?

**IN THIS TESTING, IN ANY SENSE DID YOU HEAR THIS COMPLAINT, "WELL, HELL, I CAN GO OUT AND FIX THIS F-4. BUT WHEN YOU TEST ME ON PAPER—"**

We have always had that. Of course the book answer is that we can teach people to take tests. I think we can. If they have the proper aptitudes to begin with, we can teach them how to test.

**YOU THEN FOUND YOURSELF IN A HOW-TO-TAKE-TESTS SITUATION?**

Right. You had to convince these people that we can—there was a waiver provision, too. You could get a waiver for these.

**HOW DID THAT WORK?**

You could go before a board, and they could agree to waive your tests. We had several who tried to get waiver after waiver after waiver rather than apply themselves and learn how to study and then learn how to take tests.

**DID YOU FIND THE SITUATION THAT TESTS TAKERS WERE GETTING THE PROMOTIONS RATHER THAN THE DOERS?**

That was a perception for a lot of people. That was a perception of the doers that the test takers get all the promotions. But I think all in all, when it was all said and done, it pretty well equals out. The people who are the doers could be better if they would take the time to read or learn how to read. I think most of it was reading and comprehension to begin with, because if they could read and comprehend, then they could also take the tests. They would know how to answer. And I guess we still have a little of this fight going on. We still have some people saying, "Well, we have a percentage of people who still can't take tests." I suppose that is so, but it is because they have never really had to test. They have been able to get by.

**WAS THERE AN APR [AIRMAN PERFORMANCE REPORT] INFLATION? DID THIS HAPPEN AS THINGS WENT ON?**

Yes. Initially, when we started the Airman Performance Report, we had controlled ratings, not as hard and fast controlled as we had under the officers a few years ago, but at the top of the form, it gave you a breakout. So many people out of—I can't remember the numeric thing—but a certain percentage of them, one could be exceptionally well, and one had to be on the other end. Then it broke down so the average would be in the middle. For a while reports sort of stayed that way, but it wasn't long until people began to say the reason they didn't get promoted was because they didn't have a high enough performance report, so they started pushing it over and pushing it over, and the next thing we knew, everyone was firewalled on the right-hand side. I don't think that was absolutely necessary for a promotion. I think I was fortunate that I had some honest raters who did not rate me completely over the right hand in everything.

An expression in the report: How am I to improve myself? I think that helped me. It never slowed me down from any promotions. I was one of the real fortunate. I was promoted the first go on the E-8 and the first go on the E-9. I think we would still have people that would be promoted that way, particularly the top grades now that we have the WAPS and we also have the board that takes a look, too. I think the board can adjust those things.

**IN THE 1970S THERE BEGAN TO BE TALK NOW OF DOING AWAY WITH THE DRAFT AND GETTING TO AN ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE. DID THAT COME DOWN TO YOUR LEVEL YET AT ALL?**

Yes.

**HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?**

I did not feel we should go for an all-volunteer force because I thought it would be too expensive, and we wouldn't get a good cross section, although, the Air Force had not drafted people. We got a good cross section because people were motivated to come into the Air Force rather than wait to be drafted by the Army. I felt we would not get the good cross section of the people, and it would become too expensive, I feel that we are right in that situation today.



## **IN 1971 A STUDY BEGAN OF OFF-BASE HOUSING OR LIVING FOR UNMARRIED (ENLISTED MEMBERS). WHAT WAS THIS IN RESPONSE TO? WHY WAS THIS NOW THOUGHT OF?**

We had a shortage of quarters, to begin with, and we were trying to upgrade the living conditions for our people. It was a matter of deciding how we would work it; who would be entitled and who would not be. The decision was that we would do it by rank, [starting with] the senior person. We found out it was not always working that way because we would have people that did not want to live on base, but because of the quarters availability when they came in, they would be assigned [quarters on base]. And we had some commanders who were not asking them, when they had an overage again, if they wanted to move off. Then vice versa, we had some that were living off, and they would be told they had to move back on because—we treated people a little bit unfairly. One place they would have to live off base because there were no quarters. They would have to buy furniture. They would get to the next place, and they would have to live on base. It was not only disturbing, but it was also financially difficult.

There were some people that felt they couldn't be responsible, couldn't be trusted. What are they going to be doing with all of this spare time off? We are not going to be monitoring them.

We discussed this in several major meetings. It came up in career motivation conferences, and it would come up in different places that I would travel. I think our people were always concerned, well, as an enlisted man, how are they going to handle themselves? Can they make their payments? Here they are old enough to be in the service and I think we have to show we have that kind of faith in them and give them support. We can't automatically say because they are enlisted lower graders that they can't take care of themselves.

## **WERE THERE EVER ANY PROBLEMS?**

There were problems; people that were used to someone getting them up to get to work on time couldn't make it, some of them didn't pay their bills. Initially there were problems, but I don't think there were nearly as many problems as some of our people had anticipated.

## **YOU THEN BECAME CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IN OCTOBER 1971. YOU HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN WHEN HARLOW WAS NAMED.**

I had been turned down when Harlow was named. Two years later I surfaced at the board, and it wasn't an automatic thing. Gen. [Carl] Stapleton did not say, "Well, you are going to be my submission." We polled the field, and they held a board, and quite frankly, I didn't know whether I was going to be the top man out of the command or not because we had other very, very good competitors, people who would do well in the job. It happened I was the [nominee], and I think I competed with 22

or 24 other people, at Randolph again. It was about two weeks later that I was notified that I was one of the people to come to [Headquarters] Air Force for an interview, but I was told not to discuss it with anyone other than my family, and the TDY orders would not show that I was in Washington for that purpose, and they would tell me exactly what to do.

I came in military air to Andrews [AFB, Maryland] and I was met by SSgt Ben McCarter who was working in the CMSAF office. Ben happens to be a captain now and has done well in his career. He met me, and he took me to the Twin Bridges Marriott motel. They already had the room reserved. He said, "Here are the telephone numbers for the office. You are not to call anyone or go see anyone while you are here in Washington. We will let you know when and where the interviews [are]. If you need anything, call us, but you don't go anywhere except down to the restaurant to eat. "Don't go out," I thought, "My gosh, this is really super, super secret. It must be important. It is so secretive."

About 10 minutes after he left, I looked at my watch. I think it was three o'clock in the afternoon. I thought, "I'm awfully thirsty. I think I'll walk down to the bar and get a beer." I opened my door, and at the same time I opened my door about eight or 10 doors down the door opened, and [CMSgt] Dick Stewart stepped out. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I just finished my interview this morning. I am going to be catching a plane this evening sometime. Let's go get a drink." We went and had a drink and talked about it. But other than that I didn't have any contact. Then I learned it was Stewart and [CMSgt Robert] Colpitt who were the two guys who were being interviewed with me.

Anyway, the next morning McCarter picked me up, and I went over to see Gen Robert Dixon. At that time, he was a three-star. It seemed to me like I sat in his outer office for an awfully long time. Finally, his door opened, and he came out and invited me to come in and asked me to sit down on the couch and told me to relax. I said, "How the hell can you relax at a time like this?" He said, "You have to relax." He started giving me some probing questions . . .

Then I went down to see Gen. [John C.] Meyer. That was really a tough interview. It felt tough, not from the standpoint of questions, but he sat back of his great big desk; it was a very formal thing, and I was in a chair over by the side of his desk, and he smoked those big cigars and talked in those low monotones. I had difficulty understanding some of his questions.

## **FROM AN AUDIO STANDPOINT.**

Yes. I felt that, after I had that interview, I was really confused. I thought, "Well, I might as well go back to San Antonio because it is all over with."

## **HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THERE?**

I would say probably about 45 minutes.

## **IT WASN'T VERY LONG.**

No, it wasn't a very long interview...

We were told when we left there, "We will let you know whenever the decision is made." About two weeks later, I was sitting in my office, and I had a call from base ops in San Antonio at Kelly, and they said, "There is an inbound coming in. It is going to be in here at five o'clock, and there is a colonel on there that has a package for you." I had no idea what they were talking about.

I went down and met the plane. There was a colonel on there from Randolph AFB, coming back from TDY, who had a letter from the Chief of Staff saying that I had been selected. It also had a note on the outside of it that once I read the letter I was to call Headquarters Air Force and let them know that I had received the letter. As soon as I did, they released the message to all telling the world.

The next morning, I woke up and it was headlines in the San Antonio paper. I got front-page coverage on the San Antonio Light. That is a little bit different than how the announcement is made today.

## **WHEN YOU MOVED YOUR FAMILY UP, WHERE DID YOU LIVE THEN?**

After the school year was over in June, we moved out to Andrews [AFB, Maryland]. There was an old farmhouse out there, out by itself, that they elected to set up as the quarters for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. They were supposed to have built quarters at Fort Myer [Virginia] for all of the senior NCOs of the services. For some reason they were never built.

## **DOES THE CHIEF STILL LIVE OUT THERE?**

No, he does not. [CMSAF Thomas N.] Barnes, when he replaced me, stayed in the same house. They added on a bedroom and a bathroom because he had a larger family. It was a nice little farmhouse. It had an open stairwell with a nice railing and a fireplace. It was very comfortable. The only thing, the basement leaked. We had a lot of stuff ruined because of water damage and mildew from the basement storage. But it was very comfortable. It was out by itself, and it was very relaxing. When you got home from a trip, you could go there and really be relaxed. Barnes lived there, but when [CMSAF Robert D.] Gaylor came in, Gaylor's wife, he said, did not want to live out there all by herself, so they elected to take one of the newer sets of quarters that had been built on Andrews.

## **ON THE NOTES I HAVE HERE, IT SAYS THE AIR FORCE WAS GOING TO BEGIN GUARANTEEING JOBS TO ENLISTEES IN JULY 1971. WAS THIS SOMETHING NEW IN THE AIR FORCE?**

Yes, this was something new. Before, everyone had been just handled by the recruiters, and once they got to Lackland, they hit the classification system. It was at Lackland where they made the decision which career field they were going to go into.

## **THE ARMY HAD ALWAYS GUARANTEED SCHOOLS, HADN'T THEY?**

Yes, the Army had guaranteed schools, but the Air Force had not. So what we started doing then was the career job reservation system, so we could guarantee them that if they met all the qualifications that they were going to be an aircraft mechanic or a dental technician or whatever it may be.

## **DID YOU RUN INTO THAT PERENNIAL PROBLEM OF YOUNG JOE BROWN JOINS FROM [OMAHA], AND HE ENDS UP BEING AN SP [SECURITY POLICE] RATHER THAN A COMPUTER OPERATOR?**

We had some of that, but when we started tracking it down after this system was devised, we found out that in many cases he did not understand. This was one of the reasons why Air Force went to setting forth in writing what the promises were by the recruiters.

## **HAD THERE BEEN RECRUITER ABUSE, SO TO SPEAK, ON THIS THING?**

Yes, I would say that there was. The recruiting service may take objection to this, but there was. I know from my experience in the 3504th Recruiting Group that we had recruiters that were promising things, and they couldn't deliver. But they got the person to Lackland, and they may have been sucked up by the MPs [military police] or the food service or something else, something they didn't want.

## **AS THIS BEGAN, HAD YOU GOTTEN INVOLVED IN PROMOTING THIS THING OVER THE YEARS, THIS GUARANTEE? WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN ANYTHING YOU WERE FAMILIAR WITH AT ALL?**

I was familiar with it from the fact that I had spent some time in the recruiting service and being a sergeant major on a base, a personnel sergeant major, I often times had people in my office who were complaining about the fact that they did not get the career field that they were promised.

## **TOPCAP [TOTAL OBJECTIVE PLAN FOR CAREER AIRMAN PERSONNEL], THAT CAME IN IN THE 1970S?**

TOPCAP came in in the 1970s. That is the Total Objective Plan for Career Airman Personnel.<sup>5</sup>



## **DO YOU THINK THAT WAS A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING?**

It was a very good thing because encumbered with this was the WAPS promotion system, the Weighted Airman Promotion System, and then we later tacked on to it the equal selection opportunity for promotion. I was there when we decided to go with the equal selection opportunity, and we made that decision to have every career field have the same opportunity for promotion selection. We also made a decision that we were going to have to reclassify people when career fields became overage.

Well, what happened . . . was that we never wrote the policies or the regulations to enforce that reclassification when we had an overage. As a result, we still have serious overages in some of our career fields.

We had talked early on, when we first started thinking about this, that if we were going to select a man for senior master sergeant, for example, and there were no vacancies, they would have to agree to go into another career area in order to get that promotion. But we had too many of the “do-gooders” that felt, “This is too stringent of a policy. We can’t do this. It isn’t right.” They had been in this career field, so we ought to leave them in the career field. Well, it is just common sense if you are running your own business, you are not going to pay people to sit around.

## **DID THIS TOPCAP ALSO INCLUDE THIS FORCING PEOPLE OUT OF A CERTAIN CAREER POINT IF THEY DIDN’T GET PROMOTED?**

Yes. It built tenure points so people would have to be separated if they weren’t promoted.

## **IS THAT EFFICIENT? IN OTHER WORDS, IF YOU HAVE AN E-5 THAT IS DOING A VERY GOOD JOB AND WOULD BE SATISFIED STAYING AN E-5, DO YOU HAVE TO PROMOTE HIM? IS IT FAIR—USE THE WORD “FAIR”—TO FORCE HIM OUT OF THE MILITARY SIMPLY BECAUSE HE IS NOT PROMOTABLE ALTHOUGH HE IS DOING WELL. THAT IS THE ARGUMENT AS I UNDERSTAND IT.**

That is the argument, and that is still a good, basic argument. What do you do about those people who are really good in their chosen profession, and the Air Force needs them. They would never be managers or supervisors. You need some of these people. Perhaps the Air Force ought to take a relook at this and see what percentage of a career area they could keep as skilled technicians who are never going to go but really have that solid background. I would think there ought to be some way we could look at that today and do something about it.

## **DID YOU PERSONALLY START GETTING LETTERS FROM GUYS, “HEY, THEY ARE THROWING ME OUT OF THE AIR FORCE?”**

Yes. I received many letters and a lot of telephone calls on probably every base I went to from someone who was about to be forced out, saying, “Why can’t they let me stay?”

Well, I had to support the Air Force program. The decision had been made. Gen. Ryan was very supportive of the personnel programs, and my words from him were, “Let’s let these things work. We just have them; they are in, let’s let them work rather than start diddling around with them.” It happened particularly on a promotion. I thought we should authorize commanders to make some special selections for promotion like they can now. They have a program today where they can make some.<sup>6</sup>

I was down to Kelly Field, and I was talking to [Maj. Gen. James G.] Randolph, who was the deputy commander of that AMA [Air Materiel Area] at Kelly at the time. We were getting ready to ship all of these F-5s, these T-38 trainers, over to Southeast Asia right at the end of the war. They had all of their engineers researching the best way for them to make the shipment, how to put them in the C-5s or C-141s, whichever they were using to fly them over. They were having a great deal of difficulty with this, very high-level people working on the configuration of how they should be shipped.

They found a staff sergeant who had been a loadmaster who was working as a cook in the galley of the aircraft assigned to that AMA commander. He said, “This is very easy.” He went over and worked it and set up a program how they could tear those things down and put them in and ship them. Gen. Randolph wanted to do something for this guy. I came back and talked to Gen. Ryan, and Gen. Ryan said, “Well, it is all well and good, but we can’t dork around with the WAPS promotion system. I don’t want to do it. The system is working. Let’s not foul it up.”

I am sure he was concerned because of all the pressure he had had from Congress, all the letters to congressmen. These things just died out after we got the Weighted Airman Promotion System. But until this day I still think the staff sergeant should have gotten a spot promotion.

## **I HAVE NOTE HERE THAT IN FISCAL YEAR 1971, THE FIRST TERM RETENTION RATE WAS THE BEST IN SIX YEARS. DO YOU REMEMBER WHY THAT WAS?**

I think it was because our people were convinced that they had a lot of opportunity to see where they were going. I think the Weighted Airman Promotion System and the TOPCAP program, they could see where there was an avenue for progression, and I think that is why we had that good retention.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF—I DON'T KNOW IF THAT WOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION OR PROFESSIONAL MILITARY TRAINING? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION?**

I think professional military education is one of the best steps that we have taken in the last 30 years, maybe since we split from the Army. As we have become more and more sophisticated and tried to centralize more and more, we have expected people to step into jobs and perform those jobs without the benefit of a great deal of experience. So we throw them into these jobs, and they are supposed to be leaders and supervisors. I think we do a fairly comprehensive job on the technical training, but on the military side of the house, professional side, management side, up until about 1975–76 we really didn't have our act together.

That came about as a result of [Lt. Gen. Kenneth L.] Tallman's Air Force Management Improvement Group [AFMIG] that he convened during the summer of 1975 for Gen. [David C.] Jones. They looked at the entire spectrum of what was going on in the enlisted side of the house (and some on the officers to a degree) and one of the first things this group came out with was a statement: We need to professionally develop our noncommissioned officers like we do our officers. As a result, the Air Force built a five-phase professional military education system for the enlisted. I can see now that it is starting to pay real dividends. Looking back in retrospect, had we had it 35 years ago, it would have been tremendous. We depended on the process of osmosis, if you will, to teach these people.

## **THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY WAS APPROVED BY CONGRESS IN THE FALL OF 1972, AND IT OFFICIALLY OPENED IN JANUARY 1973. HAD YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN PUSHING THIS OR GETTING IT ORGANIZED OR GOING TO CONGRESS?**

Yes, very much so. There had been some discussion before we opened it about making it a First Sergeant Academy. We knew we could not send all of the first sergeants to it, and I didn't want to see that happen. I felt that all of our senior NCOs needed this type of professional military education, and to limit it to only one area would be wrong for the Air Force. So the decision was made then that it would not be the first sergeant school; it would be a senior NCO academy.

At that time a Col. [Robert K.] McCutchen and Ray Warren were there. Col. McCutchen had two secretaries that were working with him along with Ray Warren and this other individual that moved over when they moved to Gunter [AFB, Alabama] to really get this thing going. I thought it was one of the best things that happened for the Air Force.

## **HAD YOU GONE TO CONGRESS TO TESTIFY ON THIS?**

I had not. The testifying had all been done, but there were still decisions being made, like the first sergeant business and so forth.

## **WAS THERE SOME MEANING THAT IT WAS PUT OVER AT GUNTER RATHER THAN ON AIR UNIVERSITY, MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA?**

I think the real reason was that there was not space on the AU for it. As I look back now, I think it is a good thing that it was established over at Gunter. I think it probably has more prestige being away from the officers, separated from the rest of the AU. A lot of people will argue that and say, "No, it would give it more prestige if it was right there on the circle with all of the rest," but I think there would be problems. There wasn't adequate office space, auditorium space, classroom space, or billeting for the people. As a result, what they have done at Gunter, they are going to have a very first-class facility when this new construction is finished. The new dorms they are getting are all very, very nice, and it is going to be really a first-class school. When you talk to people in the other services that go there that have gone to their schools, there is just no comparison. Our school is just head and shoulders above the rest.

## **FROM THE ONSET, WAS IT HOPED FOR OR PLANNED FOR DOWN THE ROAD THAT A NCO WOULD EVENTUALLY RUN THE ORGANIZATION?**

We were talking about that, but the thought was at that time in the Pentagon, "We are going to give you a full colonel, and the colonel will be the commandant. You cannot have an enlisted commandant in charge of this school." Really, the thinking didn't start changing on that until the Tallman AFMIG Group of 1975.<sup>7</sup> It was after that that people started talking seriously about trying to make that a senior NCO position. It took Gen. [Charles G.] Cleveland to do this, and he did it despite the objections of some of his superiors who said it wouldn't work. I think it worked very, very well. They picked the right man for the job, and I think that is what we have to do on all of them.

## **WAS THE AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OPPOSED TO THE SNCO ACADEMY DOWN THERE AS IT DEVELOPED?**

There were some pockets of resistance. Some people thought we were going too far. What are you going to do with these people when they get out? Well, we did have a problem until 1975–76 when we started really trying to do something about better jobs, because these people came back and I think for the most part they were better qualified than most of the company and field grade officers they were working for. They certainly had had their horizons broadened, and in many cases they were more ambitious than they ever were before. They started thinking about trying to do something.



**YOU WERE INTERVIEWED FOR THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE IN JANUARY 1972. YOU TALKED ABOUT YOU WANTED BETTER HOUSING AND PAY—OF COURSE THAT IS STANDARD. THAT IS LIKE MORE MONEY OR SOMETHING—AND MORE PME FOR NCOS. THE THREE THINGS YOU NOTED IN THE NEGATIVE SENSE WERE YOU THOUGHT FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS WERE BEING BYPASSED, AND THERE WAS A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE AIR FORCE ITSELF BY THE ENLISTED PEOPLE. WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM THERE?**

Absolutely. We had people who were specialists. They really didn't understand their job, how their job contributed to what the Air Force was doing, what the Air Force mission was. They couldn't see that the supply guy at Kincheloe AFB [Michigan] didn't understand that his job was very important to making sure those birds were launched every day. If he didn't do his job right, someone didn't get the supplies whether it be in the housing or wherever. People couldn't do their jobs that would really support getting this done. I felt that our first echelon supervisors were being bypassed, particularly with this business of this emphasis on human relations, that they weren't having to work the problems. They didn't take an interest in their people. They were told not too many times. "You don't have any control. Let him or her go do whatever they are going to do, but you don't need to get into it." Things do not run smoothly in any organization structured like the military service unless everyone along the line that is responsible is involved.

**DID THE DRAWDOWN OF THE VIETNAM WAR NOW MAKE YOUR WORK EASIER OR HARDER, OR DID IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE AT ALL?**

I don't think it made too much difference. Although we had a lot of troops over there that were not too busy, I think we had more problems. There was more tendency for involvement in drugs, more alcohol, and so forth, and more chance for people to stop and think about things and complain more.

**DID YOU HAVE ANY PARTICIPATION IN THIS OPERATION HOMECOMING WHEN THEY BROUGHT THE POWS BACK FROM VIETNAM?**

No, I did not. As I look back in retrospect, I probably should have forced myself into it. I was not invited to actively participate in this thing, but a little older and a little wiser, I think, I would have forced myself into this thing.

**WE WERE TALKING ABOUT PME. THE AIR FORCE, OF COURSE, DOWN AT MAXWELL THEY HAD THAT LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT SCHOOL. SOME WOULD SAY THAT YOU CAN'T MANAGE A MILITARY ORGANIZATION—YOU CANNOT USE ENTREPRENEURIAL CONCEPTS IN A MILITARY ORGANIZATION. YOU CANNOT TAKE THESE ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND METHODOLOGIES AND EVERYTHING AND TRY TO RUN AN AIR FORCE. DO YOU THINK THERE WAS A TIME OR IS A TIME THAT THE AIR FORCE HAS TRIED TO BE TOO MUCH LIKE A BUSINESS?**

Yes. We have had times. I think it has only been in the last six or seven years that we have really gotten serious about getting back to leadership being number one and management being a subset of leadership. We spent a lot of money sending at least our colonel-level people to management schools outside of the Air Force, sending them back to college to get master's and so forth, management being the big thing. I think now that we have arrived, and we have since 1975–76, at the decision that management, while important and while we need it—it is very important—it really is a subset from a military standpoint to leadership. Leadership is a predominant requirement.

**DO YOU THINK YOU CAN TEACH A MAN TO BE A LEADER, OR ONCE AGAIN, IS THAT SOMETHING THAT HAS TO BE BORN INTO AN INDIVIDUAL?**

I think you can if you start early enough and provided he is put in an environment where he sees—besides the schools, you have to put him in an environment where he sees leadership by example. If he doesn't see it, then the schools are not going to pay great dividends.

## **DID YOU EVER DEVELOP, IN YOUR CAREER, ANYTHING THAT BECAME CHIEF KISLING'S LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUE? DID YOU EVER DEVELOP SOMETHING THAT YOU FOUND USEFUL?**

Number one, I think first of all, you need to be up front with your people, and you can't play one person against the other. You have to treat all of the people that are working with you the same. They have to be treated fairly. You have to listen. This is one thing that I have tried to do, and one thing that a lot of people fall down on is they fail to listen to their people. I found this with my children, and I see it now with my little grandchildren. You have to hear what they have to say. Even if you know what they are going to say, you have to let the person say it the way they want to say it because they want to make sure that you understand what they are talking about. Far too many people don't have the time to listen. I see this today. It happens a lot at the senior level. They say, "I don't want to hear that. I don't have time to hear it. I know all about it." Well, you kill a lot of initiative and you lose a lot of confidence of your people in you when you don't have time to hear what they have to say.

I also think you need to exhibit, when it comes to leadership, the leadership—if you are an active duty Air Force man, you really need to exude that 24 hours a day no matter where you are. It has to be the same whether you are in the club or whether you are out to a social event, and I don't mean stilted, as it is in the office. You can't just become a different person. And you see a lot of people that completely change once they get into a social environment and everyone is their friend. Then when they get to the office in their work environment, down on the flight line or wherever it is, they don't have time for any of these people. They get caught up in their own importance in these jobs; I think they have to remember the only way they can ever be successful is for their people to be successful and to give the people that are doing the job the credit for it. Far too many times we have section heads and division heads, particularly in the staff business, that rewrite things. A lot of them rewrite it just so they have their name on the piece of paper. So if there is going to be any kudos, it is going to be to them. By the time people get to those jobs, they should have enough confidence in themselves to know that the people above them are really looking at: What are you doing with your people? How well are you developing your people? Are they able to produce? That is what leadership and management has to be. Those are rather basic and rather simplistic. I think those are the things that I really consider on looking for leadership.





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **THOMAS N. BARNES**

**OCTOBER 1, 1973 - JULY 31, 1977**

Thomas Barnes was born on 16 November 1930 and raised in the small town of a Chester, Pennsylvania, where his father was the minister of the largest black Baptist church. He was fond of the small town. As a teenager, following his father's death, he worked part time for a local shipbuilding company to help support his family. However, in 1949, at the age of 18, he boarded a train for San Antonio, Texas, to begin his long Air Force journey.

Barnes received what he calls, "the shock of my life" when he reached Lackland AFB, Texas. Base administrators immediately split him from his white friends and held him in casual status until enough black recruits arrived to form a flight. He was in one of the last flights that year to experience the complete and total segregation of basic training.

During his 28-year career, Barnes served as an aircraft maintainer, flight engineer, flight chief, and senior controller. He was promoted to chief

master sergeant on 1 December 1969 and was selected as the Air Training Command senior enlisted leader in October 1971. In 1973 he was a graduate of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy inaugural class. That same year, Gen George S. Brown selected him to be the fourth Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Barnes would be the first African-American to serve in the highest enlisted post in any of the services.

Barnes worked for equal opportunities for all minorities during his tenure. He also worked to solidify the enlisted professional military education system. Following the initial two-year tenure, Gen. David Jones extended him for one year. He was later extended for an additional year, becoming the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CM-SAF) to serve four years in the position. Barnes retired in 1977 but stayed close to the Air Force through speaking engagements at military functions. He succumbed to cancer on 17 March 2003.

The Air Force Historical Research Center interviewed Barnes in November of 1980. During the interview, Barnes discussed his experience as a black Airman in a newly integrated Air Force, the nation's response to the Vietnam War, and the challenge of serving with a large family. The complete interview can be accessed on the Air University Library online research center.<sup>1</sup> Portions of the interview are printed below. The order of some of the questions and answers has been adjusted to depict a chronological reflection on the life and career of Thomas N. Barnes.

## **TO BEGIN THE INTERVIEW THIS MORNING, CHIEF BARNES, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EARLY FAMILY LIFE.**

I came from a family of four children. There were two sisters and one brother. The two sisters were older, and the brother was a year younger than I.

My father was a Baptist minister. He pastored the largest black Baptist church in Chester, Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, his name is still in the cornerstone of that church, which is named Providence Baptist Church. It is at the corner of Second and Pennell Streets. The neighborhood, as I saw it last, is quite rundown, but the church is very prominent in it and still has a relatively large congregation. He died in my early teens. I was 14 as a matter of fact. My mother was not in good health; she had had a kidney removed right around the period of his death and was unable to work, but she was, nevertheless, very encouraging to my remaining in high school, at least, and then to keeping the family very close until we could all sort of get out on our own. She passed during the late 1960s after a long illness.

By the time I graduated from high school, given my family situation, that is my father having passed, my mother's insistence that I stay in school to finish at least high school, a need now to provide some things for the family, and certainly being of age to do that, I had worked part-time jobs, night jobs, and all. They were relatively easy, I might add, because those were the war years in the 1940s. I worked as a supply man in a shipyard, some shipbuilding company in Chester.

So I worked a short time after my graduation from school at the shipyard, and then I went to a recruiting office, and because some friends had gone in the Navy, I really enlisted in the Navy. The day I was to go to Great Lakes Naval Training Center, before my swearing in, I got sick with strep throat. I had a fever of 105 and got admitted to a hospital, and the last thing I remember, really, about that was being placed in a tub with alcohol and ice to break this fever, sort of a little out time there. Upon coming around, much to my sorrow, whenever I got to where I could comprehend things that were going on, I had missed my training period at Great Lakes and had to wait, they told me. I said, "Oh, hell, I didn't want to wait."

In this same building, which was our downtown post office building, were, like in most towns, the Navy recruiter, the Air Force recruiter, the Army recruiter, so I went to the Air Force recruiting office and told them I had taken a physical. I had done everything but swear in for the Navy, and they couldn't take me until the next opening came at Great Lakes. The guy said, "Oh, hell, that's no problem for us. We can send you right away." I said, "Okay, I think I'm ready to go," and I took an Air Force entry test, having done all the rest of the work. The physical and all was administered at Scoop Hill Hospital in Philadelphia. That was the entrance and examination station, and I left home on 14 April 1949. That was Easter Monday.

When I left home for Lackland [AFB, Texas], I left with a number of other people from my own neighborhood, two friends as a matter of fact, and several others in other towns in Pennsylvania, but we left on a train journeying to San Antonio, good long train ride. It made a good opportunity to be friends. I learned a couple of new card games en route. As I say, there was plenty of time for that. But then I got the shock of my life, I guess, at that point in arriving at San Antonio, being picked up from the train station and trucked out to Lackland and ran into a segregated basic training situation. Today, when I talk about that, I find many people look very strangely and say, "Well, I never knew the Air Force was like that." But it was. I was one of the last flights in that year that experienced a complete and total segregation of basic training.<sup>2</sup> So the friends that I had gone with I lost. They were on the other side of US 13, as you know, the loop runs through Lackland. White trainees were on one side of that and black trainees on the other. Very few people remember that about Lackland. But each time I visit it, and I do have the opportunity fairly frequently, I often look at what now is left to kind of identify where I was down there.

## **HOW LONG WAS YOUR BASIC TRAINING DURING THAT PERIOD?**

Thirteen weeks, 13 weeks to include bivouac. I look back on that. I have discussed it, obviously, a number of times with people who think basic training today is not adequate. You hear that. "Oh, they are not giving us any training." I think that probably is not true. I think all that happened was they shaved off the fat of the training program, not that it was wasted at that time, but rather there were a number of things basic trainees did in the actual course of training that Air Force people as a mission never really got into. One of those was the bivouac situation. There was a requirement to go bivouac. Hell, Air Force people don't bivouac unless they get special assignments, and if they do, then the bivouac training comes as a result of that special assignment preparation in the field as opposed to a thing in basic training. These were some of the principal changes.

We spent a great deal of time dry and wet firing weapons. At that time there was a need for the disassembly, the assembly of the weapons, both hand and long weapons. There was a great deal of time in the dry fire, and then, of course, a great deal of time in the wet fire to actually qualify. The bent was, other than the periodic requirement to fire again, never really having a job that put you in contact with a firearm. So I think the changes in basic training were smart changes. They recognized this time factor and concentrated on the actual things that people are going to do today when they get in the field.



There is discipline. If you go to Lackland and watch basic trainees, you won't find a one who doesn't address you snappily as "yes, sir," "no, sir," or "yes, ma'am," or "no, ma'am," and they know where they are, and they know left from right when they come out of there. That kind of deteriorates perhaps in the field. This is not uphill. It may even begin to deteriorate slightly at the tech school level, perhaps a little less tightly controlled there. I think there is a marked difference, however, in the TIs [training instructors]. I think these guys were selected sadists. There was no hesitancy to inflict great disciplinary punishment on people who offended the system. I think there was merit in that. It made you wish not to offend the system. It was memorable to that degree. I think it was a lasting kind of thing. It, however, fell into the area today as abuse and/or an intrusion of civil rights, so to speak.

I would like to be specific about some of the kinds of things that took place. At lunch hour and quiet [hours], noise in the barracks often were not identifiable, and you would never find who laughed in the middle of the night. This often caused us all to have to fall out and get dressed. It caused us all to have to get scrub brushes and buckets and go around those old dormitories that were over in the 3080 area and scrub the sides of these damn things until they were actually white, and the floors were like toothpicks in there from scrubbing. You would actually take out the cots and take out the footlockers—and that was all you had. There was a little hanging rack behind the bed that your clothes stayed on—and you got down on your hands and knees and you scrubbed the thing, and you took buckets and rinsed it down, and then your bedding was outside and everything, and you put it back in.

You know, you soon got sensitive to not screwing up, really. The old octagon soap bars, and I'll never forget them, seemed to never wear out. There was always plenty of that around. Then there were forced marches, with packs. There were the actual duck walks, which were some things where a formation was left at rest while the TIs stepped away.

Since the TIs were black, we were black, there was certainly no discrimination, and all you could say was, "This guy was the meanest bastard I ever saw." They were sharp. They wore blue helmets with white stripes around them, as I remember. They wore white gloves, and some of the starched, most perfectly pressed fatigue uniforms and highly polished shoes I ever saw, and they were good. They could instill rhythm in a marching group. They could instill great pride, and we won the drill competition because, I think, of this heavy discipline. I was very proud of that achievement at the end of the 13 weeks. It certainly welded a bunch of people with different ideas into a pretty doggone good group.

I left Lackland with many fond memories, needless to say, and I went on to Chanute [AFB, Illinois], and I went into tech school, into Aircraft and Engine School, and I worked on the kinds of class 26 airplanes that were there at that time, which were P-47s [Thunderbolt fighter aircraft],

and we had one F-80 [Shooting Star], an early jet.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, it had some damage, so they class 26'd it and brought it there. We learned the ejection system on the jet airplane from the F-80. There was a lot of classroom work, a lot of academic exposure. Everything was in the old lockstep method of technical training at that time, irrespective of the capability of the students to grasp it and go ahead. There was no way to handle one that went ahead, so he was lockstepped in with the slow learner, and it kind of got to the point that if you were abreast of what was going on and you did your studies at night, class could get a little bit boring in that regard.

## **WAS THE TRAINING AT CHANUTE STILL SEGREGATED?**

No. The training at Chanute was mixed, training at Lackland was segregated, training at Chanute was mixed, placement at Camp Stoneman [California] was in waiting for an assignment overseas, and the integration order had come. There were a number of organizations in the Air Force at that time without blacks in them. The 4th Troop Carrier Squadron, 62nd Troop Carrier Group, at McChord AFB [Washington], was one of those squadrons. I went as the first black in the 4th Troop Carrier Squadron, which was an experience I assure you.

## **HOW LONG WAS THE SCHOOL AT THAT TIME?**

Quite long, nearly a year with the specialty added on to the end of it. Some of the courses now, if you were in just one element of the aircraft and engine course, was about six months, I think somewhere, eight or nine months. If you got the basic aircraft and then the engine portion added and then a specialist's school on the back end of that, then it kind of extended. Some went into rigging specialties that dealt expressly with that; others went into engine specialties and really became specialized in engines. It was a good system then. It is a better system, I know, now by far, but it was quite good and, I think, adequate for the preparation that was needed. It just tended not to be sensitive to the many different things that make up human beings. That would be the major difference I would have to cite between then and now.

Anyway, upon going to McChord, a new experience took place. This was a troop carrier organization. It was an organization that had C-54 [Skymaster four-engined transport] aircraft. Having now a hydraulic specialty, I was assigned to the hydraulics shop, and I worked at night doing inspections on C-54s and maintenance. My shop chief was named Roy Arquello. Roy was a staff sergeant and probably one of the sharpest hydraulic mechanics the Air Force ever had. He taught me an awful lot about the system, but because the C-54 had the kind of emergency system it had—it had hydraulic wipers and all, not too unlike other airplanes but, nevertheless, it differed slightly—I went to Great Falls, Montana, to specialize in C-54 hydraulic systems. They specialized on the C-54, so I got a further specialization in, now, not only the system but the airplane.

Then I went back to McChord and got the shock of my life because by then Korea had gotten to be a boiling issue. I got back on Tuesday, and we had a meeting the following day in our hangar where the commander informed everybody to prepare for a 90-day TDY to Japan and settle all the things you needed to settle right now, if you had some that were pressing, because the first airplanes would leave Saturday morning. So I left with my organization going over to Ashiya, Japan. Some of the airplanes purely carried personnel, others carried maintenance equipment.

We made a stop at Wake Island—I was on a heavily loaded airplane so we made a fuel stop—and another airplane that landed there had a brake problem, a leaking brake. Well, that was of little moment. They took all the people off of it, and we had jacks and equipment on it, and I had an opportunity to practice my hydraulic expertise en route, so I did some brake maintenance and cleaned that up. It was just a normal thing. Then we went on.

I got over to Ashiya, Japan, and we landed, unloaded our airplanes that night, started loading cargo on, and the crews turned right around and the next day were flying missions in Korea, just nonstop. From then until I came back to the States, the shifts were 12 on and 12 off. So my introduction into that life early was one of hard work; it was one of great effort, and then of some learning because there was a need to do other things now than my specialty.

## **BARNES DESCRIBES HIS PERSONAL TRAINING TO BECOME A FLIGHT ENGINEER . . .**

In my 12 off, I could do what I pretty much pleased. I got an okay from the operations people to fly on an airplane and learn what a flight engineer does, and I watched [Crew Chief Leon B.] DeGarmo. He had confidence in me. He put me in the jump seats. His pilots, the pilot and copilot, accepted that on his say-so and let me do the takeoff and the prelanding check, and it began a training program for me. I knew the hydraulic system, and I had mechanic friends who were engine people, who were APU, auxiliary power unit, people, who were electricians, who were airframe people, and I spent time with them in the inspection dock, sharing hydraulic knowledge with them, gaining propeller knowledge from them.

After 11 months of extensions in this initial 90-day TDY that I mentioned to you awhile back, the squadron moved from Ashiya, Japan, to Tachikawa, Japan, and changed designations on paper. The 4th Troop Carrier Squadron went back to the States, on paper, and the 14th Troop Carrier Squadron came over. The people and equipment stayed in place. The 4th picked up C-124s [Globemaster II heavy-lift cargo aircraft] back at McChord, and the 14th stayed with the C-54s.

By now, I was a flight engineer, budding flight engineer, but no checkride. The checkride was a matter of a pilot certifying this in the form of an engineering officer. That's where I ran into [a] blockage, a refusal to certify. I flew and never got certified. It was very heartbreaking for a good while.

Then one day, as a matter of mission necessity, all of the flight engineers were tasked for a max mission, so they couldn't be used for the test flights, and the test pilot had to take me with him. Here is where I had had the blockage before, and here is where he and I came to grips in that airplane on a test flight, getting it ready to put into a mission lineup. What I am saying here . . . is that often in the face of things for the country—that was, in essence, for the country—comes some other things. It came, that realization in the air, doing engine featherings, doing retractions, doing some free falls, doing stalls, where his dependence upon me doing what I should have done made the safety of that test flight what it was and vice versa. I think there grew an interdependence in that situation.

We got on the ground; he looked me straight in the eye, and he said, "I had no intent for your certification, but after today's workout up there, I see no way to deny that." And he pinned the certification for my flight engineer status on.

## **BARNES DESCRIBES HIS DEPLOYMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE KOREAN WAR . . .**

By the time I had completed my tour over there, the accumulation of 750 hours, I had some interesting times over in Korea.

During one of these learning things I had, I had an airplane that encountered an accident and kept me over there for about, I guess, 19 days doing a salvage job on it, taking off everything I could get off, and they had other airplanes landing sending it back. This got to be one of the most interesting things that happened to me over there. It happened at Suwon [Air Base, Korea] in February 1951, as I recall. It was cold. It was miserable conditions. The Army had just taken the Suwon strip, and there were no permanent structures on it at all. There was a big mess camp, and there was a medical tent that they did emergency surgery and repair of people who were wounded and injured in preparation for flights back to Japan to the hospital. There was a tent in which the ambulance drivers stayed and ambulatory patients. I stayed in this tent at night when I couldn't work on the airplane. I could see many, many, and sometimes very few, of our troops come in, Army and Marine people come in wounded. As a matter of fact, a couple of guys died in the tent next to me during one night. It was an awakening experience for a young guy, I can assure you.



I got back to Japan. Obviously, things were a hell of a lot better. I had a chance for some milk runs then—milk runs being what few dependents were in that area moving from Japan down to the Philippines. Then you would stage crews down there, that is, you would fly a crew down, and they would bring your airplane back, and you would stay five days. Another crew would come down. You would bring your airplane back, and they would stay. This gave you a little break, a little respite from that kind of thing. I appreciated the break at that time.

Then one of the most trying points in my career took place. I was in a dining hall, and just like the cases in many dining halls in an occupied country and some in status of forces countries, the indigenous personnel girls who were serving on trays milk, coffee, and tea and whatever else, and the ugly American surfaced in the presence of a guy who reached out and grabbed one of these girls by the buttocks as she went by. Like any self-respecting woman, though she was Japanese, she turned around and showed her dislike for that. He leaped up and slapped her. He said, “Shut up! You sons of bitches shouldn’t have started the war. Moreover, you shouldn’t have lost it.” She broke down and cried. She just cried and cried. I didn’t really understand wholly what I saw. Just a little bit later, I did. When I say a little bit later, that was after my marriage and my own children. What I saw was, but for my being over there and the commitment of many, many other Americans in overseas places, however the discomfort be, was that situation in reverse. The feet of foreign soldiers on our soil and that being my daughter or your daughter or my sister or maybe even somebody’s wife, that was the turning point in a solid commitment for me, and that was before the end of my first enlistment. Enlistments were three-year enlistments then; they were not four years. I was committed to a career because of the kinds of things that I saw.

I finished my time over there by the accumulation of 750 hours, and I rotated back to the States. By then the assignments process had gotten away so much from unit assignment, and I went all the way to Springfield, Massachusetts, to Westover [AFB], to what then was the 1253rd Air Transport Squadron. It had C-54s, and its mission was NEAC, Northeast Air Command, flying up into Argentina and Torbay, Newfoundland. I was, of course, in my flight engineer duties there. They got designated the 30th Air Transport Squadron and identified to receive C-118s [Liftmaster piston-powered transport aircraft], which was a nice airplane. It was a new bird, not that much different but significant differences, too, when you really got down to looking and comparing the two airplanes, much different engines, different propeller system. It was a one-prop control and a sync button as opposed to four-prop controls, just a beautiful airplane, the C-118 versus the old C-54. If you looked at the two airplanes and didn’t know airplanes, they would look very much alike. I appreciated that.

Then came the opportunity to volunteer for some duty with the 1308th Ferry Group headquarters which was at Kelly Field here in Texas, and I did that because I knew a few of the guys who were in the troop carrier squadron had gone to the ferry group down at Kelly, and I found that interesting. So I volunteered. I went down there.

By that time, I had married and I had kids. If you remember the old commissioning system, one of the criteria for that was no marriage. Today, and this is what I meant by an intrusion into today, hell, you can’t deny a guy flying because he is married or commissioning. The idea, however, was the pay of a cadet didn’t support a family at that time. You had to buy books and all. You just couldn’t support it until there was some substance. Well, that’s a personal thing today. That would be an intrusion into your personal life whether you had the money. You know, this is just like getting permission to get married. Hell, if your commander didn’t think you could handle it, he denied you the privilege, or the first sergeant for that matter. It’s the power of men in positions. I say that with some underlining.

First sergeants were hellaciously powerful. They controlled your destiny. You had to actually request permission to get married, and if they reviewed your financial status and said, “Jim Hasdorff, you are a screw up. You don’t manage your money well enough, hell, no,” you didn’t get married.

## **YOU MENTIONED . . . THAT WHEN YOU FIRST GOT TO MCCORD, YOU WERE THE FIRST BLACK AIRMAN TO BE ASSIGNED. WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THESE PROBLEMS WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED THERE?**

Well, I think, initially, the myth thing was the biggest problem, in an open-bay barracks, the myth that blacks would steal. You know, everybody was a little guarded about their stuff. Or they smell and they don’t wash regularly. Nobody really wanted to bunk above or below me. I had a little problem finding a place to get, initially. I think a little reluctance on the part of officials to intercede because they didn’t understand either what was to take place. Those were the initial kinds of problems. They would be hard to detect unless you were experiencing them yourself, which I think underlies a lot of the system where there were people attempting to investigate or look at things that were allegations of mistreatment, and not understanding what mistreatment is and how it comes about. I think, while that’s not pleasant, it helped me to be able to understand what was actually happening to and around me.

In instances before that, I had experienced a few things, as an example, with cross-country trips with my crew, at a stop and an attempt off an installation one evening, as a crew, to get a bite to eat. We went in and we had a waitress come and take the orders, but say, “You will have to pick yours up around at the back. We can’t serve you here.” My crew demanded, “Just what the hell do you mean? We all came in together.” She said, “I know. I don’t make the rules here, but I work here, and we can’t serve him in here. There is a window around back where he can go pick it up.” And they said, “Bullshit, if he can’t eat, we won’t eat.” “But you have already ordered.” They said, “That’s your problem.” So we got up and walked out, and then, obviously, it was a matter of what had been ordered now and nobody would pay for it. In an attempt to leave then, an attempt by the management and two or three bystanders to get this taken care of, giving them as much guilt as I had, so it became an exciting few moments. We were able to literally scuffle our way free of that.

I think this is indicative of many of the early struggles in having listened to some of the kinds of problems that our people had at different places. I think these are not too unlike how it begins. I think how it ended, often—some tragic endings—was probably the key to handling it or not. I was thankful for whatever elements of patience there was to not have things turn out that way, and it later became an asset at dealing with that kind of thing in helping the Air Force and other people.

## **I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A QUESTION IN REGARD TO YOUR VARIOUS PROMOTIONS. DID YOU FEEL THAT YOUR PROMOTIONS THROUGH THE VARIOUS GRADES WERE EQUITABLE, OR WERE THERE ANY LONG PERIODS WHERE YOU DIDN’T SEE A PROMOTION?**

I think they were quite equitable, particularly during my first enlistment, which was a three-year enlistment. At the end of that enlistment, I was a staff sergeant. That was pretty fast moving for a three-year tour, but I think it was largely in tune with the work volume. I mentioned in some earlier discussion that during much or most of the overseas work in two 12-hour shifts that I worked my normal functions and then a flying function and slept somewhere in between there. While I didn’t always see it, it was clear that the recognition for that in promotion was very fair and just. I had no problem with that.

There was a very long period, however, not just for myself but I think, for the entire enlisted force, as it sought to reduce what was called the “Korean Hump,” and there was quite a lengthy time between staff sergeant and tech, as I recall. From tech on to chief, I think, were fairly normal time spans. I do, in all fairness, say that I think there may have been a little acceleration because of the Vietnam War. I think my promotion to senior was quite unexpected at the time it came, and then certainly later to chief at the time it came. I just anticipated, because of how the cycles in time had been prior to that, that it would be a longer period.

## **WAPS [WEIGHTED AIRMAN PROMOTION SYSTEM] WAS IMPLEMENTED IN JUNE 1970 AFTER EXTENSIVE RESEARCH BY THE AIR FORCE HUMAN RESOURCES LABORATORY. FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE, HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS THAT PROGRAM BEEN?**

WAPS has been very successful. It places the burden of responsibility directly on the shoulder of the individual, the necessity to prepare for the testing, knowing what the scores are. The factors that are weighted are, in all but a few cases, directly at the control of the individual. Now, there may be a necessity at some point to change a factor or two, expressly points given for decorations, for example, which I believe are still included. I profess a mild ignorance here in that I have not looked directly at WAPS over the last few years, but it was a weighted factor. If you were in a career area that never exposed you to the opportunity to get a medal, as an example—and I used to use this example in talking about that need to change a weighted factor—if you look at an Airman or NCO [noncommissioned officer] working in a synthetic trainer system, a simulator, great technical capability, but there are none of those overseas, so there is never going to be an overseas opportunity to go do that job. Then the attainment that some of the ribbons or medals that carry point value are not going to come that way, so this guy feels shortchanged of this skill because of their duty type. In that regard, there would need to be some offsets in other things with your extremely high point value that would offset the absence of a medal.

On the other hand, where there is a well-rounded utilization of the AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code], overseas and point values for ribbons and medals become a factor or the opportunity for getting the different kinds of medals exists more in some career fields than others, then there appears to be some little offset there. But beyond that, I think WAPS has done a splendid job, and I think, by and large, it provides a means to see, really, where you are, especially if there is a missed cycle in preparing for the next.

I think there are some cautions to utter. Those cautions are, however, the point values awarded for attendance at PME [professional military education] schools when they used the school basically for the attainment of the points. The significance here is that there are points given for correspondence and in-residence, and the feeling is, “Well, if I can get the points for correspondence, I won’t go to school,” which leaves to me something lacking in how this is done. I would think that school may necessarily need to be a by-product of the promotion. You get promoted and then you get the opportunity to go to school. I think it would turn that around and discourage any proliferation of the achievement of points by virtue of that kind of a system. That may be backwards. I always had a little trouble with that anyway.

I think our PME process is badly needed and certainly having worked hard to get it on line, across the board that is, I support the fact that it shouldn’t be abused in anyway. I think there is some abuse to the system in that regard.



## **IN YOUR MOVE FROM LAUGHLIN TO RANDOLPH [AFB, TEXAS] AS A SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR POSITION FROM ONE PLACE TO THE OTHER?**

After moving to the Air Training Command Headquarters, it was immediately clear that Air Training Command did so much more. It was responsible for the basic training. This is the initial introduction of people from a civilian sector into a military role. The same thing applied for officers through the OTS [Officer Training School] function. That was a thing that Air Training Command [ATC] did. But Air Training Command also had the total technical training responsibility in all of the career fields, so right away my role both enlarged or expanded and changed to include methods of assisting my boss in the regard of all that Air Training Command did.

It became obvious that we needed to do some things with casual time at our tech schools, both in the preschool and postschool sense, where students had arrived early and not able to start class with casual time on their hands. This is the area that was very, very critical in which the discipline instilled in the basic training tended to decline. The basic training was very tightly controlled, and once in the tech school, it was very tightly controlled, after you started the class. The casual period, however, gave leeway for “Well, what the hell is the use? They hurried and got me here, and now I am not doing anything.”

On the other end of that, when the graduation was done [if you finished early], you had to wait on your class.<sup>4</sup> We were able to spot the great decline of interest that took place in this casual period, waiting for the rest of the class to catch up. This guy had time on his hands. If they used him, then there was not what was called productive usage. It pissed him off, to be very honest, or pissed her off to be used in some menial sense, to be just a gap filler, waiting for an assignment action.

We had excesses in a number of career fields, if you recall, and we forced cross training. We forced people out of some career fields into others, irrespective of their abilities to do this. Many times, they were there, but they were spinning their wheels. This shed some light on that through spying it early on in a technical preparation for that particular career field. So we were able to resolve a great number of problems in this respect.

The needs for some consideration of new quarters and better studying conditions in quarters. If a student is required to study, then the study conditions should be as best [as] they can [be] to enhance that. These were some things that resulted, I think, in many of the quarters improvements that took place at all the installations, to include Lackland.

The testing for AFSCs was developed at Lackland, as you know. Great groups of noncommissioned officers came and spent days and hours pouring over items that would eventually become test material. They were doing this in non-air conditioned facilities for audio capability, and it was just atrocious to try working under those conditions. These were some of the things that were ultimately improved, because you were there, and you were hearing the direct input. You spent time with basic trainees; you had a good feel for that program. You had a chance to visit OTS; you had a good feel for that program. You had an opportunity to see the difference in NCOs passing through the commissioning process and coming out as an officer, or those who had strictly an ROTC background going directly into a commissioning process and coming out as an officer, and there was a marked difference, because here was a guy, having had the enlisted side of the fence, now with both sides of the fence under his belt.

## **ALL RIGHT. LET’S TALK ABOUT HOW YOU WERE ELEVATED TO THE JOB OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT IT, AND WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING YOUR BEING SELECTED?**

I was at Air Training Command as the senior enlisted advisor when announcement of the incumbent Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force’s tenure was coming to an end and that considerations were being made for his replacement.

After the names were all submitted to the command headquarters, they held a screening to come up with a command nominee or two in case there were two authorizations. Those were then submitted to Air Force. The total of those kinds of submissions were 33 in the year that I was under consideration. The next step was for those persons to convene at the Air Force Military Personnel Center at Randolph, and I was there, of course, on Randolph, so it was sort of a walk-across-the-street thing for me. The purpose of the Personnel Center was to eliminate that down to three finalists, and this was over the course of two days of interviews there.

I must say that when I was selected as one of the three finalists, I really began to realize what I was in from both a momentum and a magnitude standpoint, having seen 30 people eliminated in the process. Then the three finalists being submitted to Air Force were required to go to Washington to the Pentagon for interviews with the DCS/P [Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel] who at that time was a tough, very demanding guy. I moved then to the Vice Chief of Staff and then, ultimately, an interview with the Chief of Staff, who talked to all three initially and then went back to the individual interviews and then made his selection.

The two competitors that I was with I knew well. I knew one of them from a previous association in a similar career area. This was Chief Conrad Stevens. Conrad was in the 6th Troop Carrier while I was in the 4th, and we ended up, as a result of a storm, as transients in a transient barracks one night, sleeping above and below each other. The other was a guy named Jim Marlow, who had reached, I thought, the epitome of security police superintendent duties and first sergeant duties. He was just a prince of a guy and a good friend. Those were the two other finalists during my tenure.

I was, as a matter of the things I did as a senior advisor, over at Lackland, and I had brought in all of the first sergeants and many noncommissioned officers from one of our bases for a visit to the basic training center. We stayed in a recruit training and housing building. These guys hadn't been in an open bay dormitory, let alone a dormitory, for years. They had no concept. They enjoyed it. We, at night, even did an old tight blanket card game that used to be the mark of the old days, and they enjoyed sleeping in the open bay bunks and a gang latrine. They had gotten up two mornings with the trainees. They were awakened in the middle of the morning with the trainees falling out to the response of a whistle and said, "Jesus Christ, these guys really moved." They were surprised and pleased at how the basic trainees responded. I, as the senior advisor for the Training Command, was proud to display that. We had them go through facets of what they got academically, an overview of the training program by the people there at Lackland.

In the middle of all this, I got a phone call. I left it, and it was Gen. [William V.] McBride, who then was the commander of Training Command, who said, "I want you back over here right away. You have got to go to Washington. You have been selected as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. You have to be in Washington tonight." A helicopter came to the Wilford Hall helipad to pick me up. I had to leave my vehicle, which my wife got later. They had advised her: she had clothes ready. I landed at Randolph, and a car picked me up, whisked me by my house, and they had already told her what things I needed. She had those in a bag and threw them right in the car window. I didn't even have time to get out and say "Hi" to her much, went back to the line to a T-39 [business jet], and on the way to Washington. I changed my uniform in a car from the Andrews [AFB, Maryland] flight line en route to the Shoreham Hotel. The official announcement was made at the AFA [Air Force Association] Outstanding Airmen of the Year dinner in the 1973 AFA Convention. Of course, I must say that was the fastest day of my life. I sound a little breathless now. I kind of relived that excitement, and that is literally what happened as a result of that.

**I READ RECENTLY WHERE (THIS QUESTION) HAS CREATED A GREAT DEAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, NOT ONLY FOR BLACKS BUT FOR ALL MINORITIES, THAT THE QUESTION ALWAYS LINGERS IN THEIR MINDS, "AM I GETTING THIS BECAUSE I REALLY DESERVE IT, OR AM I WINDOW-DRESSING?" NOT ONLY DOES IT CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE MINORITIES, BUT IT WILL TEND TO DEMORALIZE THE ANGLO MAJORITY BECAUSE THEY THINK SOMEBODY IS GETTING SOMETHING FOR NOTHING. SO YOU SEE IT FROM BOTH ENDS.**

Obviously one of the first things that came up following the initial selection was, "Do you think this happened because you were black? As rigorous as the competition was, my answer to that was, "No." But then the follow-on question was, "How do you intend to do that without having it come out that way? How do you intend to do the job?" I addressed that, and as I recall . . . first off, I would be naive not to believe that that's the assumption on the part of many people, but that I know for a fact there are three identifiable categories of people now that I have to deal with.

There is a category that, certainly, believes my selection was because of my race. Certainly, there is a category who do not believe that, and then thirdly, there is a category who don't care but who say, "We'll wait and see what this guy does." The only thing I don't know is how big either category is. So I categorically said, "I really now have to do the job and then let the people judge that." At the end of what was considered the normal tenure of two years, as you recall, I was extended a year by Gen. Jones, which was unprecedented, and at the end of that year was again extended, which was certainly unprecedented, which gave me a total of four years in the job. I think at the end of the second year, most of the questions concerning the race issue and my selection had subsided in that new issues were on the horizon and [that] the continuity of my involvement in those was principally the reason for the extension. I think the Chief of Staff had that prerogative to do. He felt comfortable with my involvement with the kinds of things that were now coming forth—certainly the newness of women in the nontraditional jobs or roles. I understood that very well. More than that, the very great and grave difficulty as a new administration and some new directions set upon us.









## **YOU WERE THE FIRST BLACK TO HAVE EVER HELD THIS POSITION AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. DID THIS PUT ANY INITIAL STRAINS ON YOU, KNOWING THIS, WHEN YOU FIRST TOOK THE POSITION?**

It did. I knew there were people watching to see just what would happen. I knew there were people who felt now will come a flood of things for blacks. The time will be spent with blacks on visits to installations and that the whole thing will advance to the Chief of Staff, information that was more beneficial to blacks. All of those things were made. I had some anonymous letters and phone calls that so much as told me that. So, yes, they put some additional strains on me, a little of that. Places that I went where that was common knowledge, one of those being the Ebony Magazine interview. There were some questions surrounding that in a later visit to Johnson Publications in Chicago. I went there for an in-depth interview with their editors. Then, of course, the media was there, and I consented to an interview in which this was the foundation of questions as a black. I had to discount the fact that being black had anything to do with the selection or, in fact, my conduct of and in the job. It carried even a little larger stigma because I was the first in any of the services, period, and I answered some questions from, principally, uninformed people about the other branches. I had to limit my answers there. “Will they or are they going to appoint a black to one of their services?” And, hell, I had no way of knowing what qualifications were for it, not just because I knew they couldn’t do that, but where there were people qualified, I would think their opportunities were to go—so it did place considerable stigma and strain particularly for the first year and a half.

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE SINGLE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT YOU HAD WHILE SERVING AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE?**

I believe that to have been the solidification of the program of enlisted inclusion in the planning process. I think, if you recall, the assignments process took on some new meaning. I think these were all some things that fell out of that office, the ability to gear some things towards the senior noncommissioned officer force. They were in a series or in a package of items that were being worked on, and while there was not one, there was a series of things. I think, if you recall, there were some changes in the allocation of housing. There were some changes in the TOPCAP [Total Objective Plan for Career Airman Personnel] order of the day that allowed selective extension beyond 30 [years of service]. There were a series of things that took place that I would consider the most significant. So, those things that were contained in that package, I think, were the most significant thing—the advancements made for the enlisted force and, certainly, a locking in of the professional military education system at all levels.

While the Senior NCO Academy was certainly already in being, the plans for its further inclusion into the Air University complex [remained]. It is still intended, I would hope, to eventually move that from Gunter [AFB, Alabama] over to Maxwell [AFB, Alabama] and include it in the academic circle. From some standpoint, I hope, that is still in being. Those were some things that were even downstream that were included and, certainly, all the levels of PME.

So with those having been factors as they were, I think—there were some other things that were of a little different nature that were requirements for me to do, both under General Brown and General Jones, that I think resulted in my two extensions, which were unprecedented. These were some very delicate areas that had great bearing on how much and how fast the Air Force pursued some elements. These were the inclusion of women in nontraditional roles and some feedback to the chief.

## **DID YOU HAVE COMPLETE ACCESS TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF ANYTIME YOU NEEDED IT?**

I had access when I needed it. Both of them—I must say this now. I am not able to speak, obviously, for my predecessors or successors in that regard, but the access to the Chief, the Vice Chief, the Assistant Vice Chief, and the DP [DCS/P], or the Air Staff for that matter, I considered really unbelievable initially. In working through the exec for the Chief’s time, you learned the best times to see him. It is important—and I don’t know whether anybody else discussed this with you, officer-wise, who had dealings with the Chief of Staff—each time you could see the Chief of Staff, conversationally, was not necessarily the best time to surface something you would like him to accept or buy. There is great meaning in that. If you were really trying to push or sell a program, just because you had access to him that day may not have been the time to present it. Often there were times to wait that were better than others in which to sell. There was often a need to try some things out on the Vice Chief and the Assistant Vice Chief before you went. These people were magnificent in providing that type of assistance and that kind of guidance in, “Today may not be the best day to sell that. Let me call you when the time is right.”

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR MOST UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE WHILE YOU WERE IN THAT POSITION?**

I consider the most unforgettable experience—well, there were several in that they were good and bad experiences. Certainly, the two extensions were most unforgettable. I think there was no way to put that down at all in any sense of priority. They were unprecedented, and they were an experience to have it said to you by the Chief of Staff, I plan to keep you around for another year, certainly was an unforgettable experience. In essence, I believe the opportunities to wholly represent the Air Force in testimony at the House and Senate Armed Services Committees had to be the epitome of experience. I think perhaps that same statement will embody the most difficult decision in how best to convince the Senate and House Armed Services Committees

that there was genuine union interest. I think the validity of that testimony had a lot in it for what took place in a legislative way later on, in having commanders not deal with unions. I think those were some very critical times and probably some of the darker days that I remember when there was something akin to doldrums hanging over the Air Force enlisted element, with the feeling that there was nobody in house who could do anything for us—the secretary, the chief—there was just a complete loss of confidence. I think, in coming back in and talking about unions to the boss were some of the tougher times that I had, and how to be convincing in that in saying to him, when I knew he had done his best, and the conditions perpetuating it were beyond his control, that a lot of our people had interest in a union. I think that had to be some of the most difficult periods. It is tough to say, “Boss, they don’t believe you or the secretary or anybody can do that, and they want a union.”

We had very, very grave situations facing the Air Force, as about 35 percent of its people were interested, seriously, in joining a union, because they saw nobody else able to help this erosion that was taking place. I testified before both the House and the Senate Armed Services Committees on the union issue. I testified before the House committee in conjunction with my counterparts from the other services, and I testified alone before the Senate committee as far as that was concerned, but along with General [Bernard W.] Rogers from the Army and a representative from the Navy, in that particular hearing, and Senator [John C.] Stennis [D-MS] and Congressman [Richard C.] White [D-TX] from El Paso were the chairs of the two committees, and each of them had the question, “Is there a bona fide and genuine interest by people wearing uniforms in unions?” And the answer to that was “Yes Sir, there is.” Then the follow-on question was, “If the nickel fell on the grass today, how many of our people would join the union?” The answer for me was, “About 35 percent.”

## **HAS THIS DESIRE FOR A UNION ABATED ANY, OR IS IT ABOUT THE SAME?**

I think, while you don’t hear it as much, it is simply because we have a provision to keep it from occurring. As you know, the legislative issue made it a constitutional point of view, and it got into the issue of constitutionality. You could not prohibit or preclude anyone from joining a union, but you can preclude a commander from bargaining with the union, so that defanged the union issue. Since there is no bargaining capability, why join? That is what sort of defanged the union issue. The legislation was passed that prohibited it for a commander to bargain with a union. He cannot do that.

## **HAS THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE BEEN MORE HELPFUL TO AIRMEN ENTERING CIVILIAN LIFE?**

In the long run, yes. It records and equates to civilian status those courses that are given a technical nature or, I guess from the beginning,

from basic training, which has a significant portion of it dedicated to physical training, physical fitness. Physical conditioning is a scoreable school item. It is, therefore, given a mark and then equated to its civilian counterparts. It begins with that, and everything from that point forward is recorded pretty much automatically. For those people who believe it didn’t help them, myself included—although I always understood the program because it developed in ATC while I was there—the community college went back to my basic training and plucked out the physical conditioning aspect. All the tech schools have scoreable meaning. All I needed to do was provide them the completion certificates. I would say if it is too far back, it is of little value. My school being in a reciprocating aircraft and engine feature and today everything is jet, it would have little value of equation, but it does have the capability. I think where there are requirements for in-house educational standards, the community college serves that very useful purpose also. It is an encouragement to people on active duty to better themselves academically, which means much in their own career advancement inside.

Then of course, it is invaluable in a record that you can carry right on out to the civilian community with you. So, while it serves both sides of the fence, I think it has, in its long term, a profound effect in an outside use.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR FEELING TOWARD GOING TO THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE?**

Initially, and I heard it from a different level, perhaps, than many people in this way. That was one of the advantages of the senior enlisted advisor duty in that major commanders, in preparation for putting that to their commands, were talking about that some time before it began. An all-volunteer force became a factor. As it was described and as it was provided for monetarily at its onset, it looked to be a workable solution. Early on, however, the dangers of what were the Moskos theory or Moskos philosophy about jobs or professions, et cetera, became a factor in, can you buy this kind of allegiance and alliance and have it whole, or do you, at best, create a job?<sup>25</sup> I think there was a danger of that early on. As a matter of fact, I think there was some discussion about that danger. In other words, is money all it is going to take to buy a good, strong military force?

The needs that were identified were being worked on right away—the needs in housing, the needs in upgraded equipment on installations—and as you know, all of this was taking place. Then all of a sudden, the money dried up and benefits began to disappear, the GI Bill being one of the bigger ones. It was just considered wholly unacceptable by military people that there was an interference with that, a breach of promise, so to speak, is how was interpreted, to be very blunt.

Then the other kinds of things that sort of fell by the wayside started us on the downhill decline. You couldn’t buy from the community as the economy had jobs going fairly well at one time. You couldn’t attract by the kind of money we offered people to come. As the economy changed, retention became the problem instead of recruiting.



Things that became socially acceptable conflicted with our inner workings of the system as much as disciplines were concerned, and the modification of our disciplinary process and the inclusion of some of the kinds of things, judicially, that took place had an impact on just the military scenario, period. Many commanders and many noncommissioned officers considered it a weakening of the process to allow certain things to happen without what had formerly been . . . just punishments for those things happening. I think we really didn't approach that well until there was some look/see at the reports surfaced by the task force on military justice that had gone throughout all the services and rendered a report and then got those in some perspective.

Unfortunately, the feelings generated by the kinds of things that report turned up paralleled a number of things that were going on in communities. So whichever way you turned, you had people from outside with those ideas; you had people inside with those ideas. So, we lost a little ground in that respect, trying to deal with one thing and really weakened another.

## **DO YOU THINK A GENERAL REVULSION TO THE VIETNAM WAR HELPED BRING THIS ATTITUDE ON?**

I'm sure it did. There were certainly some very hard feelings about our involvement in the war . . .

I think for those who look back over the picture that is presented in war and its aftermath saw, from the World War II perspective, the United States enter a war from a position of being way behind. We had to put together a force; we had to amass equipment and project it abroad, and we did that very well, and we did that with total unity—and I underscore that many times—total unity of the country. There was a common belief by everybody that this needed to be done, and the obvious results were victory and supremacy from World War II, and superiority for that matter. The tangible gains for the investment of money and lives were visible to everyone in this country. We occupied the Japanese properties, the island chains; we occupied Europe and were a world superiority. Nobody had any bad feelings about the kinds of things that happened other than the personal losses, of course, and the fact that there had had to be a war, but in that there was, we had won it. At some sacrifice, yes, but we had won it. Not only did we emerge from that victorious and supreme, but we emerged from it as a monopoly with the possession of an atomic weapon.

By the time Korea came, we still had great capability, and we fought the battle that we fought in Korea, and there was less understanding by both people in the military and out, first, for our involvement which started as a police action, but the fact that we could never unleash all of this power we had on a country like Korea. It was never understood why there were no tangible gains in it. At the end of Korea, there was merely the dividing line, the 38th parallel, that was there when we began, when the presumption

was that we were going to help South Korea maintain its independence. So, there was some loss of credibility from the people who involved us in this.

By the time we got into Vietnam, here was still another situation whose origin was not clear to most people, yet a propelling into it and an escalation beyond belief and beyond time and still the restraint that held us from using the capability we had to deal with it. At the time it ended, here was still a dividing line and no tangible gain—great prisoners and war losses that are still unresolved today in terms of people who were or were not there. I think it was a little more than the American people could understand.

In the living rooms, I think the media, TV in particular, projecting this situation into the homes, and family discussions about the ridiculousness of how it was going on, drove a generation of kids who are now recruiting age or who were draft-card-burning age at that time. Our colleges looked at this on a political science sense and saw its fruitlessness. So, we had a lot of informed opinion in the rejection of that. It wasn't arbitrary. It was a lot of informed opinion from college students and others. Then of course, there was the fleeing of people from the country. After the draft card burning, there was the evasion by going to other countries. Then the bitter wound was inflicted by pardoning all of those.

Those who went and sacrificed never could condone that pardon. That put a wound in the country that is a scar, still, today if it gets rubbed a little raw, depending on how or who talks about it. So here we are sitting on the brink of perhaps a Middle East involvement with oil as the issue, and the bigger question, while we don't exploit the other resources we have. We give way to this socially acceptable thing of environmentalists in the country perhaps, stopping us from doing the mining and this and that because of over- environmental conditions, and yet we go to war over oil. They are asking the question, "Is it necessary?"

You saw the reaction to the initial need to register. Although the salvation of our military system at the moment is to know who and how many we can depend upon should the chips fall. I think there is a great need to get that all back in perspective, and I think that is really what underscored the great offsetting of the results of this just recent past presidential election. I think that was of the major contributing factors, along with a lot of other things that are going on in the country.

## **(INFLATION) HAPPENED WITH THE APRS [AIRMAN PERFORMANCE REPORT] AS FAR AS ENLISTED PEOPLE WERE CONCERNED. HOW WOULD YOU ADDRESS THAT PROBLEM, AND WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET AROUND THIS SORT OF THING?**

I think the APR system, as a system, changed from what I recall as the old form 75 and an oral board to a later form and some testing and then the eventual development of the Weighted Airman Promotion System.

If the APR inflation record is just that, an inflation record, it's probably due, in large part, to the absence of former PME opportunities and the professional approach to evaluation. I think, by and large, there was no chronology of information by NCOs—and I'm not saying they should keep a black book or anything on our people—but I think the kinds of things that constitute performance over the rating period rather than the most recent events, which generally turn out to be the case, are principally responsible for the inflationary process. Now to put that in being and in operation, and to go back, we had a little quota system at one time that impacted the APR, but only a certain number of the people could be at the high end of the scale. This tended to do some controlling, but it also tended to punish some people who were duly deserving of some high ratings. But I think it needed to have sort of a bite-the-bullet approach with supervisors and managers to really say, "I have to understand the system and have faith, because I make this guy or this gal a seven. It is not going to kill him or her professionally. The system is still going to recognize them."

Obviously, promotion was the same thing. The promotion boards may have reversed that. They are looking at all nines rather than what tended to happen as a result of trying to take the inflation down. There was really a clean breakpoint to insert that. I think that clean breakpoint needs to be done and do an actual, honest evaluation. Now that I can look at that from another point of view, inflation is a problem in business and industry also, in the rating and merit process. What we have had to do is the semblance of a quota system, particularly where the mandatory or rather voluntary wage guidelines were instituted. We did this on an institutional or business-wide basis, and the guidelines were met across the board. The development of a merit system that allowed realistic approaches to evaluation may be the Air Force's answer to this. It gives a starting point at which this true score and true evaluation creates no penalty for the individual being rated. The shadow of penalty is what has caused the inflationary thing to kind of continue. I think the system itself is good. I think it is enforcement where the emphasis needs to be placed. In other words, if we are tending to overinflate, then I think we have, by virtue of the PME exposures now, a professional way to address that. This goes back to my statement about senior noncommissioned officer and promotion being an opportunity to go to school as opposed to vice versa. We have turned around some things and allowed them to continue to aid and abet this inflation process. So, we really need to enforce what we have. I think we've got a damn good system. I just think it needs enforcing.

## **BEING IN THIS POSITION AS LONG AS YOU WERE, DID THE PRESSURES OF THE JOB START TO GET TO YOU?**

No. I have been asked that before. I think it is the kind of a job in which, if the pressures did, it would be noticeable by you and others right away. Noticeable by you in the sense of the physical effect by familiarity or a lock-in to a particular component of the system that's being worked on to start trading off or exchanging something in one system for something you would like in another system. There were the opportunities, I think,

for that to happen, but where it would shortchange anybody in either element of the field, there was certainly a need not to do that. I thought about what impacts, perhaps, that would have, but the whole thing moved fast enough that that never occurred, and I had no ill effects from it whatsoever.

## **WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY? YOU WERE TRAVELING EXTENSIVELY.**

My family, fortunately due to Marie's strength, stayed cohesive, and they stayed devoted and dependable. I didn't have to disassociate myself with my job to tend to family matters. I have to largely thank her for that, because the children understood the need to travel, and they had been sort of conditioned and geared to that. I must go back and thank my tour of duty as the Air Training Command senior advisor for that conditioning. I even go back to Laughlin and do it there. Though I was never away from the base for any longer than a day's visit somewhere else, the time away from the house in the job was a beginning. So, there was some conditioning all the way. It probably even goes back further than that to our marriage.

When I married Marie, I was a flight engineer. As I was seeing her, I explained to her what a flight engineer did and was. So, she was accustomed to the fact that I would fly this weekend and not be home, and she didn't see me for a week or two. It was an understanding right from the beginning. It never really bothered her. We didn't have any adjustment. It wasn't like I was home all the while, and then all of a sudden, I left. This made her able to endure my period overseas well and without difficulty. She just carried that all the way through. She was no stranger to my being gone and, therefore, had no adjustments to make. She was quite able to handle it.

## **HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR WIFE, BY THE WAY?**

We were hometown. She was in school with me. Her family and my family knew each other. She is a year or two older. She was a class ahead of me. When I came back from Japan, as a matter of fact, they had moved to within a block of where we were. Her sister owned a restaurant, and I went there to eat while I was home on vacation. This is when I really got to know her. I really didn't know her while I was in school. I knew her, but her now being a little older and seeing some things, there was some innate qualities about her, some strengths, that still persists today.

One of those was she was a direct counter for everything, and I tended to appreciate that somehow. She was a good balance for everything. She always had this level thinking and just as quiet and calm as she has done this morning. She doesn't mind working; she was working then, and she is still working today. We've raised our family, and she has worked through that except for her pregnancies—and for the love of working. I think the credit for those things certainly in a marriage goes to her. My mother encouraging me to finish school and then her being encouraging in all the other kinds of other aspirations that I've had. She has always been there to lean on. She's been that way with the children.



## **HAS THAT BEEN A PROBLEM, TRYING TO RAISE A FAMILY WITH ALL THE FREQUENT MOVES?**

No. As a matter of fact, that's a frequently asked question. It is one that my sister and I had a good opportunity to deliberate, the one that taught school. She doesn't have any children. She dealt with children in school. She has none of her own, though she was married. I want to make a point of that. I would, in fact, ask military families to look very carefully at their conditions in this regard. In what are called the formative years, these are the years that children learn good or bad habits quickly and easily, at home and away, the places of assignment are often critical. Now if you live in an area—and I'll use Washington, DC, as an area—if you live exposed to Washington or New York, and you are not eligible for on-base housing, it plunges your family right in the midst of a very tough set of conditions for formative years.

I can't thank the Air Force enough for however my assignments picture came out. During the formative years for our children, we were in places like Limestone, Maine [laughter]. Too damn cold to get out and get into anything, and if you did, there was nothing to get into but potato fields and woods. Some people found that a drudgery; some despised it there, and it bothered some people even mentally. We found it a great thing in reading and hearing the stories about kids in other cities, tilted off into the drug thing or what have you at very early ages, to find that, at that time anyway, was virtually void of that kind of problem.

## **IN SPEAKING OF YOUR DUTIES AS A SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR, YOUR WIFE APPEARED TO HAVE ADAPTED PRETTY WELL TO THE MILITARY LIFE, BUT AS AN ADVISOR, YOU UNDOUBTEDLY SAW MANY CASES WHERE WIVES NEVER DID ADAPT.**

That's true.

## **DID THIS POSE A SPECIAL PROBLEM FOR YOU AS AN ADVISOR?**

Not really. It posed a challenge more than a problem in trying to create a place of involvement for many wives. I'd like to explain that, because the makeup of the different installations that the Air Force has lends itself to that easily or makes it very difficult. Obviously, the hub of operations is the base itself, and the things that go on there are much more accessible to the people who live right on the installation, to be able to see visibly and take advantage of. This is where the functions of dining-ins, or -outs for that matter, that included the wives allowed them to come. Where there was sufficient housing, you had a larger group of people interested in involvement in that. Where your eligible grade NCOs, now these are wives who are eligible for membership in the NCO club, lived

by necessity rather than by choice off the installation and were struggling with the rigors of economy in a base area—Washington, DC, is a perfect example of that.

With as many military people as there were at Andrews [AFB, Maryland] and Bolling [AFB, Washington, DC] and the insufficient housing on both until they built new housing, and I'm still not sure it satisfies the whole need, you know, people were living in Upper Marlboro [Maryland]. They were living out in Indian Head; they were living in Forest Hills or downtown. We lived downtown the first time we were there, and many of the things that were on the base at night, you know, I just never went back to. Marie's involvement at that time was probably like a lot of other wives. She had no desire. Well, after that's gone so long, they just withdraw.

It was knowing how that worked that enabled me to accept it as a challenge rather than a problem and then be able to kind of help in that regard. You have to get the wives involved in working on that. The wife being attuned to the husband's needs is key to his success. If she is not supportive of the efforts he does—this doesn't mean she has to go to everything, but she has to be willing to understand his need to be out there at night at a meeting, or why it is necessary to work late, or why it is necessary to go over to Airman So- and-So's and help him. You know, who the hell is he? As soon as they can understand that, the guy has a lot freer hand. That was what I used to encourage, that necessity to be a community, although you were separated by the geographies of on- and off-base conditions. Once many guys get home in the evening, they never get back to anything. It is an excuse; it's a crutch.

## **ACCORDING TO YOUR BIOGRAPHY, YOU HAD 28 YEARS OF ACTIVE AIR FORCE SERVICE. COULDN'T YOU HAVE SERVED LONGER?**

I could have. I could have gone to 30, but anything following what I have described would have been anticlimactic. I thought that was a good point to separate and break, and I did. I have no regrets in having done that. I think there would not have been a place I could have gone, though I would certainly have had a choice of places to go.

Somehow, that would have been very easy, having worked for the chief, to get any assignment that you wanted, within reason. I had identified some that, perhaps, I would have liked to have had if such were to be the case. As decision time came, it was the proper time to separate. Anything else would have been of no moment compared to that tenure.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **ROBERT D. GAYLOR**

**AUGUST 1, 1977 - JULY 31, 1979**

When Robert D. Gaylor arrived at basic training in 1948, he was introduced to a new world, one he says made him feel “like a kid at Christmas.” He was born on May 8, 1930 and raised in two small towns in Indiana, the second of eight children. The Air Force was an opportunity to get out of town, travel, and learn new skills. He quickly fell in love with his new life and soon knew the Air Force would be a lifelong adventure.

Throughout his career, Gaylor experienced many unexpected twists and turns. He served as a security police member, a military training instructor (MTI), and an academy instructor and served tours in Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Germany. His excitement for the unknown allowed him to look at each twist and turn as a new adventure, choosing to stick to his mantra of “Forward, March” rather than fight against the opportunity. He developed a passion for leadership and committed the latter part of his career to sharing what he knew with as many Airmen as possible.

In 1977 Gen. David C. Jones, chief of staff of the Air Force, selected Gaylor to serve as the 5th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. In two years Gaylor traveled extensively, listening to Airmen and tackling issues such as equal travel benefits for enlisted Airmen, maternity uniforms for female Airmen, and an ongoing institutional drug and alcohol problem. He retired in 1979 but has continued to stay very close to the Air Force. Today he regularly visits Airmen, sharing his passion for both leadership and the Air Force.

Gaylor sat down for an interview in August 2015 to reflect on his experience after more than 68 years in or near the Air Force. During the interview, he shared his memories of an Air Force establishing itself as a separate service, his time as the senior training noncommissioned officer (NCO) of a Women in the Air Force (WAF) training squadron, and his passion for leadership. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

## **CHIEF, FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS. WE JUST WANT TO START BY TAKING YOU ALL THE WAY BACK TO 1948 WHEN YOU CAME INTO THE AIR FORCE AND ARRIVED AT BASIC TRAINING. WHAT WERE YOUR IMPRESSIONS WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED THE AIR FORCE?**

I was born in Bellevue, Iowa, population 2,000. When I was nine we moved to Rossville, Indiana. The sign outside the town said 626 people. When I was 13, we moved to Mulberry 10 miles away, population 880. There was no television then. Whatever we knew we read in the paper or radio, so I was very naïve and I didn't have any knowledge about the world other than my own world.

So when I joined the Air Force it was with great excitement. I was like a kid at Christmas. Everything was a new experience. I had never ridden a train. I rode a train three days to Lackland, everything was fun, exciting. I was a wide-eyed hick from the sticks. Really. I had never, ever talked to a black person, an Asian person, probably not even a Catholic . . . so my background and knowledge level was very minimal. Fortunately, I had a great attitude. I wanted to experience things I had not, so I was so excited, and why not?

## **WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU—HOW MANY WEEKS WAS BASIC TRAINING THEN?**

Basic training was 13 weeks. We were met at the train station in San Antonio [Texas]. We boarded a bus, and first thing we were told was to shut up. So we shut up and rode to Lackland [AFB, Texas]. It was fairly early in the morning, and we were taken to a big building. There was a yellow line and the “yeller-ater,” the guy yelling at us said, “Follow the yellow line, and whatever happens, happens.” All I know is that I followed the line. I took off all my clothes, got a haircut in the nude in a barber chair, got into the shower, continued down the line, got two shots in my arm, a New Testament Bible, and an issue of clothing. They didn't measure. “What size are you?” Medium. And I had a duffel bag. “Fill the bag, go in that room, and sit on your duffel bag and shut up.”

All of that happened within maybe an hour and a half. So I'm in a one-piece fatigue uniform, cap down over my eyes, and I shut up and sat there. I didn't know anything. There were 60 of us new Airmen.

We boarded a bus and rode to a single-story barracks. They broke us into two 30-man groups, marched us into the barracks and I was assigned an upper bunk. All of that happened in less than an hour.

Then a little skinny three-striper came in and said, “My name is Justin, and if any of you feel you can whip me, come on up.” And I thought, well, I'm not going up there because he may be a black belt expert or

something. There were guys bigger than me and they didn't move. Then he said, “Now we know who's in charge, don't we? You had your chance. From now on, you will do what I say.” That was good enough for me, wow. I was in scouting, but it wasn't that demanding.

It was all fast-paced, no minorities in my flight. There were 60 of us, Flight 3583, living in two barracks. The latrine was three buildings down, you went down the sidewalk with your ditty bag and your towel over your shoulder in your underwear. It was so new. Wow!

We had a “G.I. party.” I didn't know whether that was cookies or what. It turned out to be scrub brushes. We cleaned the floor on hands and knees. The discipline was the best thing that ever happened to me.

## **AWESOME. AFTER BASIC TRAINING YOU RECEIVED YOUR JOB. DID THEY OFFER YOU JOBS DURING BASIC TRAINING? FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, YOU WERE INITIALLY DISAPPOINTED WITH THE CHOICES YOU HAD.**

Believe it or not, we left Lackland not knowing our career field. They marched us into a room at Lackland and said, “Here is your base assignment. They'll decide how to use you when you arrive.” They called five of us for Waco Air Base, Waco, Texas. On 10 December 1948, I left Lackland a veteran of 13-weeks' service. Seventy-two dollars pay a month, had an Army PFC [private first class] stripe on my arm. I couldn't wait to go on leave to Indiana and show off my uniform. I rode the train all the way back home, was home nine days and then left 22 December, rode the train back to Waco.

We were advised at Lackland to report to personnel upon arrival. Everything I owned was in my duffel bag. I was in my Army Air Force uniform we had been issued. I reported to personnel and a corporal said, “My job is to find you an assignment.” He said, “You're lucky, I have three choices and you get to pick.” Apparently not everyone got choices. He said, “You can be a cook, firefighter, or military policeman.” I had seen World War II movies where control tower, “land on runway so-and-so.” So I had visions of something glamorous and romantic and “Air Force-y.” I must have hesitated because I remember he said, “I don't have all day, pick one or I'll pick one for you.” He turned hostile within seconds. Based on that I said, “I'll take military police.”

He wrote a name and a building number on a piece of paper, said “Report to this name, this number. Next.” He was through with me in about a minute. I was classified in the cops. I drug my duffle bag across the parade field looking for building whatever and walked in and said, “Here I am.” Who are you? “I'm PFC Robert D. Gaylor.” Okay. You're now a cop. I'll take you over to the barracks and assign you a bunk.



Things happened so quickly and without any sophistication what-so-ever. That was 23 December. On 25 December, Christmas morning, from one o'clock to five o'clock in the morning I guarded the finance building armed with a 30-caliber carbine, scared to death. No training. All I knew was my general orders. I'm guarding the finance building with a carbine, wondering, "How did I get here? What am I doing?" That was the beginning. Within a month I was working the main gate. No training.

## **NO TECH SCHOOL?**

No tech school at first. In May of '49, six months after arrival, the first sergeant called me in and said, "Caylor, you appear rather motivated. We have a quota for MP [military police] school at Camp Gordon, Georgia, and we've picked you." I rode a bus from Waco, Texas, to Augusta, Georgia, through the Deep South in May of '49. I had never seen a colored water fountain, colored eat here, colored restroom, colored sit in the back of the bus . . . I had never seen that. That was all new to me. I was wide-eyed, but I had always wanted to meet people from other cultures, so in one way it was a positive experience, and in another way it was very confusing. I couldn't—if you had asked me why it was that way, I could not have explained. Apparently that's the way it was.

## **WHAT WAS THE RANK STRUCTURE AND PROMOTION LIKE THEN?**

In April of '49, I'd been in the Air Force eight months and was promoted to corporal. In those days the commander apparently had a desk full of stripes, and if he decided, he could promote you.

When I joined there were three choices: three-year enlistment, one-year enlistment with a five-year Reserve obligation, or an indefinite enlistment. You could sign up for indefinite, meaning that you could say I've had enough at any time, or the Air Force could say we've had enough of you. The majority of the cops in my unit were one year active, five-year Reserve, and they razed the heck out of me. "Hey, Lifer." I was called Lifer when I had eight-months' service because those guys—basic training, about nine months at Waco, and back to Pittsburgh or wherever.

The laugh turned out to be on them because in 1950, when the Korean conflict broke out, the Reserves were recalled, and a lot of those guys ended up in Korea, whereas I didn't go until later. So at the time they thought, I'll do my year, avoid the draft, go back five years Reserve. So I think the reason I got picked for MP school is because they weren't going to pick the guy who was going to be there for seven, eight, nine months where as I was on a three-year enlistment.

My pay as a corporal went from \$72 to \$80. We reported for pay, stood in line, signed the payroll, went down the pay line—maybe a dollar to the Red Cross, two dollars for GI laundry. By the time you got to the end of the line, you had maybe \$64, all mine. The first sergeant would say, "Okay, get over to the PX [post exchange], buy your necessities so you don't run out." It's a great memory.

I lived in an open bay barracks where you knew everything everybody had, said, did. You'd go in the shower, come back, and maybe your watch would be gone from your bed. There was that downside, but, call me crazy, I found it exciting. I might have been the easiest Airman anyone ever supervised. I never complained. I thought everything was great—Clean the barracks, "Oh, boy, something to do." I was into baseball and softball. I always wanted someone to play catch or someone to hit fly balls to me.

One didn't go anywhere. There were only four cars in my whole squadron at Waco. The first sergeant ran a survey, how many of the cops in our squadron had a high school diploma? I think it came out around 16 percent. So, "You're one of those guys with a high school diploma. Oh, look at you." That was really something! In fairness to those who did not, they left high school to go fight the war, and so you can't fault them. Many of them went on to get their GED [general education diploma], and many of them went through life with an eighth grade education—so the education level was quite low. I don't remember any college graduates.

## **THAT WAS DURING THE BEGINNING STAGES OF OUR AIR FORCE AS A SEPARATE SERVICE. CAN YOU COMMENT ON HOW THAT TRANSITION WENT, AND HOW WE SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM THE ARMY?**

I wore two sets of collar brass, US and propellers. We had a [Gen Henry] Hap Arnold patch. We sewed it on our sleeve. Back then there were hash marks indicating years of service, and a bar indicating overseas service. I didn't have those. I thought, "Oh, he's been overseas, and he's been in years." I think the hash marks were three years each. I didn't have any ribbons. Now I see Airmen with a rack of 12 ribbons and three stripes on their arm. My first ribbon was the Army Good Conduct Medal, and I didn't get that until I'd been in two, three years. I had one little ribbon. Then came a marksmanship ribbon, and I had two. They changed longevity from a hash mark to a ribbon—the blue ribbon. Eventually I had with five-, six-years' service, three ribbons: Marksmanship, Army Good Conduct, and Longevity. You didn't get many ribbons then; so there is a tremendous difference in ribbons.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH SEGREGATION, AND THE END OF THAT, WHICH HAPPENED AROUND THAT SAME TIME?**

I was a cop, so I drove around Waco Air Base on base patrol, and over by Gate 2 lived the black Airmen. They had their own dining hall; they had their own vehicles. But because I was a cop, I'd pull up beside them and just talk. So I knew Tom Farmer and Cliff Schaefer, but they lived over by Gate 2. There were five barracks. They had their own first sergeant, Sergeant Jackson.

In July of '49, the President Truman decision was enacted.<sup>1</sup> Segregation was over. I had no problem with that. "It's about time." I can still see in my mind a two-and-a-half-ton truck backing up to the barracks steps, and here they came, clothes hanger, foot locker, Cliff Schaefer, Tom Farmer, Broussard, Carr, Townsend, I knew them. "Hey, good to see you, good to see you, your bunk's over there." Within 15 minutes we were integrated. Eight black cops moved in, and, "Okay, integration has happened."

You know barracks rumors—the rumor was, if you find in your heart that you cannot live with a member of the other race, you simply go to the orderly room and announce it and you can be released from the Air Force. So that was a rumor. Captain Griffis put a stop to that. He called us all together and said, "The first one of you that causes a problem, you'll be court-martialed." That put a stop to the barracks rumor, and we had no choice but to try and work it.

I'm sure there were some scuffles, but there were some scuffles between the white guys before the blacks moved in. I had no problem with it. None. I thought, what took so long? Why not sooner?

What was interesting, in the barracks, two things happened when the blacks moved in. One, the music changed. For the first time, I heard Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine. I'd never heard of them. I enjoyed Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra. The music changed. I heard music I had never heard. And, how do I say this delicately, the smell of the barracks changed in a positive way. The black Airmen used Noxzema a lot, and you could smell that. I didn't know why until I found out later it was the ingrown hairs, and the Noxzema provided a cooling effect. That was never explained to us. I didn't understand that, and I didn't ask. In '49 and '50, those things I remember. The music and the—whatever, drugstore smells, different hair pomade, odors I had not smelled. I had no problem with that. I was a happy guy.

I loved being a cop. One time, Provost Sergeant Howard came in the barracks. He said, "I'm looking for four permanent gate guards. The four of you will be the only four who work the gate. Eight hours on, 24 off; a day shift, off 24 hours; a swing shift, off 24 hours; a mid-shift. If you're interested, knock on my door," and he left. My buddy said, "You don't want to do that, Bob. You have to be sharp, you have to shine your boots." And I said, "If I'm going to be a cop, I want to be top of the line." So I went and knocked on the door. For about a year, I worked the main gate. I was working when they changed the name of the base from Waco Air Force Base to James Connally, a lieutenant colonel from Waco killed during World War II. I opened the door for Secretary of the Air Force [William "Stuart"] Symington when they drove him up to the gate for the ceremony. Wow!

You know, that's a great story because I remember how I felt. I called my mom. "Mom, I opened his door"—even now, when an Airman

asks me to pose for a picture I never, ever say no, because I remember. That's a great message, never forget how you felt. Never forget where you came from. I remember opening the door for the secretary and feeling that I was the greatest cop on Earth. I've never forgotten where I came from and what it was like back when I was a young Airman.

## **DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED TO SERVE A FULL CAREER THEN?**

I was a cop, and I went home to Indiana on leave twice. One thing I learned, 30 days away from my Air Force was too long. I was ready to go back to camp after about five days. So I promised myself I would never take more than a 10-day leave. I never did, ever, because it was too long to be gone from the Air Force.

Okay, so three-year enlistment, I was coming up on my three years and beginning to think, "Do I want to stay in, get out? What do I want to do?" North Korea invaded South Korea in the summer of 1950, and the Air Force world changed. We were getting ready to go blue. I had worn OD [olive drab] and khakis and one-piece fatigues.<sup>2</sup> I was beginning to see two-piece fatigues, blue uniforms. I was beginning to see the removal of the brass, the oxidized brass, the belt buckles were changing, and I thought this is pretty exciting.

There was no Clothing Sales. You got your clothes from squadron supply. If you ripped your khaki shirt, you took it down to supply; the specialist would reach over the counter and hand you a replacement. When it was time to go blue, the supply sergeant called us in individually, measured us and ordered our issues. So we didn't all get blues at the same time. Some of my buddies got their issue and I was angry. I said, "Oh, they got the blue uniform," and so I waited for my issue to come in and then got to go blue. That was in the fall of '50, so it took about three years for the Air Force to become the Air Force. You can't just change your clothing overnight. They started at basic training, issuing to the new Airmen. Those out in the field got ours when available. Clothing Sales opened in 1953 maybe, when they started giving us an allowance to buy our clothes and stopped issuing them out of supply.

## **IS THAT WHEN THE RANKS CHANGED AS WELL?**

The first Air Force rank I wore was staff sergeant. I was a PFC, corporal, buck sergeant. I made buck sergeant in nine months. I got back from MP school in '49, and they promoted me. I had been in less than a year, and I had three stripes. I made staff in two years, three months. December 13, 1950, I sewed on staff. And I hadn't even completed my first three-year enlistment.

When the Korean War broke out, at first it was like, "Where's Korea?" No big deal. The Reserves and the Guard initially fought most of the war, so it didn't really affect me that much until my three-year enlistment was up. In the summer of 1951, my three years was up, and I was a staff sergeant. Twenty-one years old, loving the Air Force, and I went to Personnel.



The guy said, “You got two choices: reenlist or we’ll extend you.” And I said, “For how long would you extend me?” He said, “Well, how should I know? Until the war is over.” And I thought, well it’s three years or until the war’s over; it might be 10 years. So I reenlisted for three more. Finance counted out, in my hand, seven 20s and a 10— \$150 bonus. I had never ever seen that much money in my life. I had seven 20s and a 10 in my hand, and I went, “Wow, this is great.” Then I went downtown and bought a car—my first car—a ’39 Chevy. So I had a car and suddenly everybody was, “Hey, Bob, when are we going to town?” [Laughter]

## **I WANT TO GO BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE BLUE UNIFORMS AND THE RANKS CHANGING. DID THAT HELP AIRMEN FEEL LIKE, HEY, WE ARE PART OF A SEPARATE AIR FORCE?**

You know, it was so gradual. Let’s pretend that everybody had put on the rank and new blue uniform all at once, it would have been, wow. But because it was so incremental and spread out, I’m not sure anyone noticed it. There was a base in San Marcos [Texas] called Gary AFB—closed years ago.<sup>3</sup> I went to visit two of my buddies there, and they were wearing the new chevron; I had never seen it. “Ooh, look at that.” And I was still wearing the buck sergeant stripe. So, it took, oh, gosh, six months to two years to get everybody clothed and striped. So, it was so incremental I’m not sure there was any great fanfare.

I’ll also tell you there was no Air Force Times. There was a monthly commander’s call where the commander would get up, “All right, listen up.” He would brief us the latest policies, “Okay, thank you.” So, the information chain was minimal. And who cared? I didn’t care what was going on at a MAJCOM [major command] or the Pentagon. I could care less. My world was this: softball, being a cop, eating a piece of chicken, going to the club, getting a beer. That was the difference. You saw the same people at chapel, at the club, and playing softball. And on Friday night they didn’t split in a million directions, everybody stayed on base.

Life was simpler, less complicated, and, therefore, I was not aware, nor did I care. And if we got some unusual decision we’d say, some idiot up above—for example, some general decided they didn’t like to see a T-shirt above your shirt; so, we had to all buy V-neck T-shirts so the T-shirt didn’t show. That was about ’54 or ’55. You had to throw away all your T-shirts and buy V-neck. Somebody decided that every car on base should have a red reflective tape across your rear bumper, or you couldn’t register your car on base. So there were these decisions, but when they were made you never knew. You would just say, “Who is the idiot that did that,” and you’d go on about your business. There was no, “I think I’ll e-mail the chief of staff or write to the Air Force Times.” [Laughter] Whatever happened in your life, you just saluted smartly and went about your business.

## **YOU TALKED ABOUT INTEGRATION AND LETTER 35-3.**

### **HOW DID THE LEADERSHIP RESPOND?**

When Capt. Griffis said, “The first one that causes problems would be court-martialed,” he got my attention. I guess I was so naïve I thought that America suddenly just flipped a button and we all began singing Gettting to Know You. But, of course, it didn’t happen that way. All I had to do was go into Waco and see the ugly segregation. The Air Force was a step ahead. On base, if you stood up and said something derogatory, you’d probably be in trouble. Off base it still was rampant. It took many, many years, into the ’60s—Dr. [Martin Luther] King and others. The Air Force did it with an edict: You will live together. The social climate took many years.

## **WOMEN ALSO BEGAN JOINING THE AIR FORCE IN THE LATE ’40S. I KNOW YOU HAD A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN YOUR CAREER WHEN YOU WERE AN INSTRUCTOR FOR A BASIC TRAINING SQUADRON OF WOMEN. CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THAT?**

WAF.<sup>4</sup> They were WAF, Women in the Air Force. I came out of Korea in 1957 with orders for Lackland. I had told the clerk in Korea I wanted to go to Lackland, and he said he could guarantee that. I said, “How?” He said, “Just trust me.”

So I got to Lackland and I went to the cop squadron to sign in, and the first sergeant said, “I don’t show Gaylor coming; I’m not sure you’re coming in here. I’ll bet you’re going to teach at the air police school.” He gave me directions, and I drove across Lackland thinking I’m going to be an air police instructor. I got over there, and the guy said, “I don’t show you coming in.” Now, I’m confused. He said, “Let me see your orders.” And then he said, “Look, after your name on your orders there’s a capital T in parentheses.” I had seen that in Korea, “What does it mean?” He said, “You’re going to be a TI [training instructor].” I asked, “What’s a TI?” He said, “A basic training instructor.” I said, “How did that happen?” He said, “You volunteered.” Johnson volunteered me to be a MTI, knowing I wanted to go to Lackland. I didn’t know it. So, I was now a TI, and because of my positive attitude, I said, “Forward, March.” You know, some guys might say, “How do I get out of it, who do I have to talk to? I’m blind in one eye.” I said, “Forward, March.”

I became a TI in 3709, all male squadron. I was a street TI, a master sergeant marching troops down the street. It was the best thing that ever happened. Fortunately, I had a senior Airman who knew what he was doing, or I’d been lost. I did Flight 200 and Flight 66. I put two flights through, and they moved me to Area NCO.

I was in 3709 two years, and the commander called me and said, “You’ve been nominated to be the senior training NCO in the WAF basic training.” I knew the girls were up there on the far corner of the base, and other than that I saw them march in parades. I knew nothing else about them. He said, “No promotion goes with it. It’s just a higher job than you have now.” I’ve always been one to believe if it’s a higher position you better take it; you know? I had to go for an interview, and my wife had to go because I’d be there with all those women.

So Selma and I went for an interview. This was the fall of 1959, and I was being interviewed by three females. I’d never spoken with one, I don’t think. Many bases didn’t have any, because they didn’t have dorms for them. As far as I know, most women were at Travis [AFB, California] or Westover [AFB, Massachusetts]. They were flight attendants or flight nurses or medical. They interviewed me, and I apparently impressed them; they hired me. I became senior training NCO for the 3743rd WAF basic training squadron—Bob and his 400 women. And it was all new to me.

One thing I found out was how quickly the young ladies learned. They seemed to grasp stuff quicker. There were no left-foot marchers, like in the male squadron where there were some guys you could never get in step. I used to march with the ladies in parades with a shorter pace, instead of 30-inch it was about 28-inch, it was just right for me. They learned quickly, and they were motivated and wanted to serve.

Maj. McAmis, the commander, said to me one day, “I’m having a consultant from Braniff Airlines come in to teach posture and grooming techniques to the instructors so they can teach it to the trainees. I’d like you to sit in so that you can appreciate the training we’re giving.” I sat through three days of training on how to apply my makeup, how to select my wardrobe, how to fix my hair, how to stand. I would go home and my wife would say, “What did you learn today?” “Well, let me show you how to stand graciously.”

The female TI’s were so motivated, but you didn’t get away with anything. They’d get in your face in a minute.

For two years I was the WAF senior training NCO. There were seven career fields female Airmen could be used in, that was it. We could train 8 flights of 40 each. That meant eight times 40, 320 Airmen. They could only go to certain bases in 1960–61.

Okay, fast forward to 1970. It became obvious we had to bring in more women. The draft ended; retention was low. What do we do? Let’s bring in more women. Well, there was a lot of dissension: “I’m not working for a woman; I don’t want women working for me.” I can remember many times I would say, “Hey, big mouth, let me tell you something. They learn very quickly, they want to serve, they are highly motivated; I suggest you shut up and give them a chance.” I said that many times in ’70, ’71. My

basic training experience helped me smooth the integration of more women into the force. We were about four percent; in ’74 we went to seven percent. We opened up cops, maintenance, career fields, and I was out there saying, “Yay!”

Now we’re up to about 1975–76, and I was at a meeting and somebody said, “You know what, we’re losing a lot of talent. The women are coming in, we’re training them at Keesler [AFB, Mississippi], Sheppard [AFB, Texas]. We’re promoting them to senior Airman, staff sergeant, technical sergeant. They get married, they get pregnant, and then leave the Air Force. We’re losing all that talent.” “What are you suggesting? That we allow them to stay in? You’ve got to be kidding. You’ve got to have lost your head. A pregnant Airman? An Airman with child?”

“Uh, yeah. [Laughter] Why not? Let’s give it a try.” So initially it was by waiver only. You had to ask for a waiver.

Now we’re up to about ’77. I went out and about all over the Air Force. I’d go in an office and there was a lady in civilian clothes, “Good afternoon, Chief.” I asked, “You’re a civilian employee?” “No, I’m a tech sergeant.” “Are you on leave?” “No.” Well, she would stand up and the pregnancy was apparent. This was in ’76, ’77. I went back to the Pentagon and said, “There was a bit of confusion.” “What are you suggesting?” “Not sure, maybe a maternity uniform.” “You’ve got to be kidding . . . a maternity uniform?”

I was on the uniform board, and we met and we had Wright Patterson AFB [Ohio] make up a prototype maternity uniform. We started with a winter uniform only, and they gave the board a skirt that had the U-shape. We passed that around and some members didn’t want to touch it, like a hot potato. A female general was chairman of the board. She asked, “Members of the board, what is your recommendation?” Seemed to me to be time. If we’re going to allow them to stay in, we needed to clothe them. We started with the winter uniform. The work uniform, ABUs [Airman battle uniform] or whatever they were called then, came later. We started with the blue uniform and gradually, incrementally, all items came. I look back now and my decision was sort of, “seems to me to be about time.” Now when I look back I think, wow, that was a monumental decision.

What is interesting, in my travels now in this century, I tell this story, and female Airmen ask, “You mean there hasn’t always been maternity uniforms?” I say, “There hasn’t always been maternity.” We’re talking just 30 years. It’s part of the Air Force evolution.



## WHAT WAS THE GENERAL RESPONSE FROM AIRMEN AS THE ROLE OF WOMEN EXPANDED?

Let's pretend that you're an Airman who doesn't go along with that. We'd say to you, "Simply live with it or get out." In my case, my attitude was invariably, it must be time. Looks to me like a necessary transition. There is no question we were influenced greatly by societal activity. Whatever is going on out there usually carries over into the military. The military is a mirror reflection of society, and to go against it is somewhat futile. Let's suggest I had sat at the meeting and said "I don't agree with keeping women in the Air Force, I definitely don't agree with maternity uniforms." They'd have probably said "And we don't agree with your disagreement." In my case it was to support the decisions and to explain the need and reason for change.

I would stand in front of Airmen in a maintenance hangar and one would ask, "Why are you placing women in the maintenance field? I'm not carrying their 55-pound toolbox." I answered, "You may not have to. She might want to carry yours, along with hers."

Hair was a big issue in the '70s. Everything was hair; there was hair all over the place. We would go to staff meetings, and all we would talk about was hair. The Vietnam War was over; people were seeking true equal opportunity. Drugs were becoming prevalent. You could open a door to a dormitory, and the smell of hash would hit you in the face. Those were issues that we had to work, but hair was the number one issue.

I was visiting in Guam, and I was in a hanger talking to Airmen, and I look out and there is a tall guy in the back of the group of about 30 and this guy's hair was slicked down; it looked like grease. He raised his hand and said, "I have a question. Why can't I wear an earring?" I asked, "You want to wear an earring?" He said, "Yeah." I was totally caught off guard—"But why?" He said, "It expresses my individuality." "I'll tell you what to do with your individuality—get the hell out of my Air Force."

I went back to my room, and I reflected. I handled his question poorly. He had caught me so off guard. I said to myself, "Boy, you blew that one." I thought I'd never see him again, but he deserved something better than what I gave him. Little did I know that that was the advent of piercings and tattoos. That would have been late '78—I would have bet you anything he was going to ask about hair, and it was piercings. I retired in '79, so I didn't have to deal with it, but my successors [CMSAF James M.] McCoy and [CMSAF Arthur L.] Andrews had to deal with piercings and tattoos.

Once again it's what I call the evolution of the force. Every group feels they have to express their own generation, their own individuality.

## SO GOING BACK, I THINK YOU SPENT FOUR YEARS OR SO AS AN MTI . . .

Four years, four months. Two years as a male instructor and two years, three months as a female instructor. I didn't volunteer, but I'm glad I did it. You cannot help but learn while you're teaching. I learned customs and courtesies, firing ranges, and nuclear explosions—I learned all of that because I had to teach it, how to set the sights on a weapon, etc. Four years plus was enough. I was ready to go back to being a cop. Some guys wanted to stay there for a long time, but I said farewell, and I went to Japan to be a cop again. I was a master sergeant.

Let me tell you a quick story, if Gaylor can tell a quick story. In 1958 I managed the Lackland Warhawks baseball team. By order of the base commander, those of us on the team were relieved of duty at noon every day. By written rule, my day ended at noon to either practice or play a game in Alpine, Texas, or Corpus Christi, San Angelo. So my unit made me an academic instructor. I've always enjoyed classrooms. I'd teach three or four classes and say, "See you all," and I'm out of there.

In October of '58, after a season of baseball, I was due an annual APR [Airman Performance Report]. Second Lieutenant Moser was my rating official. I was an area NCO and was in charge of the four flights. He called me in to review the appraisal with me. He gave me two checks down the middle of 5 ratings—two 3s, and three 4s, no 5s. Lowest grading I'd ever received. As a cop, I'd always gotten the highest ratings. He handed it to me, and I became angry, not at him, but I was seething. On the back, the first line said, "Master Sergeant Gaylor appears to be a very bright and young, intelligent noncommissioned officer. However, he was gone most of the summer playing for the base baseball team. Master Sergeant Gaylor must make a key decision: Does he want to be a jock or a noncommissioned officer?" I was angry, seething.

I went home and complained to my wife. She said, "It's a pretty good statement: Do you wanna be a jock, play ball, get off duty at noon, or do you want to be a noncommissioned officer?" It made me think. He was probably the most courageous rater I've ever had. He told the truth. He said what I needed to hear. If more supervisors would do that: "Do I want to be mediocre, or do I want to be great?" He put it on me.

In the spring of '59, when I heard the cracks of the bats hitting the ball, I knew it was time. I decided I wanted to be an NCO. I took up umpiring, which I could do off duty. But I thank him. I have never seen him since, but he told me what I needed hear. He influenced my career by that line, "does he want to be a jock," which I could have been. I was good enough to be one, "or do I want to be a noncommissioned officer?" It's just a great story that makes a great point of leaders rating people based on their performance.

## YOU BECAME AN NCO ACADEMY INSTRUCTOR LATER AS WELL, SO YOU WERE AN MTI, AND THEN AN NCO ACADEMY INSTRUCTOR.

In the '50s and '60s NCO academies were owned by commands. Not every command had an academy. If you were in a command that didn't have an academy, you never went. I made senior master sergeant in Tachikawa, Japan, in 1963. I had never been to an academy or a leadership school. I had no PME [professional military education]. I had read a couple of books, but I was a senior master sergeant with no formal education.

I left Japan for Columbus AFB in Mississippi and SAC [Strategic Air Command]. I got a call in November '64, "You're going to NCO Academy at Barksdale [AFB, Louisiana]." I said, "I'm a senior master sergeant. Why don't you send some deserving tech?" I drove down to Barksdale, asking why I am going to NCO Academy? I get there; there were 120 students, and I was the only senior master sergeant. The rest were techs and masters. I'm told, "You're the class leader." "Well, yeah, I'm the only senior. What am I doing here?"

Within two days I realized why I was there. They were teaching me things I never knew: effective writing, effective speaking, work simplification, leadership. I had never heard of Abraham Maslow. I didn't know his hierarchy of needs. Every day we marched, and every student had to give 14 commands in two minutes. A lot of the students had trouble, so I began an adjunct every night in the day room. I would take a classmate outside, "To the rear, march on the right foot, left face, salute." I really got motivated. I thought this class was the best thing that ever happened to me professionally.

Banquet graduation night: "May I have the envelope please? And the honor graduate from Columbus [AFB], Mississippi, senior master . . ." Well, I'll be damned. I get the Academic Award, the Honor Graduate Award, and first runner-up to the Commandant's Award. I returned to Columbus AFB filled with pride, picture in the base paper with the wing commander.

Three days later, the academy called, "We have an opening on the faculty, and you're our first choice." "I'm what?" "You say the word, and we'll transfer you down here." "Wow! I'll take it."

Within a week, the process had started to move me to Barksdale. I left the cops. My major called me a traitor, but I transferred. I'd only been at Columbus a year.

The Vietnam War was escalating. I left the cops, arrived at Barksdale with my spouse and four kids in a '59 Plymouth station wagon. They had temporarily closed the academy to air condition the student dorm, so they sent me to an academic school at Maxwell. They taught me

how to get up in front of a group, put a lesson plan together and use training aides, visuals. I came back, and I was pumped. I taught two classes, and the Vietnam War closed all the academies. So, what do we do? Find a job.

I went down to the cop squadron at Barksdale, "Here I am." "Who are you?" "I'm Gaylor." "What do you want?" "I want a job."

I became a cop at Barksdale simply because the academy closed. All of us instructors had to go back to our career field. I got orders for Korat, Thailand. I moved the family off base into Shreveport, [Louisiana,] rented a house, and off I went to Thailand as a cop in January 1967. In April 1968, I made chief—four years in grade as a senior.

One day the Stars and Stripes headline read, "Paul W. Airey Selected to Be First Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force." I knew they were selecting one, but I was rooting for Jeff Marsh because he was Thirteenth Air Force, who we came under, and I had met him. Jeff didn't get picked. He was one of the three finalists: Conrad Stevens, Jeff Marsh, Paul Airey, and they picked Airey. I had never heard of him.

In October, six months later, the Korat sergeant major called us base chiefs in and said, "Chief Airey's coming to visit. There will be a cocktail party for the chiefs only at the club at 5 o'clock." There were only 16 of us chiefs. We were instructed to step forward, shake his hand, tell him where we work, and get out of the way. We went to the club, and here he was with a wreath chevron. When it was my turn, I said, "Chief Gaylor, security superintendent, nice to meet you, Chief." I thought, "He talks to God." I was awestruck.

I've often thought if you had sidled up to me then and said, "Hey, Bob, you think someday you would be in that position?" "Yeah, as soon as I get back from the moon." I never, never, never thought that 10 years later I would put on that wreath chevron.

That's a great story because an Airman today, sitting there with two stripes, may be CMSAF [Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force] #28. They don't know that. You just have to do your job every day. You can't screw off and then say, okay, now I've decided I want to be chief of the Air Force. Every day, every day, every day, every day. Attitude, aptitude, head on straight, team player. There is no magic formula. It is a simple process.

The things that helped me the most was being an MTI and an academy instructor. Had I been a cop, my scope would have been limited to that field. I encourage everyone to be a recruiter, a first sergeant, an MTI, an MTL [military training leader], an academy instructor. It broadens your scope. It lets you see how the rest of the Air Force operates. Had I only been a cop I would not have had any idea what they do in PMEL [precision measurement equipment laboratory] or fuels or biophysics. If I was CMSAF today, I'd probably make special duty mandatory.











I'd probably say between your 10th and 20th year of service you will serve as a recruiter, first sergeant, something, because although people may drag their feet and go begrudgingly, it would help them. If they close their minds and say, "I don't want to do it," I'd probably say, "Well, you have made your choice. This is your future; you'll probably retire as a tech or master." I think you owe it to yourself. I never said no to any opportunity.

## **I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE TWO TOP RANKS, WHEN WE CREATED THE SENIOR AND CHIEF RANKS—**

When I made master sergeant that was the end of the line. I made master on April 1, 1956. I was 25 years old. The wing had been given a quota of one, and I met a board with five other guys. A week later I was told I made it, and I sewed it on immediately. I thought that was the end of the line. That's it. There's no further promotion.

In 1958, at Lackland I decided to apply to be a warrant officer. I didn't like the title, Mr. Gaylor, because it sounded civilian-ish, but I thought I owed it to myself. I applied and I filled out the form—and I didn't tell anybody except my family. I was thinking any day I would be selected, then I get a letter back saying, "Your application is returned without action. We are coming out with two new ranks that will soon be announced. Therefore, we are not selecting any new warrant officers."

I said, "There are two new ranks coming out." Guys asked, "What have you been drinking?" [Laughter] It hadn't been announced. I sort of had the preemptive information. And sure enough, in '58, they announced senior and chief. I knew I didn't have a shot. I was 27 years old, and there were World War II guys hanging around. I didn't even think of making senior, and I didn't.

A year later, to get chief going, they promoted something like 626 chiefs with a year in grade. They were called charter chiefs. and they put on the rank. I thought my career had just been boosted; I have two ranks to go. In '63, with seven years in grade as a master, I made senior master sergeant. And in '67, I made chief. So that was a boon to me because it opened some new ranks. Otherwise, I would have peaked as a master, and I may have run out of gas at about 14 years of service and coasted. But it gave me aspiration to go for those two ranks, and I achieved them.

I left Korat, Thailand, on January 10, 1968 with orders for Grand Forks, North Dakota. I flew back to Shreveport to get my family, and headed for Grand Forks. I had no problem with that; I was back to being a cop. I was a chief. I knew I would be the group superintendent of the cops. I got home to Shreveport, and Kenny [Gaylor's son] was nine years old, and he showed me a coat he got for Christmas. I said "You're going to need that where we're going." He looked at his mother, and she said, "Your father doesn't know yet." "What is it I don't know?" She

said, "We're not going to Grand Forks. SAC headquarters called yesterday. They're reopening the SAC Academy at Barksdale. You're going to be the first instructor."

Wow. From being an academy instructor to closure, going back to the cops, to Thailand, and then on to Grand Forks—and Jim McCoy was in personnel at SAC—he engineered my diversion. I owe that to Jim. You talk about timing. Had I come back a week earlier, I would have gone to Grand Forks, and you'd never hear about Gaylor. Had I come back a week later, I might have gone to Grand Forks; it's timing. While I was on the way home, they diverted me to Barksdale. I didn't even know it. My family knew it before I did.

## **WERE YOU EXCITED ABOUT THAT OPPORTUNITY?**

I was beside myself. We decided to open the academy in July of '68. There were SAC academies at March [AFB, California], Westover, and Barksdale. We brought those three into one, and we used lesson plans from those academies. We selected a faculty of 22 by looking at packages. The first women came through in the summer of '69. The first tech sergeant instructor didn't happen until '72. The first black instructor happened in '73. We weren't biased; it just happened that way. We didn't say we can't pick that person because they're African-American; we just didn't. I'm not sure we even had any packages. It wasn't a blatant discrimination; it was just a happening. I look back now, it was inappropriate, but we were not at the point of quotas—like we have to have two of these, three of these. As a matter of fact, the first black person we added was a black female, TSgt Dale Armwood; she's retired in San Antonio. I see her every once in a while.

It was 1970, and I was loving my Air Force life. The commandant, a lieutenant colonel, notified me that a three-star general wanted to interview me. I asked, "For what?" "He's creating a new position, Second Air Force sergeant major, an enlisted person on his staff. He's never had one, and he's heard about you and your background." So, I went for an interview. I had never talked to a three-star general. We talked 45 minutes about my views on leadership. He said, "The top enlisted ranks are not leading as they should. They're not doing their job. I want to bolster that. You have a background in leadership. You have a reputation." And he hired me.

People asked, "Hey, Bob, what are you?" "I'm sergeant major." "What do you do?" "I have no idea. I just sergeant major around." I had mixed emotions. I didn't want to leave the academy, but it was exciting to work for a three-star general. I started out, and I had no idea what to do—no guideline, no job description. It was a great title. I got introduced at luncheons. "But what do you do?" "I'm not sure."

Gen. [David C.] Jones wanted me to talk about NCO leadership, so I put together a two- or three-hour talk. I called an Air Force base, "Ok, here I come." An NCO on the phone said, "For what?" "I want to talk to Airmen." "Well, we're pretty busy." I said, "Here I come." And I went.

I got up there, and there were 18 Airmen assembled. I just talked to them. I mean, I was flying by the seat of my pants. I had no idea what I was doing. I started off on a shoestring, and with my boisterousness, I developed a reputation.

## **WAS IT A CHALLENGING TIME—I KNOW CHIEF AIREY AND THE FIRST CHIEFS HAD CHALLENGES CREATING THESE POSITIONS ACROSS THE AIR FORCE.**

Airey was the right choice to be the first. After I met him that first time for one minute, there wasn't much publicity. You didn't hear much. Airey's Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force? What does he do? He apparently goes to dinners and gets introduced. CMSAF #2 [Donald L.] Harlow came to the academy in '69. I played golf with him. I have the scorecard in my lockbox. I beat him. I had an 87, he had a 92.

## **OF COURSE.**

I was riding high in Second Air Force at Barksdale—17 command bases, and I was traveling out to them. In 1971 General Jones got picked for a fourth star and went to Europe to be the USAFE [US Air Forces in Europe] commander. He called me and said, "Do you want to go to Germany?" I said, "I've never been." He said, "Let me go on over and see what we got, and I'll summon you." I didn't tell anybody because it was just him saying that to me.

He left in February, and in May I got a call from Pete Todd, Jones's aide. He said, "He's ready to move you." "Well, when does he want me there?" He said, "Next week." "Next week? I got four kids. I can be there mid-summer." Then I got word from the personnel center, "You're not going to Germany. That four-star can't buck the system. What does he think, all he has to do is say he wants somebody and gets them? You're a cop, Gaylor. They're over in cops in Europe. You're not going." I said, "Hey, you work that out with the four-star. Now don't get me in the middle. You deal with him."

In three days another guy called and said, "You're going to Europe." So in July '71, the Gaylor's went to Europe.

Flip Horn was the USAFE senior enlisted leader. Immediately people believed I was replacing Flip Horn. I knew I wasn't. That's not why Jones brought me over there. On the third day I was there, I went to see him. He said, "Here's what I have in mind. Don't even say the word academy. We don't have the money. What I envision is a leadership center. Maybe four instructors and one admin guy. I've got a building I can give you, I think the classroom seats 36 people. I envision a two-week course—no drill, no volleyball. I want you to focus on effective speaking, equal opportunity, and leadership management."

We opened the USAFE Command Management Center. We gave quotas out to USAFE bases, and within six months they were beating down the door to get in. I had a sergeant from Bitburg [AB, Germany] say, "I'll take leave if you'll give me a seat in the classroom." People found their PFE [promotion fitness exam] score was going up 40 points. We weren't teaching the test, we were teaching leadership and management, effective communication and equal opportunity. Man, we gassed them—36 NCOs every two weeks.

I arranged to keep three instructors at home and one would travel to a USAFE base. Everybody wanted us. In 1973 General Jones announced we were moving USAFE Headquarters from Weisbaden [AB, Germany] to Ramstein [AB, Germany]. And in the summer of '73, I became the USAFE senior enlisted advisor—the first one at Ramstein.

## **HOW LONG DID YOU SERVE THERE?**

In May of '74 Gen. Jones was selected to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force. After he left, I was a lame duck. I kept doing what I was doing, but without any senior command support. In August of '74, three months after he left, I got a call from Pentagon personnel saying Gen. Jones was ready to move me. I said, "Where does he want me?" "Well, let me tell you first what he wants you to do. He wants you to travel all over the Air Force talking about leadership. And he doesn't care where you do it, Pentagon, Maxwell [AFB, Alabama], Randolph [AFB, Texas]. He said to tell you that you pick." I chose Randolph.

My family and I arrived at Randolph in August '74. I was given blanket travel orders valid for a year at a time that I could travel anywhere in the Air Force world to talk leadership. That was my only guideline.

## **WAS IT JUST AS SUCCESSFUL AS THE COURSE IN EUROPE?**

I put together a leadership talk and I developed a handout. All I did was show up at the base theater and, "Here's Chief Gaylor." "Who is this guy?" "I don't know, but he left this handout." Like the Lone Ranger, I left a silver bullet.

I flew all over the Pacific giving my talk on leadership. It started out at about 45 minutes. By the time I gave a dozen talks, it became a two-hour talk. No break. I had a line of requests waiting. I hit the ground running. I did 265 travel days in 1975. I was talking leadership in base theaters, spending three days at a base, six talks, two talks a day, frequently without a microphone. That's why I still talk so loud, because I had to.

My first of six talks I'd have an audience of maybe 22, and then I'd have 64. By my sixth talk, I'd have standing room only because it was a good talk. It was on styles of leadership and adapting your style to the situation. In fact, the strength of your style is your potential weakness. That's a true fact most people never think of. If you're a take-charge autocratic-type leader, getting things done, you're probably at times too damn bossy.



And if you're a people-oriented, friendly, caring guy, people will step all over you. So you got to learn to cut it off at the pass. You got to know when your strength is becoming your weakness.

## **HOW DID YOU END UP BEING SELECTED AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE?**

In July of '77 I received a message along with four other chiefs, "Report to the Pentagon to meet a board." On July 7th we assembled on the fourth floor of the Pentagon. The five chiefs looked at each other. It appeared one of us was going to be [CMSAF Thomas N.] Barnes's replacement. A lieutenant colonel briefed us, "There's a board down the hall, a four-star and two three-star generals, and you'll meet alphabetically—30 minutes each." We stood there, not wanting to sit down and wrinkle our trousers. I was excited, butterflies, etc.

Great questions: "What are the issues we're facing today? What would you do if you were the next chief?" I enjoyed it. I wanted more because I had traveled the Air Force and I knew the pulse. They told me I could leave. I stood up to shake their hands, and I said to a three-star, "Thank you, Colonel Mathis." I called him colonel. I called a three-star general a colonel. I said, "Isn't that great? I come all the way from San Antonio. I shined my shoes, I bought new ribbons, I got a haircut. I thought I did fairly well with the board, and I screw it up just trying to get out of the room. May I start over?" Sure enough.

I left the Pentagon about four in the afternoon. I got in my car, and we headed back to San Antonio. I was driving back and stopping, giving talks en route at bases, and on 17 July I got a call from the Gen. [Bennie L.] Davis, "Thought you might like to be the first to know you've been selected." Wow! Matter of fact, I had just gotten out of the shower. I had a towel around my body. Wow! He said, "The word will go out tomorrow to the Air Force." Wow!

We drove into Washington on the 29th of July. On the 31st I was in the chief of staff's office for the ceremony.

## **LOOKING BACK, DO YOU FEEL YOU ACCOMPLISHED WHAT YOU SET OUT TO THEN?**

You know, I realize I wasn't the greatest "Pentagon Chief." I went to Spangdahlem [AFB], Germany, on a Europe trip and [future CMSAF Sam E.] Parish was the USAFE senior enlisted leader. He told me that 17 Airmen wanted to meet with me at Spangdahlem Air Base. "About what?" I asked. He said, "I have no idea. They've asked for an audience." Well, I never said no; so we set it up.

I went to the recreation center that evening, and there were 17 Airmen, 17 spouses, and crying babies. "Who are you?" They said, "We're unsponsored Airmen." "What do you mean unsponsored?" "Our dependents were not funded." "Well, then how did they get here?"

"Well, her dad paid." "Why are you unfunded?" "Well, because Air Force policy does not permit family travel for E-4 and below." I thought, "That doesn't seem right. If the colonel gets to bring his family, why doesn't the young Airman?"

I came back to the Pentagon, and knew we needed to fix this issue. A colonel said, "That's Air Force policy." I said, "Sir, that's the worst thing you could have said to me . . . that's Air Force policy." He asked, "What are you saying?" I said, "Maybe we need to change Air Force policy."

Senator [John W.] Warner from Virginia had run into the same thing with Sailors at Norfolk [Naval Shipyard, Virginia] and thought it was about time we changed it. I went over to Capitol Hill and testified with a committee. Well, Congress changed that. I was given credit, but it wasn't me. I didn't change it; the Air Force did. I'm not one that says I did this during my tenure, but I do say we obtained travel for Airmen of all ranks and their dependents, and we opened 70 leadership schools.

## **GEN. JONES SEEMS TO HAVE FOCUSED ON LEADERSHIP EDUCATION, AND I GUESS IT WAS VERY NECESSARY AT THE TIME. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT WAS?**

I think we just hadn't gotten there educationally. I think, for one thing, we had way too many levels of leadership. I would go out on a SAC flight line at Carswell [AFB, Fort Worth, Texas] and there was a colonel, the director of maintenance, then a lieutenant colonel or major, then a captain or a lieutenant, then the chief or a senior master sergeant, then a master sergeant or a tech sergeant, and then a staff sergeant out there actually changing the tires. We needed to take about five of those levels out of there. We could get by with a colonel, a captain, a chief or a senior master sergeant, and a staff sergeant.

There is something to be said for a planned reduction of the force. Sometimes it's healthy; you get all those levels out of there. That's what we did. We had 465,000, and we reduced about 100,000. With the aid of technology, we could do stuff quicker, throw away the tech order, and give them a system they could look into. We could get a lot more done. I mean, majors were telling chiefs, "Stay out of my area. You made a decision, it wasn't yours to make." The chief says, "Okay, I'll just drive around in my flight line truck all day." We just had to get rid of some levels and clarify authority.

We had a lot of bases that wanted leadership schools. We said "All right, you can have a leadership school, but it has to be in-residence. The students must live in a leadership dorm." The bases were really cramped, three to a room, and they said they couldn't spare additional rooms. So, the policy was they couldn't have a leadership school. Well, that didn't make sense. So we changed it to where if you had a dorm, okay, but you didn't have to have a dorm. If the students lived at home, that was okay, too. It was more important to have a school.

Along the way we made modifications that appeared to be sensible. Instead of saying, “If you don’t meet this provision you can’t do this,” we said, “We’ll change the provision to where you can do it.” We did a lot of sensible things. Instead of saying, “Ah, you were caught on drugs, you’re out of the Air Force,” we said, “Let’s open some medical procedures where you can be treated. We’re not going to dump our drug users back onto society; we’re going to try our best to rehabilitate them unless they’re not able to rehabilitate.” So, we did some very commonsense things along the way.

Gen. Jones’s philosophy, and some people never learn this, was that you can’t change procedures by sending out a letter or an e-mail. If that was true we’d send out a letter saying to treat everybody nice. He knew you have to educate, and education takes time. If you send out a letter you might change some behavior overnight, but if you’re going to change it in the long run, you’ve got to educate. Leadership schools, NCO Academies, Air Command and Staff School, Squadron Officer School, there are no substitutes. If you want me to fly an airplane, you’d better train me. You don’t just put me in a cockpit and say, “See if you can take this thing off.”

## **YOU SEEMED TO HAVE LED THE AIR FORCE THROUGH A LOT OF CHANGE. WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT LEADING THROUGH CHANGE?**

I have studied change quite extensively, and I learned that the powers to be that initiate the change are obligated to ensure that it will, in fact, make things better. This is before the masses even know about it. These are the thinkers in the Pentagon. They’re obligated to evaluate, measure, and weigh it to make sure.

Next thing, announce it, market it, sell it, and answer the why. In the old days, the powers to be back in the ’40s used to say, “All leaves are canceled until morale improves. You will improve your morale by order of the commander.” You can’t do that anymore. Americans are too sophisticated. They want to know why. So, we have to market, we have to sell. We have to convince as many of the masses as possible. That’s called education. Here’s why we’re doing it, and here’s what we expect from the modification or the change.

Then I suggest the recipients of the change have to say, “I’m behind it. I’m for it. I’m not going to fight it.” Then you celebrate the change. You literally celebrate it.

When we sold our old house, I stopped at the end of the driveway as we backed out for the last time and shut off the car. My wife said, “Why are you shutting off the car?” I said, “We will never walk in this house again. Let’s remember the Christmases and the good memories and the families and the neighbors. Let’s just sit here for a few minutes and remember such and such.” We both thought that was great. It was a great house. “Okay. Now let’s agree that we will never in our new home say, I liked my other house better. My other pantry was bigger.” What’s to

be gained by that? You celebrate change. We’re in a new house. It’s going to be great.

Sometimes I say, “If you’re on your second marriage you may not want to say to your spouse, ‘Well my previous spouse . . .’ You may not want to go there because the odds are you’ll get in trouble.” So you celebrate change.

## **YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP EDUCATION. THERE WAS A POINT IN YOUR CAREER WHERE THE SENIOR ENLISTED FORCE TRANSITIONED FROM A TECHNICAL MIND-SET TO A LEADERSHIP MIND-SET. WHEN WAS THAT, AND WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT THAT CHANGE?**

I think it was in education. You know, I never went to leadership school. I never went to an academy until I was a senior. I was never given that benefit.

Everything starts with a theoretical framework. People say, “I don’t like theory.” You’ve got to start with theory. If you don’t start with theory, where do you start? [American psychologist] Frederick Herzberg theorized that it’s not the environment in which an Airman is motivated. It’s about what they do and the feelings they get from the job. That’s a theory, but where else would you start?

Autocratic leadership won World War II. George Patton is a prime example. After World War II, when there wasn’t supposed to be any more war, professors like Maslow and Herzberg said that you don’t have to yell at people to get them to work. You can provide a work environment that makes them receptive to work. People went, “No, you have to yell at them and you have to tell them what to do.” And they said no. So, we began to listen to some of these so-called experts. We may not have agreed with everything they said, but they left a thought behind, a starting point.

For example, an author wrote a book in 1970 titled *I’m Okay, You’re Okay*. What in heaven’s name is that? There are some different thoughts; I’m okay, you’re not. You’re okay, I’m not. Neither one of us are okay, or I’m okay, you’re okay. So I read that and thought, “Well yeah, I’m okay, but so is he. It’s not I’m okay and he’s not. We’re all okay.”

So every one of those theoretical frameworks left something behind we could inculcate into our own style. You are a product of supervisors you had, who had supervisors they had. We’re all a transition. You don’t go from Gen. Patton to Mark Welsh. There’s a series of people in between that influence somebody who influences somebody who influenced. Now you got Mark Welsh, who is a great manager and a great leader and a great human being and a great father. You might say, “Where did he come from?” Well, George Patton would have probably drummed him out of the Corps, you know. “You don’t yell. You’re not profane.” Well, we found out you don’t have to be. All that’s education.



That's why I'm a PME supporter. You don't tell people how to lead, you plant seeds that help them put together how they lead.

## **ONE OF YOUR OTHER STRENGTHS IS YOUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE. HERE YOU ARE, IN YOUR MID-EIGHTIES AND YOU'RE STILL CONNECTING WITH YOUNGER AIRMEN TODAY BECAUSE YOU'RE A GOOD COMMUNICATOR. WHAT IS YOUR SECRET?**

I am convinced at the age of 85 that God put me on Earth to talk. I cannot raise the hood of a car. I have trouble driving a nail. There are just so many things I cannot do, but I can talk. When I was four years old I sang at a grocery store opening "Where Have You Been, Billy Boy, Billy Boy," and won a big box of cookies. In high school I was not a good basketball player, but when someone had to get up in the auditorium to announce the upcoming game, they'd shove me up front. So, I've never met a microphone I didn't like. I can talk. I pay people to raise the hood of the car and drive the nail. It took me a while to learn that. I tried to raise the hood of the car, and I screwed things up—and it cost me double. I talk.

I think the message is that each person is pinged with a talent. I've seen six-year-olds sit and play the piano. I go, wow. Where did they get that skill? I watch a guy repair a transmission with little parts, and I go, wow. I think I've always had the ability to communicate. I've never had a problem with that. I had to learn things I didn't do very well. Could I learn to drive a nail? Sure. Why don't I? I'm not interested. I'm too busy talking.

I said to a guy, "I just paid \$1,000 to have my trees trimmed." He said, "You can't trim a tree?" I said, "No. I would probably saw my arm off. I paid \$800 to have my sprinkler system adjusted." He said, "You can't adjust it?" "No, but I'll tell you what I can do. I can go to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. I can give a talk. They write me a check for \$2,400. I come back and pay the tree trimmer and the sprinkler adjuster, and the world is happy."

## **TWO MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOU. FIRST, IF YOU COULD THINK BACK TO THE AIRMEN YOU SERVED WITH WHEN YOU CAME INTO THE AIR FORCE AND THEN COMPARE THEM TO THE AIRMEN THAT SERVE TODAY, WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?**

I think the biggest change obviously is technology, no question about it, and that is wide-ranging. As they were educated in middle school and high school, they had computers, calculators, a variety of devices that helped them learn. They brought that talent with them. You give them a new piece of equipment, then moments later they're somewhat skilled with it. I believe technology has opened the field.

It's like what I said earlier about your strength becoming your weakness. If your life is all technology, you lose the ability to interact with others. You can't sit and enjoy a beer—you're too busy on a device. I see it in restaurants. They invite a girl for a date, and they both sit there looking at a device—and that's terrible.

My daughter interviewed potential employees. She said, "Dad, 50 percent don't know how to interview. They don't know how to sit and carry on a conversation." So it's a case of overextending. The Greeks of thousands of years ago said the key to a happy life is balance. Work, play, family, work. The moment you get out of balance, you're tilting. People that embrace technology 100 percent and rely on Facebooking with somebody in New Hampshire instead of people within their immediate community don't know what they're missing.

A belief and a truism is that what you grow up without becomes very important to you later in life. People in my age bracket, what's important now are cruise ships—because we never did it—and jewelry. I bought my wife a ring when she was 80, she never had one. Now if you go on a cruise ship and have a big diamond when you're 24, what are you going to do for an encore? So, you say I'll probably go to Africa and work with the impoverished, because you've never tasted that. That's what people are doing now. As they get older, they're looking for something they've never had before. We never think of that. We just sort of migrate. What you grow up without becomes very important to you later in life. I grew up during the Depression and World War II, and now I got to have a Mustang—a '66 Mustang—a new Hyundai. I go on fancy cruises because I never did that.

## **WELL, THAT'S IT CHIEF. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR DOING THIS . . .**

I couldn't wait for today. I thank all of you. It must be close to 11 o'clock.

## **WELL, IT'S ALMOST 1:00.**

As I was saying, I'm either blessed or cursed with a lot of information. My prayer to the good Lord nightly is that there are still people I want to talk to and share my experiences, so give me a little more time and then give me the courage to know when my time is up and handle it appropriately. That's all I want. When Airmen write me a note, an e-mail out of the clear blue, and say you made me think, I go, wow. That's the money in the bank. I wouldn't take a million bucks for that, to think that maybe I helped somebody. Because so many people helped me.

I realize you can't tell somebody how to behave. You just sort of hope to say something that they remember. I'm notoriously famous for things like "Hot Fries" and "put your name on the mailbox." Those are Bob Gaylor's stories. And I dice radishes. They're just stories I tell.

People ask me, "Did that really happen?" I say, "I don't know. I've told the story so much I think it did." And then I'd say, "Did you like the story?" And they say, yeah. "Well then it doesn't matter whether it's happened or not if you like the story." [Laughter]







# CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JAMES M. MCCOY

**AUGUST 1, 1979 - JULY 31, 1981**

James McCoy was sure he would become a priest. He was born in Creston, Iowa, on 30 July 1930 and attended a Catholic prep school and St. Benedict's College. But after a period of reflection and prayer, he decided against it, choosing instead to join the Air Force in January 1951.

McCoy became a radar operator and quickly moved through the ranks, rising from corporal to technical sergeant in just five years. He then became a military training instructor and followed the path of education throughout his career. After a two-year tour in the Philippines, McCoy became a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadet instructor, then a noncommissioned officer (NCO) preparatory school instructor, and later the noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of professional military education (PME) for Strategic Air Command. In 1974 he was selected as one of the USAF's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

In July 1979, Gen Lew Allen Jr. selected McCoy to be the 6th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). McCoy quickly set out to improve the enlisted retention rate, which had dropped to as low as 25 percent in the late 1970s. He implemented the Stripes for Exceptional Performers Program, improved discipline, and expanded PME. He retired in November 1981 but continues to stay in touch with the Air Force. He speaks to every class at the Senior NCO Academy, and his namesake's Airman Leadership School at Offutt AFB, Nebraska.

McCoy sat down for an interview in September 2015 to reflect on his life before, during, and after the Air Force. During the interview McCoy spoke about his passion for PME, how close he was to becoming an officer, and his excitement after being named Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

**WELL CHIEF, WE OFTEN LEARN ABOUT OUR FORMER CHIEFS IN THE PDG [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE], AND ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS IT SAYS IN THE PDG ABOUT YOU IS THAT AT ONE POINT YOU CONSIDERED GOING INTO THE PRIESTHOOD, BUT YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND AND ENDED UP COMING INTO THE AIR FORCE.<sup>1</sup> I'M CURIOUS AS TO WHY YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND AND HOW YOU ENDED UP IN THE AIR FORCE?**

Well, first of all, let me go back to the priest business. I did have a vocation. I spent four years in Maur Hill High School, which is a prep school for St. Benedict's College, St. Benedict's Abbey, and I was convinced that I had a calling, but I got a year in at St. Benedict's, and I said, no, that's not for me.<sup>2</sup> So I went home. Of course, my mother was very upset, because she was convinced that I should have been a priest. And I said to myself, well, that's not my calling. Instead, I joined the Air Force.

I joined the Air Force because I almost got drafted into the Army, and I didn't want to do that. I had already gone to a recruiting office. I had already talked to recruiters and, actually, basically signed some papers. I was a junior at St. Ambrose College in Davenport, [Iowa,] and my dad, to this day I do not know how he got a hold of me, late 1950, and he says, "Son, if you're still thinking about joining the Air Force, you better do it today because your draft notice is on the dining room table." In those days, if you got your draft notice, if you actually received it, you were drafted. So I got on a bus and went down to the recruiting office, signed the papers, and the rest is history. But I did have a calling, and I'm very proud of that calling. And I think that, you know, who knows where I would have been if I'd finished that calling. I wouldn't have been Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, that's for sure.

**MAYBE THIS WAS YOUR CALLING IN THE END. YOU JOINED, I THINK IT WAS LATE 1940S, EARLY 1950S?**

January of '51.

**AT THE TIME THE KOREAN WAR HAD BEGUN. AND, WE OFTEN TALK ABOUT WORLD WAR II . . . AND YOU HEAR ABOUT AMERICANS COMING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THAT WAR. THEN YOU HEAR ABOUT VIETNAM, AND HOW MANY AMERICANS WERE AGAINST THAT WAR. WHAT WAS THE FEELING AMONGST AMERICANS, AND THE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MILITARY MEMBERS, AT THE TIME YOU JOINED?**

Well in 1951, actually 1950, when I got the notice from my dad, the American public was very sincere about young men serving in our country. And I say young men because at that time not too many women were serving the country. So I felt it was my duty to do that. I felt like I needed to be ready in case, because I knew I had a low draft number, and I knew I was going to get drafted. But anyway, the consensus of the American people in the early '50s was, serve your country and do it well.

**ONE OF THE THINGS THAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT WHEN YOU JOINED IS THAT WE WERE STILL A VERY YOUNG SERVICE. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THOSE EARLY DAYS? I THINK AT ONE POINT YOU WERE A CORPORAL BEFORE WE EVEN HAD THE AIRMAN RANKS. DID IT FEEL LIKE A SEPARATE SERVICE AT THE TIME?**

Well, I think the best way to answer that was that we were so young, and we were trying to figure out what the Air Force was going to become. I remember I went through Lackland [AFB, Texas]. I remember the men and women, or the men that went through Sampson [AFB, New York] were issued the olive drab uniform, but they got one stripe.<sup>3</sup> They were a PFC [private first class]. So I started as a private. I was then a PFC, and then I was a corporal. On our wedding invitation, it says Cpl. James M. McCoy. On 1 April of 1952, I woke up one morning and I'm no longer a corporal. I'm an Airman second class. And we had Airman third class, Airman second class, and Airman first class. One of the things I remember distinctly is when I wanted to get married, I had to get permission because I was only an E-3, a corporal. So I had to get permission from my squadron commander to get married.

**DID THE STRIPES CHANGE AT THAT POINT TOO?**

No. We had the regular, we had the new stripes. We had the one stripe, the two stripes, and the three stripes. And so we had all those up until [CMSAF #10 Gary] Pfingston was chief when they changed the chief stripe.



## **YOU SAID YOU HAD TO GET PERMISSION TO GET MARRIED, WHICH IS INTERESTING—WELL, FIRST, HOW DID YOU MEET KATHY?**

Actually, it was kind of interesting. My sister introduced us, and it was at a college bonfire in St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa. Nancy, my sister, says, “I want you to meet somebody.” So she introduced me to this young, lovely young lady by the name of Kathleen Loretta O’Connor. I said, “Boy, she has to be a good Catholic with a name like that.” And she was and still is. But that’s how we met. She could probably tell you more about it, but . . .

## **HOW DID SHE FEEL WHEN SHE BECAME AN AIR FORCE SPOUSE?**

Well, I left her on the back porch of her house in Dixwell Court in Davenport, Iowa, crying because she didn’t want to see me go. And I was probably crying too. And her dad was mad at me for a couple of years because I left his little girl and went off to war. But when I came back, I had gained about 30, 40 pounds. I was pretty big. That was that good chow hall food. Anyway, so we kicked it off from there. And we got married, and I got trimmed down a little bit. So it was a great experience for both of us.

## **YOU WERE PROMOTED FAIRLY FAST. IN 1956 YOU WERE A TECHNICAL SERGEANT, AND YOU WERE SELECTED TO BECOME AN MTI [MILITARY TRAINING INSTRUCTOR].**

Well, first of all, the reason I got promoted early was because in those days we had frozen career fields. If you were in certain career fields, you couldn’t get promoted. I was in a career field that was brand new—instructing training career field. So I went up pretty fast. And as a result of going up pretty fast, they said since you’re an instructor, you need to come down to basic training and help us with basic training. So I became an MTI. I wasn’t pleased with that, but it was a great experience. Being a tech sergeant, I didn’t have to push troops, but I had to supervise about 15 young Airmen to do it.

I had in the meantime attended OCS [officer candidate school]. I got five months into the course, and I was eliminated. Five of us were eliminated from the course, and it was because of the scoring system that they had. Not too many people know that, and so it’s kind of an interesting thing, what if? What if I had become an officer? I wouldn’t be sitting here as the sixth Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Who knows what I could have been.

## **WAS THAT A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR YOU THEN?**

It was a big disappointment. I almost left the service. Not only was I eliminated from OCS, I was shipped to the Philippines by myself, leaving Kathy back in Davenport, Iowa. So I was extremely disappointed. And I was taking it out on myself. But a good friend of mine, a master sergeant, World War II veteran, got me under his wings and said, “McCoy, you got too much to offer. Get yourself straightened out.” And to this day I thank him for that because I did. I mean, I eventually got her to come over, and we spent a year over there. We had another child in the Philippines, and so it was quite an experience.

## **WHAT DID THAT TEACH YOU? DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE MEANING OF SERVICE AT THAT POINT? YOU KNOW, IT’S A LOT OF SACRIFICE.**

Well, the services today have changed so much as to when I came in. In those days, you’re pretty much on your own. And I can remember the first sergeant I did have in my organization, he says, “Are you a member of the NCO Club?” and I said, “No.” And he says, “Well, you should be. Come on down.” So we went to the club. Guess what? He got plastered out of his mind on my money, and I had to go home to face her with all our money gone. So a little bit different in those days. But I think I learned a lot in those early years of my military life: how important it is to take care of your people. And that was my emphasis even when I became Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force because I wanted to make sure our people were well taken care of. Get involved. Get involved in everything that you can possibly do.

## **WE CREATED THE SENIOR AND CHIEF RANKS AROUND THAT TIME. YOU WERE A TECHNICAL SERGEANT, AND AT THAT TIME MASTER SERGEANT WAS THE HIGHEST YOU COULD GO. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THAT CHANGE?**

Well, we were in the Philippines at the time, and I thought to myself, “Well, I got one more stripe to go.” Seven, or eight, nine, 10 years of service. And after the change I thought, “Wow. Now I got another two more stripes to make.” But, again, going back to that first sergeant/master sergeant, he told me, “Don’t give up. You got too much to lose.” So I did. I studied. I finished my college degree and continued on to do the best I could. After the Philippines, we went to the University of Notre Dame. I went on AFROTC [Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps] duty there, and that was a great experience. I wish I could have spent more than one year. But, again, manpower cuts cut my slot, so I have a history in my first 10, 12 years of getting my slots cut. And so I had to go and ended up down the highway to a Strategic Air Command [SAC] base called Bunker Hill AFB in Indiana. What a change that was.

## **YEAH, I IMAGINE. YOU SPENT QUITE A BIT OF YOUR CAREER, ACTUALLY, IN THE TRAINING ENVIRONMENT.**

I did.

## **WHAT DREW YOU INTO THAT PATH?**

Well, I guess one of the things, as I think back on it, was my experience on ROTC duty leading the cadets. You know, they were going to be our future officers, and I was bound and determined that they knew the difference between officer and enlisted, and that they had the emphasis on enlisted in their portfolio. So I think that was a challenge for me.

When I went down to Bunker Hill in the early days of the Airman Leadership School, they called it prep school in those days. In the first prep school class I stepped into, it was Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory School. They were staff sergeants, but 12, 13, 14 years of service, again, because of the frozen career fields. I said to myself, "Something's wrong here. Just the picture is not right." So, I made a little promise to myself if I ever get up to a position where I can do it, I want to change that.

Well, actually, I did. I got to SAC Headquarters, and we named it the NCO Leadership School. Now it's the Airman Leadership School. So through the years, I've seen the evolution of that.

## **NOW IF I UNDERSTAND IT RIGHT, ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS WAS [CMSAF #5 BOB] GAYLOR; IS THAT CORRECT?**

Yes, it was.

## **WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT TEACHING HIM?**

I taught him everything he knows except the 3 Bs, as I say sometimes: "Be brief, be bright, and be gone." He never has learned that one. He still hasn't. But anyway, Bob was in the class I taught, and I taught human relations and management.

I remember one day sitting in class, this was at Barksdale AFB in Louisiana. It was pretty warm outside, and the air conditioning had broken. It was right after lunch. He was sitting in the corner I think, and I was going through this lesson plan as best I could, and I could see I was losing the class. I was talking about performance standards, and performance standards had certain subjects you had to weigh. So I went through the process of what you do to get the weights—and I looked at him and I said, "Sergeant Gaylor, what do you weigh?" He woke up and said, "165." So I thought that was the end of the class.

But the other thing I remember about the NCO Academy. I was at the NCO Academy when President Kennedy was shot. I was in class and I was teaching emotions, and you talk about a touchy subject to get through.

So later, we shut down the school, shut down the Academy.<sup>4</sup> Everybody went different ways. I went to the base at Barksdale. Bob had to go to Utapao in Thailand. And while he was over there, I was working in personnel at Second Air Force, and I had the opportunity to see the chief promotion list. Well, guess whose name was on there? Bob Gaylor. So I went to the clothing sales store, got a set of chief stripes, and went out to see Selma [Gaylor] and their four children, and I told them that Bob had got promoted.

So Kenny [Gaylor, Bob's son,] said, "We need to celebrate." So we did. And Selma says, "I think there's a beer in the refrigerator." So he went over and got it. And to make a long story short, which I have a tendency not to do, I went over and drank his beer. That was his coming home beer.

## **OH, NO.**

He had told Selma to leave it . . . don't let anybody touch that. So he returned home from Thailand, and he tells Kenny, "Bring me my beer, my coming home beer." And Kenny says, "Jim McCoy already drank it." So that's how far we go back.

## **THANK YOU FOR SHARING THAT STORY. I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS YOU TALKED ABOUT IS HOW PME IS DIFFERENT TODAY. ONE THING THAT IS QUITE DIFFERENT IS THAT EACH COMMAND HAD ITS OWN SCHOOL. EACH SCHOOL WAS SIMILAR, BUT DIFFERENT. AND OF COURSE TODAY ALL THE PME SCHOOLHOUSES OPERATE UNDER THE BARNES CENTER.<sup>5</sup> DO YOU THINK THAT HAS BEEN A GOOD EVOLUTION?**

Oh, yeah. First, I was the SAC senior enlisted advisor at the time, and I had control of the three academies in the command. Well, it actually came down to one academy by then. We could pretty well pick and choose what we wanted to teach. But the change was the right thing to do; it was the right move. We had some academies and some places around the country that were teaching small arms—how to carry arms. And other ones were just concentrating strictly on speech. So, we didn't have a standardized curriculum. We developed our own curriculum. So by establishing a college for enlisted PME, which is now the Barnes Center, we standardized the curriculum, and we're doing the right thing.

I have some trouble with them every now and then because they want to go a little bit too far than I think we should be going, but it's still standardized. And what we've done is we've been able to develop our academies and our leadership school, but more importantly, the great young Airmen that we have today.



## **THINKING ABOUT HOW IT WAS BACK THEN AND LOOKING AHEAD TO HOW YOU WOULD WANT TO DEVELOP AIRMEN, WOULD YOU SAY WE HIT THAT MARK?**

We did. It was the right thing to do. When I became the chief, I knew that the best thing we could do was to expand that and get it better, even make it better.

There was a lot of heartache because we took away the funding that the commands had put into the academies and leadership school. Some commands like SAC, they put a lot of money into it, and they wanted to make sure they had the right curriculum and the right facilities, and so forth. And so some of the commands were a little bit put out with that, because now they had to put it in their own budget process.

## **IN 1967, WHEN CHIEF [PAUL] AIREY BECAME THE FIRST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, OBVIOUSLY THAT WAS A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY. WE LOOK BACK AT IT NOW AND THINK OF IT AS A MAJOR CHANGE. WAS IT JUST AS SIGNIFICANT THEN, WHEN YOU HEARD THE NEWS THAT WE HAD MADE THAT MOVE?**

Well, yeah, that was—and you probably know the history of this. If Gen J. P. McConnell hadn't appointed Chief Airey as the first one, we wouldn't have this. We would have had to rely upon Congress to do it, because there was an emphasis within the Congress, Cong. L. Mendel Rivers [D-SC] had started it. You know, "Air Force, if you don't do that, I'll pass a law requiring you to do that." Well, the leadership of the Air Force at that time got the message, and that's when Paul was selected.

And Paul would tell you today if he was here, God rest his soul, that the first six months he was in the job were the hardest six months he had ever spent in his entire career—and he was a POW [prisoner of war] in World War II—because he had to sell the position. A big push, and he had to sell it to Gen. McConnell. And after about six months, Gen. McConnell called him in and said, "You're right, Chief. I made a mistake. This is what we need." He thought it was going to be somebody who would be in the chain of command and would do all these things, but it wasn't. And we never were that chain of command. We were there to advise the leadership of the Air Force.

So, you know, it was a positive mood. I was stationed at SAC headquarters at the time, and I remember when Chief Airey made his first visit to Offutt and came in on an airplane. I said, "Whoa. Got his own airplane." I thought that's a pretty cool job. So people said, "You ought to be thinking about that." And I said, "Okay, I'll think about it." I never thought it would happen.

## **AND YET IT DID. ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS CHIEF AIREY DID WAS DEVELOP A NEW PROMOTION SYSTEM (WAPS), AND YOU HAD MADE CHIEF RIGHT BEFORE THAT WAS IMPLEMENTED.<sup>6</sup> WAS THAT A NECESSARY CHANGE AT THE TIME?**

Well yeah, again, going back to the frozen career fields, we had a lot of people that couldn't get promoted unless somebody died or left the service. So, it was the right thing for the Air Force to do.

I know when it first came out there was a lot of controversy about it because you had to test, and you had different points for this; different points for that. We had to educate the force on why we did this. And as a result of the change, we had an equal opportunity promotion system. The frozen career fields went away; we didn't have them anymore. We had people retiring at 20-years' service as a staff sergeant because they couldn't get promoted. And here I was just rapidly going up the ranks—and I wasn't the only one. There are a lot of other career fields like that.

## **HOW LONG DID IT TAKE, I GUESS, TO NORMALIZE ACROSS THE FORCE?**

The WAPS system?

## **YEAH.**

Let's say probably three or four promotions cycles. People had to get used to it. And a lot of the old timers that were against it eventually retired, so I would say three, or four, or five years. It was pretty well accepted when I became Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, and that was 1979.

## **ONE OF THE THINGS I FOUND INTERESTING WHEN I WAS READING ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CAREER WAS THAT YOU CONSIDERED RETIRING EARLY. THEN YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND, AND YOU WENT ON A DIFFERENT COURSE. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT MOMENT?**

I love to talk about that because this young lady over here [Mrs. McCoy] had a big influence on that decision. What had happened was we were at SAC headquarters. I had 19.5 years of service. I had made chief when I had 16 years in the service. An assignment came down, and we had a large family. We have eight children. I called Kathy, and I said, “We got to talk about this.” In those days, if you had an assignment, you had seven days to accept the assignment or retire, and I was eligible for retirement as I could have retired at 20 years.

So we really discussed it quite a bit, and I said, “We need to talk to our children.” One of the things we always did was sit down together for dinner. Well, we called them around, and I said, “We’ve got some news. We’ve got a new assignment.” And they asked, “Where are we going?” “We’re going to Hawaii.”

Well, the little ones were jumping up and down. They were happy. Debbie left the room. Her mother went in and found her laying on her bed crying and sobbing, “I do not want to go. I don’t want to go. Please.”

## **HOW OLD WAS SHE AT THAT TIME?**

She was a junior in high school.

## **I SEE.**

So, that was a big decision we had to make. It was tough. It was tough with Debbie. I think as we both look back on it, Kathy and I, not only did Debbie go to Radford High School, she won the biggest scholarship that you could win, and went to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. And she was watching some guy by the name of Paxton playing lacrosse. He was an All-American lacrosse player, and he was a couple of years ahead of her. So to make a long story short, they ended up getting married. And I think she’s done pretty good because he’s now the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps.<sup>7</sup>

I promised Debbie the day she married him that I’d say something nice about the Corps every day. So, I said it today. Period. Check it off.

## **DONE.**

That was a big decision it really was. We went to Hawaii, and we got caught up in a four-year assignment. Thanks to the Air Force Association, I was selected, I should say we were selected, as one of 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

We came to Washington, [DC,] and we met a general by the name of Gen Russell E. Dougherty, and he asked us questions in the receiving line. We were still stationed in Hawaii. And he said—he particularly asked Kathy, he said, “Is Jim serious about coming back to SAC?” And she said, “Yes, he wants to come back to SAC.”

So later on that evening, he came back over to us and said, “Well, think I know a few people in Strategic Air Command. We might get you a good assignment to Kincheloe [AFB, Michigan], K. I. Sawyer [AFB, Michigan], Minot [AFB, North Dakota], Grand Forks [AFB, North Dakota]—all those great northern-tier bases.”<sup>8</sup> Unbeknownst to me, he was interviewing me to be the first senior enlisted advisor.

## **WAS THAT, BASICALLY, ESTABLISHING THE POSITION?**

Exactly.

## **AND HOW DID THAT WORK?**

Well, SAC was the last command to do it, but I had a lot of good mentors that were in the other commands help me establish the position at SAC. Plus, I had a great group of chiefs right there in SAC headquarters.

When Gen. [John C.] Myer was the commander of Strategic Air Command, he had 12 chiefs. Kind of like the 12 Outstanding Airmen, he had 12 chief master sergeants. He would take two or three of them on the trip with him, and each time a different one.

And they probably got together one time, when Gen. Dougherty became the commander, and said, “What do we need to do?” He says, “Do we keep this program, or should we go to one?” And they unanimously said, “Go to one. Go to one.” And fortunately, I was the one.











## **YOU WERE ONE OF THE STUDENTS IN THE FIRST SENIOR NCO ACADEMY CLASS. WHAT WAS THE CURRICULUM LIKE IN THAT FIRST CLASS?**

Well, biggest thing I remember about it is was when we reported in. We were stationed in Hawaii, so I came in with my golf clubs, and people said, “What have you got there?” I looked at the curriculum, and there was a lot of time on our own there, so a couple of us did that.

But to try to answer your question, the biggest challenge was we were there to figure out what we should teach and when we needed to teach it, because the Academy was still being built. It was a program that needed to be done, and needed to be developed for senior NCOs. We kind of took that upon ourselves.

## **IT HAS CHANGED QUITE A BIT. ONE OF THE THINGS YOU DO, ALMOST EVERY CLASS, IS GO DOWN THERE TO TALK TO THE STUDENTS. SO YOU’VE SEEN IT DEVELOP INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY.**

Oh, yeah. It’s kind of interesting to look at the class today and compare it to what it was 20 years ago when we started bringing the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force in. We still had trouble with weight. We still had trouble with hair. We still had trouble with how to wear your uniform. The force now today is what I envisioned it would be when I was Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. And so, I think we’ve come a long way in that respect, and we’ve done a great deal for—not only for individuals like yourself, but for those young Airmen coming behind you.

## **WE’LL SKIP FORWARD TO WHEN YOU BECAME THE SIXTH CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE SELECTION PROCESS? HOW DID THAT WORK FOR YOU?**

Well, each command could nominate. Some commands depending on the size, SAC for example, could nominate three people to meet a board in San Antonio [, Texas]. I was one of the three out of SAC. It was different than it is today, because today the commands only nominate one person. There were 27 or 28 of us that met the board.

It was a general officer, and Chief Gaylor was on the board as the present Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. There were several colonels, and he was the only enlisted person. Colonels and one general officer. So, it was quite an experience.

Well, they pared it down to three of four of us. Four of us had to go up to the Pentagon and meet with the DP [deputy chief of staff for personnel], which is the A-1 now, the vice chief of staff of the Air Force, and the chief of staff of the Air Force. We did not meet with the secretary of the Air Force. Today it’s a little bit different.

So, you know, at that time Gen. Lew Allen was the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. So we had interviewed with him, and, again, I was the SAC senior enlisted advisor, and so I was anxious to find out what was going to go on.

Later I was back at SAC Headquarters, and Gen. Allen called Gen. [Richard H.] Ellis. The exec answered the phone, and he knew it was something about me. That’s all he knew, because Gen. Ellis was very quiet, very closed. He closed his doors all the time.

So he got on what we called squawk boxes in those days, and says, “Come up. I need to talk to you.” Well, I knew something was going on and the selection had been made. So I walked up the stairs to Gen. Ellis’s office and I thought to myself, you know, “What if?” And the other side, “What if I don’t?” I had close to 28, 29 years of service, and that would pretty well make up my mind.

So I walked up there and walked in his office, and Col. Murphy was the chief of staff, and he was kind of a grouchy old guy, you know. He looked me and said, “What do you want?” I said, “Gen. Ellis just called me.” He said, “He called you?” “Yes, he did, Colonel, he called me. He wants to see me now.”

Gen. Ellis was sitting behind his desk, and he wore Ben Franklin glasses like that. He was reading something, and as he looked up, he took off his glasses and had a great big smile on his face. Gen. Ellis hardly ever smiled. He was just one of those World War II —type generals and had a great career. He said, “Congratulations.” And I thought, “Holy crap.” He said, “You’re going to be number six.”

This is a Friday morning, and I said, “Can I tell anybody?” He said, “No. You’ve got to wait ’til the message flows.” So I said, “Can I tell my wife?” He said, “Oh, yeah.” Well, I was on my way out the door, and his aide was sitting there. He knew what was going on, he was a young captain. Well, in those days SAC had a looking glass. You know, airborne command post. So by the time I got home that night, Friday night, everybody in the Strategic Air Command knew I was going to be number six. So, it was quite an experience.

**WHEN YOU BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, IT WAS AN INTERESTING TIME IN OUR HISTORY. IT WAS AFTER VIETNAM, AND WE HAD BEGUN TO DRAW DOWN. A LOT OF PEOPLE REFERRED TO IT AS THE HOLLOW FORCE. WHY DID THEY USE THAT TERM?**

Because first of all, retention was down and recruiting was down. The force was hollow, and we didn't have enough people on the list to get into basic training. When Gen. Allen called me in, he says, "Chief, I want you to concentrate on two things. Make sure the recruiters are doing their job, and secondly, make sure the MTIs, are doing their job. We got to get the right people in. We got to get the right people trained." So that was my chore for two years. And it was tough thing to do because our recruiters were just banging, just trying every which way to get anybody in. And some of the people they brought in were just dirtbags, if I can use a term that, God rest his soul, [CMSAF #9] Jim Binnicker used to use. So, we really had to concentrate on watching that they went through basic and tech school. It was a difficult time.

Fortunately, we served during a period of time when we had a change of administration, from the Carter administration to the Reagan administration. We got to go to President [Ronald] Reagan's inauguration. It was on the west lawn of the Capitol, and it was the day the Iranian hostages were released. And you talk about euphoria in our country that came out of that. So, yeah, from then it was just, it was a great, great time, because Congress was back with us. The American people were back with us. I say us: the military.

**SURE.**

So, I know I talked to my counterparts in the other services, and they went through the same thing. The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy came to the office one day, and he said, "Jim, I don't even have enough senior petty officers to put our ships to sea down at Portsmouth [Virginia]." So it was a tough time. It really was. Retention was horrible, and morale was even worse. But with that change of leadership in the government, it all changed.

**WAS IT INSTANT?**

Well, I wouldn't say it was instant, but it was very noticeable that it was the right thing for the country to do. I would say from where I sat, it was getting to be very noticeable. In about the summer of '81, right after the election, the five senior enlisted of the services went to sit down with Sen. Jim Exon [D-NE] who was the senior senator from Nebraska. He talked to us and said, "The reason I called you over here is because I want to hear from you guys. I was an NCO during World War II. Why are people leaving the service?" Well, Bill Connelly [sixth Sergeant Major of the Army] pulled out a pay chart and laid it in front of Senator Exon. He said, "You ever looked at pay chart, Senator?" And the Senator said, "No, why?" And Bill said, "Well, look how many pay raises are over 20 years of service to 22 and 26. So he said, "Well, we'll fix that." Well, it didn't get fixed until [CMSAF] Pfingston's time, because it just got caught up in conference committees and so forth. But that had a lot to do with retention—they knew it was going to come because we emphasized it.

**ONE OF THE OTHER THINGS YOU FOCUSED ON WAS EXPANDING YOUR ROLE. WHEN AIREY TOOK THE POSITION IT WAS NEW. EACH CHIEF AFTERWARD FORMALIZED THE POSITION A BIT MORE, AND YOU WERE TRYING TO EXPAND IT. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU WERE FOCUSED ON THAT?**

Well, again, it goes back to our focus on retention, to make sure we got the right people in the right jobs. During those times I think one of the things we did was with the senior NCOs. Master, seniors, and chiefs could wear their rank up on the shoulders of their uniform shirt. It was approved during our watch, and it stayed until Chief [CMSAF #14 Gerald] Murray was the chief. He called me one time, and he said, "We're going to do away with it." I said, "I'm surprised it lasted this long." But it was a retention thing. And it was trying to get the senior NCOs a little bit more status, a little bit more recognition. And it worked. I think it worked.

Paul Airey just ate my backside up one side and down the other. Several times he told me, "When I die and go to heaven, I don't want St. Peter to think I'm an officer." I said, "Paul, don't worry about that."

He was upset, and he never did accept that, God rest his soul. But Paul Airey was one of my great mentors. I'll never forget the day that I became the chief. I walked back to my office after the ceremony, with the US emblem on, and he called me. He said, "I got one piece of advice for you, Jim." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Stay humble. Stay humble. Don't let it get to your head." And I hope I did that. I still hope I can be humble like that.



**THE POSITION TODAY, I THINK YOU WOULD AGREE, CONTINUES TO EXPAND A LITTLE BIT. IT'S THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT. DID YOU EVER THINK THAT THE ROLE WOULD BECOME WHAT IT IS TODAY?**

Well, really when I was in it I was hoping that in the future I'd see the emphasis that's being placed on it today. First of all, you've got to keep in mind that a lot of our senior leadership in the Air Force, the officers never had a senior enlisted advisor. They didn't know what it was. So, those of us that were young at the time had to develop the position, and I've seen the progression.

For example, I think I only testified twice in two years before a congressional hearing. Now, Chief [CMSAF #17 James] Cody and the rest of the senior enlisted leaders, they're over there all the time. So, yeah, I've seen a lot of changes from the fellas following me and up to the present day. And, you know, a positive change. The big thing that I respect about it is that the following chiefs have kept us involved. We go to senior academy. We're allowed to do that. We're the only service that does that. The other services do not. They don't take advantage of their former senior enlisted leaders.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT DOES FOR US? I THINK IT'S AN IMPORTANT THING YOU JUST MENTIONED. IT'S RARE. WHY IS THAT VALUABLE?**

Well, I think the fact that when a new program is developed in the Air Force, we're usually the first ones to learn about it. And, you know, we can voice our opinion. It's tough on the present.

**YEAH.**

So, I think it's a plus for the Air Force that they keep the senior enlisted leaders around. I don't know why the other services don't do that.

**WE REALLY CELEBRATE OUR FORMER CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS OF THE AIR FORCE. YOU MENTIONED COMING TO THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY, WE READ ABOUT THEM IN OUR PDG. EVERY AIRMAN KNOWS WHO THE PAST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS OF THE AIR FORCE ARE, WHICH I THINK IS ANOTHER IMPORTANT POINT. IT TIES US TO OUR HISTORY.**

Right.

**A COUPLE MORE QUESTIONS BEFORE I LET YOU GO. LET'S TALK ABOUT ADVICE FOR CHIEFS. YOU MENTIONED CHIEF AIREY TALKED TO YOU IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS, SAYING BE HUMBLE. THE CHIEFS THAT ARE LEADING TODAY IN OUR AIR FORCE, WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THEM?**

Well, during my career—particularly when I was in SAC—I saw people that were supposed to be in a leadership position, the senior enlisted advisors in the bomb wing, or tanker wing . . . all they did was drive their wing commander around. I said, "That's not your job. Your job is to inform the wing commander. Your job is to tell him what he doesn't want to hear." That was my big point, tell it like it is. That's a key to a lot of our leadership today, and that's what we emphasize to young senior NCOs.

**ALMOST 35 YEARS AFTER YOU RETIRED, YOU'RE STILL VERY INVOLVED IN THE AIR FORCE. YOU HAVE A GREAT PERSPECTIVE BOTH OF YOUNG AIRMEN AND OUR SENIOR NCOS. IF YOU LOOK AT OUR AIRMEN TODAY, AND YOU HAD TO START A SENTENCE WITH "I BELIEVE," WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe what we're doing is the right thing to be doing. There were a lot of things during my career, after my career, and so forth, that, you know, I was not in favor of. But by the same token, I got on board. I had to quit living in the past. And I tell people that because I hear a lot of people that have no idea. They say, "Well the Air Force isn't like it used to be." Well, it's not supposed to be like it used to be. It's not supposed to be like when we were serving. Because they're better.

I look at the education level of our enlisted force today when I go to the senior academy. It's amazing. We've got people with PhDs—enlisted people with PhDs, master's degrees. When I retired in 1981, I was one of the few chief master sergeants that had a bachelor's degree. And that's because I came in the service with two-and-a-half years of college. I almost got drafted. But I finished, you know, tuition assistance and so forth. So, you know, I believe that we've got to keep moving forward.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **ARTHUR "BUD" L. ANDREWS**

**AUGUST 1, 1981 - JULY 31, 1983**

Arthur "Bud" Andrews was born on 9 March 1934 to a loving mother and a father who "was a disciplinarian in the true sense of the word." He was raised in Boston with two sisters and a brother and attended the Cathedral of Holy Cross, Bancroft, and Rice public schools, and the English high school. In 1953 Andrews decided he "wanted to show at least my parents, especially my father, that I could do something, hold a job, and become something," so he enlisted in the Air Force.

Andrews served four years as an air policeman before separating following his initial enlistment. A year later he enlisted again and served tours at Shaw AFB, South Carolina; Kadena AB, Japan; Ubon Royal Thai AFB, Thailand; and Tyndall AFB, Florida. As a technical sergeant assigned to Tyndall, Andrews began his first of 10 years as a first sergeant, a job he called "one of the most rewarding jobs in my career."

Gen. Lew Allen Jr. selected Andrews to be the 7th Chief Master Ser-

geant of the Air Force (CMSAF) in the summer of 1981. During his tenure, Andrews challenged NCOs to focus on the Airmen they led and to care for them and their families. He focused on cultural changes, believing it was time for Airmen to "think 'we' instead of me, me, me." He also traveled extensively, believing it was important for the CMSAF to hear from Airmen firsthand. Andrews retired from the Air Force on 31 July 1983 but continued to motivate and encourage Airmen by serving as the deputy executive director for public relations in the Air Force Sergeants Association's international headquarters. He passed away on 26 October 1996 after complications from heart surgery.

The Air Force Historical Research Center interviewed Andrews in September of 1986. During the interview, Andrews discussed his experience as an air police investigator, his passion for the position of first sergeant, and the importance of education for enlisted Airmen. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

## TO BEGIN THE INTERVIEW THIS MORNING, CHIEF ANDREWS, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR EARLY MILITARY SERVICE. WHY DID YOU JOIN?

My driving force, as I look back on it, to join the service was patriotism and that type of thing, but I think there was a mood around the people I hung around with that that was the thing to do.

Down deep, my own personal feelings, which I don't know that I mentioned it to anybody until now, were I just didn't want to hang around the corner, smoking cigarettes, whistling at the girls, and getting an odd job here and there. I wanted to make something of myself. In fact, I wanted to show at least my parents, especially my father, that I could do something, hold a job, and become something. Now, bear in mind, I had no intentions—absolutely none—except to serve four years and get out, and I did. I served four years. That was it, and I got out.

I finished my tour [at Fairfield Air Force Station (AFS), California], which was, I think, 18 months or two years, and I got out.<sup>1</sup> I had a 1949 Cadillac. People say, “Oh, that's a classic.” Well, in those days it wasn't a classic. It was just a plain old simple used car. I can't believe it, even to this day; that Cadillac did not have a heater in it. I left on the 20th or the 21st of January in 1957 and drove through the Mojave Desert and Needles [California] and Flagstaff [Arizona]. I ran out of gas and money in Wichita Falls, Texas. [Laughter] This is as true as true can be. I went into a motel, not an elaborate one, just a motel, and I stayed there. I got up, and I looked for a job every day. There's a great golfer by the name of Lee Trevino, and I heard him say one time that you don't know what pressure is until you are making a \$2 putt and you don't have \$2 to pay when you lose. Now that's pressure. I would like to mention to Lee Trevino that I think what pressure is, is to have a hotel room, or a motel room in my case, no money to pay for it, and getting up every day and looking for a job, hoping to pay for it at the end of the week.

[A year later], I went back to Boston, Massachusetts, and again I stayed with my sister and brother-in-law for about three months. One day I woke up—and I knew I was going to do it—left the house early in the morning, went to the [South] Boston Army Base in south Boston, and said, “I do.” I reenlisted. I lost a stripe because I had been out over 90 days, or 89 days I think it was in those days, and it was almost 14 months. I came home and told my mother after I had done it. [Laughter] She said, “You shouldn't have done it. You should stay.” I had put my application in for the state police job. I waited, and I waited, and I didn't get any response or notification, so I kind of got a little discouraged. I just had to have something to do. I made the decision that I had better do it now, so I went and reenlisted.

## WHEN YOU WENT IN THE FIRST TIME, WHAT CAREER FIELD WERE YOU IN?

That was really a bucket of worms. Some people are mechanically inclined, and some people cannot change a tire. I'm almost to that point. I am not mechanically inclined. I'm sorry; I cannot. I can change a tire, but I just can't do mechanical things and take engines apart and put them back together again. I don't understand it, but that's what I qualified for, at least in those days. You really never knew what you were qualified for. To this day, I don't believe it was what you were really best suited for. It was really—and I'm not saying this was wrong—but it was the need of the Air Force at that particular time. I went into the aircraft mechanics—me in mechanics! I honestly tried, but I washed out. I washed out of that class at Sheppard AFB [Texas]. That was just not my bag—it was not. I washed out, and I went through a board. They would determine that I had tried and had done my work. I had done my homework, and I just couldn't adapt to that mechanical type of environment of taking things apart, aircraft and everything else.

So I was assigned to the security police at Sheppard AFB, and I was very, very happy. That was really the beginning of my Air Force career where I started to see things differently. Prior to that, with the mechanics, I was dissatisfied. I knew I couldn't do it. I tried, and I couldn't do it. I wasn't pleasing myself, and I wasn't pleasing my instructors. But with the military police, I was determined to learn those facets of that job to the best of my ability. I can say now after all these years that I believe I've done almost every facet of the military police that there was—town patrol, security, law enforcement investigations, even industrial security. The only thing I didn't do was to handle a canine, which I would have loved to have done. That was the only function, I believe, that I did not get to handle in the security police field. I stayed within the security police field 13 or 14 years. It was a very rewarding career. I had a lot of exciting times in the security police, and I accomplished a great deal.

In fact, I guess the highlight of my military career was when I was at Shaw AFB [South Carolina]. I arrived there in 1960 or 1961. Of course, I was an Airman second class because I had just come back in 1958. I was an Airman first class when I got out in 1957, but when I reenlisted I lost a stripe. I am a two-striper now, and I'm trying my very, very best to get that other stripe, and they are just almost nonexistent during the 1960, 1961, 1962 timeframe. Very, very few were ever even promoted. I happened to get promoted. At that time, they allowed me to just fill in temporarily with an investigation that was going on. It was basically a stakeout. They were looking for somebody, and so I got that. I was very fortunate—I found the guy that we were looking for. I found him in a house in a pantry underneath the sink, so they allowed me to stay a little bit longer and then a little bit longer, and so I didn't get out of investigations. I stayed in investigations, which was very exciting because no two cases were ever the same, no two robberies, no two arsons were the same. The enjoyment I had was finding out who did what when I was not there, and I had to put all the pieces together. The highlight of my military police career was, again, at Shaw.



## **WHY, WHILE YOU WERE AT FAIRFIELD AFS, CALIFORNIA, DIDN'T YOU SEE THE AIR FORCE AS A CAREER AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME?**

I came in to do four years, and I was going to do it—and I was going to do it honorably. I was going to do as much as I could for that period of time. I made Airman first class prior to getting out. I had it almost a year before I got out, so I made Airman first class in about just a little over three years. That was a good progression. A lot of people who will listen to this or read this won't understand that during the fifties you had to be four years plus before you could become an NCO [noncommissioned officer], namely staff sergeant. There were no staff sergeants made under four years. There was only one way you could be a staff sergeant—you had to reenlist. That was automatic. You just were not a staff sergeant with under four years. That was just a law of the military.

My time came, and I decided not to reenlist. I was going to go back home and see which way I wanted to go. Like I said earlier, I got in that Cadillac. . . . Years ago when they released you, they gave you the price of bus fare from your discharge point to your home of record. If you really put it into perspective, it was really not that much money, and it didn't really get me very far. I had to really watch each and every penny, and, even then, I ran out of gas and ran out of money in Wichita Falls, Texas. I don't think that I was extravagant in any sense of the word.

I think if I really sat down and put it all into perspective the reason I came back into the service was because of the times. Don't misunderstand me that I was not patriotic; I was. I think we, all of us, come in the military for a combination of many reasons, and that's good. I think it's wrong and it's unfair for a person to come in for one specific reason; i.e., education, travel, or money. If he comes in for a combination of those reasons—education, travel, excitement, adventure, or whatever you want to call it—and he gets a little of each, he'll be happy. If he gets his education and that's all he wanted, once he gets that, then he leaves everything else and he's out, or he gives up his career and gives up his opportunity. I'm not saying don't come in for an education, but don't come in just for one specific thing. One of the primary reasons I came back in is that here I am now, I had spent four years in the service, got out, and stayed a year still away from home. I had been home once or twice in those four years. I think I had been home in the five years from 1953 maybe 60 days if you put them all together. Now here I am. I'm five years, and I come back. I'm happy to be home with my family and everything else. That's not the issue. The issue is, the people that I left in 1953, the boys and the guys that I hung around with, were still on the corner, still smoking cigarettes, still whistling at the girls, and still without a job. After a while I said, "I don't want to become involved in this rut. I don't want my life to be a measly manner of existence." I saw, even though they were my friends, they did not have a goal. They were just getting up and doing nothing. Those who were working were working just for pocket money, nothing for a future or nothing for a savings. I just said that I had better do something because I

felt that I would become involved in that rut. Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees. That's a truism. I felt that if I stayed there I might fall into that trap. Whether unwillingly or willingly, I might just fall into that trap. So that's when I decided.

## **BACK WHEN YOU WERE IN, WAS THERE SOME STIGMA ATTACHED TO BEING IN SECURITY POLICE?**

Yes.

## **AS I REMEMBER, IF YOU WASHED OUT OF TECH SCHOOL AND WOUND UP IN—**

They gave you transportation, security police, or food service. Nine out of 10 guys would have—out of those nine guys, three of them would have got security police, the other three got transportation, and the other three food service. There's no doubt in my mind that that's how it worked.

I saw more to the security police than a lot of people saw, whether it was the powers that be or whatever. I saw a good vocation. If I decided to get out, at least I would have a vocation: law enforcement. To me it was a reputable job. It was a good job, and if you took it to heart, you were helping other people for the most part. In the big picture you were doing something for society. That's really how I saw it.

Some people came into the security police for the reason that they had a little bit more power, some of the young kids, and they did. The security police wielded a great deal of power, especially in those tech schools. We have come a long way—oh, have we come a long way. I couldn't fathom it. Here I am, I'm on Sheppard AFB. I'm the low guy on the totem pole because I'm a washout, and I'm just in. So these people whom I'm working for and who have two and three stripes—I've got one stripe on my sleeve—they've been in the air police since basic so they know all of the ropes. They are the experts so to speak. They put me on the ammo dump. They start you off at the ammo dump. The ammo dump is the lowest job you can possibly have in the security police, at least during those days. In fact, it was so bad that I had to report to guard mount 30 minutes early because it took you 30 minutes to get out to your post. I had that more times than not. You just walked around a barbed wire fence, and there were some boxes in there. It could have been ammo; I don't know what. You just walked around it day and night. But I knew that if I did my job and I did it right, I'd get a better job. Sure enough, I got Wherry housing, the gate. That doesn't sound like a big whoop-de-do, but when you are working the Wherry housing from an ammo dump, that's a big step up. Then they give you patrol. You ride with somebody on the base for your tour of duty. Then, when you really get good, they give you the main gate. Now this all took some time. This was not overnight. So I progressed from the ammo dump to Wherry housing and then from there to riding on the vehicles, the carryall vehicles, and going for the money at the bank on pay day because they paid in cash in those days.

We would go down in two or three carryalls, going to the bank, and we would wheel it out in big bags and take it to finance. They would count it, and 16 or 17 policemen would secure that building for three or four days until the money was paid. That was also a good job. You were progressing. Then they give you the main gate. That was a big deal, the main gate. That's where everybody saw you, visitors and officers. That's where the main hub of the base was taking place. Then the ultimate, at least for Sheppard AFB, was town patrol. If you got town patrol in those days, you had your act together, you were clean, you were neat, you knew your job, and you were visible to the public of Wichita Falls, Texas, and also to help the GIs out. I got town patrol, so I was happy with my assignment. I did the ammo dump, the Wherry housing, the patrols, the finance, and the main gate, but really the ultimate was town patrol. That was a very, very select few.

In those days, the rules, the laws, or the regulations, you didn't deviate from them. Military clothing could not be worn with civilian clothing. That was a taboo.

Some of the things that went on in those days in the fifties, if it was pouring down rain—I didn't think it was right, but I had to go along with it because I was the low guy on the totem pole—and a guy was coming out to go in town and he had his raincoat on, they would make him take it off and send him all the way back.

Those days are gone, and we've really come a long way. We really have. Those weren't really bad days. I think it was just that the Air Force was not all that old. You are talking about 1947, and I am only talking about 1953. We are not talking about being that old. I think we had a lot of growing pains. The Army had been in existence for 200 years or more before, so when they separated, it wasn't all that traumatic. For the Air Force, it was different people. Those are some of the things that were not right. We don't do those things today. I really believe that the Air Force takes care of its people today, more so than we had ever dreamed about 15 and 20 years ago.

## **HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANY THOUGHT GIVEN TO PROVIDING COUNSELING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF NOT ONLY TECH SCHOOLS BUT WASHED OUT OF FLYING SCHOOL AND THINGS LIKE THAT?**

Yes. The percentages of washouts are astronomically lower than they were in the fifties and the sixties. I contend that the reason is that the testing that's done as the guy or the gal comes into the service is so designed now that we can tell you what you are really benefited for. You'll hear, and I'm sure that people who listen to this or read this who have been in for 20 or 30 years will hear, the story that it's not what you know, it's what they want you to do. I know people and you've heard war stories or horror stories where this guy had gone through all of the culinary schools you could think of. He was a chef and a half. He could prepare the

meals from nothing, and they sent him to medic school or something. They sent him to something that was absolutely directly opposite of what he was trained to do. Those days, for the most part and for the vast majority, are gone because today when the guy or the gal goes in and goes through the recruitment process, there's a stepping-stone to each and every facet of his induction—the testing, the physicals, and everything.

Now bear in mind you can't please everybody. Not everybody is going to get what they want, but I'm positively sure that whatever they do get in today's Air Force they will be able to handle mentally. They may not like it, and that may not be their desires, but they will be able to take care of it and do a good, professional job. That's the bottom line. The bottom line is that the needs of the Air Force have to come first. If we've got a thousand people and 950 of them are all placed where they are needed and we need 50 more in this one here, we can't put 955 in this other area. We've got to fill that particular gap, but we won't fill it with somebody who can't do it. His or her tests will indicate clearly that she or he can handle that particular job.

If they just put away the fact that they don't want that particular job or that particular assignment, they can do it. I think what enhances that today more so than it did in the past is that the [NCOs] today explain the big picture to these guys and gals. I knew I was a security policeman, but I didn't know the big picture. I didn't know what I was really doing, what I was going to be securing and that type of thing, and where I fit into the picture. I used to do a job, and I would go home after I did it, and I didn't know if I did it good or bad. If I did it good, I didn't know what I really did. You just did your job. That was the most important thing. If you didn't, you were chastised, and rightfully so. Today, you not only do your job, but they kind of tell you where you fit in what you are doing for the Air Force or for the mission or for the country. It's a little bit more in-depth other than just doing your job. For the most part, I think the [NCOs] and the officers alike tell their young enlisted troops where they are going, what they are going to do, how they are going to achieve it, and what they are going to do for the Air Force when they do that.

## **DID YOU SEE THIS STIGMA DISSIPATE OVER THE YEARS THAT WERE ATTACHED TO THESE PURSUITS LIKE SECURITY POLICE AND FOOD SERVICE?**

Yes. But you are absolutely right. If you washed out of school, you got handled, "Well, you are going to security police." In other words, you were a dropout. That was it. It was really not a good thing for most people. Some people tried very, very hard. They wanted to be a mechanic. They lived and breathed being a mechanic. Then when they washed out and they got security police, food service, or transportation, they were just devastated. I think they were devastated not so much because they got that particular job but because of the stigma that was attached to it. But as the years went on, the military police or the security police—the air police as we called it, AP, with the armband and all that—times changed.



With everything else, with time, education, and experience, we got some fine leaders in there who made the military police, the air police, the food service, or the transportation a meaningful part of the total organization. I guess it goes back to the fact they had to do something with the guy or the gal who dropped out. A lot of people didn't want to go into the military police or to transportation or food service. Those were the ones that were lacking in personnel numbers wise, and that's where they kept throwing them. Coupled with that, there was a stigma attached to it.

Look at it today. Transportation is a very meaningful part of the Air Force. Stop and think about it. You can't go anywhere without it. We'll just say let's talk about Logistics Command.<sup>2</sup> People say, "That's a little nickel and dime outfit," but let me tell you something. If we were to have a major conflict, a major war, I'll tell you what, I don't care how many F-16s and F-18s you've got, without Logistics Command you can't survive—you cannot survive. Logistics, that's getting part A to part B in a timely fashion. Am I right or wrong? Sometimes people think that—and I don't think they do it with any prejudice—the aircraft is very important, but I've always contended, no matter how much we've paid for that aircraft, \$25 million, \$26 million—and I don't care what the numbers are, and I don't care how educated and how smart that pilot is—it doesn't make a difference. You can get the biggest—just pick a name—[Brig Gen Charles E.] "Chuck" Yeager. I like Chuck Yeager, and I know Chuck Yeager. With him, a well-known man, he's versatile; he's experienced; he's a great pilot; and he's a great Air Force leader. Put him in the best aircraft we've got, but he can't take off the ground unless that mechanic, that one-striper, pulls the chocks. That's one way of looking at it. Or we'll pull the chocks. Okay, he still can't go until that young guy from transportation of the fuels puts fuel in there. And he still can't get off the ground unless the avionics man has done his job. If he takes off, he still can't do his job unless he can land. It's just not one man anymore. It's a combination of many, many, many people that are going to make the Air Force what it is today, and that's how it is today—a combination of many, many, many people.

I think many years ago it was this outfit versus that outfit or this organization against that organization. I am happy to say that I think that those days are gone. I think they are bygone days, if you will. They are days of the past. The organizations, the transportation, logistics, Air Force Systems Command, all of those organizations are an integral part of the big picture.<sup>3</sup> They always were, even back in the fifties, but people didn't associate the air police with transportation and transportation with food service. But just think of it, those guys who walked those ammo dumps, or worked town patrol, or whatever they did, how much could they work them if they didn't get fed through the mess hall? They have to eat. Look at the transportation guy. You couldn't do your job if you didn't have a vehicle to do it. You couldn't walk the base, not proficiently. I think it was not me against them and all that. I think they were just organizations, and I just don't believe, at least during my tenure in the fifties, that there was that feeling of unity. It was this organization against that organization and that type of thing. I left in August of 1983, and they have really come a long way.

## **WELL, LET'S GET YOU BACK GETTING INTO YOUR SECOND TOUR IN THE AIR FORCE. YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU GOT INTO INVESTIGATIVE WORK. WERE YOU EVER IN SOME TYPE OF FORMAL TRAINING FOR THIS, OR DID YOU JUST DO IT ON THE JOB?**

I did it on the job. Everybody has a forte to a certain extent. I do like investigative work or that type of a job. I listen to people, and when they say things, my mind automatically starts to gear up as to why they said it and where they said it. It's not so much that I am critical of what they said, but I listen to people, and I can, more times than not, tell you if somebody is blowing smoke up my nose. [Laughter] I guess what I really liked about the investigative work was the excitement of putting together a puzzle: basically a crime. When you were home asleep or 500, 200, or 100 miles away, somebody did something. Then you went in there after he had done it or after they had done it, and you put all of the pieces back together again exactly how they did it, yet not being there when it was done. I really thrived on that. My military career, as far as the security police, was very, very rewarding. I was involved in solving simple larceny to murder. Arson, child molestation—I did it all. To me it was very rewarding to find what had happened when I wasn't even there and putting all the pieces back together again, even if it was an automobile accident which involved a fatality on a rain-slick highway. You got there half an hour afterwards, and you put all the pieces together. That's what I was excited about. I liked that, but I never had any formal training.

## **DID YOU COME TO THE ATTENTION OF YOUR SUPERIORS AS BEING ADEPT AT THIS SORT OF THING?**

The only thing I can say is yes, and I say that with modesty. At Shaw AFB when they gave me that stakeout looking for an NCO—I think he was a master sergeant—they had been looking for him for a long time, and they knew that he was going to come back. They felt certain that he was going to come back to this house. He lived off base. I was put on the stakeout, and I did it day in and day out.

Now stakeouts, when you watch television, it's done in 30 minutes or maybe an hour. [Laughter] You sit there for countless hours, six, seven hours, and it's very, very difficult sometimes because it's not always the best of weather. If it's cold out, you can't turn on your car because now people will know that you are in your car or keeping warm, which is also a safety factor. If it's hot, well, you've got to contend with the elements, and it's not as glamorous as people or as television lead you to believe it is. It's boring, and it's tiring. Then you go home and go to bed, and you get up and do the same thing the next day.

This particular time that I was picked to do it, I got the job for the surveillance because the NCO—he was a staff sergeant, and here I was a two-striper—was off somewhere. I got it because they needed a stakeout. I went with another master sergeant, and we staked out. We were pretty certain that he was in the house. Somebody was moving around in it.

We went into the house—and my partner, the NCO, said, “We must have been mistaken.” I said, “Let’s look a little.” We looked a little bit further, and I looked underneath the kitchen cabinets—why, I don’t know. I’ll be honest with you. It scared the hell out of me. [Laughter] I’m looking for the guy, but I’m not thinking I would find him under the kitchen cabinet under the sink. He had gotten in there, and I didn’t know if he was armed or anything else, but that’s where I found him. Anyway, I got the job, and one thing led to another. I got other jobs in the investigative field, where I uncovered larceny at finance, and somebody robbed the commissary, and we got him. At the time, to me it was a big, important job.

## **WHEN DID YOU GET YOUR THIRD STRIPE BACK AGAIN?**

I got it in 1961. I got it there at Shaw AFB. This may not sound familiar to a lot of people, but I got it under what they call EWQ, exceptionally well qualified. There were only so many stripes. In fact, Shaw AFB got seven first class Airman stripes. Seven, and that was it for the entire base, all AFSCs [Air Force specialty code] and everything else. In those days you had to meet a board. You would meet the commander and a bunch of NCOs. I met NCOs one day, and then I met the commander the next. I made my Airman first class stripe under what they call EWQ.<sup>4</sup> So, that’s when I got my stripe back. I came back in 1958, but I made my stripe back in 1961, and that was fast. At that time, it may not have seemed it, but that was very, very fast. Then I went to Okinawa [Japan] from there, and they put me in investigations there, and I worked investigations.

## **DID YOUR NAME JUST COME UP FOR OKINAWA, OR DID YOU PUT IN FOR IT?**

My name came up. I was kind of surprised because I hadn’t been there that long. I went to Okinawa. I got there, and, of course, they look at your records, your performance reports. My performance reports reflected investigative, and that was what I had been doing earlier; so, they put me in there.

## **WERE YOU STILL SINGLE DURING THIS PERIOD?**

Yes.

## **WHEN DID YOU GET MARRIED?**

I got married in 1969 when I went to Panama City, Tyndall AFB [Florida], and I came from Okinawa in April 1965. I met Shirley there. She was a schoolteacher at Moffett High School. She was a phys ed [physical education] teacher. It was a blind date.

Military-wise, I was at the security police there, and I had an opportunity. The base commander asked for me, and I got it by name. This was during the height of Vietnam, 1965, 1966, 1967, when people were going over almost on no-notice, seven-day, or 14-day notice. The protocol NCO for the base, a tech sergeant, got an overnight shipment to

Vietnam; so, I was asked to go in and fill in just for a short period of time—a few months. Those few months ended up to be almost 18 months. I was the NCO of protocol, and I worked directly for the base commander—functions, dining-ins and -outs, and all that. It’s not as glamorous as some people think. [Laughter] You needed to know your protocol. You needed to know who was coming in, especially the black-tie affairs and that type of thing. It was a nice job.

I had a major I worked for. His name was Sterling H. Elmore. He was a good commander, but he was not a popular commander. He was not a popular commander for the air police. He was not popular at all. I think he wasn’t popular because he didn’t allow anybody to do anything. He had to be a part of whatever situation was going on. I don’t think he trusted people to their fullest. He always had his finger in whatever was going on within the organization, whether it was the first sergeant’s business or whatever. People took offense to that. They felt like they weren’t being allowed the opportunity to show what they could do for the organization. He became a little upset because I was working outside my AFSC, which was air police. The IG [inspector general] came in one day, and they also looked at the air police. He said, “Listen, this NCO over there is outside his AFSC.” I was a tech sergeant. I need to share that with you . . . I had made my promotion to staff sergeant and tech sergeant in Okinawa, but when I left the promotions hadn’t been released, so about a month later I got a message saying I was a tech sergeant. I was a tech sergeant at the security police and also protocol. He told the IG that I was working outside my AFSC and he wanted me back. Well, I had seen another side of the Air Force that I hadn’t seen. I had done the security police work, but I had seen another section. [The base commander] said that I had to go back, and I said, “Is there anything else I can do?” He said, “No, not really. My hands are tied.” I said, “Well, I would like to be a first sergeant if I could.”

To make a long story short, he put in the request for the first sergeant. This was just a very brief time in the Air Force history that they selected tech sergeants to be first sergeants. Within a year you had to pass the test and be promoted or else you reverted back to your other AFSC. In other words, you couldn’t stay in there indefinitely. You only had a period of time as a tech sergeant first sergeant to be master sergeant or else you had to go back to your other AFSC. The Air Force sent back a message to [the base commander], and they gave me 13 different assignments that I could have applied for. Not one of them was Tyndall AFB, and I wanted to stay there. The first sergeant, who was a master sergeant, was working for the transportation squadron at Tyndall. The powers that be made arrangements for him to go to CBO [Consolidated Base Personnel Office] because he was an ex-personnel man. He was willing to go back to personnel in his AFSC, and they would put me in there with transportation. So, I did get to stay at Tyndall, and I worked for a Maj. Forbes. He was the commanding officer, a good commanding officer. He knew his troops, and he got things done. I stayed there, and I was Tyndall’s first and only and youngest tech sergeant first sergeant. It’s somewhere in the archives that I was the youngest tech sergeant and only tech sergeant in Tyndall AFB history.



I made master sergeant the first go-round. I made it six months later, so I did very well. I made staff, tech, master, E-8, and E-9 with the minimum time in grade. I was a chief master sergeant at 19 or 20 years.

## **YOU MENTIONED IN (THE PAST) THAT YOUR TIME AS FIRST SERGEANT WAS ONE OF THE MOST GRATIFYING PERIODS OF YOUR CAREER.**

It was. I guess the reason I really wanted to be a first sergeant was that every first sergeant that I had going up prior to becoming a first sergeant, I cannot recall one not being professional. Well, now that I think about it, I can find one. He knew his job absolutely inside and out, but there were some gray areas with him. I think for the most part first sergeants treated me very, very well. They were concerned about my future, and I saw that as a positive sign. So, I wanted to be a first sergeant for a combination of reasons. First of all, I considered it to be the most important enlisted job in the organization. I thought it was the nerve center and that you could influence people much better as a first sergeant than you could as an NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge] of a section. An NCOIC of a section was limited to that section, but as a first sergeant, you had all the sections under your control in your approach to things, your professionalism, and your leadership. I think people saw you in a different light. I tried very hard to display professionalism in every sense of the word. I believe in professionalism. Even today I believe in it, whether you work in the military or civilian life. If you are a professional, I think you will go much further than if you're not.

You had to be a lot of things as far as a first sergeant. I think first sergeants don't get the credit that they honestly deserve because they are a combination of so many things. They are a father confessor. They are an intermediary for domestic problems. There are alcohol problems; there are drug problems; there are domestic problems; and there are discipline problems. Not everything is negative, but they have a lot of those things going on, and they have to be able to handle it and to keep the mission going. If everybody came in with a problem and it wasn't solved, it wouldn't take very long, and you wouldn't have an outfit. It was good, and I enjoyed it.

## **SPEAKING OF THE VIETNAM ERA, MANY OF THE INTERVIEWEES THAT I'VE TALKED TO, MILITARY MEMBERS, RESENTED THE FACT THAT THEY BECAME THE WHIPPING BOYS FOR THE VIETNAM SITUATION, AND THEY FELT IT WAS PURELY DUE TO THE INEPTITUDE OF OUR POLITICAL LEADERS THAT MADE THEM THE WHIPPING BOYS INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.**

I think you are right, more so than you are not. I guess if I had to put some sort of a picture as to how the American GI was held back during

the Vietnam War, if you could picture a military Soldier, however you image him, and have one hand tied behind his back, that's how I looked upon the Vietnam War. But if you turn that Soldier around, I think you will honestly see, in my mind's eye, a group of politicians holding his arm. That's how I looked at it.

But even though I didn't agree with all of the political views, I had to believe in the orders that were given by my superiors. I said it time and time again, that we came into the military, swearing some sort of an allegiance, to obey our country, the laws, and the officers appointed. To me that's a solemn oath. I don't think you or I or anybody can take that and say, "I will do this, but I'm not going to do that," and "I'll do this, but I won't do that." It's not being robotic. It's not just being some sort of robot for somebody with periscope vision and not having some sort of a thought process of a decision of your own, but it's necessary that you listen to the superiors. In the event that they are not giving you the orders and they are doing an injustice or a damage to our way of life and everything else, there are all kinds of means of getting around that, either legislative or congressional or just retiring from the military, if you feel that bad about it. I just don't think that people can pick and choose what orders or policies that they are going to accept. They cannot pick and choose. I don't think we are in that kind of a job. And it isn't any different if you work for Delta, Anheuser-Busch, or any major corporation, GTE, Chrysler. When Lee Iacocca or August Busch III says, "This is what I want, and this is how I want the operation to work," you are not going to say, "Well, I'll do this, sir, but I'm not going to do that." How long would you have a job? So, it isn't just the military. The impact on the military is that if you don't do it, you could very well put yourself or your country behind the eight ball; whereas, you are putting a company's statistics or their percentages of growth and net profit where you could hurt them. When you are talking with a military guy and gal about disobeying orders and policies and picking and choosing, you are not talking about a gross net profit at the end of the year. You are talking about freedom or the lack of it that you are going to have if you continue. You can't pick and choose what orders and what policies and what rules or regulations you are going to adhere to—not in the military.

## **YOU WERE A FIRST SERGEANT OF THE 483RD ORGANIZATIONAL MAINTENANCE SQUADRON AT CAM RANH BAY (VIETNAM). WHAT TYPES OF PERSONNEL PROBLEMS WERE YOU FACED WITH? WERE THEY ANY DIFFERENT THERE THAN WHAT YOU HAD EXPERIENCED PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL THERE?**

No. The biggest problem in that organization was drugs, to be very honest with you. I mean cocaine. If you were devious and had that kind of a way about you—and I'm sure some tried—you could make a great deal of money, but maybe not so much there because the little vials that they were selling for maybe \$2 was anywhere from 96 to 97 percent pure. That was, in the eyes of those who use it, the best there was.

That same vial, back in the States, was cut down maybe 30, 40, 50 times. What was happening to our troops over there—not only the fact that they were taking it and were getting hooked, and, of course, destroying the mission in many, many respects because if you are on that stuff, there is no way you can handle the mission. We are not talking about just getting up and flying around for a Sunday afternoon. We are getting up and flying on a very, very important mission. In addition to that, the guy would go back if he got undetected. Now if he was to buy it on the street he would have to buy it at maybe 50 or 60 times more than what he had to pay for it there, and it wasn't one-third as far as potency as what he had over there, so he was really spending hundreds of dollars a day just to keep up with what he was getting there for \$2 or \$3. We did have quite a bit of a problem in Southeast Asia.

## **WERE YOU ABLE TO TURN THIS AROUND?**

Yes, I think we all did because we caught them. The awareness that we had a problem was very, very evident. It was mostly the younger troops. I think I found in our organization one tech sergeant that may have been involved, and the rest were these two- and three-striper. Why just the young striper and not the senior NCOs? That's debatable. During the whole tenure there, I think we only had one NCO who was involved, and he was not only using it, but I think he was selling it. That was more of a serious crime than just the use of it. I think we turned it around, not just in my organization but in all the organizations because of the efforts of very responsible people. I say again, the first sergeants were a very focal point and the commanders and also the OSI [Office of Special Investigations]. In that organization of people, I think we turned it around a great deal but nothing like we would have liked to. You don't want to see that.

## **WAS THIS A 12-MONTH TOUR THAT YOU WERE OVER THERE ON?**

Yes. I think I came back a little bit early though. It may have been 10 months. I think what happened is that they really got an influx of military personnel. Even though your 12 months were up, you really didn't get to go home unless you had a replacement. In an organization of a thousand people and you are going home, they wanted to have a replacement. I think I left there at probably nine and a half or 10 months, maybe about two months early, because there was an influx of first sergeants coming into the field, and I was happy.

## **HOW DID YOU WIND UP AT KEESLER (AFB, MISSISSIPPI)?**

I went to Keesler from Cam Ranh as a first sergeant, and I had the student squadron.

## **DID YOU WANT THAT SORT OF THING, OR WAS THAT JUST AUTOMATIC?**

I can't recall what my dream sheet was for what base I wanted, but Keesler was fine. I had no objections with Keesler. I had never been down there—well, I was years and years ago only for about maybe 30 or 40 days when I first came in the service. It was a good assignment. I had the 3392nd Student Squadron, and it was a good assignment. All in all, it was a busy assignment. I had a lot to do. I think the busyness came about not so much from the numbers but because every six weeks we would receive x number of troops from Lackland [AFB, Texas] on a bus. This was their very, very first touch of what you call the military after Keesler. This was their first indoctrination as to how they were going to be looked at and serve either in the tech training school or at their first assignment. It was challenging. First of all, the basic military training, they kind of take them from a rainbow type of a situation, with all kinds of colors of clothes and hats and everything else, and just kind of put them into an organized group. They give them to the units, and now it's the units' time to pick up exactly where Lackland left off and mold them into regular, honest-to-goodness Airmen or military members. I think the basic military training schools are really doing their jobs. They were putting those men and women out.

As I remember Keesler, I would see a troop get off the bus, and he would almost walk at attention and would salute almost anything that walked. Everything was "Sir," and it was brisk, but it wasn't three or four weeks later that if you looked at that same individual that you saw, you wouldn't see that "Yes, Sir" and "No, Sir." Sometimes it would be "Yeah," and the briskness was gone. It really bothered me a great deal. I blame the personality drop or the military drop—I don't know how you want to call it—the change, from three or four weeks ago when he got off that bus from Lackland to what he is today, on supervisors. You don't have to give them the same regimented thumbs-on that you did at Lackland. Lackland was nothing but molding that guy or gal. I think what happened was that they allowed them too much freedom at one specific time. They got off that bus and had never seen anything, and all of a sudden they were basically free to go and do what they wanted to do. I think it was too quick, too fast, and I know that some of the NCOs in the managerial or the supervisory capacity allowed that young Airman to be too familiar with the supervisor. I think it just broke down from there. It was so evident. I had more discussions on this, and I talked about this so many times. You couldn't believe it . . . a man would get off that bus on the first day of April in 1978, and four weeks later you couldn't recognize him in a crowd. He was not that polished guy.

## **WERE YOU ABLE TO CHANGE ANYTHING?**

I think I changed it as far as the organization. We NCOs talked about it. That also was a period of time of familiarity. NCOs didn't feel that it was any big deal to be very familiar with the one-striper. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that they weren't equal. They were equal as an individual and as a personality and as an education, but as far as grades, they were not equal—and they cannot be equal.









Out of that little scenario that we talked about being polished, being ready, and being willing to serve and organized and disciplined from basic and all of a sudden, “Don’t ‘Sir’ me. You are not in basic anymore.” From there it got to the point where the young Airman was confused. He really was confused. I’ve had them tell me that they didn’t understand how it could be so different. When they went to basic they were not willing to accept any of this, but they were in fear, not petrified fear but fear that they had to do the right thing, fear of the unknown. They didn’t know what was going to happen if they didn’t do it. They weren’t going to be beaten. They didn’t know what was going to happen; so, they did it out of fear. But it didn’t take but maybe seven to 14 days, and they realized what they were doing and that now they were working as a unit. In basic military training today, I’m convinced that if you and I were to go down there today and go through that process, you and I would not graduate, not at all, unless we were a team player. You can’t graduate from basic military training today unless you are a team member. So this young Airman got this team-oriented thing, and all of a sudden he’s told, “Don’t ‘Sir’ me. You are not in basic military training anymore.” Whatever the TIs [training instructors], the drill instructors, did was destroyed in a matter of seconds. That bothered me quite a bit. Things have changed now.

## **IT WAS DURING THAT PERIOD THAT YOU ALSO ATTENDED THE SENIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMY AT GUNTER [AFB, ALABAMA]. HOW DID YOU GREET THE IDEA OF ATTENDING THAT PARTICULAR COURSE?**

I ran. I was told by some NCOs, “You don’t need that. Don’t worry about it. You’ll get promoted anyway, so don’t worry about it.” It wasn’t so much getting promoted with or without it. It was an opportunity. I didn’t do as well as I could have done in school . . . and I didn’t want to lose an opportunity again. Here I had an opportunity to go to school with some of the top NCOs in the country and some of the best faculty. These people were experts in their field, and I did not want to pass that up.

It was nine weeks, but I didn’t want to pass it up. So I absolutely ran, and I did not get selected for the second class. The first class was already picked when it all came down through the channels. The class was already picked, and that was a very prestigious class. [CMSAF Thomas N.] Barnes was in it, I think, and [CMSAF James M.] Jim McCoy was in it. A lot of top NCOs were in it. I didn’t get the second class because I was passed over, but I was selected for the third class, so I went to 73-C. It was one of the highlights of my career. For such a short period of time, nine weeks, it was good.

## **CAN YOU GIVE ME A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SORT OF THINGS THAT YOU DEALT WITH IN THAT NINE WEEKS?**

Just everything—human relations, management, and leadership. I guess the best thing that I got out of it was the classroom exchange between

the other NCOs on world affairs and issues. The auditorium was fine. You went there and listened to guest speakers who were very, very polished and very, very versed on whatever the subject may be, but I think the benefit I derived was from the classroom exchange. This was the first time that I had ever really sat in that kind of a 12-, 16-, or 18-man class, which is small, and really exchanged our thoughts. There was academic freedom, where you could say what you wanted to say. The school helped you in so many ways. It made me a better NCO. I thought I was a good NCO when I went there, but I know I became a better NCO because of that school. The only thing I can say to whomever is eligible to go to that school is that they should go.

The story during the first five or seven years of that school was that, “I’m an E-8, and I’m a chief. What can you teach me?” That was not the attitude to have. It was kind of prevalent though, and a lot of people didn’t want to go to the school. There were a lot of good NCOs who didn’t want to go for a combination of many reasons—maybe the family separation, and maybe they’ve got 24, 25, 26 years, and they are already a chief. They can’t get promoted by going to the school. But I have yet to hear from an NCO who went to that school and said he didn’t enjoy it. He’s happy, and he came back saying, “You’ve got to go.” That’s probably pretty much predominant throughout the leadership schools in the Air Force and the other academies—the NCO Academy down at Kirtland AFB [New Mexico] or whatever base you want to pick. I have seen countless times where people left their organization dragging their heels, leaving their heel marks on the pavement, and then coming back and probably being the best spokesman for that school than anybody else could have ever been. I have seen that time and time and time again.

## **WHAT GRADE WERE YOU WHEN YOU ATTENDED?**

I was an E-8.

## **WAS THAT GENERALLY THE MAKEUP OF THE CLASS?**

The majority were E-8s. There were chiefs in there, and some of them didn’t want to be there. It was a new school, and in 1973 it was only the third class. Was it going to fall through the proverbial crack another year from now? There were mixed emotions. Was the school going to be funded? Was it going to get better, or was it just going to be one of those flashes in the pan? All those kinds of comments came out: “Why should I spend nine weeks there, and next year it will be disintegrated?” That was some of it.

As you and I can see today, it’s not only there but it’s bigger, better, and stronger than it has ever been. The support came basically from the Air University [AU] and Air Training Command, or, technically speaking, Air Training Command, and then it reverts to AU, am I right? Today the emphasis and the support, although it’s under AU, really comes down from the Air Staff. They support it, and they believe in it. There are not too many schools that you get three- and four-star generals to come to and to address. The chief of staff of the Air Force, Gen. [Lew, Jr.] Allen, came down there and spent two hours down there on the stage. He told them what he thought and what was going on and fielded their questions.

Gen. [Charles A.] Gabriel went down there, at least once if not twice. Gen Alton D. Slay went down there. These are times where people of this caliber and position are wrapped up in major, monumental decisions for the defense of the country, but they find time to go down there and to tell them what's going on and also to hear how they feel about whatever. I gained a great deal from just being there. I applaud it. I think it's one of the best institutions the Air Force has as far as the learning process. I just think it can't do anything except get better.

## **LET'S TALK ABOUT THE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR POSITION. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CONCEPT OF SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR?**

I think the program is very good. I think it's beneficial in that the senior enlisted advisor, whether at the base or the wing level, is the eyes and the ears of the commander of that base or that wing. The philosophy that I think that the enlisted advisor should be doing is having a pulse on the enlisted corps within that organization that he's working with. No matter how good or how energetic or how many hours the commander or wing commander works, he can't get down into all of those trenches as often as the enlisted advisor. So, he is really basically the eyes and ears of that commander.

I think the program, when it first started out, was probably not meant to do what it's doing today. When it first came out . . . people would just go directly from their job site right to the base commander's office. In putting in this position as the senior enlisted advisor, that was going to be the door that the young man was going to come to, and it was the responsibility of the enlisted advisor to solve that man's problem before it got any further. In other words, in a sense maybe it was just a roadblock or a hurdle—but not in the sense that it was to diminish the guy or the gal coming up. It was to take the load off of the base commander or the wing commander and that echelon and let the enlisted advisor work the problem as much as he possibly could. He had the authority and the green light to go to the people who could solve that problem, whether it was the commander of the medics if it was a medical problem, or he could pick up the phone and call the commander of finance if it was a finance problem. He had the authority to do what the base or the wing commander would have done. But, as it turned out, it not only went from that but it went to other things, mission-oriented things. It got bigger and bigger and bigger, where the enlisted advisor was doing more and more and more. That's not bad, but it's just that he's got more of an area of responsibility today than he did back when it first started, and there's nothing wrong with that. I think it's working fine.

## **SOME OF YOUR PREDECESSORS—**

Who are they? (laughter)

## **[CMSAF] PAUL AIREY FOR ONE—**

Paul Airey, the godfather. (laughter)

## **—WAS VERY UPSET WITH THE TITLE “SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR.” HE CALLED IT A “NAMBY-PAMBY, NONDESCRIPT TITLE” THAT HE WASN'T THE LEAST BIT HAPPY WITH. HE WANTED TO CALL IT “CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF MAC [MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND]” OR “CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF SAC [STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND],” BUT HIS SUCCESSORS ALL VETOED THE IDEA. THEY FELT THAT IT WOULD DETRACT FROM THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE POSITION, AND IT NEVER CAUGHT ON. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT TITLE?**

Let me say two things. I consider Paul Airey an honest-to-goodness friend and professional, equally. I consider him my friend. I've known him since 1976. I've known him whether he's known me; that's something else. But I do not agree with Paul that there should be a Chief Master Sergeant of TAC [Tactical Air Command] or SAC or MAC or Logistics or Systems Command or whatever. I think that the title of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force—that's it. There should be nothing else. They shouldn't have any addendums to that or Chief Master Sergeant of TAC. There's only one Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I think that's the only way it should be, and they should not piggyback on that.

Senior enlisted advisor, what else can you call it? Base sergeant major? Now we are getting back into an Army terminology. We separated back in 1947 and became different, distinct, separated from the Army. Now we are the US Air Force, not the Army Air Corps. We needed to take new changes in titles and everything else. I think that senior enlisted advisor, after all of the conversation about it, will probably survive between now and whenever. I think all of the rhetoric and all of the discussion about changing the title has worn itself out. Personally, I don't think it will ever change. I think it's here to stay. There may be a better title for it. I don't know what it would be. I hope sincerely that nobody tries to tack on a title saying “Chief Master Sergeant of” because there's only one “Chief Master Sergeant of,” and that's “of the Air Force.” If you start putting little additions on to that, I think you honestly will lessen the position that goes with that title. That's my personal opinion.<sup>5</sup>



## **WAPS [WEIGHTED AIRMAN PROMOTION SYSTEM] WAS IMPLEMENTED IN JUNE 1970 AFTER EXTENSIVE RESEARCH BY THE AIR FORCE HUMAN RESOURCES LABORATORY. FROM YOUR VIEWPOINT, HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS THE WAPS SYSTEM BEEN?**

Totally successful, in my estimation. I don't think that you've got from the predecessors of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force any response other than that. WAPS is an absolute super program. I guess the Air Force has done as much for the enlisted guy and gal for their progression as is humanly possible. Simple, to the point, WAPS is here to stay, and it's accepted—that's the key word. It's accepted by the enlisted force. It may not have been at the outset, because there were grumblings that it's here today and maybe not tomorrow. That's what probably bothers some people sometimes. Like the NCO Academy or the Senior NCO Academy: "It's here today. Why should I go? It's not going to be here next week." There was that fear that it may not be here and it was maybe just a flash in the pan. It's accepted, and it's here to stay.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE (CCAF)?**

Coming from an individual who really didn't put his mind to the academics, I support any kind of an educational program, whether it's the very basic leadership schools within the squadrons or the Community College of the Air Force. Just education in itself is just another avenue in which you can better yourself economically, emotionally, or mentally. I support CCAF. I don't think we have enough. There are a lot of people in there. I don't know what the figures are now, but I wish there were more people because today the Airman and the NCO or the enlisted corps has probably more time for that type of an education than they did many, many years ago. The reason that they have more time is that things are more organized today than they were 25 years ago. Things are just so much better organized, and people have more time, but I don't think enough of the people are taking advantage of the Community College of the Air Force and other programs. Some are, but not as many as I would like to see probably.

## **ONE OF THE CRITICISMS ABOUT NOT JUST THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE BUT ALSO THE IDEA OF GETTING A DEGREE IS THAT IT HAS CREATED THE ILLUSION IN SOME AIRMEN'S MINDS OF "LOOK, I'VE GOT A DIPLOMA NOW. I'VE GOT A DEGREE. PROMOTE ME." I THINK IT WAS PAUL AIREY THAT POINTED OUT THAT THERE'S MUCH MORE TO IT THAN SIMPLY WALKING IN WITH THAT DIPLOMA.**

He's right, and we've got to be mindful of the individual that walks around with that perception. Hopefully it's not running rampant

throughout the Air Force or throughout the military services. That parchment is only a portion of what has to be accomplished. You can put the piece of diploma or the parchment and time in grade into two different categories. Just because you've got time in grade does not mean that you are worthy of promotion; I'm sorry. There are individuals who feel that because they have x number of years or they've got the exact number of months' time in grade for the next promotion that they should be automatically promoted. By the same token, this guy or gal walks in and says, "Listen, I've got so many credits and so many degrees. I need to be promoted." There's a lot more to it than that. You've got to have the experience, and you've got to have all the things necessary to be upgraded. Time in grade or the parchment, those are two individual things.

## **IN AN AIR FORCE TIMES ARTICLE DATED 16 NOVEMBER 1981 YOU NOTED, "THE NEW TWO-TIER PROMOTION SYSTEM IS NECESSARY TO CORRECT SERIOUS IMBALANCES."<sup>6</sup> THIS PLAN "GIVES SHORTAGE SKILLS HIGHER PERCENTAGES OF PROMOTIONS IN GRADES E-5, E-6, AND E-7 TO IMPROVE RETENTION AND ENCOURAGE RETRAINING INTO THEM." IN RETROSPECT, HOW DID THIS TWO-TIER PROMOTION SYSTEM WORK OUT?**

I don't think it worked out as well as the Air Force envisioned it. The thought process and the motivation behind it was honorable. I just don't think it had the backing, to be honest with you, of the majority of the working group within the Air Force. I don't know what my predecessors may have said about that. I think the intentions of the program were honorable, but by the same token I don't think it solved any of the problems that it was trying to solve. It was a means to the end, but it didn't get there as the Air Force envisioned.

The bottom line to that is that I just don't think it had the meat or the substance as the Air Force envisioned it to solve some of the imbalances and that type of thing. There was probably a great deal of animosity from people who were not in those positions, and they were being bypassed and promoted. I don't think it did all that the Air Force would have liked it to have done. It was an honorable attempt to solve some of the problems, but I don't think it solved the problems to the extent like TOPCAP [Total Objective Plan for Career Airman Personnel] solved a great number of the problems and WAPS solved problems. Even in those instances, you didn't please everybody. Nobody was all satisfied. But I think on this particular program there was probably more dissatisfaction than there was acceptance of the program.

**THE 16 NOVEMBER 1981 AIR FORCE TIMES NOTED THAT YOU SUPPORTED THE STRIPES FOR EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMERS (STEP) PROGRAM, “WHICH ALLOWS COMMANDERS TO MAKE A LIMITED NUMBER OF PROMOTIONS TO E-5, E-6, AND E-7 WITHOUT REGARD TO AN INDIVIDUAL’S TIME IN GRADE OR TEST SCORES.” THIS SYSTEM APPEARS TO COUNTER THE WAPS REFORMS, WHICH WERE DESIGNED TO DO AWAY WITH COMMANDERS SHOWING PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT TO FAIR-HAIRED BOYS. HOW DID THE STEP PROGRAM WORK OUT?**

While I was in, it worked out very well. Again, not everybody in the world was for it. If you weren’t promoted under it, you probably weren’t for it. [Laughter] If you were promoted under it, it was the best thing since Post Toasties. It was to get away from the time in grade and the testing. If I go back, in retrospect, and think about it, the reason STEP was put out, Stripes to the Exceptional Performer, is that some people are absolutely superior people, but for some reason or other—it wasn’t just designed because a guy or a gal couldn’t take a test. It was a combination of just absolutely many, many things, not just his ability or lack of ability to take a test. It was based on his professionalism, his leadership abilities, his qualities, and his work habits. This guy or gal who was considered for the STEP or ultimately promoted for the STEP was looked at with a fine-tooth comb. I think it was good because the numbers that were promoted under STEP affected the overall promotion nil. It had absolutely no effect whatsoever. You are talking about 100,000 Airmen, and now you are talking about x number of stripes for—how many did we have, 50, 150 Air Force-wide? I can’t recall the numbers, but they were ridiculously low and had no effect on the promotion system as a whole. But by the same token, it awarded that guy and gal who performed admirably in many, not just a few, but many, many, many areas an opportunity to get promoted ahead of somebody else or ahead of his time under the normal promotion system.

**SOME OF MY PREVIOUS INTERVIEWEES HAVE VOICED CONCERN THAT BECAUSE OF PRESSURE BY WOMEN’S RIGHTS GROUPS AND SO FORTH THAT THE AIR FORCE WENT OVERBOARD IN PUTTING WOMEN IN PREVIOUSLY MALE-DOMINATED CAREER FIELDS, AND SOME OF THEM ARE RATHER VOCAL IN STATING THAT IT WAS TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE OVERALL GOOD OF THE AIR FORCE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS THAT ONE?**

Yes. You are right in the first part of your comment where some women’s groups may have had an impact on some of the decisions that

changed some of our previous decisions as to where women would sit or be, but I’ve got to disagree with the other statement. I don’t know who disagreed. I find the women to be excellent managers and excellent military people. I don’t know who it is, and it’s not important to me who, but I don’t see it as a detriment to the Air Force or to the mission. I see that the women that we’ve got are very, very professional, and they have done a job in a lot of instances better than the male who was doing the job previously before them. They are dedicated, and they are probably a little bit more exact in many instances on certain things than their male counterparts. I disagree with . . . whoever said that.

**ACCORDING TO ANY NUMBER OF MY PREVIOUS INTERVIEWEES, THEY STRONGLY FEEL THAT SOCIAL ACTIVISTS, PRIMARILY IN CONGRESS, HAVE TURNED ALL OF THE MILITARY SERVICES INTO ONE BIG SOCIAL EXPERIMENT TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE OVERALL FIGHTING FORCE.**

I think they have too. I think you’re right if you look at the big picture, but if you are just looking at women—

**NO, THIS IS NOT JUST LOOKING AT WOMEN. IT’S LOOKING AT—**

Your question originally was for women. I think, for the most part, they had a very positive effect on the military structure. In fact, I think it was a surprise to many, many people, because women were not considered an equal. I’m sorry; they weren’t. I don’t give a damn what anybody says. Even in my younger days, they were not considered. They were the weaker sex, and that was the name of the game, but they have shown in more ways than you can shake a stick at that they are very, very capable. There are women who couldn’t find a telephone in a phone booth, but there are also some men who couldn’t find a rabbit bleeding in snow. What I’m saying is that there are just as many males who are incompetent as there are women. I’m not weighing one against the other. There’s an even balance. I think the difference is that we held that women were inferior and they were not capable. I think for the vast majority, whether you admit it or not, they were misclassified as being incompetent, and we realize it now. I think we do as society, but I think we also do as the Air Force. I think the Air Force is very, very happy that we’ve got a caliber of woman that we got in.

I know these young girls who are only two- or three-strippers, and they are avionic technicians. When they were going through high school, they couldn’t spell “avionics,” but when they decided to join the Air Force, they were given a battery of exams—and the magical wand was waved. They put it all in the computer, and she did very well in this particular career field. They approached her, put her in there, trained her, and gave her some of the teaching that she needed. Here she is now; she’s coping with a \$23 million aircraft, if not more. Three years ago she was probably, according to most people, just an average young girl banging around high school. Now here she is; she’s got her a future in front of her, and she’s doing us a great job.



**ANOTHER ISSUE THAT IS CERTAINLY TALKED ABOUT A LOT, BOTH IN THE OFFICER CORPS AND IN THE ENLISTED, IS THE EFFECTIVENESS REPORTS OR APRS (AIRMAN PERFORMANCE REPORT) IN THE CASE OF ENLISTED MEN.<sup>7</sup> AS YOU ARE PROBABLY AS AWARE AS ANYBODY, WE'VE ALWAYS HAD THE TENDENCY TO INFLATE ON THESE THINGS, AND WE KEEP REVISING THESE THINGS, LOOKING FOR THAT PERFECT SYSTEM WHEREBY WE CAN GET AROUND THIS, BUT IT NEVER SEEMS TO HAPPEN. WHAT WORDS OF WISDOM DO YOU HAVE IN THAT REGARD?**

If I could answer that question, I could probably make a lot of money. [Laughter] In fact, I've thought about it, and I wish I could answer the question because I would take out a contract and go to the Air Force, and I would probably be able to retire for the rest of my life. I would sell the program to the Air Force because I know the military would pay me more than anybody else would. [Laughter]

This is my opinion of the APRs. They are bigger than the Goodyear blimp. That's how inflated they are. There's just no getting away from it, but how? The only thing that we've been able to do—you can't put a yardstick on it, and you can't measure it—is that there is an inflation factor there. We know it, and you know it. You look at them, and you have to throw that in there somewhere. You don't put it down as far as numbers, but it's there. What really gripes me to no end to find is a one- or a two-striper or maybe even a three-striper with a nine APR. Where the hell can he go? He can't go anywhere except up. Why we cannot give him a six or a seven is he will be dead in the water, because nobody else will give it. In other words, if you have been honest with your individual and you give him a true, honest-to-goodness reading and a six or a seven is exceptional, very well qualified, when you put him next to everybody else who got nines, he's a dummy! In fact, you were honestly saying he has really got the potential and with time he is going to be a top NCO, but you have shot him out of the water. He's dead in the water because of everybody else not going along with your way of thinking. You are not going to get everybody to go back down and do it realistically. If there was an edict from the president of the United States that nobody with two stripes or three stripes would get any more than a six, then every damned one of them would get a six. In other words, a six would be the highest. So you can't break it. You'll never be able to break that camel's back. I wish I could figure out how we could do that. I would be able to rest pretty comfortably.

I don't know how we can solve the problem. I remember when the APRs came out in 1960. You can look at my APRs. I got a six or a seven, and I was happy as hell. I was ecstatic to get a five or a six. I got five, and then I got maybe five and a half. The numbers equaled might be five and a half. Then I went to a six. I gradually grew into that position. Even though I have gotten nines, and, if you read those blocks, I'm no more a nine than the man in the moon. You had no alternative because everybody else was doing it. There was a brief—I mean very, very brief—period where commanders were told and supervisors were told to bring them back down, but that lasted maybe a reporting period. It had the same negative impact that it did on the officers' corps. Talking about APRs, let me tell you. I really became irate during my tenure because I saw APRs which clearly, distinctly said—this is for tech sergeants and master sergeants—“This individual is not performing his job commensurate with his grade and not recommended for promotion,” and he was promoted. People will say, “That's a bunch of crap. You didn't do that.” That is true.

**ARE THERE ANY SUBJECT AREAS THAT I HAVEN'T BROUGHT OUT DURING THIS INTERVIEW THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?**

The only thing that I have ever said loud and clear during my talks as the Chief was that I was very, very concerned about leadership. I think leadership is first and foremost. If you can't lead those people, then you shouldn't be in the job. A lot of people want to be leaders. I've always said, and I believe this, you cannot be a good leader until you are a good follower first. If you are a good follower, then you have the opportunity to be a leader. That doesn't mean that you are going to be a leader because you are a good follower, but you have to have at least that one prerequisite of being a good follower before you can ever be a good leader.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **SAM E. PARISH**

**AUGUST 1, 1983 - JUNE 30, 1986**

Sam Parish left home at age 14 and quite literally never looked back. He joined the Air Force at 17 and a few months later, in August 1955, found himself at Wiesbaden Air Base, West Germany. For a young man raised in “the backwoods of north Florida,” it was an entirely different world.

Parish quickly made a name for himself as a weather operator. He was one of the first to receive a dual specialty code following a merger; he graduated top of his class in seven-level school, becoming the youngest seven-level in his career field and later became the only enlisted Airman developing weather systems in the System Program Office.

Thanks to great leadership during his first assignment, he learned the importance of tenacity and resolve and reached the rank of senior master sergeant in just 12 years. In 1973 he attended the pilot class of the Senior NCO Academy with two other future Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force

(CMSAF): Thomas Barnes and Jim McCoy. He later became the senior enlisted leader for both the US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) and the Strategic Air Command (SAC), where he improved the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year program and established the First Sergeant of the Year award.

In 1986 Gen Charles Gabriel selected Parish to be the 8th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Parish immediately improved recognition programs across the force, establishing the Levitow Award in Professional Military Education and an Air Force-wide First Sergeant of the Year award. He also moved promotion to senior airman to a fixed point in a career, ensuring Airmen had a chance to compete for promotion to staff sergeant during their first enlistment. Parish retired in 1986 but continues to participate in a wide variety of Air Force activities, speaking at different engagements, including the Senior NCO Academy.

In May 2015 Parish sat down for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and his tenure as the CMSAF. During the interview, Parish highlighted the impact of his early leadership, why he got involved in the community, and how he established the First Sergeant of the Year program. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

## **CHIEF, THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS. YOU CAME IN, IT WAS 1954. YOU WERE 17 YEARS OLD. OF COURSE AT THAT TIME THE KOREAN WAR HAD JUST WRAPPED UP; THE COLD WAR WAS BUILDING. DID THAT PLAY A ROLE INTO WHY YOU DECIDED TO JOIN?**

I have no idea why I joined the Air Force. I had a good job. I was in Fort Myers, Florida. I left home when I was very young. And I went down and was walking past, and I saw this thing. It said United States Army recruiter. So, I go in and he said, “How old are you?” I said 17. He said, “Come back when you’re 18, and we’ll talk.” Well, I walked out. I had never heard of the US Air Force, but I looked up and there was a sign that said US Air Force. I thought, “What’s that?” And I walked in, and there was a young staff sergeant sitting there. And I said, “What’s this Air Force all about?” He said, “Here, take a test.” I took the test. And he said, “Fill out this form.” I filled out the form, and he said, “Come back in a month.” I went back in a month and he said, “Congratulations, you’re going in the Air Force on the 7th of December.”

Two years later, I found out my mother had to sign for me to join the Air Force, but I didn’t know that. When I went to get married, my commander called me in and said, “Hey, you’ve got to have my permission to get married. You’re not an NCO [noncommissioned officer].” I said “Oh, okay. Do I have your permission?” “Oh, yeah, we like your supposed wife very much.” And then he said, “By the way, your mother has to give you permission too. You’re not 21.” I said, “My mom doesn’t even know where I am?” He pulled out a stack of letters, hands them to me and said, “Okay, read them all.” He had been communicating with her the whole time I was in the squadron.

## **DID YOU COMMUNICATE WITH HER BEFORE YOU JOINED OR DID YOU JUST . . .**

No. No, I left home. When I left home, I left home. Very young, very, very young. I left home when I was 14. The next time my mother saw me I was in the Air Force and heading for an overseas assignment. After that, the next time she saw me I was married and had a child.

## **HOW ABOUT THAT. WAS SHE PROUD OF YOU?**

Oh, yeah, very proud. And I was very proud of my mom. It wasn’t her. I had a stepfather that was impossible, but we solved all those problems. So, why did I join the Air Force? Still have no idea. But once I got in I found something.

## **YOU CAME IN, YOU WENT TO BASIC TRAINING AND I THINK IT WAS 12 WEEKS AT THAT TIME.**

Yeah, it sure was, 12 weeks.

## **WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU?**

Well, number one, my first airplane flight was from Miami, Florida, to San Antonio, Texas. I guess I was apprehensive, but I wasn’t apprehensive enough to not think that once I got my orders I needed to start reading them. Before I got to Lackland, [AFB, Texas,] I had memorized my serial number. Not a social security number—a serial number. I still remember it to this day. And I got there, and I guess I could say that I went through 12 weeks of basic training, and I’m not even sure one of my MTIs [military training instructors] ever knew my name.

## **JUST A NUMBER?**

Well, not even a number, because there was a whole ton of us in the flight. And, you know, upper bunk, lower bunk, open bay barracks. I mean really barracks. I went into the service being raised in a rural area from the South. I knew how to say “Yes, sir; no, ma’am.” So, if you did that and you didn’t rebel, I found that basic training was no problem. We still had to do the PT [physical training], but hell, as young kids you can just about ace that if you want to.

So, I enjoyed basic, but we did some things then that we wouldn’t dare do now. You know, we didn’t take our qualification test until we got to basic training. Our sixth week of training was when we took them. Once we took those tests, then they started deciding what you were going to do in the Air Force.

## **DID THEY HAVE PEOPLE FAIL THOSE TESTS?**

AQE [Airman Qualifying Examination] scores is what we got then.<sup>1</sup> I think I had a 90 in general, but the rest of them—well, they got you out of grammar school. We were never told the importance of them, because we sat there and took the sound test and shot spit balls at each other. But it was an experience, and I had a couple of people I still followed for years afterwards.

I was the only person in my entire flight that went into weather. I didn’t know what it was, but there was another flight; there were four of us that went from Lackland to Chanute [AFB, Illinois]. They put us on the train, and the three that I was with were all reenlistees, and here I am, 17 years old. It was a two-day train trip to Chanute, Illinois. I swear those guys spent the whole time in the bar. I didn’t drink, so I had trouble finding meal tickets and everything else because the ranking person got the tickets. So, it was an experience. I had no trouble with it, I enjoyed it. I started learning about the Air Force.



**OVER THE YEARS, WE'VE EVOLVED OUR BASIC TRAINING. IT WENT FROM 12 WEEKS DOWN TO SIX AND ONE-HALF WEEKS. NOW WE HAVE EIGHT AND ONE-HALF, WHICH INCLUDES THE AIRMEN'S WEEK CAPSTONE AT THE END. HOW IMPORTANT WOULD YOU SAY IT IS TO EVOLVE WITH THE TIMES AND MAKE SURE WE'RE STILL FOCUSED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION WITH BASIC TRAINING?**

Well, I think some of the things we're doing in basic training I question a little bit. However, I'm not on active duty and haven't been on active duty for 29 years. I think you almost have to evolve because you're getting a different kind of Airman there than I was when I was an Airman—completely different. You keep up with the times, and I think it's unbelievably important to do what we do in basic, because what you actually do is remake a human being. When our people leave basic military training, in my day—and I still talk to people that have graduated today, some local Airmen—they feel when they leave Lackland AFB, that if you cut them they would bleed blue. Parents cannot believe what we have done to their son or daughter in such a short span.

I still remember in 1978 when I was there for a graduation. I was the USAFE senior enlisted leader, and one of the parents said to me—because we had just started getting parents to attend, relatives, anybody—one of them said to me, “What have you done to my Johnny?” I thought it was derogatory; so, I said, “Ma'am, I apologize.” And she said, “No, no, we want to know the secret.” I said, “I can't tell you; it's classified.” She had seen so much of a change in her son that she couldn't even hardly recognize him. I think that's unbelievably important.

After that, we have a tendency to carry this on into tech school. I'm not sure we do such a good job with that. I'm not talking about the technical training or the following training, but the way we do it. The young person gets there and guess what—when they left Lackland the Air Force was their first love. And they get there, and the first thing they hear from one of the instructors is that they have the most important job in the US Air Force, and we don't just take anybody in this career field. They start changing them from love of Air Force to love of job. Then they get out in the field, and the first thing they hear when they get there is you got the most important job in the Air Force, and we just don't allow everybody to be a crew chief. All of a sudden, at five or six years in service, they make staff or tech sergeant and we tell them, I'm sorry, we don't need you as a security forces person anymore at that grade, we need you over here. And they won't change because of love of job: “If I can't be a crew chief, to hell with it. I'll get out of the Air Force.” I heard that from an Airman. I told him, “They don't have crew chiefs outside; what are you going to do when you retire?” Well, come to find out all he wanted to do was be on the flight

line. So, he went to another job on the flight line. And he made tech sergeant the next cycle, master, senior, and he's now a chief in our Air Force; happy as hell. But he would have gotten out of the Air Force because he couldn't be a crew chief.

So you see we teach love of job, and that's what we do there after basic. We kind of dilute the basic training importance of love of Air Force. If you love the Air Force, you don't care what you're doing so long as you can do it.

**YOUR TECH SCHOOL, AS YOU MENTIONED, WAS WEATHER. YOU GRADUATED AND YOU WERE SENT TO WIESBADEN, GERMANY. I'M CURIOUS, WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE, JUST ENTERING A NEW COUNTRY?**

Well, number one, I grew up so far in the backwoods of north Florida that I hardly thought there was another language in the world. When I got ready to go to Germany, I took leave and went home and visited my brothers and sisters, and then took a Greyhound from Marianna, Florida, to New York City, Grand Central Station. At Grand Central Station I had to go to a place called Manhattan Air Force Station. I had never heard of it in my life. Nobody else had either—it was new. So, I finally got there and I checked in, and they said you're going to be here two weeks and you're going to be doing KP [kitchen patrol] and details until we get a flight to ship you out on. I said, “Flight? They told me I was going by ship.” “Nope, this is the Air Force, we're experimenting.” So, they gave me a bunk and said they would ding me in the morning at 5 o'clock. Well, 11 o'clock at night they came and said, “Are you Parish?” I said, “I am.” “Are you going to Germany?” “I am.” “Get up and pack, your plane is going to leave. We're going to Idlewild [Airport, now John F. Kennedy International Airport] and you're going to fly out of there to Germany.”

Well, I went to Paris, France. The flight ended in Paris, it was a contract flight, and they said we'll let you know when there's a flight going to Germany. I'm staying at the Hotel Litre on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Six weeks later they said you're going to Germany today. Well, the flight was less than an hour. So six weeks I sat there and waited. What did I do? That was the most boring time of my entire life.

## REALLY?

Mm-hmm. Couldn't speak the language and everything. I got to Germany at 10 o'clock at night. And thank heavens for—postwar I guess you would say. They were still running shuttle buses to the base, and the 11 o'clock run was for the people that were in the entertainment places. I asked some guy, "Does this bus go to the base?" "Which base?" I didn't even know there was but one in Wiesbaden. "What do you do?" I said, "I'm in weather." "Oh, you're going out to Wiesbaden Air Base; this bus here will take you." So I got to Wiesbaden Air Base at midnight and checked in.

About the time I got there and started my OJT [on-the-job training] they decided they needed to change AFSCs [Air Force specialty codes]. We had one, two, three, four, five AFSCs in weather. They were going to take three of those and put them into one if we could do it. And so they said I was the guinea pig, and I was going to sit in an office and read the book and then they would test me. So they did. I tested, and I passed. So they said, "Okay, if Parish can do it, anybody can do it."

They would not send the people in those other AFSCs back to Chanutte for training as a ground weather observer. So, we all did it by OJT. So, I finished that course and then there was a young captain there that was in weather communications in the headquarters, and he said, "I want you to work for me." I said, "Doing what?" "Weather communication." "What's that?" He didn't know. And he said, "We'll learn." And that was probably one of the most beneficial things I've ever done in my entire life because he taught me so much and allowed me to do things as a young Airman that I would never have been able to experience anywhere else.

## WAS THAT CAPT EUGENE BLANTON?

Yeah, Eugene T. Blanton. He just passed away, and I got an e-mail from his wife. I got a phone call first. She said to me, Sam—we had never lost contact; he was in California—she said, "Sam, the old goat's gone." And I said, "You're kidding me." Nope. So, she sent me an e-mail, and it was a whole bunch of clippings that he had kept through the years of me serving in the Air Force. So, that kind of made, you know, goosebumps appear on you.

## YEAH. SO WHAT EXAMPLE DID HE SET FOR YOU, AND THEN WHAT CAN MOST AIRMEN TODAY TAKE FROM THAT?

Well, you know, he laid out some ground rules when I went to work for him. He said, "You have to be the best of anybody of your grade in this squadron if you're going to work for me. Whatever you do, you have to be bright at it, and you have to be good. If you make a mistake, and if you make the mistake for the right reason, you'll be okay. It doesn't mean I won't chew you out. That doesn't mean I will not tell you to get out of this office, I don't ever want to see you again. But if I say that to you, and you take it literally and you leave, I'll charge you with AWOL [absent without leave], okay?"

So, he even taught me how to drink martinis. I had never drank in my entire life. We were sitting in Paris on a TDY [temporary duty]—I went TDY all over Europe with him—and he said, "What do you want to drink?" I said, "Coca-Cola is fine." He said, "You ever have a martini?" I said, "What's that?" And I tasted it, and it tasted like drinking pure kerosene. He told me I'd develop a taste for it and not to worry about it.

He made me do things that I knew I couldn't do as a young Airman. He would not take over. He'd just tell me, "Redo it. I don't like this portion of it; I don't like that." And the hardest thing was writing and learning the circuitry and learning where the weather came from, from North Africa to, you name it. We collected all this data, and it was radioed in; and then we'd break it down, and we'd distribute it. It was him allowing me as a young Airman to do things that nobody else in the squadron did, period. I guess that stood well with me for the rest of my life.

Our operations officer there, Col. Don Moore, was just a super, super ops officer. He was a lieutenant colonel. I went to seven-level school at Chanutte as a young staff sergeant. It was 26-weeks long. You had to go to seven-level school before you could get a seven-level. Then you had to take OJT for one year, and then you had to take the SKT [Specialty Knowledge Test] and pass it. When I graduated from seven-level school, I was waiting for my assignment because I was raring to go, and they put a hold on me for four months. Nobody knew why. All of a sudden an assignment flowed to 433L System Program Office in Waltham, Massachusetts. That was my next assignment, and they were holding me because they were establishing a job for me to do in the development of weather systems. Col. Don Moore was the operations officer of the System Program Office. I got there, and I was the only enlisted Airman. There were a ton of people in the System Program Office. There were three full colonels, two lieutenant colonels, a major, and Staff Sgt. Parish. The rest were engineers, GS-11s, 12s, and above.



**I WANTED TO ASK YOU AGAIN ABOUT CAPTAIN BLANTON. TAKING WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED FROM HIM, WOULD YOU OFFER ANY ADVICE TO THE AIRMEN THAT ARE SUPERVISING NOW, WHETHER THAT'S A YOUNG STAFF SERGEANT OR MAYBE A . . .**

Well, it doesn't matter. See, he didn't do it as an officer. I had all the respect in the world for him as an officer, but he was my supervisor first and foremost. We would travel, and it was always Capt. Blanton. I never used his name, Eugene, in my entire life—other than Capt. Eugene T. Blanton. It was the easiest thing in the world to do. I had no problem with it because, like I say, I grew up in an environment where it was yes, ma'am, and no, ma'am, to everybody. If you didn't, you'd get smacked by mom or dad. So, he taught me the value of being able to do things. He gave me the leeway and guided me, but he did not steer me. He allowed me to make mistakes, so long as they weren't criminal. And I never did that, thank heavens. He never fired me from a job, and he really never, ever yelled at me. Sometimes I think in my later life I preferred the yelling rather than, you know, that arm on the shoulder. That's the worst, when he put his arm on my shoulder and said, "Airman Parish, you don't know how disappointed I am in you. I never believed that you would do something so dumb." But I had done it for the right reason, and I didn't bother asking. When I reached that point, I didn't ask; I just stepped on ahead. In the long run it was the right thing to do, but it was the wrong timing, and I didn't do the right thing. I didn't ask him, and he was blindsided.

**THAT'S NEVER GOOD, TO BLINDSIDE THE BOSS, RIGHT?**

Well, supervision to me is, you know—we discipline our children because we love them. Well, you should discipline your Airmen or your NCOs because you love them. It's a different kind of love. It's the love of service and country. If you don't do that, guess what—you'll allow them to stray off of the beaten path. Then when you try to correct it, it's too late because they never saw it coming. With Capt. Blanton, he taught me those values very, very early. You know, I guess—well, ain't no guess about it, I was a master sergeant before I was a supervisor for the first time because I was at Hanscom [AFB, Massachusetts] for so long. I made tech, master, and, six months after I left there, I made senior when I got to Germany.

**YOU WERE AT HANSCOM FOR SIX YEARS?**

Six years, yes.

**BASED ON WHAT I'VE READ YOU WERE PRETTY HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY.**

Oh, unbelievable, yeah, yeah.

**WHY DID YOU FEEL THAT WAS IMPORTANT?**

Well, I didn't look at it as being important. I was out there on the end of the line. I didn't work at Hanscom. I worked in a research lab in downtown Waltham, Massachusetts. When I first got there, I wasn't even allowed to live in base housing because I wasn't assigned to the unit. I lived 45 miles away from my job. Just to go to the gym or do anything was a major chore, because getting to work was a long enough drive. Then I passed within four miles of Hanscom, and that's where we did our commissary shopping and things of that nature. You know, I was kind of looking for that camaraderie with enlisted people. A person that had a tremendous impact on my life happened to be a tech sergeant and ran the gym at Hanscom, and his name is George Price. He opened the door for me to go to the gym because I could never get there before the gym closed at 6 o'clock, and it was closed on the weekends in those days because they didn't have the funding to run it.

He told me one day, "Sarge, you like to come to the gym?" I liked to play badminton and stuff like this, so I said sure. And he said to me, "Here's a key to the gym. If you ever, ever do anything in this gym that I find out you shouldn't have done, I will collar you and you don't know what I'll do to you." So he trusted me enough to give me a key to his workshop, if you will. He also introduced me to the game of fast pitch softball, which I already knew from Germany. He asked me if I would manage the team. I was a young staff sergeant, and I said, "Manage a base team? Are you kidding me?"

So, getting involved in military community activities was a way for me to associate with fellow enlisted Airmen, because my whole life was spent with engineers and officers—and it was a business relationship. I got so tired of going to my captain's house for Thanksgiving with six children. And it was the involvement that gave me a feeling of belonging to something other than my job. We weren't very sociable living 35 miles from the base. We moved three or four times while we were there, and it was always getting closer to the base.

I finally made tech sergeant, and they called my wife the next day after I pinned on tech sergeant and said, "We have a house for you on base, do you want it?" It was one of the greatest things to ever happen in our life. So that's why I got involved in the community. It was a sense of belonging—a sense of feeling.

**SOME OF THAT HAS CHANGED TODAY IN THE SENSE THAT THERE IS A LOT MORE FOR YOUNG AIRMEN TO DO OFF BASE. MOVIE THEATERS, FOR EXAMPLE, AND SPORTS TEAMS... AIRMEN DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO GO ON BASE TO FIND THINGS TO DO. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT EVOLUTION?**

Well, it's not a matter of finding other things to do. They have the means to do other things. You know, when I was in Germany, I was the only person in the entire barracks that had a car. I didn't drink, so guess what—I made a small fortune hauling drunks back to the base at midnight, if you want to pardon the expression. Cheaper than a taxi. Today you go into the dorm area and you see automobiles the likes of which, if they don't have a letter of the alphabet in the title, you know, you don't have a car. So, they have the means to get out there.

It doesn't have to be the local bowling alley, or it doesn't have to be the club. It's getting out into the community and getting involved. That's an unbelievable thing. I'm not sure they're getting involved in the local community for the same reason that I did for the military community, for my comradeship. It's for them to I guess participate in something they enjoy doing. And many times their supervisors may not even know they're doing it.

So, I think it's important to participate in community activities. And, you know, that's what we're all about. We don't need the thoughts of the public that we've had in the past in many cases, especially during Vietnam and things of that nature. Today it's enjoyable to go through an airport and see GIs coming back from the desert with the DCUs [desert camouflage uniforms], or BDUs [battle dress uniforms], or ABUs [Airman battle uniform], whatever the hell you all call them, and people saying to them, "Thank you for serving." It probably gets old to the people, to you guys. But I see the thanks, and it's so good of a feeling because the community feels that way. And then when we have somebody that does something to tarnish the name in the community, that bothers the heck out of me.

**YOU MENTIONED VIETNAM AND THE DIFFERENT LEVEL OF RESPECT FOR THE SERVICE MEMBERS TODAY COMPARED TO VIETNAM. DO YOU THINK THAT DAMAGED THE MORALE OR THE SENSE OF PRIDE AMONG AIRMEN?**

You know, I don't know. I look at that and I don't think it damaged the morale so much as it gave us the feeling that the public is completely ignorant about what we do. The Air Force wasn't treated as badly as the Army and the Marine Corps. For example, during Vietnam, the latter parts of Vietnam, we weren't allowed to wear our uniforms in public, period. If you came back from Vietnam and you came into San Francisco or Los Angeles, wherever, you changed out of your uniform and put on civilian clothes before you left the airport. There was a time when even going to the Pentagon, they discouraged wearing your uniform to the Pentagon.

**WAS THAT FOR THE MEMBER'S SAFETY?**

Safety. Because people would pour blood on you and everything. That continued on until—well, I was Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and we still had demonstrations on the Capital Mall. It was a horrible, horrible experience and feeling because mothers and fathers of America blamed their sons and daughters for what was going on in Vietnam. And it was a totally misplaced, misguided public that allowed that to occur. They blamed their sons and daughters. They'd throw blood on you. Everything, it was horrible.

You coupled that with the racial unrest that we had in the late '60s, and a large portion of it was generated because of the discontent with the war. Now you walk down the street and guess what? Or you go through an airport and everybody wears their uniform. It was against Air Force regulations for you to wear your fatigues off base and stop in any store on your way home, unless it was a drive thru.









## **SO WHY, FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T HAVE TO, WHY DID THEY CONTINUE TO SERVE?**

Love of service, love of your job. I still think that most people—do they serve because of the money? I don't believe so, because I guarantee you that there's not a single NCO today that could come within \$500 of telling me how much they make in a year, cash. And I'm willing to bet with them. So, money is not the driving force behind serving. Now is it something that I'm going to do because I'm patriotic? I don't think so. I think the majority of our people, after they get in and get their feet on the ground, enjoy what they're doing, and they enjoy the people they're doing it with. And we're paying them enough for them to have a life of their own and it's halfway decent. It's not scrounge and scrabble for everything, unless you're trying to live and keep up with somebody that you shouldn't be keeping up with. So, I think it's love of job and it's enjoying the people that you're doing it with. Nowhere in life, including the aftermath of your retirement, will you find the same camaraderie in an office environment as you find in the military. Now, does that mean that if you go into corporate life, as many of us do, you won't find the same dedication and discipline among the most senior leadership there as we do in our US Air Force? No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying at five o'clock you cease to exist as far as the corporation is concerned, as long as you show up the next morning at eight. And, you know, as long as you follow the rules, the dress codes, and don't violate company policy, you're in good shape, as long as you produce.

But the Air Force, we expect more, don't we?

### **SURE.**

You've got to look the part, act the part, and then you've got to walk the walk and talk the talk at the same time. And if you don't, then you have a miserable, miserable life, and you won't stay in. And the reason our people get out today, I don't believe it's the money, I think it's something in the leadership, the supervision, or the structure of the job performance that they're having to do that just says, "I don't need this anymore."

The Vietnam War, besides the feeling from the public, it was just a long war. Well, it wasn't only that. We operated in Vietnam just like we operated in the United States of America. You know, we didn't deploy teams over there except for the mobile teams that we sent over there, but they went over TDY also. We didn't send the whole unit. And once we got over there, you know, our security forces, they didn't defend our bases—they defended the interior of the base. Army took care of the exterior. If our security was breached and people started coming on the base, that's where the security forces took over, to defend the interior.

Things changed drastically in Iraq, didn't it? There were no boundaries, and all of the sudden, our defenders that were defending the interior of the base also became the defenders of the exterior. Our Airmen operated outside the wire. There's not a job we have in the Air Force that at one time or another, over in Afghanistan and Iraq, they didn't go outside the wire. So we changed the way we do business. From Da Nang Air Base [Vietnam] to Tan Son Nhut [Vietnam], when those planes went there and they took off to fly a mission, whether it was a [C-]130 or F-4 or whatever was taking off, I guarantee you that plane had been loaded there, it had been serviced there, and the men and women that did it saluted when they took off and hoped and prayed that they come back. They came back and tried to land at the same place. And that's how we operated from the States. We changed that in Iraq. Most of the aircraft were not based in the country, they were in further areas that they could reach very quickly. They had some there, but not all.

### **SURE. THAT'S INTERESTING.**

We changed the way we do business, completely and totally. And is it bad? Hey, I'm not on active duty, you know. I can't say one way or the other. But if we're a better Air Force because of it, that's what it's all about, because we serve a nation not an Air Force.

## **SURE. I THINK IT WAS IN 1969 WHEN YOU MADE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT?**

Well, I made chief master sergeant on November the 15th in 1968, when I was notified by my commander at one second after midnight that I had been promoted to chief.

## **THAT WAS RIGHT BEFORE WE MOVED TO THE NEW PROMOTION SYSTEM.**

Well, that was the last of the good days as I call it, from promotion standpoint because the last—by that I mean I had a line number. The Weighted Airman Promotion System [WAPS] had not been born yet, and I had the last damn line number in the entire promotion cycle.

I waited, and I waited, and I waited. And finally, I believe it was mid-1970 when they said you're a chief today. Thank you very much. And I sewed them on my uniform, or Inge did, and I went work, and that was the extent of it. I got a date of rank of 1 December 1969. But I made it November of '68, and I had to wait because that was the first year for a line number system that they started in the Air Force.

## **WHAT WAS THE PROMOTION SYSTEM LIKE BACK THEN?**

### **I GUESS FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE BEFORE WAPS?**

Well, it was not very good—it was not very well done. And I have to be very critical of that because we got into this “have and have not.” World War II ended and a lot of the people out of World War II, some rift officers, all came out as master sergeants. Korea, the same thing. So master sergeant was the highest grade you could get in those early days, and all those slots were filled. So, if you couldn’t make master sergeant, well, then the highest you could go is technical sergeant. They promoted based on essential vacancies, and if there were no vacancies, nobody got promoted. And those that did get promoted had to be in a critical AFSC, generally aircraft maintenance and the like.

Weather was in the ops arena, and I made tech in ’62 and I was the first person I ever saw make tech sergeant. The average retiree in the early ’60s was a staff sergeant with 20 years in service. Congress was getting flooded with letters from enlisted Airmen in our Air Force about the promotion system and not being able to get promoted. It was an invisible system. You didn’t know what it took to get promoted, and we didn’t have any debriefs on it or anything else. You made staff at the squadron level, and at the tech sergeant level you moved to base and MAJCOM [major command] level. I made senior in ’67, and that was the first time I competed centrally for promotion. All you knew is you either got promoted or you didn’t get promoted. If the promotion board met, you walked outside and looked at the daily bulletin. If you didn’t see your name on the list, you said, “Well, I didn’t get promoted.” There was nobody that could brief you on how you came up short or anything.

So, the Weighted Airman Promotion System was a godsend and a lifesaver for the US Air Force.

### **DO YOU THINK IT HAS MET ITS INTENT OVER THE YEARS?**

I think it probably not only met its intent but it exceeded the intended purpose. The problem is we didn’t follow up, because WAPS promoted as an equal opportunity system, and every AFSC got promoted in the same promotion percentage. Some may differ because if you got two eligible and can only promote one, that’s 50 percent. However, the percentage throughout the Air Force might have been only 30 percent or 20 or 10. But they had a follow on to it, and it was called over-promoted and big AFSCs. Maintenance was the largest AFSC in the Air Force at the time. And once you became the crew chief or the engine prop person, or whoever, and you liked what you were doing, it was awfully hard for you to go and say, “Well I want you to go be a medic,” or “I want you to be something else,” when the person had been working with their hands the whole time.

We didn’t have the system where, if there were too many people in this specialty at the grade of tech sergeant or master sergeant, either some would retrain or nobody would get promoted. That’s what we should have done, something that drastic. We offered opportunities over and over again. We went out and solicited people, begged them, gave them AFSCs of their choice in many cases. We still couldn’t get them out of the career field they were entrenched in and were comfortable in. They didn’t want to throw that away and say, “I’m going into this unknown, dark, grey area.”

### **ONE OF THE THINGS YOU GOT TO DO WAS ATTEND THE FIRST SENIOR NCO ACADEMY CLASS. WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU?**

Well, it was really, really, really unique because I had been in solo positions my whole career, from the time I went to the 7th Weather Squadron from Hanscom until I was selected for the senior academy. I went down there as a senior chief because I already had four years’ time in grade and I still didn’t have 20 years in service. I’m going in with some chiefs that had 26 years in service. I was in a class that had the likes of [CMSAF #6] Jim McCoy, [CMSAF #4] Tom Barnes—we were all classmates. I wasn’t in awe, because there are very few things in life that has awed me, but to see these people operate and to watch Tom Barnes in his calm way, be in a seminar and sit there and have this violent discussion basically, and have him so calmly never get ruffled, you can’t help but have part of that rub off on you to a certain extent. So I wasn’t in awe, but I sure as hell developed a much, much greater respect for most senior NCOs and the environment they operate in—and where they came from too.

### **SURE. I FIND IT INTERESTING THAT YOU WERE IN THE VERY FIRST CLASS, AND I KNOW YOU CONTINUE TO GO DOWN THERE TODAY. SO YOU’VE SEEN IT GO FROM THE BEGINNING TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY. HOW DO YOU THINK THAT CLASS HAS EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?**

Well, it’s evolved to the extent that I think we’re getting a lot more out of it than we ever dreamed we would get out of it. I know starting off it was awfully tough. We took only chiefs in there. And chiefs didn’t feel like they needed to do anything in the world because they already had it made. They didn’t need it for promotions. And we weren’t sending them there for promotions. We were sending them there to be better NCOs and to learn a little bit about the big picture, if you will. I’ve never seen the big picture, but we were teaching them those things they needed to know to be the most senior enlisted leadership.



Well, let me tell you what, by the time Jim McCoy became Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force he would get roasted going down there by the chiefs. Jim tolerated it to the extent that he could, and then we started thinking of change. [CMSAF #9] Jim Binnicker was the big changer in the Senior NCO Academy, because for the first time, we started sending master sergeants to the senior academy. Before, it was only senior master sergeants and chiefs. And now it's awfully close to being virtually all masters with the new system. They do much of the core curriculum before they even get there. Now, they're in there for six weeks, and they're doing things for leadership, management, and supervision—the types of things they're going to do as masters and seniors and chiefs. Chiefs virtually don't go there anymore because they've all been.

So, I like what I see in the Senior NCO Academy, and I think it's worth every dime we lay out there. Some changes I would like to see. I'd like to go back to a formal graduation. I think it was important to celebrate the ending of something that was almost spectacular at times. But that's neither here nor there. You don't go there for a graduation anyways; you go there to see how you stack up and learn against your fellow NCOs and Airmen.

## **YOU'VE BEEN A BIG PROPONENT FOR NOT JUST THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY BUT FOR PME [PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION]. WHEN YOU WERE THE CMSAF YOU STARTED THE NCO PREPARATORY COURSE. WHAT KIND OF IMPACT DO YOU THINK PME HAS HAD ON THIS FORCE WHEN YOU CONSIDER WHERE WE ARE TODAY?**

It's awfully easy to answer, in my opinion. It's the greatest single step taken for the development of our enlisted Airmen in the history of the US Air Force. I just wish like hell that I would have had the opportunity to attend what our E4s do today—management, supervision and leadership. What I got was what I observed and what I got out of my seven-level weather school, because they taught us management, leadership, and supervision. That was in 1960. The academies were just standing up, and we didn't have the preparatory course and things of that nature. To get our young people at the very earliest stages and move them up and build on each step, the purpose of it, and what they're experiencing as a senior airman, now as a staff sergeant and tech sergeant and a master sergeant in the NCO Academy. And then the senior academy, and now we're fixing to start our chief's course back up. So, you see you never ever get too old to learn. If you learn something, that's valuable to our younger people—because they are going to lead our Air Force into this twenty-first century.

## **YOU CREATED THE FIRST SERGEANT OF THE YEAR AWARD WHEN YOU WERE AT USAF. YOU DID IT AGAIN WHEN YOU WERE AT SAC, AND THEN YOU DID IT FOR THE AIR FORCE. WHY WAS THAT SO IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO GET THAT RECOGNITION?**

Well, you know, you need to go back into time and see where we were. We had different caliber of people to start with. First sergeants were—I guess you would say if there was any segment of our population that was brown shoe it would be the first sergeants. You know, disciplinarians, tough as nails. As a young Airman, I'd walk a block out of my way to keep from meeting a master sergeant on the street. If it was a first sergeant, I'd probably walk 10 blocks to keep from meeting him.

I had never been in a unit that had a first sergeant. We had about 300 people in the 7th Weather Squadron. I was the squadron chief observer, the first sergeant safety NCO, training NCO. I worked for the ops officer. I went there as a master sergeant, made senior, and when I made chief, they curtailed me and shipped me to Scott [AFB, Illinois]. The thing is, I was in essence a first sergeant for three years, with a commander that depended on me for discipline to everything else. I took all the correspondence courses they would allow me to take, to find out what was going on. When I went to Military Airlift Command and retrained it was the first time I ever had a first sergeant.

When I got to USAFE, the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year program was one of the programs that I first attacked because we didn't do anything except name them in name. We had first sergeant conferences that joined with us at the senior enlisted advisors' conferences, and that's where the determinations were made as to who was going to represent the bases at the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year program. Well, I found there was never a first sergeant nominated. And I knew damn well they were doing a superb job.

At the first sergeants conference I asked them, "What's going on guys? Don't you all realize the importance of this job and the importance of being recognized?" They said, "Chief, if we do it, it's self-serving, and we're taking that slot away from one of our people that could be nominated." So I went to Gen. John Pauly, and I said, "Sir, we need a new program." He said, "Sam, you already got your Outstanding Airmen of the Year program. What do you want to do?" I said, "I want a First Sergeant of the Year program, because they don't allow themselves to be nominated. The commanders can do the nominating, and then we'll get a group of chiefs together and we'll decide which commander's got the best package." He said, "Sounds good to me." Well, let me tell you what, doing things for people doesn't always work well, because the first sergeants absolutely refused to participate in it. Refused.

General Pauly told me he'd talk to them. So I got them all together; we had a hellish discussion on the First Sergeant of the Year program. Then he got up and talked and closed by saying, "I understand that you don't feel that a First Sergeant of the Year program is needed. I'm telling you as your commander in chief that a First Sergeant of the Year program is going to work in the US Air Forces in Europe. And I'm here to tell you something else, if you don't want to participate, and if you're anti-First Sergeant of the Year program, leave your diamond at the door when you leave this damn conference. I enjoyed being with you, take care, good luck." I didn't find a diamond in the out basket anywhere.

I went to SAC. One of the first things I did was attack the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year program and ask for a First Sergeant of the Year program. Gen Bennie Davis said to me, "What's wrong with our Outstanding Airmen of the Year program now?" I said, "You bring them in, you wine them and dine them for one night, then you send them home." "What do you want?" Well, he had an airplane, a KC-135, the most beautiful plane in the inventory. "I said I want CASEY 1 for a week." He said, "Are you out of your mind?" I said, "No, sir." "What are you going to do?" I said, "Well I'm going to show them what we do in SAC. I'm going to take them to Colorado Springs [Colorado]," because we had the missile business at the time. "I want to take them to Vandenberg [AFB, California], I want to take them to a northern-tier base and have a good time out there with them, bring them back here, have a banquet, announce who the recipients are, and send them home the next day. And while we're gone, the chiefs are going to determine who the winners are. Nobody will know." And he said, "Hmm, I like that." So, he said, "Give me a disposition form." That's what we had, we didn't have e-mails or nothing. So, he sent the form to the director of operations, who was a two-star general. He came down, and he got on the top of my desk with his golf shoes on, and he was doing a jitterbug, calling me every name in the book, and who did I think I was and everything. I looked at him and I said, "General, you're in the wrong office. I don't think I signed that memo." "Yeah, but you're the author of it." I said, "Well go down and tell the general he's wrong." He didn't have the nerve. We got CASEY 1 for a week, and the program kept going as long as Strategic Air Command was in existence.

The First Sergeant of the Year program got a lot of resistance initially, until they communicated with somebody that had been in USAFE—or somebody in USAFE had come to SAC—and they told them how it worked. When I became Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force that was one of the first three things I pursued after I met with the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. I picked their brains, and the Levitow Award was born—the First Sergeant of the Year program was born, things of that nature. I went to General [Charles A.] Gabriel with it when we were flying to Europe on a visit. He read the memo from the meeting while he was in his compartment on Speckled Trout. The aide came out and said, "The chief wants to see you." So I went back, and he said, "I like it. When we get to USAFE release it to the world." "Sir," I said, "It ain't been staffed. I'll prepare a message for you to send to the Air

Force announcing it." He said, "Nope, it's your program, sign it." So, the First Sergeant of the Year program for the Air Force was born, approved on that airplane, and believe me, I suffered immensely from it—more ways than one. Because the promotion to senior airman was part of the memo.<sup>3</sup>

## OH, REALLY?

Yeah. It was released that we were going to do it, but we didn't have the idea yet how to do it. So, when I got back it had to be staffed and . . . it was not pretty. None of it was pretty.

## I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS THAT STORY HIGHLIGHTS IS THE ABILITY FOR THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE TO INFLUENCE THE ENLISTED FORCE AND LEAD THEM IN NEW DIRECTIONS. CAN YOU DESCRIBE—I GUESS JUST LOOKING BACK—HOW THAT HAS BEEN SHAPED OVER THE YEARS, THAT INFLUENCE THE ENLISTED FORCE HAS NOW BECAUSE OF THAT POSITION?

You know we had to claw for the things we got. We had to fight and claw not only the director of personnel, but the director of operations, or whatever you call them now: the A1s and the A2s and so forth. We had to do that battle, and it was always behind closed doors. Now, our senior NCOs have seen this development, and they're picking up the ball. What I see happening as part of this is this tendency to aspire to a job rather than to serve the Air Force. You know, a senior airman asks me, "I want to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force one day." When they start thinking of being the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force as a senior Airman, as I told one senior airman, "Son, you've got to make staff sergeant first." I'd already asked him how much time in service he had, and he said, "Eight and a half years, Chief." I looked at him and I said, "You know, if you don't make staff sergeant in the next year and a half, they're going to kick you out. Then how are you going to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force?"

It hurt his feelings tremendously, but driving me back to my quarters, he said, "Chief, I appreciate you not saying that publicly." I said, "I would never embarrass you like that, but there's a message there." And he said, "I got your message." He made staff sergeant, he made tech the first time, master, senior, and now he's a retired chief master sergeant. You see people get on that path though—the tunnel vision—where there's nothing in the world except what's at the end of that tunnel. They don't see all the interference on the outside of that tunnel, and that's why it's important to continue to focus on the total person. I don't want somebody to be a technical expert as a chief master sergeant. I want somebody that knows the technical aspects of the job and then to be a great leader and supervisor and to make changes that will benefit those that come behind, not those that are ahead.



That's what I think the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force have done. And I'm going to tell you something else, too. We could never, ever, ever have gotten here without a person named Paul Airey. Paul was the type of individual that had the patience of Jude but would eat you out in ways you never dreamed of being chewed out. He set the pace for us.

**ONE OF THE SIMILARITIES, COMPARING YOUR TENURE AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE TO TODAY IS THE FISCAL ENVIRONMENT. THE DRAWDOWN OF AIRMEN, LOOKING AT THE RETIREMENT AND ASKING HOW WE CAN SAVE MONEY. I'M SURE THAT BROUGHT A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY FOR AIRMEN WHO WERE SERVING THEN. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR AIRMEN SERVING TODAY WHO ARE FACING THOSE SAME CHALLENGES?**

The things that we faced then . . . yes, we were faced with financial challenges. And if you think it has been tough with sequestration and all that, go back to 1978. In 1978 we had about 120 F4s at a squadron at Torrejón Air Base, Spain. On any given day, if we could have launched 20 airplanes we would have been unbelievably successful. Everything had been cannibalized just to keep some of them flying. The vice commander of USAFE had to personally approve every single TDY in the command except for General Pauly and myself. Wing commanders, Numbered Air Force commanders, everybody. That's how hard up we were for funds. So, funding has been cyclical the whole time.

We had shortages, and all of a sudden, you know, along came [Pres. Ronald] Reagan. He started looking at things, and President [Jimmy] Carter on his way out gave us the biggest pay raise we got in the history of the Air Force. President Reagan was given credit for it, but it happened during the [Carter] administration and he [Reagan] took office in January and it had already been approved. They started targeting the raises—17.4 percent pay raise for a chief. The next year, the year after, we got a 14.4 percent pay raise, again targeted, because we had developed a breaking point between E-1 and E-9 of about a 3:1 ratio. A chief made about three times as much as an Airman basic, but for the general and the lieutenant it was about 6:1 or more, about the same as it is today. This is what we harped on. It wasn't that we were looking for anything for ourselves. We knew what happened in '78 when we couldn't launch airplanes because we didn't have crew chiefs. They had all left. Let me tell you, they left for one reason: money. They couldn't even afford to have a family.

That started solving itself, and now, we're faced with shortages again, but this time it's different—we're drawing down the force. Just imagine what we did after Vietnam. It's not the first drawdown that has ever occurred; it's the third one during this generation of Airmen. In the early '90s we had a drawdown, and then we had another drawdown in the mid-2000s, and now we're having the other one. So Vietnam, we went from almost a million Airmen to 500,000 in about three years. We didn't do it very nicely—used a butcher knife or a machete. And then in the early '90s, we learned some things, but we still didn't do that very well either—had a lot of discontent. And we've gotten better and better at drawing down the force. The doubt in people's mind, however, we still haven't resolved.

So when you find out that we're going to have a new retirement system, you look back and see what the retirement system that was implemented—and I think it's called three year . . .

**HIGH 3. AND THEN NOW WE HAVE THE HIGH 3 WITH THE REDUX.**

Right, with the REDUX.

**IT'S AN OPTION.**

But with the High 3 there was some turmoil. There was a lot of discussion, but nobody understood what it was all about. Then they started, you know, fairness. We don't deal in fairness. If you joined the Air Force and this is the system we have when you join, and they didn't make it retroactive to the old people that were serving, the High 3, then you've got nothing to complain about really.

The young people we have today, I've never seen any better in my entire Air Force life. Young people come in better educated than I was, and they have a distinct sense of purpose. A lot of them come in with two stripes. Damn, it took me two years to get my first two. And not only that, but they know the Air Force is going to be their career. And I never, ever, ever, ever made a conscious decision to make the Air Force a career. I enjoyed what I was doing, I enjoyed the people I was doing it with, and the most natural thing in the world was to raise the right hand again and say I do.

The point is, our people come in for reasons. Some do, some are looking for themselves. What was I looking for? I don't know, but I must have been looking for something. It doesn't matter why you join. It's the oath of enlistment that we take, and we need to emphasize that. The young Airman that takes that oath in the MEPS [Military Entrance Processing Station] station the first time, they have no concept of what they're saying other than they've got to remember the words to repeat them. But after they've said it about four, five, or six times, it starts to dawn on them. You're making an oath to defend the United States of America against all enemies foreign and domestic. I'm here to tell you there are no "ands," or there are no "ifs," "buts," or "however" in our oath of enlistment. It is absolute.

## **YOU MENTIONED THE OATH—HOW DO YOU THINK THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE HAS STRENGTHENED THE AIRMEN OR THE AIR FORCE?**

Well, I'm not sure that it has strengthened it, to be very honest with you. You know, if you stop and you think about it, and I spent a lot of time with Chief Paul Airey, and he was a draft era and so was I. We didn't draft people with a college degree into the Air Force. Now the Army might have tried to draft them with a college degree, but when they found out they could join the Air Force, they joined the Air Force. Having a draftee that is 30 years old next to an 18-year-old doing the same job, if you got the right draftee in there that's educated, guess what? Some of that starts to rub off. Airey said, you know, in the trenches of World War II we had college degrees and high school graduates, and dropouts, like myself, and he said it was a great way to serve. Well, we probably will never go back to that, and I kind of hope we don't.

What this has done though, it has driven up the cost of DOD [the Department of Defense]. It has also driven up the amount that each one of our Airmen make in each pay grade, and that's been the greatest, greatest benefit right there. It has raised the standard of living in our military services. The other part that I see is that it has given us a young Airman the likes of which we have never gotten before in the US Air Force. People willing to come in for six years and get two stripes, or those that are ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], or have two years of college, or a college degree, that say I want to see something else in the world. And it's not necessarily—as I tell our senior Airmen—I don't believe that each one of you are so patriotic that you said I'm going to join to serve my country. And that's okay, because once you get in, you're going to get that patriotism if you serve—that's all that counts. They come in for different reasons, and if it's money that's okay, too. Find a job? Don't be ashamed to say it.

So I'm not concerned about why you join, it's what you do once you take that oath and continue with your life. We're getting a great quality of Airmen.

## **WHEN YOU HEAR PEOPLE TALK ABOUT CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE SAM PARISH THEY SAY HE'S A STRAIGHT SHOOTER. WHAT IS A STRAIGHT SHOOTER, AND WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

Well, I think a straight shooter is telling it like it is. When I retired from the Air Force, we didn't even have cell phones and the Internet wasn't invented. All of that stuff, it has changed the way that we think and do business. A straight shooter to me is absolutely telling people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. I guarantee you when your boss calls you in and says, "I need your opinion on this," you know exactly what he or she's looking to hear as a general rule. If you tell him what he wants to hear and you don't really and truly believe that, you're not a straight shooter.

## **I THINK WE'LL WRAP THIS UP WITH ONE MORE QUESTION. I WANT TO ASK, IF YOU LOOK AT OUR AIR FORCE TODAY, IF YOU LOOK AT THE AIRMEN THAT ARE SERVING TODAY AND YOU HAD TO START YOUR SENTENCE WITH "I BELIEVE," WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe we're getting the greatest quality of dedicated, disciplined, and educated Airmen we could ever hope to get in our Air Force. I just hope and pray we have the Airmen in the NCO ranks and the officer ranks that will provide guidance, leadership, and supervision to them to make our Air Force even better in the future than we've been in the past.





# CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JAMES C. BINNICKER

**JULY 1, 1986 - JULY 31, 1990**

James C. Binnicker always wanted to fly. Born on 23 July 1938 and raised in Aiken, South Carolina, by his freshman year of high school he was a member of the local Civil Air Patrol squadron. He loved the camaraderie and the structure, the discipline and the flying. "I found that I was very comfortable and enjoyed putting on the uniform and dressing up like an Airman," Binnicker recalled. "The marching, the flying, the saluting, that was sort of my thing; I liked it. And then when we went to summer camp, the exposure to . . . the real Air Force . . . solidified that this was what I wanted to do."<sup>1</sup>

In 1956 Binnicker was named Cadet of the Year and was awarded a scholarship to attend flight school. He also represented South Carolina in Great Britain as a foreign exchange cadet. By all accounts he was a successful cadet with a bright future in aviation. But a year later, in 1957, his path took an unexpected turn.<sup>2</sup>

Binnicker signed up for the Air Force's aviation cadet program with every intention of becoming a successful Air Force pilot, but doctors soon detected a high-frequency hearing loss in his right ear. He was disqualified from the program and returned home. Brokenhearted but determined to serve despite the limitation, he decided to enlist. As he recalled after a long, successful Air Force career, "I was disappointed and didn't want to go back home and face the people I had sort of thumbed my nose at—I'm going to go off and be jet pilot—so I told the recruiter I wanted to join the Air Force."<sup>3</sup>

The hearing loss disqualified Binnicker from several jobs, but he found a career field that allowed him to serve close to airplanes and pilots: personal equipment.<sup>4</sup> He spent the next few years at Altus AFB, Oklahoma, installing parachutes and other survival equipment in B-52 Stratofortress long-range bombers and KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refueling aircraft.

He quickly grew accustomed to the Air Force culture in the late fifties. He joined the Aero Club, went to movies with friends, and hung out in the barracks dayroom. He learned the benefit of mentorship from his experience with a maintenance chief, CMSgt Roy Duhamel, and grew frustrated with the barracks set up of two Airmen to a room and a shared bath, which was the norm until the late nineties, well after he retired.<sup>5</sup>

His career took off as his supervisors recognized his motivation and natural ability to lead. He cross-trained into the air operations career field in 1964 and moved to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, as a staff sergeant. While there, he planned flights going into Vietnam and quickly made technical sergeant. Over the next 10 years, he served in North Dakota, Vietnam, Georgia, Taiwan, North Carolina, and Texas.

In 1977, now a chief master sergeant and experienced senior enlisted leader, Binnicker began serving in a unique role. Pres. Jimmy Carter established a commission on military compensation with the specific charge to “identify, study, and make recommendations on critical military compensation issues.”<sup>6</sup> With Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Thomas Barnes’s recommendation, Binnicker became the senior enlisted adviser on the commission.

The members researched and made recommendations on different forms of compensation, including basic pay and allowances, special and incentive pays, and retirement benefits. It was one of many experiences that prepared Binnicker to later serve as the CMSAF, and he credits Barnes for his success. “He involved me in some things that gave me visibility that I might not have gotten otherwise,” Binnicker said. “I kind of point to him as the guy [who] had the most influence and impact on my career.”<sup>7</sup>

Following his yearlong assignment to the compensation commission, Binnicker returned to serving as a senior enlisted advisor for the 12th Air Force at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, and later for the Pacific Air Forces Command at Hickam AFB, Hawaii. He was then selected to serve as the chief of the Chief’s Group at Randolph AFB, Texas, before serving again as a senior enlisted advisor, this time for Tactical Air Command.

In 1986 Gen Larry Welch, selected Binnicker to serve as the 9th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. He quickly adapted to working on the Air Staff and began to implement a variety of initiatives, most notably a new Enlisted Evaluation System that introduced the Performance Feedback Worksheet and the Enlisted Performance Report. He also began to enroll master sergeants into the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy and led through a significant drawdown of military personnel that impacted promotions and disrupted the force. When he became the CMSAF in 1986, the Air Force had 603,714 Airmen on active duty, but by 1990 that number had dropped to 535,233.<sup>8</sup>

Binnicker retired in 1990, but he continued to serve in a variety of Air Force roles. He was a member of the Air University Board of Visitors and the Airmen Memorial Museum. He traveled around the world to speak to Airmen in different forums including professional military education (PME) courses. In 2000 Binnicker became the chief executive officer of the Air Force Enlisted Village, where he worked tirelessly to create a safe and loving home for more than 400 residents. Binnicker passed away from cancer on 21 March 2015.

Before his passing, Binnicker did not sit down for a long-form oral history interview. However, as he often said, he never met a microphone he didn’t like. The following are quotes and perspectives that Binnicker shared throughout his life and Air Force career.

## **ON THE PROMOTION SLOWDOWN IN 1987:<sup>9</sup>**

“The no. 1 issue, no. 1 concern, no. 1 problem in the Air Force today is the promotion situation. Not only from those people who are holding a line number, but those people who hope to get promoted, and even those people like chief master sergeants who can’t get promoted but are concerned for their people.

“I just don’t think that a lot of people understand the ramifications of our promotion system. That is, we are restricted as to how many people we can have in each pay grade and we historically have promoted to the maximum in each pay grade.”<sup>10</sup>

“When FY [fiscal year] 87 promotion time came we did not have approval authority for the remaining increases but we felt they would be approved. It was a gamble, and we lost. I know a lot of people find it hard to believe, but the promotion delay was not caused by budget cuts, I can assure you that is true.

“The good news is we’re confident that we’ll be out of this delayed promotion situation by the end of December. We’ll be back on track, however, I predict the numbers will be smaller in future promotion cycles for the next couple of years due to continued good retention and reduction in force size.”<sup>11</sup>

“I remember in the 1950s when promotions were frozen. That meant there weren’t any promotions at all. So, the possibility is there. The percentages are small, but at least we can look up and see that there will be some stripes forthcoming. Given that information, the idea is to be competitive and go for it.

“Some people will rationalize that, well, if I had been given a medal from my last unit I would have been competitive. That is rationalization. They should never use that, as far as I’m concerned. If they had studied harder and made five more points on their score, the medal would be a moot point.”<sup>12</sup>









## **ON INVOLUNTARY OVERSEAS EXTENSIONS:<sup>13</sup>**

“I went to Germany just before the changes were announced. Though there was uncertainty, moral was high. Then, after the tour extensions were announced, I visited nearly every Air Force unit in England. Most people I talked with wanted to stay in Europe longer. The Air Force did a good job handling a potentially demoralizing situation by keeping everyone informed why these changes were necessary.

“Many weren’t [happy]. That was a difficult decision, but we’re doing all we can to end the program. Given the time and budget constraints, we had to decide how best to cut PCS [permanent change of station] costs quickly. Now we are exploring additional ways to cut moving costs. We can probably save money moving people to a base nearer their current assignment, if there is a vacancy or requirement. That doesn’t mean everyone returning from Europe will go to an East Coast base just because it’s cheaper. Mission requirements still come first.”<sup>14</sup>

## **ON ISSUES THAT THREATENED RECRUITING AND RETENTION DURING HIS TENURE:**

“Smaller pay raises, for one thing. Plus, the perception blue-suiters are losing benefits. It reminds me of the talk in the ‘70s about an ‘erosion of benefits.’ We weren’t losing a lot of benefits, just perceiving a loss.

“We need to inform people about what is happening to benefits. Then, when they read rumors about benefits in a local newspaper, they might not jump to conclusions or make a rash decision to leave the Air Force.

“[Benefits] are important, but satisfaction is a more important motive to stay on. Satisfaction with where you are, who you work for and, especially, how you’re treated. When you go to the personnel or finance office, do you get prompt, efficient service? We’ve got the best medicine in the world and top-notch doctors, but sometimes, in some places, getting an appointment is major problem. We’ve got to become more efficient at providing these services.”<sup>15</sup>

“People very quickly could fall into the mode of not caring if people want to stay in. We have to care. The plan is to keep the very best people. A good way to do that is to provide them a lifestyle that makes it comfortable for them to stay. Then we can make great demands on them. We can have high standards and work them very hard. Because when the smoke clears, we’re still going to have an Air Force.”<sup>16</sup>

## **ON CHANGES TO ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION DURING HIS TENURE:**

“We’re putting the M back into PME by shifting to a more practical curriculum. We’re reducing the time spent in world affairs and devoting more to NCO subjects—things NCOs need to do their jobs—and writing exercises that relate to the job such as performance reports, staff summaries, and talking papers. We’re not eliminating world affairs; since we make PME-completion a major factor for promotion, shouldn’t we then ensure that the curriculum closely relates to supervision and management?”<sup>17</sup>

## **ON THE TRANSITION FROM THE AIRMAN PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) TO THE ENLISTED PERFORMANCE REPORT (EPR) AND PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK WORKSHEET:**

“[APRs] had become, in my opinion, a meaningless document because 98 percent of the Air Force had the same . . . [rating]. I was never convinced—nor am I today—that 98 percent [of the force] is perfect; and essentially that’s what we were telling them, that 98 percent of the Air Force is perfect. And when you give everybody the same report card, then you hurt the people who are truly the exception. The old APR . . . was not a bad system. We had just abused it to the point [where] it was ineffective. If we had followed the regulation and treated it the way it was designed years ago, then it would have served us forever because it was well designed. It had just [come to the point where] if you [didn’t] get a nine, you were dead.

“Somehow we had come to think that if you didn’t get a report card all the way to the right, there was something wrong. I was just hoping that, over time, we would accept a report card that might not be all the way to the right.

“Feedback was something I thought was absolutely essential—still do. It wasn’t done very well in the beginning, but I saw it as a tool to help supervisors in many ways. You’ve told them up front what your standards are; at midpoint you said, ‘this is how well you’re doing’—or not doing—and then the report card.”<sup>18</sup>

“We needed to [make some changes] quickly, before we got too far into the evaluation system.<sup>19</sup> If we had waited too long, there would have been more reports rendered, and we would have had to have gone back and possibly redo those. So we just felt that if we’re going to do something, now is the time to do it. And it was done very quickly. We had a gut feeling—from conversations with senior NCOs and commanders that this thing was not as smooth as we thought it might have been.”<sup>20</sup>

“When we first started last May, our education program was not as comprehensive as I would have liked. Some people did a superb job. Those who didn’t were the root cause for a lot of misconceptions, myths, and just plain misunderstanding around the Air Force—it was a reflection of the quality of the education program.

“We’re going to put additional emphasis on educating everyone, including senior raters, officers, supervisors, civilian supervisors—anyone who’s in that process should be educated and told how to render a report under the new Enlisted Evaluation System.

“We should completely forget the APR philosophy. We need to take this new evaluation system and rate people based on their performance today not try to conjure up some kind of equalization table that says a ‘7’ [APR] is equal to a ‘3’ [EPR] because it’s not. If I give a master sergeant a ‘3’ under the new system, I’m going to slow him down. He won’t get promoted as fast, but I’m saying he’s a satisfactory performer and should be considered for promotion. Will he be promoted? That depends on his whole record.”<sup>21</sup>

“It will take a while for people to get used to it, understand it, and accept it. Some people will never accept it. They’ll just have to leave - so we’ll do that through attrition.”<sup>22</sup>

### **ON HIS EXPERIENCE WORKING AS THE CHIEF OF THE CHIEF’S GROUP:**

“I, like a lot of people in the Air Force, had some preconceived notions about personnel; I think personnel gets a bad rap because of the business that they’re in. They’re either moving you or promoting you or educating you, and those are things that are near and dear to everyone’s heart. So if you can’t satisfy everyone, obviously you’re going to have a bad reputation. The training, the exposure I got while working at the Chiefs’ Group, I think, [enabled me to] go out and defend the personnel system. When you’re standing on stage and someone is upset with the personnel system—either they didn’t get promoted or they didn’t get the assignment they wanted—it certainly helps...to be able to...explain the system...from the standpoint of having worked there and understanding the system.”<sup>23</sup>

### **ON MASTER SERGEANTS ATTENDING THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY:**

“When I was a chief-selectee, I felt cheated because I had a strong need for [the information gained at the academy] a lot earlier. And I felt that the payback would be greater [if] we would expose master sergeants to this information. That’s the beginning of the senior NCO corps. We call master sergeants senior NCOs; we include them in the Top 3; we call it the Senior NCO Academy, yet we don’t send them to the senior school. The primary purpose would be to send the master sergeants earlier to take advantage of this newfound knowledge, and they would be better prepared, I think, to move into the senior and chief ranks, and take those positions of greater responsibility.”<sup>24</sup>

### **ON THE FUTURE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY AND THE POTENTIAL FOR A FEMALE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE:**

“[In the past], female members would get promoted up to a particular grade—usually a master sergeant or senior master sergeant—and then get frustrated with the system because they could see that they are not going to get the choice positions that other chiefs might get. [Today], young women at the staff or tech sergeant level [can] see that ‘Hey, there is a reason for me to stay in the Air Force.’ And they are obviously staying longer and doing quite well, I think, in being competitive for jobs. It’s just a matter of time before we have a very serious candidate for Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force who happens to be a woman.”<sup>25</sup>

### **ON THE MISSION OF THE AIR FORCE ENLISTED VILLAGE:**

“Our mission at the village is simply to provide a home. It started out with only Air Force enlisted widows, but over the years we have changed that to include a lot of different kinds of people. We take care of Air Force enlisted widows first and foremost, that’s the priority. Then we have moral dependents, when it’s just the right thing to do.

“It’s not just a retirement home for widows. It is a community. It’s an extension of the Air Force family, and we are very proud to provide that. The village is not a place where people go to die; it’s a place where people go to live. . . . We don’t just provide an apartment; it’s a way of life.”<sup>26</sup>

### **ON HOW HE WOULD LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED:**

“That I did my best. I would hope most people would say the same thing . . . and that’s all you can do. That’s all that the country can ask of you . . . that you do your best. That’s how I’d like to be remembered.”<sup>27</sup>





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **GARY R. PFINGSTON**

**AUGUST 1, 1990 - OCTOBER 25, 1994**

Gary R. Pfingston was born on 2 January 1940 in Evansville, Indiana. In the mid-1950s, his parents moved west to southern California, looking for better job opportunities. Pfingston quickly adapted. He became an avid athlete, competing in football, baseball, and wrestling. He graduated from Torrance High School in 1958, and later enrolled in El Camino College.

He was a young man with big plans. He worked for the Redondo Beach Recreation Department, delivered papers for the Los Angeles Times, married his sweetheart, Marsha A. Hunt, and was scheduled to attend Long Beach State University. But on Christmas Eve 1961, a month after his marriage, the plan changed. He received a draft notice with a scheduled physical date of 2 January 1962. It would be his 22nd birthday.

After his physical, Pfingston considered his options. A draft deferment was not a possibility, as he was not a full-time student, and even though he was married, he did not have a child to

support. Knowing military service was in his future, he decided to enlist in the Air Force. He packed his bags and left for Lackland AFB, Texas, in February 1962. Following basic training, the Air Force selected Pfingston to serve as an aircraft mechanic. He moved to Amarillo, Texas, where he attended technical training, while his wife lived off base with a friend. He then received his young family's first assignment: Castle AFB, California.

At Castle AFB, Pfingston began to enjoy and adapt to the military lifestyle. He worked as a crew chief on B-52 Stratofortress long-range bombers and played a role in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. He played fast-pitch softball during his down time and later attended the NCO Preparatory School. As his initial enlistment came to an end, the Air Force offered him a bonus to reenlist. He had no problem taking the money and continuing to serve.

“I thought, hey, this is a pretty damn good deal,” said Pfingston, reflecting on the decision years later. “Why get out? Because there was a limited amount of money in the bonus program, people had to reenlist quickly or the money might be gone. I think I got \$1,800, and that was a lot of money at that time.”<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, the Pfingstons moved to Plattsburgh AFB, New York, where he continued to work as a crew chief on B-52s and KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refueling aircraft. He was later assigned as the noncommissioned officer-in-charge (NCOIC) of the aircraft records, documentation, and debriefing sections and was promoted to technical sergeant. In 1972 he was assigned to U-Tapao Royal Thai AB, Thailand, for one year.

Pfingston’s career took a turn when he returned from Thailand in 1973. He was stationed at Lackland AFB and assigned as a military training instructor. Although he was initially hesitant to embrace a role he felt was not his type of work, Pfingston found he “just absolutely loved it.” It was a three-year tour, but in 1981, eight-and-a-half years after arriving at Lackland, Pfingston, now senior master sergeant, was finishing his last of five year-long extensions.<sup>2</sup>

Pfingston and his family then moved to Anderson AFB, Guam, but shortly after arriving, Pfingston broke his back while working on a C-141 Starlifter. He was airlifted to Wilford Hall in San Antonio, Texas, where he spent 147 days receiving treatment for a fractured vertebra, herniated disks, and sciatic nerve damage.

When he returned to Guam, he assumed the role of first sergeant and quickly grew to understand the importance of caring for Airmen and the critical role of families. He made chief master sergeant and was then assigned to George AFB, California, where he began his service as a senior enlisted leader. He was selected as the senior enlisted adviser for the 831st Air Division at George AFB, then hired by Lt Gen Merrill A. McPeak as the 12th Air Force senior enlisted adviser. McPeak later tapped Pfingston to serve in the same role for Pacific Air Forces, which he did until the summer of 1990.

In August 1990, Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen Michael J. Dugan selected Pfingston to serve as the 10th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF).<sup>3</sup> He knew immediately that the job would be tough. The Air Force would continue to draw down—when Pfingston became the CMSAF in August 1990, the Air Force had 535,233<sup>4</sup> active duty Airmen, but by 1994 that number had dropped to 422,320<sup>5</sup>—the budget would continue to decrease, and the Air Force was prepping for, at that time, a possible air war in the Middle East.

Despite the challenges, Pfingston continued to move the enlisted force forward. He focused on quality of life issues such as housing, pay, and medical benefits and continued to move toward a one-plus-one dormitory standard. He helped inaugurate the Year of Training initiative that resulted in, among other things, career field education and training plans, three-level and seven-level technical schools for all career fields, and mandatory in-residence professional military education (PME) for all Airmen.<sup>6</sup> He also eliminated the E-4 “buck” sergeant rank, and made significant changes to the uniform, including moving the master sergeant stripe from the bottom of the chevron to the top.

Pfingston retired in 1994 but remained active in Air Force events until he died of cancer on 23 June 2007. Before his passing, Pfingston did not sit down for a long-form oral history interview. However, many of his thoughts and words were captured in print at various points during his 30-plus years of service. The following are quotes and perspectives that Pfingston shared as he reflected on his Air Force career.

## **ON HIS ROLE AND PREPARATION DURING THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS:<sup>7</sup>**

“I went to work one day with a pack of cigarettes and two dollars and didn’t get to go home for 30 days. We were locked on base. We upgraded all the airplanes and put them on alert. We had to stay with our airplane. We lived there. But, we were prepared for such occurrences. The training program in those days was much different than it is today. You had schools that you went to for every skill level, and they were mandatory. Another difference is the SKT [Specialty Knowledge Test] you take today as part of your WAPS [Weighted Airman Promotion System]. You had to take the SKT and pass it with a certain percentile score to get your three level, five level, and seven level. And you had to complete a formalized training program prior to testing.”<sup>8</sup>

## **ON PAY AND BENEFITS DURING HIS EARLY CAREER:**

“There weren’t very many people who stayed and made careers out of the Air Force because of pay and entitlements, or benefits. There weren’t any. Back then, unless you were an E-4 with four years of service, your spouse received no benefits or entitlements—you couldn’t ship household goods, spouses didn’t get travel pay. You couldn’t even live in base housing—you had to be an E-4 [with] over four [years in] to . . . get on the list. Every Airman in the Air Force lived off base. . . . Most of the first-term Airmen in the Air Force, that I was aware of, were there to [avoid being] drafted in [to] the Army.”<sup>9</sup>



## **ON HIS EXPERIENCE DURING HIS ONE-YEAR ASSIGNMENT IN THAILAND IN 1972:**

“I started in aircraft maintenance again, B-52s and tankers, and then I moved into the DCM [deputy commander for maintenance] maintenance control area. We had a lot of planes on the base. There was a lot of reconfiguring of airplanes—what was called the “iron belly” modifications so B-52s could carry conventional bombs. Up until that time, B-52s were designed to exclusively carry nuclear weapons. That’s when we first started using B-52s in a conventional war. We modified them to carry 500-pound bombs and put external bomb racks on them, also.

“A big difference between a war deployment then and now is the communication process. The only ways we could communicate with our families . . . [were] by mail or the MARS [Military Affiliate Radio System]. MARS was run by volunteer radio operators. Once a month, I would sit in a MARS station for probably eight to ten hours waiting for my turn. The radio operators would relay conversations sentence-by-sentence. I know in Desert Storm we had AT&T commercial telephones, and I understand in Bosnia they communicated on the Internet, on computers.”<sup>10</sup>

## **ON HIS EXPERIENCE AT LACKLAND AFB IN THE MID TO LATE 1970S:**

“The biggest thing we went through, I guess, was the change from the draft to an all-volunteer force. Even today, I think it was a great thing to do. The quality of the Airmen didn’t change. As a matter of fact, it might have gotten better because we had more people [entering] the Air Force for the right reasons. They were volunteering to come in—not coming in to avoid the draft.

“We started to do a lot of integration of males and females—male instructors with female flights and female instructors with male flights. We were bringing in more women, and more of them were attaining NCO status, and a lot of our young men were leaving basic training and going to work for female supervisors. Not long after that, we integrated squadrons to include male and female flights.

“Overall, these years were not good years, as I recall, for the Air Force. Those were what were referred to as the hollow forces of the ’70s. Being a young senior NCO at the time, I can say it was not very good. We went for a long time without a pay raise. Our reenlistment rates were low, and we were drawing down from the Vietnam years. We got so small, so fast. All of a sudden a base would become 50 to 60 percent manned, with no money, and you couldn’t do your job. We were killing people, working them to death. We couldn’t fix airplanes because we didn’t have money to buy parts. We didn’t have money to fly them if they were fixed. So flight crews were not getting proper training. We learned from that experience and did things differently when we had to do the drawdowns of the ’90s.

“Personally, two things of great professional importance happened to me while at Lackland. First, I started getting involved in supervision of people and leadership roles. I truly believe that my experience as a TI [training instructor] is the reason I ultimately succeeded as a chief. Being a TI is probably the best training ground in the Air Force for people programs. Second, I met CMSgt Bob Beilke. He became my role model. He saw that, as a technical sergeant, I wasn’t doing everything I could do to improve myself or the Air Force. Don’t get me wrong, I was good—I was selected instructor of the year. Chief Beilke sat me down and told me to either ‘Get all the way in or get out of my Air Force.’ His guidance inspired me to attain the grade of senior master sergeant before leaving Lackland in 1981.”<sup>11</sup>

## **ON THE DRAWDOWN DURING HIS TENURE AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE:**

“We have to be smart on how we manage our people so we can avoid those situations [where Airmen are unable to do their job due to manning]. We have to draw down the structure and force size in a systematic, programmatic way. We can’t have a smaller force doing the job designed for a larger force. We need to strike a balance between the number of people we’ll have and the number of locations where they’ll be stationed. We have to draw down the end strength and force structure to prevent the ‘hollow’ force of the 1970s. If we make this draw down smartly, we can ease some of the pain of getting smaller. But we can be smaller and better at the same time.”<sup>12</sup>

“The main thing I’m concerned about is the continuing drawdown, making sure we do that in as smooth and orderly a fashion as we possibly can, knowing we’re already now targeting in FY [fiscal year] ’94 about 4,500 additional separations. Those are numbers in addition to how many normally separate from the Air Force. I want to make sure we do everything smoothly so we can continue to be as fair to our people as they are to us. But unfortunately that’s the deck of cards we have been dealt, so we have to play ’em.”<sup>13</sup>

“I’m pretty excited and pleased that we have been able to manage this for three years now through a voluntary mode, when you understand what the alternatives are (involuntary separations). So the No. 1 thing on my agenda for ’94 is to continue with that process, then obviously await anxiously what we think is going to be required for ’95. We work that six months to a year out, so we had to start making initial decisions on what we think the end strength numbers are going to look like in FY 95. I just hope we can continue to manage it as well as we have in the past.”<sup>14</sup>

“[General McPeak] and I talked and decided that we were going to do everything voluntarily, as best we could. We were not going to do involuntary separations until it was absolutely the last resort. And that’s why we worked so hard to get the VSI [voluntary separation incentive] and SSB [special separation bonus] programs. Probably well over half of my efforts during ’91 and ’92 and into ’93 were spent working the drawdown. The personnel enlisted leaders played a major role in these programs. Chiefs like Dale Reed, Jimmy Tanner, and Josh Krebbs helped plan and organize our efforts, under the direction of General [Billy J.] Boles. We got out in front and took a big gamble in ’92—we decided to do two years’ worth of drawdowns in one year.”<sup>15</sup>

## ON THE DRAWDOWN’S EFFECT ON PROMOTIONS:

“If we continue to manage (the drawdown) in all areas to keep the force structure in balance the right number of first termers, second-termers, career NCOs and senior NCOs—promotions should stay basically what we’ve known for a couple years, as well as assignments and career opportunities, and so forth. But, if we don’t keep it in balance and we don’t get the right numbers in all of these different areas of the 20- or 30-year career, then it could affect those things.

“People need to remember, especially in the promotion system, we promote to vacancies. Where there are vacancies there will continue to be promotions. And when there are no vacancies then you don’t promote anybody.

“I think we will keep the promotion opportunities about the same. I don’t see them changing much, maybe a point or two up or down. That’s pretty much been the track record for the last three or four years. When you promote the same percentage of a smaller, eligible pool, then fewer people get promoted.

“So, just because you see a shorter list doesn’t always mean the promotion opportunities are going down, it just means 10 percent of 100 is more people than 10 percent of 10. That will happen. There will be shorter promotion lists because of a smaller eligible pool. My priority is to try to do everything we can to keep the whole process balanced so it doesn’t affect these kinds of things. We can pretty much keep all the tidal waves out of the water. There may be some ripples, but no tidal waves to wash us overboard.”<sup>16</sup>

## ON THE ONE-TO-ONE DORM STANDARD INITIATIVE, THEN REFERRED TO AS VISION 2020:

“We’ve been working on that for several years. There again, it’s a vision, exactly like the title says. But you have to do that. I think you have to look into the future a long time before you arrive, otherwise you find out, hey, all of a sudden we’re there and we hadn’t prepared for it.

“I guess we kind of had a vision for 1990 in 1960. In 1960 we didn’t have a whole lot of problems with dorm rooms because we didn’t have any. And then when we got rooms, we didn’t have a whole lot of square-footage problems because we didn’t have a whole lot in the rooms. That was before the high-tech, big-screen TVs, stereos, stereo speakers, and what not. When we finally got rooms in the ‘60s and ‘70s, about all we had in the rooms were metal bunk beds, a desk, two chairs and a wall locker—if we were lucky. About the only electronic stuff we owned were these little cigarette pack-sized transistor radios.

“Without a doubt, the most important thing we need to do is work on dormitory privacy. I really think it’s a crime to take somebody, the best of the best that we can recruit, bring them in the Air Force and say, “I’m sorry, you’ll have to have a roommate.” I just can’t understand that mentality. I raised two sons in the United States Air Force. Both of them are well into their 20s now, but when they were 10 or 12 years old living in base housing, they were authorized their own bedrooms. If they were in the Air Force, they would have to have a roommate. We’ve got a lot of work to do, but I think it’s a great program, and I think it’s an example of the senior leadership of the Air Force, the chief of staff, signing up to this and saying this is important. For many years we’ve given dormitory privacy a lot of lip service. Now we have something on paper, and we have signatures from senior leaders saying this is what they will step up to and work toward for the future.

“For the Airmen of 2010 and 2020, it’s going to be a great thing. And we need to do a better job of articulating the fact that we have Airmen who wear the uniform today who can wear this uniform in the year 2020 or 2023.”<sup>17</sup>











## ON THE 1992 YEAR OF TRAINING INITIATIVE—

“There have been a lot of gray areas and misunderstandings over who does functional training and when, and who does education and when. It was a hit-and-miss operation, trying to design an enlisted curriculum that serviced staffs, techs, and masters in the same class. Who did you focus on and who did you teach, and what did you teach them? The concept of PME is to prepare people for positions of greater responsibility, so having said that, were we preparing staffs to be techs? Were we preparing techs to be masters? Or, were we just catching up with the masters and teaching them something we should have given them 10 years ago?

“So this ‘Year of Training’ fits right in with the Quality Air Force. It’s an opportunity to build enlisted career paths, where every Airman coming in the door at Lackland can take a clean sheet of paper, write down the grades on one side and the corresponding requirements for each grade on the other. It just flows naturally in this streamlined, focused, Quality Air Force concept.

“It should encourage people, because they’re going to be given everything that they need and probably more than they’ve ever been given before. So, it should enhance their career opportunities.”<sup>18</sup>

## ON AIRMEN IN OPERATION DESERT STORM:

“Their performance in Operation Desert Storm illustrates that the quality of our enlisted force is unsurpassed by any nation. In large part due to [Congress’s] past efforts, we fielded a superbly trained, highly motivated fighting force that won the respect of people worldwide. I was fortunate enough to visit our troops in the Persian Gulf in January of [1991]. I was prouder and more enthusiastic than at any time during my 29 years in the military to be associated with the fighting men and women of today’s Air Force. They were ready and it showed. Superior training tactics, equipment, and operational art proved to be the edge.

“Airmen in the Persian Gulf are representative of our Airmen everywhere. As I travel around the world talking to the men and women in the Air Force, it is evident that we are continuing to recruit the best and provide them top-notch training.

“In recent months, we have asked our people to make immense sacrifices on behalf of their nation. The casualties of war—killed, wounded, and missing—have already given far in excess of what we could ever repay. Military service will always require the willingness to make these sacrifices and our warriors realize this. They served honorably in Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada and Operation Just Cause in Panama. The world watched as they served with pride and distinction in Operation Desert Storm.

“These actions have provided us with the most valuable resource possible for our armed forces—battle-tested and trained warriors. These are experienced people we need to meet future threats to our country and to train tomorrow’s Airmen. We have a moral obligation to appropriately care for the men and women who volunteer to shoulder our country’s military burden.”<sup>19</sup>

“I was impressed with what I saw. While there, I noticed how smoothly the operations were running, and it doesn’t surprise me because of how good the men and women of the Air Force are at what they do. This is also testimony to how good the preparation and training necessary to conduct such a large-scale operation was. What surprised me is that we have people who never knew each other before who are working, living and socializing so well together.

“The thing that is most on their minds is the health and well-being of their loved ones’ back home. Ironically, the thing most on the minds of the loved ones’ back home is the health and well-being of those deployed. That speaks well for our Air Force, the American way of life and our society. Whether you have a family or not, there’s still a feeling of family and togetherness.”<sup>20</sup>

## ON THE ROLE OF NCOs:

“I see the role of NCOs becoming possibly more dynamic—NCOs playing a bigger role in the management decision-making processes in the Air Force. We live in a very high-tech world because of what we do, because of what we are all about. I’m continually amazed as I travel around the Air Force and see some of the incredibly high-tech roles that enlisted people play in their day-to-day operations.

“Those roles will change directly proportionate to the new organization. We will continue to be the number one Air Force in the number one country in the world. The size of our force will be driven by all the outside influences. But, flattening of the layers of management and command will take place. I see jobs that will be great positions with a tremendous amount of responsibility and authority in not only management but in leadership and decision making in our day-to-day activities as well. There will be an awful lot of great jobs that people will want to have, and jobs that we need to fill with dedicated professionals. The positions will be taskings of high priority and require incredibly top-notch people.”<sup>21</sup>

## **ON PHASING OUT THE E-4 “BUCK” SERGEANT RANK:**

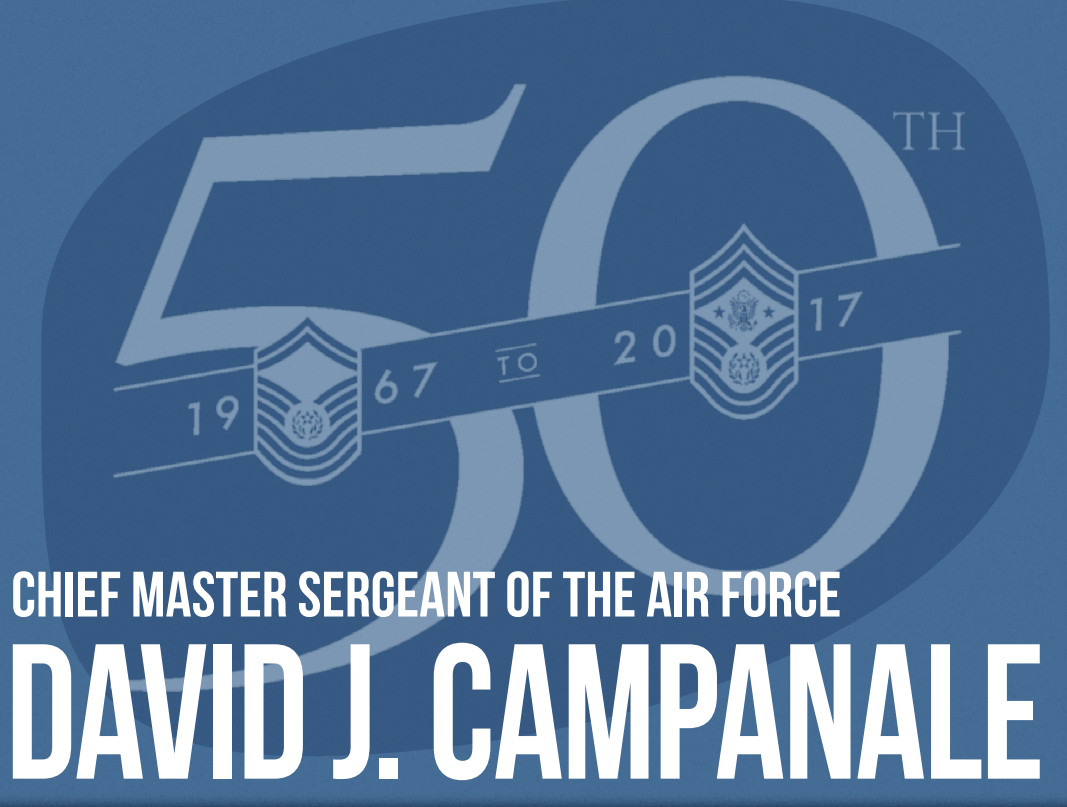
“It was a balancing issue. We found ourselves out of balance in the NCO percentages of the total enlisted structure. Over three-quarters of the enlisted force were NCOs and it would have been 80 percent without the change.

“Becoming an NCO requires that you be placed in a position in which responsibility is commensurate with the title. There was no competition for E-4 sergeant promotion seemingly became an automatic appointment process. This was due to downsizing and restructuring—it created an imbalance. We had to make the move—it was a pay-me-now or pay-me-later issue. It’s difficult to do whenever you do it, but it was a move that would be more difficult later.”<sup>22</sup>

## **ON ADVICE FOR AIRMEN:**

“Be the best you can be in your chosen field and in your particular responsibility that you have at a particular time. Sometimes, being anxious about tomorrow (causes) you not to (focus) on today. Most of the time tomorrow will take care of itself if you are truly focused on today.”<sup>23</sup>





**OCTOBER 26, 1994 - NOVEMBER 4, 1996**

David Campanale was born in 1952, raised in the inner city of Worcester, Massachusetts, and grew up to be a good athlete with considerable smarts. As he put it, he “had the world by the throat.” After high school, when sports did not work out, he realized he had to make a change and find another profession. With some encouragement from his mom, he joined the Air Force in September 1970.

Campanale’s Air Force career began with a rough patch. He broke his collarbone in tech school and had trouble taking notes and studying for tests. He made a surprise visit home on Christmas only to find his high school girlfriend had found a romance with someone else, and his mom had left town for the holidays. He also struggled with his career development courses (CDC). But thanks to good supervisors who challenged him and taught him the importance of professionalism, his career soon took off. He became an excellent B-52 Stratofortress crew chief, deploying multiple times to Guam during the latter

stages of the Vietnam War. He later worked on C-130 Hercules transports, the FB-111A Aardvark tactical attack aircraft, and the KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refueling aircraft and was promoted to master sergeant under the Stripes to Exceptional Performers program.

In October 1994 Gen Ronald Fogleman selected Campanale to be the 11th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). During his tenure, he fought for the one-plus-one dorm standard, remembering his living conditions during Vietnam and vowing to make a change. He led the Air Force through changes to TRICARE health care program and resisted a proposed change to retirement. Campanale retired in November 1996 after 26 years on active duty.

In November 2015 Campanale sat down for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and his tenure as the CMSAF. During the interview, he spoke of his initial challenges and his experiences deploying back and forth to Guam during the Vietnam War. He also shared how he was able to convince the secretary of defense to sign off on the one-plus-one dorm standard and his memory of the initial aftermath of the tragic Khobar Towers bombing. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

**WELL CHIEF . . . WE'LL JUST START AT THE BEGINNING. I KNOW YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE IN 1970, WHICH WAS ARGUABLY THE HEIGHT OF THE VIETNAM WAR. I'M CURIOUS AS TO WHAT PUSHED YOU TO THE AIR FORCE AT THAT TIME?**

Well, as a matter of fact, I came in seven days before my 18th birthday, so my mom had to sign for me to go in. And the real reason was to just find a career, something to do, an opportunity to go to school and receive an education. I was a pretty good athlete, and I thought something like that may pan out; but, when I played against other pretty good athletes, I found I really couldn't stack up to a lot of them at that time. So, my mom wanted me to get an education and didn't necessarily think community college was the best thing for me. She wanted some place where I could get some discipline, mature a little bit, and be among professionals—not necessarily in my home town. It's funny, I often talk about that quite a bit. I often wondered why you have to be born here, raised here, live here, and spend the rest of your life here. There was a big world out there, and I often conveyed those thoughts to my mom; so, she thought joining the Air Force would be a good thing for a lot of reasons.

**YOU WENT ON TO TECH SCHOOL AND THEN TO YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT, AND I KNOW YOU HAD A CHALLENGING START TO YOUR CAREER. YOU BROKE YOUR COLLARBONE IN TECH SCHOOL, HAD SOME TROUBLES WITH GRADES, TROUBLES WITH YOUR CDCS. WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE TO SOME OF THOSE EARLY CHALLENGES?**

Well the collarbone was just bad luck. We were playing football on the field, and I was running—and the goal post got in the way. I remember that, and I still feel it every now and again when the weather gets a little bit cold. So, that really slowed down all the time in tech school. That was a big difference maker for me because I was constantly in pain and trying to learn. That was difficult.

I think the other early troubles, with CDCs for example, was just immaturity on my part—maybe some poor study habits and learning

habits. I had a great bunch of supervisors on our team on the flight line. Tony Saenz was my supervisor there, George Juno who was really funny because he stuttered a lot and so we used to sing some of the instructions on how to do certain processes on the flight line. They were good, good guys, and they really tried hard; but, they were young NCOs [noncommissioned officers] who really weren't a byproduct of professional military education [PME] and how to understand and coach and teach and document and to follow up. So, I think all of those things kind of contributed to a little bit of a struggle at first.

**I IMAGINE SO. UNDERSTANDING THE LITTLE THAT I DO ABOUT THE AIR FORCE DURING VIETNAM AND JUST THE CULTURE AT THAT TIME, I'VE HEARD FROM OTHERS THAT THERE WAS LESS OF A FOCUS ON DISCIPLINE OR STANDARDS. DID THAT PLAY A ROLE IN THE EARLY CHALLENGES?**

Those were early challenges for everybody to tell you the truth. Some people had been in the Air Force longer, and it was easier for them to understand. But for a group of people my age who were just starting out, both the young officers and the young enlisted people, it was quite a challenge because there wasn't really a focus on quality of life for people. The focus was on sortie production, not necessarily safety, not necessarily training. As long as we got everything in the air—that was the most important thing.

But good things came from that, because you have to think about who were the young officers at that time—Gen Colin Powell, Gen Ronald Fogleman, Gen Merrill McPeak, and a whole host of other young officers who saw what it shouldn't be like and became determined in their career to demonstrate what it should be like. I can tell you that kind of struck me, because as much as you would learn lessons on leadership and management, some lessons you learned were not necessarily from the best leaders. Sometimes it was from the worst leaders or leaders that were in a predicament and had no other options or chose not to make a change. You just felt that if you ever got the chance this is not how you would do it.

Of course, everybody says that—it is easy to say. I remember when I first started we had a master sergeant who I think was the worst supervisor in the entire free world. But he did tell me something. He said, "If you don't like it, get out of my Air Force or grow up, change, get promoted, and do something about it." So I started making little notes to myself along the way: "If I ever . . ." I kept all those notes and I went through those during my career, and I did that on the eve of the day that I was going to be sworn in as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I looked through those notes again and realized that a lot of those things were in place for the right reason. They couldn't be changed. I also thought there were some things that could be changed and maybe the timing wasn't right 10, 15 years ago. Maybe now the timing was right, so we focused in on those types of things. So, for all his lack of ability, he did teach me some valuable lessons. I think a lot of that came out of the Vietnam War.



## **YOU CERTAINLY OVERCAME YOUR EARLY CHALLENGES. WHAT WAS IT THAT SHIFTED FOR YOU?**

I think it was a variety of things. At that time the full PME wasn't in place, but we had an NCO orientation course that lasted three weeks. I think that helped quite a bit. It was kind of funny because the gentleman who was the instructor was our maintenance officer, and he had been RIF'd [reduction in force] and he accepted a demotion back to become a staff sergeant to teach. So, I kind of took a look at that and said, "Okay, he was captain and now he is a staff sergeant and he is teaching professional military education at its lowest level." He did a really good job and he accepted that and he recognized there were other things to do. So, I think that helped—and then having children and getting married. You grow up a little bit, and I think that creates better awareness for you.

## **IT'S AN INTERESTING PERSPECTIVE ON PME AS YOU'VE SEEN IT GROWN FROM THE INFANT STAGES. IS PME ONE OF THE BIGGEST SHIFTS WE'VE MADE TOWARD THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE ENLISTED FORCE?**

Oh, I think it is, and I think it was consistent with the times. When I went into the Air Force in 1970 there was still a draft, but we ended up going to an all-volunteer force. And there was a focus from the leadership at that time recognizing that we just couldn't have the same amount of people. We almost had a million people in the US Air Force. We had so many programs that we wanted to put into place that cost money; so, sometimes the tradeoff was personnel. I remember what some of the buildings looked like, the barracks. We didn't even call them dormitories then. Dormitory became another word that sounded better than barracks. There were so many things that had to be done. I think they recognized we just had to get more out of fewer people, and that kind of fit in with an all-volunteer force. Part of that was we had to have greater expectations for our enlisted force. The leadership at that time recognized that it could be done. But again, as wonderful as everybody was, there were some enhancements that needed to be made, and professional military education was a big part of that.

## **ONE OF THE OTHER THINGS, EDUCATION-WISE, THAT HAPPENED EARLY IN YOUR CAREER WAS THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE (CCAF). IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1972; YOU WERE A YOUNG AIRMAN AT THE TIME. DO YOU RECALL THAT?**

In 1972 I didn't recall very much except paydays and how poor they were, and just getting to work on time—doing the best that I could. Life was very, very simple at that time, and I was young, supporting my family. As time goes on, you discover some things, and I think it's because you look to discover or somebody helps you discover. So, the Community College of the Air Force was a big part of that. I remember going to school at night and how hard that was. I'm reminded of that today—when I come down from Colorado here (to Arizona), one of the first things I do when I get home—because I haven't seen the family for maybe three to four weeks—I take my briefcase and I place it in the corner. I remember Thursday nights getting off school. We were gone Monday through Thursday at night school; so, I would take my books and throw them in the corner. I would take a reprieve on Friday night, then do a little bit of studying on Saturday and Sunday night. When I earned my degree that was a special moment for me, particularly because it is what I wanted to do. Learning was fun, but the work was hard and it was a goal accomplished.

## **WHAT WAS THE PERCEPTION OF EDUCATION AMONG THE ENLISTED FORCE AT THE TIME? I'VE HEARD SOME WERE RIDICULED FOR TRYING TO GET THEIR EDUCATION. OTHERS SAY IT BECAME A GREATER FOCUS AND MORE IMPORTANT AS THE YEARS WENT ON.**

I always thought it became a greater focus, and it was the right thing to do. We used to ask Airmen when I was the Chief, "Why did you join the Air Force?" A lot of times education was the number one answer, and then people would say, "To see the world." The service and what Airmen can give is predicated on how well educated they are—both personally and professionally. So to work through a degree in the Community College of the Air Force wasn't always about a degree for after the Air Force, even though that is good for our country. It was a degree for while you were in the Air Force. So, I think it was the exact right thing to do at the time. There were some naysayers, because some people thought that's all they wanted to do, but most people would find the right balance and do the right things.

## **YOU WERE A B-52 CREW CHIEF AND DEPLOYED BACK AND FORTH TO GUAM A FEW TIMES IN SUPPORT OF VIETNAM. WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THOSE DEPLOYMENTS?**

So it was called "Bullet Shot."

## WHY WAS THAT?

I don't know. It was called Bullet Shot, and we called it "The herd shot 'round the world." The troops had a little fun with that. It was our first deployment, and most of us were excited to go because we had been a garrison force as part of Strategic Air Command [SAC]. We just did the same thing every day and practiced for what we hoped would never come. So, we were now deployed in a conventional operation.

I can remember when we got off the plane that brought us to Guam. We had flown all night and had a long day ahead of us, but we threw our bags in the room and went right to work on the flight line because aircraft were coming behind us. They didn't have buses to bring us in; so, we rode around in converted old cattle cars that were used to move cattle around. That's why we called ourselves "the herd shot 'round the world," because we took these cattle cars around the base to get to the flight line.

I remember looking out the window and seeing a sign that said, "Guam is good by order of the base commander." I really didn't have high expectations, but most of us were there on orders for 60 days; so, we thought, "Okay, no problem." Then we got extended to 90 days, then 120, and then eventually 179. After the tour, we went back home, processed back in, spent a couple of days, and were then told we could go do anything we wanted for three weeks. We didn't have to take any leave. We took off for three weeks, and when we came back—boom—we were off again for another six months. We did that, came back, again the same process, and then deployed again except this time we came back home after about three months because of the Yom Kippur War.

It was a rainy, wet place. The first time we lived in the barracks, but the second time, we lived in some converted chicken coops we called Tin City. If you can imagine living in Tin City, where the roof is this far [roughly a foot] from your face and it is pouring rain on the tin roof most of the time. There were 200 people that shared two washers and dryers . . . five sinks, five showers, and five toilets. It really wasn't a great place to be. But the last time I went back, we were staying in tents, and it was far worse than that. It wasn't a good experience, but it was a living experience I remembered throughout my entire career. I always reminded myself that our troops should never have to live like that for what they do for our country.

## AFTER THE WAR ENDED, YOU VOLUNTEERED AND WENT TO GRISHAM AFB, INDIANA. I THINK YOU WERE A SENIOR AIRMAN THEN AND, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, REALLY MADE A MARK ON YOUR UNIT. I FOUND THAT INTERESTING, BECAUSE MANY WOULD SAY THAT AS A YOUNG AIRMAN YOU CAN'T HAVE THAT SORT OF INFLUENCE. WHY DID YOU HAVE THAT INFLUENCE?

Well, first of all, I was never a senior airman—I was a sergeant. A senior airman was only created as an additional grade to keep the amount of enlisted people or noncommissioned officers below the congressional limit. So, I was a sergeant, and I was always looking forward to work on the flight line. But I happened to be the lucky person. They assigned me to field maintenance to handle logistics and technical orders. I worked with quality control to put together deployment kits for cold weather deployments—tool kits and all that type of stuff. I learned how to handle a budget and started using a computer—a Burroughs 3500. I was like a jack-of-all-trades; so, they pulled me away from the flight line to go work in field maintenance and work in their logistics division. I learned an awful lot there. Of course, while you're learning, you're always trying to do your best, and fortunately, I was able to have an impact on the unit.



## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR YOUNGER AIRMEN AND NCOS WHO MAYBE FEEL THEY DON'T HAVE ANY AUTHORITY OR INFLUENCE TO MAKE MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE?**

Well, the first advice is don't worry so much about authority. Worry more about influence and what you can do. When I was the Chief, General [Ronald L.] Fogleman used to say all the time that we're all small little teams. You're a team within a bigger team, which is part of a bigger team and so on. I think that's a strength and goes to how well we're able to focus and do the little things. When you consider what the US Air Force does—and really the entire Armed Forces—not only for America, but for the world, they're able to do it and execute it in such a professional fashion. They do everything so quickly and so well. I think people lose sight of that bigger picture sometimes. Everybody is valuable in and of themselves, and they can influence the team. A team of five people can vary in rank from E-8 to E-3, but they function very, very well because they all have influence. I think that is the most wonderful thing about the Armed Forces of the United States today. We're in a society where we all wear our authority, but we don't choose to use that unless it is absolutely necessary. We instead use the collaboration of everybody's talents and thoughts to produce a better product for America.

## **A COUPLE YEARS LATER, YOU WENT TO NCO LEADERSHIP SCHOOL. YOU TALKED ABOUT PME A LITTLE BIT ALREADY, BUT JUST TO THAT EXPERIENCE AND THAT MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER—WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU?**

It was fun. The commandant of the school was MSgt John Oulette. He was really a super guy. We both had daughters that were the same age and liked to play soccer, but there were no soccer leagues, or very few soccer leagues that were mostly for boys and not for girls. I thought he was a fun guy to be around. He pointed out the fun things. He wasn't necessarily your in-the-box type of guy; he was an outside-the-box kind of guy. The staff was great. It was a great educational experience, and I remember it quite well because they had a physical fitness award and a speech award and I ended up being a distinguished graduate in the class and winning the physical fitness and speech award. It was a great time, and John and I became friends for life after that.

## **YOU MENTIONED THE SOCCER LEAGUES . . . YOU WERE VERY INVOLVED IN BASE ACTIVITIES. YOU ACTUALLY ESTABLISHED A SOCCER LEAGUE AT ONE POINT. WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO GET INVOLVED?**

Well, the first thing that started it was the fact that we were in Hawaii and there were a lot of things for young boys to do—but not for the girls. There was baseball, soccer, flag football, and a lot of other stuff. I had two daughters, and I found that a lot of parents felt the same way. So, we decided to work with the American Youth Soccer Organization to put together a league of our own—myself, John Oulette, and three or four other people who had kids that went to school together and wanted to play soccer together. We started out with just four girls' teams, and at that time there were six boys' teams. We didn't have any fields; so, we had to create makeshift fields and maintain them. We found referees and set up a league organization and made sure we complied with the rules of the American Youth Soccer Organization. By the time we got done, we had eight leagues and more than 50 teams.

We had two seasons. We had one season where the boys and girls were in separate leagues and then another mixed season where the boys and girls could play together on the same team because we felt that was important. We tried to make sure the lineups were 50/50 so everyone could play. I thought that was a big part of bringing the community together on Saturdays.

## **SO, I'M GUESSING YOU DIDN'T DO ALL THOSE THINGS FOR THE RECOGNITION. WHAT WAS IT THAT MOTIVATED YOU TO HELP OUT?**

I don't know. First of all, it is your kids, it is your family, and things to do. I joined the Air Force Sergeants Association at that time as well and did some recruiting for them and thought about what private organizations do across America. If you look at it today, there are 800,000 private organizations in America. They don't do it for tax reasons; they do it because there is a void in the community that has to be filled, and a lot of times it's focused around children. I was a byproduct of the Boys and Girls Club of America. I was an inner-city kid. That's where we went, and that's where we had our entertainment. We didn't have that at the base; so, that was really the motivation to do that for the kids.

## **YOU LATER MADE CHIEF AND WERE PRESIDENT OF THE CHIEF'S GROUP. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT FOR THOSE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO DO, AND WHAT IMPACT WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE THEM HAVE ON A BASE?**

Well, I think the first thing they have to do is what makes them feel good. There is a large number of things that can be done in a community. There are children's programs, programs for seniors, programs for people who need a meal, need a break, need a handout, and need a little love. All you have to do is care. If you do that, it sets a good example. It's not because you put it in your performance report. It's because it makes you feel good and it's the right thing to do.

## **SURE. TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHEN YOU MADE CHIEF . . .**

My goal was to become a senior master sergeant. I read the little clips that only two percent of the force gets to senior master sergeant; so, I thought that would be pretty good. I moved on from Pease AFB [New Hampshire]. I was at SAC Headquarters and again working in logistics, this time as a program manager for the FB-111 weapons system for the command. It was a very interesting job, but our boss at the time encouraged us to be 15-minute experts on anything. So, you learned to be a quick study and work through things quickly.

One of the things I think I always had as a young enlisted person was the passion for doing what was right. I learned along the way to put the detail and facts behind the passion, and I think that was a mark of being a good leader at that time. We were able to do interesting things at SAC Headquarters, and I was fortunate to make Chief the first time out. I was really surprised, because I received a call at 5 a.m. in the morning. I was doing the morning reports, and it was Gen [John T., Jr.] "Jack" Chain who was the commander of Strategic Air Command. I answered the phone and said, "Bomber Systems Branch, this is Sergeant Campanale. How may I help you?" and he says, "Is this Dave Campanale?" I said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "This is Gen Jack Chain. Congratulations." He called me Chief for the first time.

## **THAT'S A GREAT STORY. NOT TOO MUCH LATER YOU BECOME A SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER. WAS THAT THE DIRECTION YOU WANTED TO GO?**

Well, I really didn't know because when I made Chief it was gravy on the potato. We were happy living in Omaha [Nebraska]. The kids were going to school, and I really didn't want to move to California and become a wing chief.<sup>1</sup> I made Chief at 16 years in the Air Force and still had a lot to learn; so, I actually initially declined the first opportunity to interview for a wing chief. It was my late wife Barbara—she worked in SAC Headquarters and went to the Chief's office, Jan Boyd, and said, "My husband will interview. Just tell him that." I didn't want to disrupt the family.

So, we interviewed and got the job and went to California. It was quite an experience, because the senior enlisted leader at the time had just retired after 30 years. Here I was with less than 18 years in the Air Force, with a whole different mind-set and thought process. At that time Castle AFB [California] wasn't renowned for many good things. It had a high DUI [driving under the influence] rate, a high Article 15 rate, AWOL [absent without leave] rates, a lot of discipline issues, and problems on the base. It was a training base, and there were a lot of transitory people. But it was a great assignment, and I learned a lot. You go through these stages in your life, and you grow up and learn different things by who you're around and the circumstances you're placed in.

## **YOU WERE LATER AT THE MOBILITY AIRLIFT COMMAND (MAC) AND WERE ACTUALLY THERE WHEN IT EVOLVED TO AIR MOBILITY COMMAND (AMC), IS THAT CORRECT?<sup>2</sup>**

That's right. Gen Hansford T. Johnson was the commander of MAC, and he chose me as a wing guy to move to a major air command, which typically didn't happen. At that time, usually people would go to an air division position or maybe a numbered Air Force position. There were several other steps, and I jumped through that, but we seemed to hit it off pretty well. He thought that someone from outside of Military Airlift Command might have a good and positive influence on the troops.

## **AT THAT TIME IN THE EARLY '90S; THERE WAS QUITE A BIT OF REORGANIZATION. WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THAT TRANSITION?**

Well, whenever there is a change, there is always a bit of heartache. Looking back on that restructure of the force, it was emotional and painful because Strategic Air Command had gone away, and I was a part of that almost my entire career. We were going through a Base Realignment and Closure [BRAC]; so, units were closing down, the infrastructure was smaller, and it had to be that way. Air Mobility Command was part of US Transportation Command as well, and General Fogelman was the commander of both. We also stood up the Tanker Airlift Control Center at the time.

There were a lot of things we needed to change, because if you look at the world events . . . in 1989 the Berlin Wall comes down. The world changed immediately after that. We had to respond to world events. The motto of Air Mobility Command was "Global Reach for the World, Global Power for America." Making all these command changes was the right thing to do at the time, and most certainly it has benefited us as years have gone on.









## **THAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH GENERAL FOGELMAN, WHO LATER HIRED YOU TO BE THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. WHAT WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN HE TOLD YOU THE NEWS?**

Well, I didn't even really hear what he said at first to tell you the truth. It was a Sunday, and we were expecting all the Chiefs and their spouses from Air Mobility Command to come to our house for a big barbecue on Monday night. So, my wife was working feverishly to make sure we were ready, because we were expecting about 80 guests. We were going to have a conference and entertain them all week long, so you want to put your best foot forward.

This was also the day I was in the headquarters because we were ready to send a military force into Haiti.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, President [Jimmy] Carter convinced them to do this peacefully. I had my two numbered Air Force Chiefs with me at the time; so, I said, "Hey let's go over to the house because the ladies are over there. We'll have dinner tonight and be ready for all our guests tomorrow and just relax a little bit." I was going down the elevator and was on the first floor when one of the elite guardsmen said, "Hey Chief, General Fogleman needs to see you." I asked the guys if they wanted to come up, but they decided to just stay down there and hang out.

General Fogelman had some family members that had visited him a month before, and one of them had made a little flag, which was a bull with a circle around it and a line through the middle—no BS is what it was all about. He gave me that and said a couple of his family and friends wanted me to have it for being such a great host when they were there. So, I said, "Okay, thank you, sir." Then he said, "Oh by the way, you've been selected as the 11th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force." And I said, "Okay, thank you, sir." I just walked out of his office, went into the elevator, and when I was half way down, I thought, "Oh, my word, what did he just say?" So, I went back up, confirmed it was the truth, and he said, "Yup, you have to be there in two weeks."

So, I went back down the elevator. The chiefs asked what the general had to say, and I said, "Well, I'll tell you a little bit later." So, I went home and told my wife first. She was happy and gave me a hug, and she said "So, two weeks?"

So, we had a conference for one week. We were literally waving goodbye to everybody Friday afternoon following the conference and then were home pulling pictures off the wall and packing stuff up because the van was going to arrive the following Wednesday to come get our stuff. We had three days and then drove from Scott AFB, Illinois, to Washington, DC, Friday morning.

## **WHEN YOU BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE YOU HAD A LOT ON YOUR PLATE AND A LOT TO LEAD THE AIR FORCE THROUGH. ONE OF THEM WAS THE SHIFT TO TRICARE FROM THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM, WHICH BROUGHT A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY, FRUSTRATION, AND CONCERN. WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THE PRIMARY CONCERNS AIRMEN HAD?**

Well, again, it was change. Bases were closing, and in a lot of cases, hospitals were closing. We only had so many people we could keep in the force, and as valuable as the medical crews were to us, we had to keep the majority of the force in war-fighting positions because we were a deployed force. We needed something to fill in the gap, and I think it has turned out to be an incredible success.

The bigger thing was being visible and communicating. I think a sign of leadership is facing the crowds when there is something controversial going on. I can remember being in every movie theater imaginable, never watching a show, but giving presentations for people about TRICARE. It wasn't just active duty; it was retired people as well who had become used to the idea of going to the base hospital and getting care on a standby basis. Of course we were going from CHAMPUS [Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services]. There were questions on deductibles. How do I do this? How do I enroll? Just a lot of confusion. I give a lot of thanks to our incredible administrative people and the docs and all the med techs who were able to explain the process. Not only did they provide great medical care when they could, they also provided an explanation of the transition.

The other change that came from this was for many of our tenured people. When they reached age 65, they were converted to Medicare. There are different payments involved in that; so, after TRICARE came TRICARE for Life, because everyone thought it was an earned benefit that had been promised. There was never anything in writing, but I can tell you that everyone was promised that as a benefit. So, we were able to make that change and relieve a lot of anxiety for people. We just coached them through the process and made sure they were armed with as much information as they needed.

## **RETIREMENT BECAME A HOT TOPIC DURING YOUR TENURE AS WELL. THERE WERE CONVERSATIONS TO CHANGE IT TO A HIGH ONE, AND YOU PLAYED A ROLE TO KEEP WHAT WE HAD. CAN YOU EXPAND ON THAT?**

Well, first of all, this is kind of a theoretical thing, but when anybody gives you a contract or there is an agreement, if someone is trying to change it, it's typically never good for the people signing the contract. Just as a general rule of thumb.

Military retirement is an important part of why a person serves and takes less salary to do what they do. When we were a garrison force it didn't sound so hard, but when you're a deployed force and you're away from your family, you're in harm's way much more, and many things impact your quality of life. A retirement is a pretty important thing. It is not just about the repayment for the great service that people give, it's also about finding the right people to give that service for the United States of America. When you can do that and people stay in and receive a reasonable retirement for what they have done, they come back to America, they come back to the community. When we talked earlier about community involvement on the base, they come back and make a difference in their communities across America. So, if you're changing the retirement system, or if you're taking away the benefit, fewer people are going to want to come in. More importantly, fewer of the right people are going to want to stay in.

## **I FIND THOSE TWO TOPICS INTERESTING BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS SEEM TO BE COMING UP. THEY'RE COMING UP AGAIN NOW AS WELL.**

I think that it is just a matter of budgetary concerns. Sometimes people are just looking at the budget and trying to make cuts. This is the message I would give to everybody, and I hope they get a chance to hear it: If you thought it was such a good deal, why didn't you do it?

In times of war, when the war is right there facing America and the challenges are there, nobody talks about taking away a benefit. It is when the wars are over, or the perceived wars are over, that everyone wants to take back money. There is not one military person who I think wouldn't sacrifice some salary or some retirement benefits, but, if they're going to do it, every other American has to do it as well. It can't be placed on the shoulders of those who protect and give freedom—it just can't be that way.

## **EARLIER YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT TIN CITY AND HOW THAT EXPERIENCE INFLUENCED YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON HOW AIRMEN DESERVE TO LIVE. YOU PUSHED HEAVILY FOR THE ONE-PLUS-ONE DORM CONCEPT. WHY WAS THAT SUCH AN IMPORTANT PUSH?**

It all focused back to the same thing. If you're going to have a smaller force, you're going to have fewer people doing more with less. Everybody in Washington, DC, said, "Chief, don't say that word . . . doing more with less." I said, "Okay, tell me that it isn't that way." It was politically incorrect, but that's exactly what we were doing. We're asking our people to do much, much more—extend their days, work harder, deploy, and separate from their family. The thought process was, you should want to do it for less because you love your country.

There is always that back and forth that applies to everybody. It applies from the president on down—every elected political leader. I don't see them taking less for love of their country, and oh, by the way, they can quit on Friday if they want and walk away. So, when you talk about all of those types of things, the one-plus-one dorm was about who comes in and what is attractive to them.

When I came in, I shared a room with three other people. I just thought that was the way it was because that was the barracks. I had to accept that, but I hated it. I don't know of anybody who liked that at all. Eventually, it went down to two people, and only because the Air Force got smaller, but it was still a shared room with a gang latrine. It was just totally unacceptable. You don't attract quality people with those types of things.

The funny thing was, at the time we were married; I had two daughters. By government regulations, they were allowed to have a separate bedroom. So, why can't people who serve have a separate bedroom? I spent a lot of time in the extra room downstairs in the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force House at Andrews AFB [Maryland]. We moved stuff around, and hung Post-Its all over—I fell in love with Post-Its. We developed a dormitory occupancy standard and, as a result of that, put together a good plan to send forward to the secretary of defense for approval, which he declined to do at first.



## WHAT WAS HIS REASONING?

He was the secretary of defense, a great guy, Dr. Bill Perry. The Army and the Marine Corps wanted nothing to do with it, neither did the Navy at first, but I was able to work with my Navy counterpart and support him on basic allowance for quarters for deployed sailors. You learned to collaborate a little bit and work together.

So I asked the secretary of defense one day, “Dr. Perry, we interview Airmen all the time. We do all of these surveys; we spend millions of dollars on surveys. I just want you to do a favor for me.” He said, “Sure, David.” I said, “Let’s just tell the people of the Air Force and all the services that we’re not going to ask them what they want anymore. We’re not going to waste money on surveys, and we’re never going to have a one-plus-one dorm standard. If you do that for me, I’d appreciate that.”

He looked at me a little quizzically and wondered why I would say that, but it was the truth. We ask Airmen what they want; we do these surveys when we have no intention of ever giving it to them. That’s ridiculous. So, just a few days later, the civil engineering folks who had been working with me on the program said, “Guess what? Come on down.” Dr. Perry had signed the one-plus-one occupancy standard in spite of the objections from the Army and the Marine Corps representatives. I had the Navy guys on my side, and what comes with the Navy comes with the Coast Guard; so, it was three against two.

## WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE FROM AIRMEN WHEN THEY HEARD THE NEWS?

I was pretty excited about that. I looked at demographics of the Air Force, and you could see trends that were happening in our dormitories. One out of every five recruits was a female coming into the dorm, and there was a trend that young men and women were getting married for the sole purpose of moving out of the dorm. Sometimes those things didn’t end happily. So, I think we created a better environment and really made a dorm feel like a dorm. Part of that was to put a kitchen in between. A kitchen is neutral space. It’s what the people wanted and indicated in their survey by an overwhelming margin. So, why not give it to them? I think that would be a clear message to everybody that says leadership listens to you. We spend money on these surveys. Now we’re ready to make a commitment for you.

## YOU WERE THE FIRST CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE TO BEGIN THE SHIFT IN BASIC TRAINING TO FOCUS ON AN EXPEDITIONARY MIND-SET. WHY DID YOU MAKE THAT SHIFT?

We were teaching a lot of stuff that really didn’t have an impact. When we revisited our basic training, we made two significant changes.

We took away some of the training we thought was wasteful, that was repeated when they got to tech school or their first duty station. We were looking at some of the statistics on our lost ratios for people, and we were losing about nine percent of our people that would come into the Air Force simply because they had problems with some type of abuse, whether it was spousal abuse, child abuse, alcohol abuse, or they couldn’t manage their budget correctly. So we changed some of our classes to life skill classes to teach people how to manage their life. You know, like me, I was 17 years old, a lot of people aren’t going to get it right away. So, that was one thing we did.

The other thing was that, although we were preaching the benefits of the Air Force, we had to appreciate the responsibility and the commitment that people make when they take an oath of enlistment. When you take that oath, you think about what you’re doing. You’re really saying you’ll give your life for your country. I think we needed to put a greater focus on that, to get us moving toward that mind-set so people wouldn’t lose it as they left basic training and went on in their career.

I think it was the right thing to do because of the changes we made. You look at 1989 and how the world changed when the Berlin Wall came down, and then subsequent events that tipped off right away. The Berlin Wall came down, and we had an outbreak of conflict that started in Bosnia right away. We were a deployed force, and people needed to understand that mentality. Basic training was a big part of that.

## TOWARD THE END OF YOUR TENURE, YOU EXPERIENCED ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC EVENTS IN OUR HISTORY—THE BOMBING OF THE KHOBAR TOWERS. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THAT TIME?

I remember that pretty vividly. It was one day that my late wife Barbara was not at the house. She was down in Atlanta, Georgia, with my daughter Jessica, trying to help her prepare for her wedding. So, she was away, and I was out in the yard doing what I like to do. I like to cut my own grass, and so, I was home cutting my grass in the backyard.

My neighbor, who was the Chief of the Air National Guard, came down and tapped me on the shoulder and said, “You need to call the command post.” So, I called command post at Andrews AFB, and they told me what happened. They connected me with Dr. Perry’s assistant, Major General [Paul J.] Kern—he was an Army general officer—and he told me that Dr. Perry wanted to speak with me. He wanted to organize a trip to Khobar Towers as quickly as possible. I said we’ll gladly do that. I checked in with General Fogleman the next day, and then myself and my counterparts from the other services all left and ended up going down to Khobar Towers.

The commander there was Brig Gen Terry Schwalier, an incredible leader and just a great guy. We went and got a survey of everything. I was ahead of General Fogleman, so I called him over the secure phone. I told him what to bring and who to come with. I told him to bring the JAG [judge advocate general], and he asked, “Why should I bring the JAG?” I said, “You can’t believe the incredible job the young JAG corps is doing here helping people with money and recovery.” There were 19 people killed and a couple hundred wounded in that whole event, and it was really something else.

Dr. Perry met with King Fahd [bin Abdulaziz Al Saud] and talked to him a little bit. We flew to Sigonella, Italy, and jumped on the COD [carrier onboard delivery], which is the plane that lands on the carrier deck. We landed on the USS George Washington and spent two days steaming down the Mediterranean. Then we jumped off and had a dinner in the evening with the Italian defense ministry; then, I flew nonstop back from Rome, Italy, to LaGuardia Airport in New York. My public affairs guy, Mike Brown, met me there, and we flew to Comiskey Park [Chicago, Illinois] to throw out the first pitch on the Fourth of July.

They did an interview, and normally you do interviews where it’s face-to-face or there may be a camera and the interviewer is right there, but it was a remote interview that I was doing. I thought it would be one or two TV stations, but there were dozens—and they were all asking about Khobar Towers. Before the game started, we enlisted about 180 people in the infield grass; so, it was a really cool thing that the owner of the White Sox did for us.

I remember all of that very, very vividly. People seemed to have more of a focus on you and were looking at you a little differently than perhaps in the past.

## **DURING YOUR TENURE, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER MOST ABOUT THE AIRMEN?**

I think really their resiliency. It just never seemed to matter. Whatever the challenge was, the resources they lacked, or the work schedule they faced, they just never got down. They always kept their head up, and they did it with such an incredible level of expertise and excellence—just absolutely spectacular. They never failed. They didn’t want to be separated from their family; you could see that. Most people think service members love being deployed, but that’s not the truth. Maybe the first time, but that wears off pretty quick. When they get there, they just go, “Okay, this is what we have to do,” and they execute flawlessly.

## **TODAY WE HAVE A NEW GENERATION OF AIRMEN DOING EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE THINGS. WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE AIR FORCE TODAY AND THE AIRMEN SERVING TODAY, AND YOU HAD TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THEM BUT YOU HAD TO START THE SENTENCE WITH “I BELIEVE,” WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe our country is in great hands.

## **GREAT, I LIKE THAT. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU’D LIKE TO ADD?**

You know, I think about our time in the Air Force and some of things we did. Sometimes we hit on some big ticket items, which we talked about, but what I’m most proud of, really, is the onesies and twosies I could help with here and there. There are hundreds and hundreds of stories where an Airman had a problem with this or an NCO had a problem with that, and we were able to use our office and the staff of the Pentagon to help people out and to do what is right.





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE ERIC W. BENKEN

**NOVEMBER 5, 1996 - JULY 30, 1999**

At the age of 18, Eric W. Benken felt quite literally out of options. He was born on 20 August 1951 and grew up in Norwood, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati. After high school, he moved to Houston, Texas, with his family, but he found it difficult to find a steady job. In 1969 most employers refrained from hiring the young men who were likely to be drafted into the Army at age 19. After working in low-paying jobs for nearly a year, he decided to pursue a different option and enlisted in the US Air Force.

As a young Airman, Benken transferred to Taiwan and deployed to Vietnam. He experienced the lack of standards during the draft era, and learned about the importance of leadership and the critical role of the first sergeant. He served in Texas, Florida, Arizona, and Korea during his early career, and later served in Belgium at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) headquarters and in Germany as the US Air Force in Europe (USAFE) senior enlisted advisor during the mid-

nineties, when the Air Force was heavily involved in peacekeeping missions following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Gen Ronald R. Fogleman selected Benken to serve as the 12th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) in November 1996. During his tenure, Benken focused on the continued transition to an expeditionary air force, the professional development of the enlisted force, and the need to strengthen the culture and spirit of Airmen. Following a number of mishaps, he and General Fogleman, along with Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall, announced the Air Force Core Values and introduced the Little Blue Book, a move that solidified core values and moved the force further along its path toward the professional force of today.

Benken sat down for an interview in August 2015 to reflect on his career in the Air Force. During the interview, he spoke about his first supervisor, a female Airman, and how that shaped his perspective on women in the service. He also spoke about the mishaps that drove Air Force leadership to introduce the Core Values, and the impetus behind changing the title of senior enlisted advisor to command chief master sergeant. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

## **ALRIGHT CHIEF, YOU VOLUNTARILY JOINED THE AIR FORCE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. AT THAT TIME THE MILITARY WASN'T NECESSARILY POPULAR; SO, WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO ENLIST?**

It was 1970. I graduated from Norwood High School [Norwood, Ohio] in 1969. Prior to my graduation, my family had moved to Houston, Texas, where my parents were going to start a business; so, I lived with my grandmother while I finished school. After graduation, I felt obligated to join my family in Houston—besides, I really didn't have anywhere else to go. I found it very difficult to get a job because I would be draft eligible when I turned 19. Employers did not want to hire someone, spend money training them, only to have the Army take them away. There was no college money—as a matter of fact, going to college was never discussed in my family. Norwood, Ohio, was an industrial-based city, and it was expected that you would replace your father on an assembly line at a factory. So, I wound up working in a car dealership. I was washing cars, delivering cars; and with a lot of overtime, I was probably making about \$40 or \$50 a week.

One day my mother picked me up from work in my old '62 Chevy. It was a very hot day in Houston, and I had been sweltering in front of an incinerator all day burning trash. As we were making our way through downtown Houston, we became stuck in a traffic jam. I looked out the car window at the federal building. There was a recruiting poster that said, "Join the Air Force!" I told my mother, "I think I found a way out of Houston, Texas." I said, "I'll take the bus home." I got out of the car and walked in, went up to the recruiter, and said, "I want to get out of Houston, Texas." He said, "I can make that happen." About three months later, I was on my way to Lackland AFB [Texas] and became an Airman basic.

## **WHAT DID YOUR MOM THINK? WAS SHE SUPPORTIVE OF THE DECISION?**

Oh, yeah. Back then your mom and dad felt they had an obligation to care and be responsible for you until you were 18 years old. After that, it was, "Okay, you can leave the nest now; it's time to go." She was very thrilled for me. I came from a very patriotic, blue-collar family. As I previously alluded to, my dad was a factory worker. My parents strongly supported the troops and the Vietnam War. I was kind of far right when it came to politics, especially when it came to the war and supporting our

troops; so, my parents saw joining the Air Force as a natural fit for me. To this day, I have zero regard for hippie war protestors, pacifists, and draft dodgers. To me, they take everything this nation has to offer and give nothing in return. And again, it was a way to get me out of the house and away from the dinner table.

## **GOOD. SO, YOU WENT THROUGH BASIC TRAINING, HEAD TO YOUR FIRST DUTY STATION, AND ONE OF YOUR FIRST SUPERVISORS WAS A FEMALE AIRMAN. IN TODAY'S AIR FORCE THAT IS, OF COURSE, NORMAL, BUT BACK THEN IT WAS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THAT EXPERIENCE?**

Well, it was kind of ironic. Remember, I joined the Air Force to get out of Houston, Texas. Following basic training, I was placed in casual control, awaiting orders. Finally, they arrive, and my first assignment was Ellington AFB [Texas]. I asked a buddy of mine where Ellington might be, and he said, "Houston, Texas." I couldn't believe it—I was about to be stationed 25 miles from my front door. There were hundreds of bases all over the world, and I get one from Houston. My Air Force specialty code [AFSC] would be 702X0—administrative specialist. I was very happy to be in administration. My dad had made me take a typing course while in high school—against my druthers—and it would help me immensely in getting started in my new career.

Anyway, I showed up at Ellington AFB as a direct duty assignee, without benefit of going to technical school. I was very naïve, saluting and reporting to everyone in uniform. I was chewed out by the cop at the gate for saluting him and told to report to the orderly room and sign in. There was no sponsorship program, no family support center, etc. You were on your own. I showed up at the orderly room and reported in to SSgt Rudy Medellin. Again, I was informed that enlisted Airmen do not salute other enlisted Airmen and that formally reporting in was not a requirement. Rudy began typing away on a manual typewriter. He prepared my chow hall meal card pass and my liberty pass, which allowed me to go no more than 50 miles from the base without being on official leave. When he finished, he said, "Look behind me. Do you see that guy back there?" All I could see was a thick hairy arm and cigarette smoke rolling up. I said, "Yes, sir." SSgt Medellin said, "Well, let me tell you something. That's the first sergeant. You never want to see him. You never want to see your first sergeant. If you do, it's because you screwed up. You did something wrong. You didn't read the detail roster; you missed an appointment. You never want to see the first sergeant."

I was at Ellington AFB for nine months before I went overseas, and I never saw the first sergeant. I never forgot that encounter or that advice, and it would forever influence my expectations for first sergeants in the future.

SSgt Medellin also told me, "Your supervisor is MSgt Elizabeth Quiatkowski. I responded with, "Did you say Elizabeth?" "Yep, her name is Elizabeth."



You have to realize that at that time in our Air Force, women were kind of a rare commodity. They represented a very small percentage of Airmen serving. When I went through basic training, they referred to sister flights, but we rarely saw female trainees and only when they were marching. So, to hear that my first supervisor was going to be a female was a bit of a shock. I was a little apprehensive and took a lot of kidding from my fellow Airmen in the barracks. As it turned out, she was absolutely one of the best supervisors and mentors anyone could ever have. We were still a draft force and bringing in a lot of people who didn't want to serve. They hated the Vietnam War; they were anarchists and dope addicts. MSgt Quiatkowski took me under her wing and made sure I didn't hang around with the wrong people. I was an impressionable 18-year-old, and she knew it. She insisted that I maintain my standards—the same standards I had learned in basic training. She told me when I needed a haircut, corrected any uniform deviations, and monitored my time at the Airman's Club. She would allocate my time around the base, making sure I received on-the-job training that coincided with my career development course book work. She gave me feedback at the end of every single day. She was tough as nails. She could curse like a sailor if she wanted to, but it was all in the context of getting her point across. One day, I heard a commotion and looked through the crack of the door to the commander's office. She was standing in front of his desk. All of a sudden, she leaned over and was pounding the desk with her fist. She was letting him know exactly how she felt about something, and her passion was very obvious. I just assumed it had to do with taking care of the troops—because that's what she did.

Before I left for overseas, she completed my Airman Performance Report [APR]. Her final comment on the report said something to the effect—"The Air Force might consider retaining Airman Benken." Looking back I suppose she was marginally in my corner when it came to retention. Anyway, she was an awesome supervisor, and she set me on the path for any success I would have in the future. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.

## OH WOW, FANTASTIC.

Absolutely, I called her a year or so after I retired on a whim and told her who I was. She said she kind of remembered me, but she really didn't. She said, "Well next time I go over to Wilford Hall, I'll look at all the pictures of the former CMSAFs. Then I'll know who you are."

## AS THE ROLE OF WOMEN EXPANDED IN OUR AIR FORCE, DID THAT EXPERIENCE GIVE YOU A POSITIVE OUTLOOK?

Absolutely. Of course, I always appreciated the strength of women—my mother had a lot to do with that. She was a very strong person. My mother left school in the ninth grade. She had lost her father when she was only six or seven years old, and she began supporting my grandmother and her younger sister when she was very young. She worked continuously while we were growing up and overcame her lack of education in a variety of roles and jobs. She left no doubt in my mind—before I ever joined the

service—that women could do anything men could do. So, that was kind of a given, but Elizabeth certainly reinforced that idea.

When I entered the Air Force in 1970, women served in a small number of career fields—typically administration, personnel, supply, medical, etc. We did not have integrated training. As a matter of fact, when men went to the rifle range, women went to a class to learn how to properly wear makeup. They did not get the opportunity to fire the weapon. They were referred to as "WAFs," representative of the "Women's Air Force." If there were enough women on a base to warrant it, they had their own WAF Squadron with a WAF Squadron commander. So in essence, they reported to two commanders—their operational squadron commander, and for administrative purposes, to the WAF Squadron commander. It wasn't until 1973, I believe, that women were accepted into nontraditional roles and became vehicle mechanics, aircraft maintainers, etc. Basic training was becoming gender integrated. And rightfully so—as more and more women came into the Air Force, it became intuitively obvious to Air Force leadership they could do anything a man could do and there should be no glass ceiling. We broadened the aperture of what they could do—to the point where very quickly they could serve in 99 percent of all of our career fields. The only exceptions would be in special operations—combat control, pararescue, and joint terminal attack.

In 1995 there was an incident at Aberdeen Army Proving Ground where several trainees were raped by a training instructor, and it precipitated an attempt by some in Congress to overhaul our training methodology. They fundamentally wanted us to return to the separation of genders at basic training—in other words, train women and men at separate locations on the base. It was a return to preintegration days and absolutely the wrong thing to do for our Air Force.

Some congressmen who had never served in the military made this their quest. There were two commissions formed, with the expectation that the services would stop gender integrated training. When they didn't get what they wanted with the first commission, they formed another to get what they wanted. There was a lot of pressure on them from civilian female activists and the Christian Coalition, who, in my mind, just felt that women should not be serving in the military at all. They very much objected to women fulfilling any kind of combat role. Of course, this was at a time when the Air Force was opening security forces and other combat-related career paths to women, along with them flying combat aircraft.

My boss, Gen Mike Ryan, told me this was my issue to fight and that he fully supported me. I had multiple conversations with House and Senate members—one of them resulting in an exchange of four letter words in the basement of the Pentagon. I wrote several editorial rebuttals and an op-ed piece that appeared in the Washington Times. I was accused by one member of the House of "lobbying Congress," which is against the law. Our Air Force legislative liaison office rebutted the charge, saying I was "passionate about the issue, and the Air Force fully supported my position."

I wrote an especially terse letter to a senator (who never served) that was so edgy General Ryan told me to send it from my office without clearing it through the legislative liaison. I recall him wincing as he read the content. I very much appreciated his support. The senator did write me back, and obviously did not agree with my position—to put it mildly.

In the end, my service counterparts prevailed, and our services were allowed to continue training within our respective services as we saw fit. They were going to set women back in our military, and that was absolutely wrong. We fought that very hard.

I'm very proud to be able to look at the evolution of women in the military and how they serve today. We take the way we train and how women serve in our military for granted—it certainly wasn't always that way.

### **THAT'S GOOD PERSPECTIVE. SHORTLY AFTER YOU ARRIVED AT YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT, YOU WENT TO TAIWAN AND THEN VIETNAM. IN THE PAST YOU'VE MENTIONED THAT WASN'T THE BEST EXPERIENCE. CAN YOU EXPAND ON WHY?**

I left Ellington AFB and went PCS [permanent change of station] to Ching Chuan Kang (CCK) AB, Taiwan, for a 15-month tour. I would be assigned to the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing. It was a C-130 outfit supporting the airlift requirements and missions in Vietnam, which was still a very active place. By now I was 19 years old. My departure date was New Year's Eve of 1970.

My port call would take me through McChord AFB, Washington. I recall standing around in the lobby of the air terminal, waiting for my flight. The glass door to the flight line opened up, and several US Army Soldiers entered and came toward me. They were still in their jungle fatigues and combat boots. I remember them rushing past me heading toward the latrine. Several minutes went by, and they came out—wearing civilian clothes. Later, I went into the latrine and noticed they had stuffed all of their uniforms into a trash can.

Our service members were not welcomed home the way they are today—it was a very sad moment for me and one I could not fully comprehend at the time. It was a sad commentary on our society. Decades later, our nation would attempt to rectify the way our service members were treated during that time.

When I arrived at CCK, I once again reported to the orderly room, where I would be issued my two sheets, my blanket, and a pillow (without a pillow case). I never met the commander or the first sergeant.

Somebody told me I was going to be in Quonset hut number 217.<sup>1</sup> It was January and very cold, with a strong northerly wind. When I arrived at my new living quarters, I noticed the actuator to the door was

broken and it was swinging wildly. The cold wind was blowing through the hut. I also noticed there was no order to the open-bay arrangement. Airmen had pulled their bunks and lockers into semicircles, partitioning themselves off in some sort of attempt at privacy. Then a little further down the Quonset hut, you had another situation like that.

There wasn't any discipline like we had in basic training. I couldn't figure out where I was supposed to go. Fortunately, somebody said, "There's an empty bunk over here. So you can come into this circle." It was very obvious to me that nobody was checking on us—there were no inspections and no adult supervision. During my entire tenure, no senior leader came to our living quarters, and I quickly found out why. Keep in mind, I'm 19 years old, and I'm dealing with people that never should have been in the military. They were drafted. They were unhappy. We had terrible race relations at the time. It was a carryover from all of the social machinations we were going through during the '60s: all of the drugs, sex, rock and roll, and all that. The racial attitudes and elements were infused into that as well. There were fights—constant fights. The smell of marijuana would permeate the hut. There were awful things happening, and I couldn't understand why no one would fix it. Again, I would go my entire tour and never meet my first sergeant or commander.

In August, I deployed to Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam. Again, I never met my first sergeant or commander. We lived in a two-story, wooden hooch with sand bags and concrete barriers. We had a bunk, locker, and mosquito net. I was assigned to Det 1 834 Air Division and worked for the deputy commander for maintenance. My brief tenure there had me guarding weapons on a flatbed truck while they were transferred to an Army location. I had been in-country for a couple of days and was placed on a detail guarding weapons with no training and no earthly idea what I would do if the truck was attacked during the ride to the off-base location. A 19-year-old with a loaded M-16 and no orientation or training—a recipe for disaster. But I survived. I found the environment to be even worse than Taiwan. Drug use was prolific, with a lot of it being exported on C-130s back to Taiwan and other countries in the theatre.

So prolific that Chiang Kai-shek, who was the premier of Taiwan, basically said, "Okay I've had enough of this!" He fenced off our flight line and posted his own guards at the entry points. This was the environment we were in, and it was kind of like being in a prison. It became so bad that Col Andrew P. Iosue (who eventually became a four-star) was sent there purposefully to become our wing commander and clean it up. He found people that had a militant attitude, both black and white, put them on airplanes, and sent them back to the States.

So, you can imagine, when people say to me, "We need to bring the draft back." I'm going, "You've got to be kidding me." I never want to see the day when we have draftees in our military. Everyone should be a volunteer. That is why we are the most respected and feared military on the planet—because people want to be there and want to serve. No more hippies and derelicts.



## HOW DID THAT EXPERIENCE SHAPE YOUR CAREER AND YOUR LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE?

Well, it certainly shaped my perspective of the first sergeant and what they should be. But to put things into perspective, remember that first sergeants at the time were dealing with a lot of bad people. Their primary job was to administratively discharge the screwups. They typically had five or six people in the queue to receive an Article 15 or a discharge. That's what a first sergeant was basically doing. It was all about discipline. They would select first sergeants by getting the biggest, meanest, ugliest guy they could in the squadron. They put a diamond on their sleeve above their stripe. They might be a staff sergeant or a technical sergeant—there was no requirement to be a senior noncommissioned officer.

As I came through the ranks, I watched how first sergeants dealt with things, and I kept an eye on their career field. When we became a volunteer force, the role of the first sergeant began to evolve to where we are today. No longer spending an inordinate amount of time on disciplinary actions, they can commit themselves to taking care of their Airmen and their families. They can now focus on quality of life concerns and professional development.

When I became the CMSAF, I was fundamentally the functional manager for first sergeants, and I took their role very seriously. I would often remind them, “No Airman deserves to live in a dormitory where inmates run the asylum. You need to visit your dorm at two o'clock in the morning on a weekend and find out who has their music cranked up and disturbing their teammates. Seek out the ‘disrupters.’ You need to see if there's that smell of marijuana. Then you need to discipline them.” I reminded first sergeants that they owned the dormitory. The job of the dormitory manager is to make sure everyone has their supplies. It's the job of the first sergeant to enforce the discipline and make sure the rooms are kept clean and neat to avoid insect and vermin infestations. Some first sergeants believe in a hands-off approach. They will say, “Well, they deserve to live without a mom and dad watching them all the time.” That approach seldom works. It is a communal living environment, and it's critical the living and cleanliness standards be very high. You have to inspect the rooms to make sure everybody has a safe, quiet place to live. I always liked the ABC approach. If you earn an “A” room, you get inspected once a month. You earn a “B” room, and you get inspected every two weeks. You get a “C” room, and you get inspected daily until you bring it up to an acceptable standard. And the knuckleheads who can't keep their stereo turned down, you get your stuff locked up until you learn how to not disturb your teammates.

So my experience in my formative Airman years in Taiwan and Vietnam made a difference in how I view the world—especially first sergeants. In retrospect, I know the leadership in Taiwan and Vietnam didn't come to visit our barracks because they were afraid. It was like going inside San Quentin.<sup>2</sup>

## YOU EVENTUALLY LEFT VIETNAM. THE LAST COMBAT TROOPS LEFT 29 MARCH 1973, AND A FEW MONTHS PRIOR, THE DRAFT ENDED.<sup>3</sup> WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THAT TRANSITION AND THAT CULTURE SHIFT?

Our Vietnam prisoners of war [POW] were released in 1973 and went through a yearlong repatriation process before entering back into the Air Force. I was a young staff sergeant at Bergstrom AFB in Austin, Texas, assigned to the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. One day I was introduced to my new boss, Col George Hall, who had been shot down as a young captain and spent nearly eight years in captivity. Also assigned to Bergstrom were other POWs I would get to know, including Col Terry Uyeyama, Col Scotty Morgan, Col John Stavast, Col Walt Stischer, and Lt Col Al Myer. I could never do justice in describing the impact they had on me. All of them had spent five or more years as captives of the North Vietnamese. They were brutally tortured, spent years in isolation and deprived of decent food and shelter. I listened intently to their stories. In the end, I would never complain about where I slept or what I had to eat ever again. They are heroes—they were not given the welcome home they deserved. And yes, I am NOT a fan of Jane Fonda and a few others from that era.

I also cannot say enough about the end of the draft and the all-volunteer force. Having all volunteers allowed us to focus on becoming “professional Airmen” and greatly improving our readiness and combat capabilities.

## DID YOU FIND THAT AIRMEN STRUGGLED TO TRANSITION TO AN IN-GARRISON FORCE? IF YOU RELATE IT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY—WE HAVE A LOT OF AIRMEN WHO ARE USED TO DEPLOYING AND FIGHTING; THAT'S ALL THEY KNOW. THEN YOU START TO TRANSITION OUT OF THAT INTO A GARRISON FORCE. DID YOU FIND THAT WAS A DIFFICULT TRANSITION FOR THEM?

We had three periods that were very distinct for me during my tenure.<sup>4</sup> We went through the '70s, which of course was the Vietnam War. When I came in, our force was probably at 850,000.<sup>5</sup> We were putting somewhere between 70,000 and 80,000 troops a year through basic training. Now it's down to 30,000 or so. So we went through the era of the draft. Then we started transitioning to the volunteer force. In the late '70s, under the Pres. Jimmy Carter administration, we wound up with what would be called a “hollow force.”<sup>6</sup> We weren't funded properly. We didn't have the money to do training. The administration's focus was not on the military; it was on social and economic issues.

Then in the '80s, when Pres. Ronald Reagan came on board, very generous pay raises and other funding became much better. It was a complete 180 turnaround compared to what we had endured under Carter. Reagan's idea was to build a military that was so strong it would cause the Russians to fold—to collapse internally because they couldn't keep up. They would have to spend so much money to keep up with us militarily that they would collapse. And it worked. So during the '80s, we had all the people we needed. We had too many people to be honest with you. We had the assistant to the assistant NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge]. Sometimes you would work three or four days a week. Weekends were yours. We were seldom deploying, and even those deployments affected a small number of career fields. We had a very large presence in Europe, with hundreds of installations. With that forward presence, there was little need to deploy.

Then the wall comes down in 1989, and that changed everything. Suddenly, we found ourselves in a draw-down mode.<sup>7</sup> We were no longer absorbed with the notion we would be fighting the Soviet Union, and we certainly did not need that large presence of Airmen in Europe. So, we did a massive pull back, and eventually reduced to six main operating bases. Along with the large installations, we closed countless geographically separated units. That was huge. Stateside, 30 percent or so of the bases closed. The drastic reductions were under the Pres. George H. W. Bush administration.

In 1991 Desert Storm and the first Gulf War kicked off. Because we had taken down so many infrastructures in Europe, we found ourselves supporting operations more and more from CONUS [continental United States]. Following the liberation of Kuwait, we established two no-fly zones in Iraq: one supported from Prince Sultan AB, in Saudi Arabia, and the other from Incirlik AB, Turkey.<sup>8</sup> We would enforce these no-fly zones until 2003 when Saddam Hussein was eventually taken out of the picture. You can imagine the number of sorties being flown for more than a decade of air operations and the amount of Airmen who would contribute to those missions. We had somewhere between 15 percent and 20 percent of our force deploying constantly to Saudi Arabia and other locations in the Middle East to support that effort. This was a big mind-set change as our Airmen began to deploy for 120 days, be back home for a short period of time, only to find themselves deploying again. It caused a lot of turmoil for our families.

This was new for me as well. In 1991 I was a new chief master sergeant and had a NATO assignment—the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium. I had 73 administrators working for me at the time, and we were just beginning to have conversations about becoming a more expeditionary force. In 1993 I became the 12th Air Force senior enlisted advisor to Lt Gen Jim Jamerson at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. We had 10 wings and a USSOUTHCOM [US Southern Command] mission, supporting counterdrug operations. The notorious Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar had just been killed; so, it was a busy time in

South America. Twelfth Air Force was supporting the counterdrug effort at locations in Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru. I would travel to visit them via Howard AFB in Panama. It was eye opening to visit Airmen at these forward deployed and very austere locations, and it was critically important that we support them and provide anything they might need on a moment's notice. Potable drinking water was at a premium, and it was essential their food supply be sustained without interruption. It was also becoming readily apparent that deployment after deployment by some of our career fields was taking a toll on families and retention. By the time I became the United States Air Force in Europe (USAFE) senior enlisted advisor in 1994, we were deploying our Airmen in earnest—many of them from fighter bases like Spangdahlem AB, Germany, and out of bases in the UK [United Kingdom]. I was leading Airmen who would say, "Chief, I didn't sign up to be in Saudi Arabia twice this year." A lot of them were security forces, support personnel, and maintainers. It was just a small number of career fields, and we were abusing them. We were using them too much. The majority of the force was not identified as deployable; so, the same people were going time and time again.

At the same time, our operations tempo was increasing and we were becoming more expeditionary, the United States was enjoying a very robust economy. The "dot.com" boom was happening, among other things, and employment was easily obtained—especially if you were a drug-free, disciplined veteran. This gave our folks a lot of options. We became a recruiting pool for the private sector. We would train them, and the private sector would lure them away from us. The dissatisfaction with the change of the health care system to TRICARE and its associated growing pains, increased numbers of deployments, a retirement system that seemed unfair to those who joined after 1986, and family separation created the perfect story for retention issues. Spouses were saying, "Hey, look, I'm done. I'm tired of raising the kids by myself. You're always over in Saudi Arabia. And when you come back, they give you a one-year assignment to Kunsan, Korea." There was a lot of dissatisfaction.

Gen Ron Fogleman started to draw up the Expeditionary Air Force, and of course, that transitioned to Gen Mike Ryan who completed the process. Instead of 15 percent to 20 percent of our Airmen deploying for almost all of our force, about 95 percent to 96 percent of our force was now identified for deployment. They developed the Air Expeditionary Force concept. That would begin to shift the deployment responsibility tremendously.

But we also had to address a cultural shift. Those who had spent their entire careers in an in-garrison posture, where we never deployed, were fomenting a lot of the dissatisfaction. They were focused too much on their pay and benefits. They were losing sight of the real reason we serve in uniform, and it was a time to get back to basics. It was about wearing the uniform, the missions we do in preserving our freedom and liberty, and supporting others who serve.



Quite honestly, I got tired of talking about how much pay somebody was going to make on the outside. I would finally just say, “Obviously, you are not happy with the Air Force and want to pursue other options, and to that I would say, ‘Thanks for your service, and I wish you all the best.’” Then there was a perception that they had this massive erosion in benefits. Everywhere I went, I would have people tell me our benefits were eroding massively. When I challenged them to name me five benefits and five entitlements or just tell me the difference between a benefit and an entitlement, they just stared at me. The facts were that we had gained tremendously in pay, benefits, and entitlements over the years. But the perception became reality—and for the first time in decades, we were having problems with retention in all three categories—first term, second term, and career. And for the very first time, we had to allocate millions of dollars toward recruiting marketing.

So as you can see, each decade was tremendously different. The turmoil of the ’70s and moving from a draft force to the all-volunteer force; the blissful ’80s, when we had very few deployments and lots of resources; to the very volatile and under-resourced ’90s, when we had to become expeditionary.

## **YOU MENTIONED YOUR NATO ASSIGNMENT IN BELGIUM. THAT WAS IN THE LATE ’80S TO EARLY ’90S, RIGHT AFTER THE COLD WAR AND INTO THE GULF WAR. YOU WERE WORKING WITH 16 DIFFERENT NATIONS, THE DIFFERENT SERVICES. WHAT DID THAT TEACH YOU ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO FIGHT AS A COMBINED AND JOINT FORCE?**

NATO was very interesting. I worked at SHAPE headquarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. Some people said it really stood for Super Holiday at Public Expense, but it really wasn’t. NATO was there to fight communism, and to join together if the Russians ever came across the Fulda Gap with their tanks.<sup>9</sup> I think we worked well together. Every nation had a vote on how we did things. There were different beliefs, different ideas, different cultures, and it all came together there. If there was a serious issue, there would be infighting. The French would disagree with what the Dutch said, or the Dutch would disagree with what the Greeks said. The Greeks and the Turks didn’t like each other. There was a lot of that kind of drama, but if they ever had to coalesce to fight a common enemy, I am confident they would have done that very well.

It also showed me that America leads the way in NATO. The American contingent did the bulk of the work, along with the Brits and Germans. That’s just the way it is culturally. I had an interesting encounter with a Turkish brigadier general. I had 73 administrators, so I had Dutch, Greeks, Italians, Americans, British, US Army, US Navy—a cultural blend of different administrators and different capabilities. This Turkish general had a Dutch E-7 and an Italian E-9 as his administrators. Turkish generals did not talk to the enlisted. Their enlisted force was made up of conscripts

who made the coffee, drove the cars, and did other mundane things. One day I was in my office and was having a counseling session with somebody. The door opened, and in walked the Turkish general. I’m thinking, “Oh, my gosh—this never happens.” If he saw me in the hallway, he wouldn’t acknowledge my presence. I’m a chief, and he still didn’t talk to me. But he came into my office, he looked down at the person on the chair and nodded for them to leave the room. The person left, and the general sat down and said, “Chief, I want to make you a proposition.” I said, “What proposition would that be, general?” He said, “I want to make a trade.” “What would that trade be?” “I want to trade one Dutch E-7 and one Italian E-9, for one US Air Force E-4.” I smiled to myself, and at the same time was flush with pride. That encounter was proof positive of our capabilities and how respected our Airmen truly are. Of course, I didn’t make the trade, because no one was willing to give up their Airman. Our administrators could do all kinds of things. We were just beginning to get computers, and our Airmen were just burning it up. So, here this Turkish general wanted to come down and make a trade—two very senior enlisted for one US Air Force E-4. Pretty much says it all.

## **ABSOLUTELY. YOU WERE THERE WHEN THE BERLIN WALL CAME DOWN—THE END OF THE COLD WAR. YOU TALKED A LITTLE ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT HAD ON OUR AIR FORCE GOING INTO THE ’90S. WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT THE OVERALL SENTIMENT WHEN THE WALL CAME DOWN AND THE COLD WAR WAS OVER?**

The possibility that we would have to fight the Russians in the Fulda Gap and elsewhere in Europe tank-to-tank created a very tense environment for all of the involved nations. It could have happened at any moment, and you never knew. There was a lot of tension of course, but when Reagan came over and told [Mikhail] Gorbachev to “tear down the wall,” it really set things in motion. It just happened. One day we were poised for a horrific war and horrific conflict all across Europe, and the next day they had sledgehammers and were taking down the wall. You sat back and went, “Holy cow.”

NATO was a full-up force, with all the nations contributing manpower. Suddenly, it seemed the reason for NATO went away. Without communism and the Soviet Union staring at us through the Berlin Wall, was there really a reason for NATO to exist? We were knee-deep in classified plans for these battles, and then it was gone. We didn’t have an enemy anymore. People were saying, “Why do we need NATO anymore? Perhaps it is time to rethink our individual contributions to NATO in terms of manpower and resources.” Immediately, a lot of the nations started saying, “I’m not going to give you 15 people anymore. I’m only going to give you five.” They immediately began to draw back on NATO personnel commitments. Had it not been for Saddam Hussein and the first Gulf War, I believe there would have been a serious effort to dismantle NATO. Saddam brought reality to the world situation—there are still a lot of bad guys out there, and we need to stick together in the fight against them.

As a part of that evolution, a lot of former Eastern Bloc nations wanted to become part of NATO. We started having peacekeeping discussions and created Partnership for Peace.<sup>10</sup> Of great interest to the former Eastern Bloc nations was our enlisted force. They had great difficulty in comprehending the concept of a professional NCO corps. We invited them to visit the Kisling NCO Academy [Ramstein AB, Germany]—giving them a tour of the facility and briefings on our curriculum and teaching methodology. Numerous flag officers and their staffs would attend. After the tour and briefings, they would sit down with several of the students and faculty. They sat down and asked, “What do you do?” And our student would say something like, “Well I have a bachelor’s degree, and I work in finance.” They went to the next person and asked, “Well what do you do?” “I maintain F-16 aircraft. I have an associate’s degree, and I am working on my bachelor’s degree.” They would go around the room, getting similar responses from each of the students. I could see they were mesmerized at the education levels and the technical qualifications. Some actually thought we were lying to them. In their services, a major would be working maintenance, not an enlisted person. Their enlisted force would be primarily made up of conscripts and relegated to more menial duties. It was our philosophy that if we could somehow influence the culture of their services and plant the idea of developing a professional NCO corps—then NATO as a whole would be much better for it. We began sending Air Force enlisted instructors on temporary duty to Albania, Czechoslovakia, and many other countries to work with their armed forces and help them develop a professional enlisted force.

It’s a culture thing, and it’s very difficult to replicate. It is what makes us who we are as an Air Force. The professional NCO corps we have—the enlisted force we have—is so much better than any other country on this planet. That’s what makes us the best.

## **YOU WERE THE USAFE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR DURING THE MID-90S. YOU MENTIONED THE NO-FLY ZONES, AND THERE WAS PROVIDE COMFORT, DENY FLIGHT, DELIBERATE FORCE, AND OTHER OPERATIONS . . . WE WERE VERY BUSY AT THAT TIME. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE IMPACT IT HAD ON THE AIRMEN?**

My USAFE assignment was a very busy time for me. In my 18 months as the USAFE senior enlisted advisor, I worked for three four-star generals—Gen Jim Jamerson, who hired me initially and then went to EUCOM [European Command]; Gen Dick Hawley, who joined us from the Air Staff in the Pentagon would be there for roughly seven months before becoming the Air Combat Command commander; and Gen Mike Ryan, who would come to USAFE from 16th Air Force. All of them had a different temperament and a different philosophy. But they had one thing in common—they were extraordinarily concerned for the welfare

of their Airmen and their quality of life. I’ll never forget General Hawley’s comment, “We do not have congressional representation in Europe—there is no senator or representative who has Europe as part of their constituency. Therefore, I will ensure they visit us and take back with them our requests for more money to work our infrastructure and other issues.” Europe had been neglected after the draw down, so there were lots of lucrative targets to fix. They were all concerned with making improvements, because after the draw down, Europe was neglected. While the Air Force was chasing one-plus-one dormitories, we had 30 percent of the Air Force’s gang latrines in Europe. I am particularly proud of our efforts in this area. We put together a dorm council, made up of the numbered air force senior enlisted advisors and myself, and chaired by the vice commander, Lt Gen Everett Pratt. The team developed a history on each dorm, plotted out the necessary improvements and cost, and then presented it to the USAFE commander. Within a few years, there were no more gang latrines in Europe—all were in the one-plus-one configuration. We were able to bring Congressional leadership to the theatre. We took them into the gang latrines and had them stand in the middle of the mess, where the mildew, the mold, and the infrastructure was decaying. We had them experience it firsthand; so, when they went back they would put a wedge of money in the budget for quality of life for USAFE and Europe. We started Aviano 2000 in 1995, which was basically a complete overhaul of the infrastructure and quality of life issues at Aviano AB, Italy.<sup>11</sup> Quality of life—that was our primary focus.

In the middle of all that, President [William] Clinton decided we were going to stop the fighting between the Serbs and the Croats. We were going to stop the ethnic cleansing and all the bad stuff that was happening over there with [Slobodan] Milosevic.<sup>12</sup> So the president put together the framework for the Bosnia Peacekeeping Mission.<sup>13</sup> We were sitting in the Tunner Conference Room at USAFE Headquarters, and General Hawley was directing how the air bridge operations would work in Tuzla, Bosnia. We were going to build an air bridge for our airlifters, primarily C-17s [Globemaster III transports], to bring in tons of equipment and personnel to support the effort. They were going to stage out of Tuzla and push forward to develop a zone of separation that would consist of multiple checkpoints. It was going to be a massive operation in terms of airlift tonnage and manpower.

General Hawley went around the conference room and queried all his officers on how things were going to work. Then he got to me and said, “Chief, I’ve got my commander. I know who I’m going to send. Who’s going to be the first sergeant?” And I said, “Sir, I’ll have to get back with you on that.” He went on to explain, “Tuzla has an abandoned Russian air base. We’ll quarter the troops in the abandoned buildings until we can get the tent city built. A Red Horse unit will do that for us. Everyone will be armored up with a flak jacket, helmet, and they will carry a loaded M-16. They’ll be subsisting on MREs [meals, ready to eat] every day. It’s going to be in December [1995], so it’s going to be extremely cold. You’re going to need somebody who can take care of all those things.”



We had not quite developed into the expeditionary mind-set, so I was very concerned with finding someone qualified to lead an expeditionary adventure such as this. I went upstairs to my office and called all the senior enlisted advisors and presented them the scenario. I said, “Guys, I need a tough, no-nonsense first sergeant who can handle a deployment like this under these conditions.” CMSgt Bill Jennings at 17th Air Force called me back, and he said, “I’ve got a guy I’m going to send over to see you.” I asked, “What’s his rank?” He said, “A master sergeant.” I haltingly said, “Master sergeant?” Bill said, “Yeah, he’s young, but he’s good.” I asked, “What are his qualifications?” “He’ll tell you when he gets there.”

Shortly thereafter a young master sergeant named Tim Gaines showed up at my office. I skipped the formalities and immediately said, “So, Tim, tell me why you’re qualified to lead this deployment?” He said, “Well, Chief, I’m the first sergeant for 1st Combat Comm [Communications] outfit. We actually deploy every so often and spend a lot of time on the road. We’re one of the few units in the Air Force that deploy quite a bit, setting up communications at various locations. We live in tents. Our gear includes helmets and flak jackets.” I was very uneasy, but it was obvious I wasn’t going to get anyone else who could speak the language of regarding deployments.

“All right, Tim. You’re the guy. I’m going to send you in there.” Then I said, “The first thing I want you to do when you get to Tuzla is find the command sergeant major for the First Armored Division. I want you to stay close to him, take his mentorship, take his leadership, and use it. He knows how to handle troops who have weapons, and he knows about the explosive mines problem, etc. He’s a seasoned war veteran and an expert regarding this kind of environment.” His name was Jack Tilley, and he would eventually become the Sergeant Major of the Army.

I was extremely nervous about sending a young master sergeant to do this job. Seriously, I wanted to take it on myself. I told Tim that General Hawley and I would be down there in the next 30 days and that if he needed anything at all to let me know and I would be on the first C-130 out of Ramstein. He very confidently said, “Okay, Chief,” and he left my office. I had tasked him with bedding down the troops in a cold and hostile environment; charged him with the health and welfare of all the Airmen at Tuzla. That included keeping them quartered in abandoned buildings, keeping them fed, and keeping them motivated. He also had to ensure no one mishandled their weapon and kept them secure. The Army was going to be rolling through Tuzla in Humvees, tanks, and in the large M2 Bradleys. It was very possible for someone to get run over, especially in the dark.

So MSgt Tim Gaines headed down to Tuzla, and within days I was getting e-mails. I was expecting a full plate of problems and issues. Instead he said, “Hey, Chief, can you send me down some washers and dryers? I want to set up a laundromat so our Airmen can wash and dry their uniforms. The contractor who is supposed to do it [Brown and Root] can’t keep up with the demand. Also, can you send some board games—checkers, chess, Monopoly—that kind of stuff?”

I’m thinking, “Wait, a minute. Didn’t I send you to a combat zone? Shouldn’t I be getting frantic e-mails with casualty lists and other bad stuff?” Instead, he said, “Chief, we have things under control.” Tim had already established a Top III organization to help him run things. They were conducting reenlistment ceremonies at the flagpole. All the senior NCOs had bonded together under his leadership and were functioning as a well-oiled machine. He had made the connection with Jack Tilley, the 1st Armored Division command sergeant major as well. Jack was giving him tons of mentorship and helping him succeed. They were having reenlistments at the flagpole. I was very pleasantly surprised at how well our Air Force team was functioning—far exceeding my expectations. Everyone was pulling together; no one was complaining, and no one wanted to leave. It was just phenomenal. It was one of the proudest moments of my life.

I told Tim, “I’m only going to leave you there for 60 days.” Being part of the initial cadre, I knew he was working exceptionally long hours, and eventually, he would succumb to the fatigue. I also wanted to rotate as many first sergeants through Tuzla and other locations as possible to give them firsthand deployment experience. A normal rotation was 90 to 120, depending on the position. I brought him out after 60 days, and then I sent in another first sergeant, MSgt Terry Spears, who also did a magnificent job and built on Tim’s success. Every day it was getting better and better. Red Horse came in and did a tremendous job in building a tent city with heating and air conditioning for our Airmen. I sent in MSgt Jeff Gryczewski to replace Terry Spears. Jeff was a highly motivated first sergeant with a security forces background. He continued to build on the tremendous foundation that Tim and Terry had laid. Every first sergeant that worked the Bosnia effort made chief—with the exception of Tim who opted to retire as a senior master sergeant. I am extremely proud of all of them to this day. They were phenomenal leaders and did exactly what first sergeants should do.

The whole idea was to get that experience and capture it. I said, “I want trip reports; I want you to build detailed trip reports on what works and what doesn’t so that your successor can more easily build upon your work.” I took all of those reports and sent them to the First Sergeant Academy. The trip reports would be folded into the curriculum at the Academy, making it more realistic.

## **IT SOUNDS LIKE THAT EXPERIENCE WAS ONE THAT HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR THE AIR FORCE TO SHIFT TOWARD THAT EXPEDITIONARY MIND-SET.**

Absolutely. That was a big part of it. You could tell the difference between a first sergeant who knew how to deploy and one that didn't. It began the warrior Airman mentality and mind-set—critical to being able to function in a combat environment.

The culture of the First Sergeant Academy was critical to me, and I wanted to institute some changes shortly after I arrived at the Pentagon. As timing would have it, the commandant was getting ready to depart. I had met a very impressive first sergeant at Andrews [AFB, Maryland] named Roger Ball. Roger was a recently promoted chief. He had also just moved to Scott AFB, Illinois, and had only been there a few months. I called him and said, "Roger—I need you to be the commandant at the First Sergeant Academy. Will you consider it?" Without hesitation, he said, "Yes." This was service before self personified. He could have easily said, "Chief, I just moved, and it's going to be hard on me and the family." Instead he stepped up.

One thing in particular bothered me. We would select someone to be a first sergeant at their home station and allow them to immediately wear the diamond, without having completed the school. It created a culture of "I'm already a shirt, you can't teach me anything" attitude. Chief Ball stopped that immediately—you had to earn your diamond, and there would be a formal graduation ceremony to recognize your achievement. You come to the school, you learn, and you get scrutinized by the Academy staff before we allow you to wear the diamond. And that night you graduate—it's special and something you won't forget.

The fact that we add the diamond in your chevron, what does that mean? Airmen don't care about your AFSC or your specialty badge. You can take your badge off, because now you're a first sergeant. The diamond means everything. When somebody looks across the room and they see the diamond on your sleeve, there's an expectation. There's an expectation that you set the standard, that you're the leader, that you're the one in charge of the discipline and the health and welfare of the troops. You can't take that lightly. You can't just put that diamond on without having completed the course and gone through the crucible of becoming a first sergeant. When you step across the stage and everybody claps for you and praises you for all the good things you've done to pass the school, it needs to be a significant emotional event for you. It needs to set the tone for how you're going to behave and act as a first sergeant. I thought that was critical.

My early years and the lack of interaction with my first sergeants certainly impacted my view of the career field. I was tough on them—you have to be, because they have so much impact on our Airmen. And if they don't do it right, they can do a lot of damage. Nothing worse than a bad first sergeant.

## **YOU ALSO FOCUSED ON EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT QUITE A BIT. AT USAFE YOU CREATED THE NCO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR, WHICH EXISTS AT MOST BASES TODAY IN SOME FORM. WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD THAT SEMINAR IN BETWEEN THE PME [PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION] THAT ALREADY EXISTED?**

The first professional development seminar I conducted was at SHAPE. Many of the noncommissioned officers there had lost their blue and were forgetting fundamental military discipline. I found there were a lot of people on those assignments who would extend and stay forever. I also recognized there were wide gaps between the time someone attended Airman Leadership School [ALS] and the NCO Academy. There might be a 10-year gap where someone's professional development went into the idle mode. Following graduation from ALS you would be pumped up, reinvigorated, and re-blued. That would begin to fade as years went by prior to attending the NCO Academy. So the Professional Development Seminar was created to fill that gap—to take staff sergeants out of their workplace for a week and re-blue them. The effort at SHAPE was a much smaller scale than the ones we conducted at Ramstein. A lot of tremendous senior NCOs and officers participated, developing a locally based curriculum and agenda that directly tied to the mission. It gave young NCOs the big picture and access to personnel information and other material that they would not normally have on a day-to-day basis. It was information they could use to mentor their subordinates. The seminar was about Airmen taking care of Airmen. As part of the program, we would take support personnel (finance, personnel, etc.) down to the flight line and have them spend time with a crew chief. They would then appreciate the operational side of the mission. We even gave them a ride in the back of a C-130. All good stuff.

The first time it was just an informal thing. I got all the senior NCOs together, and I said, "Okay, let's build a day-long seminar, and let's address values. Let's address professionalism. Let's address how all this applies to the mission." Senior NCOs volunteered their time to make presentations. We also had a first sergeant's panel and a chief's panel. At the end of the week, the USAFE commander would address the students. We filled the Tunner Conference Room with eager staff sergeants. All of our senior NCOs wanted to be engaged; they wanted to be involved. They said, "Hey, Chief, I'll brief this, and I'll brief that." It brought the senior NCOs and junior NCOs together. It enhanced the communication.











Each time it got better and better. Then they tried to make it more sophisticated. Next thing I knew, I had NCO Academy instructors that wanted to do it. They wanted to come over and formalize it. I said, “No, no, no. I don’t want to formalize it. I don’t want professional instructors doing this. It is not another level of professional military education. I want that master sergeant or that senior master sergeant from maintenance to come over here and get in front of 150 staff sergeants. I want them to have that experience, and learn from that experience.”

That’s how it started. We started the more formal process at Ramstein AB, and I had all of the main operating bases establish one as well. When I became the CMSAF, I made it mandatory for all installations.

## **IT SHOWS HOW MUCH YOU CHAMPIONED EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT, BOTH PME AND OTHER SOURCES. WHY WAS THAT SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

If you’re going to have a professional NCO corps, then you have to focus on professional development. In addition to the formal education you get from the professional military education, you must fill those gaps in between. There is a tendency to become complacent and allow standards to become lax. That is when bad things happen. The professional development seminars helped sustain that focus on professional development.

## **YOU WERE THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE WHEN WE ESTABLISHED OUR AIR FORCE CORE VALUES—INTEGRITY FIRST, SERVICE BEFORE SELF, AND EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO. YOU HELPED INTRODUCE THE LITTLE BLUE BOOK. WHAT WAS THE IMPETUS BEHIND THOSE VALUES AND THAT BOOK?**

Unfortunately, our core values were released following some very tragic things that happened in our Air Force between the years 1994 and 1996. The first was the Black Hawk incident that took place on the Iraqi border in April 1994 as we were enforcing the no-fly zone as part of Operation Northern Watch. Two F-15s being controlled by an AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System] aircraft misidentified and confused two US Army Black Hawks with what they thought were Soviet Hind helicopters and shot them down. A total of 26 people were killed—including French, Kurdish, US, etc. The helicopter mission, known as Eagle Flight, had been conducted by the Army for three years prior to the incident. On this particular day, the AWACS, for whatever reason, didn’t control the airspace properly. Initially, the pilots were charged with criminally negligent homicide, and several of the AWACS crewmembers were charged with dereliction of duty. Eventually, all

charges were dropped with the exception of one AWACS crewmember, who was eventually acquitted at a court martial.

Bottom line—26 people killed, and no one was going to be held accountable. The investigation found multiple problems—the missions had not been integrated, even though Eagle Flight and the fighters had been in the same air space for more than three years; there was no preflight discussion regarding the possibility of friendlies in the same space; and the AWACS had fundamentally lost control of the mission. I believe they were only controlling four aircraft that day. Training and a lack of understanding on whether they were responsible for the helicopters was also an issue. In other words, there were a lot of mistakes and errors made. But the commanders in the chain of command failed to take any disciplinary action, nor did they hold people accountable in any way.

The lack of accountability did not set well with the Chief of Staff, General Fogleman. He would subsequently release an Accountability videotape for all officers and senior NCOs to view. In it, he admonished leadership that just because no one was sent to prison for their negligence, their actions did not meet Air Force standards—that the American people hold us to a higher standard. In the end, he disqualified crew members; placed disciplinary letters in the crew members’ records, and rescinded any pending PCS decorations. The actions included general officers. For the Chief of Staff to personally discipline individuals in the chain of command of other MAJCOM [major command] and subordinate commanders is unprecedented.

The second incident involved a B-52 crash that took place in June of 1994 at Fairchild AFB, Washington, just a couple of months after the Black Hawk incident. A B-52 with four crewmembers on board was completing a practice flight for an air show that would occur the next day. At the conclusion of the practice, the pilot requested approval from the tower to land. As he turned toward making his final approach, he banked the aircraft past 90 degrees without sufficient airspeed or altitude to sustain flight. They crashed, resulting in a huge fireball and killing all four crewmembers. It was another tragedy that did not have to occur. It was the vice commander’s final flight before retirement; so, a lot of family and friends were on hand to celebrate. Instead, they witnessed a horrible tragedy.

The subsequent investigation concluded the accident was the result of the “pilot’s aggressive personality.” Further investigation revealed the pilot had six major flight violations in the past three years—any one of which should have disqualified him. Instead, the 10 colonels in the chain of command who had the moral obligation and responsibility failed to take him out of the airplane. The squadron commander had been lobbied by his junior pilots to disqualify him and attempted to do so with the director of operations, only to be told it would not happen. The only reason the squadron commander was on the plane that day was because he would not allow any of his subordinates to fly with that individual.

Bottom line—the pilot had a history of being unsafe, of being obnoxious, and undisciplined. Leadership failed and did not take the appropriate action, and if they had, this incident would have been prevented. Another tragedy that did not have to happen, and a lesson for all Airmen to speak up when you see something wrong and take action—and if you are a leader, you better be listening to your Airmen.

First the tragic shoot-down of friendly Black Hawk helicopters, followed by the tragedy of the B-52 crash at Fairchild, and we would have yet another tragic incident in April of 1996. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, a charismatic public servant with excellent diplomatic skills, was a political appointee of President Clinton. The president had asked him to go to the Balkans on a diplomatic mission, which would originate at Ramstein AB, Germany. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a lot of former Eastern Bloc nations wanted to be considered for entrance into NATO. Keep in mind, we had recently established the air bridge at Tuzla, Bosnia, so there was a lot of activity in this region of the world. I was the USAFE senior enlisted advisor at the time.

The aircraft to be used was our CT-43 commercial type aircraft, which had been modified for VIP [very important persons] travel. It had a food galley and was very comfortable. We would use it when the commander and I would travel long distances to visit deployed Airmen, and typically a large contingent of personnel would accompany us. The aircraft fell under the operational control of the 86th Wing commander at Ramstein.

Ron Brown wanted to go to Tuzla, Bosnia; Zagreb, Croatia; and then on to Dubrovnik, Croatia. Unfortunately, they crashed 1.6 miles off course. They crashed into the mountain and killed all 35 souls on board. Initially, one of the flight attendants survived because she was seated in the rear of the aircraft, but her wounds would prove to be mortal. The location of the crash was very remote, and it took several hours for our special operations team and the Croatian army to find it.

The investigation found multiple errors made by the crew; that there was some bad weather in the area, which was a distraction; and the Dubrovnik airport lacked sophisticated navigation equipment to support landings and aircraft control. They were relying on beacon technology. The accumulation of crew mistakes, outdated navigation technology, weather, and other causes meant the aircraft was doomed to crash.

But what is most important to know—the aircraft never should have been there. Air Mobility Command [AMC] had said, “No Department of Defense aircraft will fly into Dubrovnik, Croatia.” The wing leadership knew this, but they wanted to do the mission badly. After all, we are the United States Air Force, and we can do anything. We’ve flown into this location previously; so, we knew how to do it. And besides, we are supporting the president of the United States, and if he wants a diplomat to go to Dubrovnik, then we’ll make it happen. So, the wing leadership

requested a waiver from Air Mobility Command. However, AMC came back with a “no” and disapproved the request. They went ahead and did the mission anyway.

Sixteen officers were disciplined—this included the immediate firing of the wing commander, vice commander, and ops group commander. A flag officer at USAFE was disciplined as well. We disciplined a flag officer in USAFE as well—a total of 16 officers.

Regardless of the circumstances, you must follow the rules. They exist for a reason. The leadership at the wing did not have the authority to ignore or overrule the guidance from Air Mobility Command. Had they played by the rules, this tragedy would never have occurred and everyone would be alive today.

I took this tragedy personally. We had flown with these crew members, and the enlisted members had recently participated in my professional development seminar. Attending their funeral services and seeing their children and family members grieve for them broke my heart. I felt a personal responsibility for them—after all I held a senior leadership position within the command. I didn’t have operational responsibility, but it still weighs heavily on my mind.

These tragic incidents and a few other personal failures were having a negative impact on our Air Force. In General Fogleman’s mind, we had lost our way and we were making too many catastrophic mistakes. Leadership was failing.

Gen William Tecumseh Sherman, the famed Union Civil War general, was quoted as saying, “Every Army has a soul, just as a man has a soul. A commander must command the soul as well as his men.” The Air Force has a soul and spirit that is the aggregation of all of our hearts, minds, and spirits. To be a great leader, you have to recognize when that soul or spirit is in trouble. General Fogleman did just that—he knew he had to get the force back to basics.

According to an article by Gen Mike Ryan, published by Air University, the Air Force had core values as far back as the ’70s. But I don’t believe they were ever really codified. And there were more than three. I joined the Air Force in 1970, and other than being taught that values and how you conduct yourself matter, I do not recall any focus on core values. I am sure they existed, but they were obviously marginalized and not inculcated into our culture. General Fogleman took a look at this, and he thought, the Army had seven and they were all tied to the word leadership. The Navy and the Marine Corps had honor, courage, and commitment. He took a really hard look at this and came up with integrity, service, and excellence. He felt all the core values from the other services fit under those three, and that was all we needed. He didn’t want to complicate it; he didn’t want to make it something you had to work to memorize. He wanted the values to be in your heart and drive your behavior.



In 1997 we released the Little Blue Book. We did a massive campaign effort to get them in the hearts and minds of every Airman. I did a videotape speaking to the core values that was looped on television sets at Lackland AFB basic training. So, while the trainees were standing in line at the dining facility, they would see me discussing core values. We also issued the Little Blue Book to every Airman and began discussing them at all levels of enlisted professional military education—to include ALS, NCOA, First Sergeant Academy, SNCO Academy, Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], and the Air Force Academy, etc. General Fogleman reminded us that the tools of our trade are lethal. We are not a private industry or corporation that can afford not to live by values—they must be part of our DNA—Americans expect a higher standard, and we must live up to that standard. Live your life with your core values as your guiding light, and you will always do the right thing—even when no one is looking.

### **LOOKING BACK NOW, IT'S BEEN ALMOST 20 YEARS SINCE WE IDENTIFIED AND BEGAN INCULCATING OUR CORE VALUES. TODAY, EVERY AIRMAN KNOWS THE CORE VALUES. HOW DO YOU THINK THEY'VE IMPACTED THE FORCE WE HAVE TODAY?**

I'll give you an example. The company I work for is USAA. I think everybody in the military probably knows who they are. They have core values: honesty, integrity, loyalty, and service. It's a company that has been around for over 90 years, and it does extremely well. Then you look at a company like Enron that, probably, didn't have core values, or at least didn't create a culture that lived by those values. I think a lot of companies fail because they don't recognize their organization has that soul and spirit. If you don't stay on top of that, things will fail.

It's the same way with the Air Force. I truly believe the vast majority of our Airmen today come to work every day with that kind of attitude, but we have to constantly reinforce the value.

### **THE AIR FORCE RECENTLY RELEASED AN UPDATED LITTLE BLUE BOOK. IT FOCUSES ON THE PROFESSION OF ARMS AND INCLUDES THE CORE VALUES AS WELL AS THE OATHS, THE CREEDS, ETC. WOULD YOU SAY IT'S IMPORTANT TO EVOLVE AND REINFORCE THAT MIND-SET IN NEW WAYS?**

Absolutely. I am especially pleased with the new version of the Little Blue Book called the Profession of Arms. Not only does it include the core values, but also the oath of enlistment, the code of conduct, and the Air Force Creed. All of these complement each other. It's a great evolution by General Welsh and Chief Cody and will serve us well.

### **ONE OF THE THINGS YOU DID AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE WAS LEAD THE CHANGE FROM THE TITLE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR TO COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT, WHICH INCLUDED THE NEW CHEVRON. WHY WAS THAT CHANGE IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

When I came into the Air Force back in 1970, the top chief on the base was known as the wing sergeant major. He sat in a prominent position within the headquarters, typically just outside the offices of the wing commander and the vice wing commander. The title was a throwback to the Army Air Corps days. But I really liked that title because it represented authority and strength. I recall my squadron commander's reaction when he learned the wing sergeant major would be visiting his unit. He ordered everyone to clean up their areas, and anyone who needed a haircut should leave the building. The wing sergeant major had that kind of impact.

At some point the Air Force opted to abandon the title, which of course was the right thing to do. After a lot of back and forth between the Pentagon and the MAJCOMs, the title "senior enlisted advisor" [SEA] was adopted. I didn't like the title at all, because I felt it as an effort to make the top chief on the base kinder and gentler. Indeed, SEAs were becoming more approachable and their role was expanding. The Air Force was coming to grips with a lot of social issues that included improving race relations, addressing the increased drug use among Airmen, and the rapidly expanding role of women in the Air Force. The SEA was now in a private office down the hall away from the command section. To me, there was some loss of daily access to the commander.

Further, the SEA title was abused widely. I recall having junior officers introducing a young master sergeant or technical sergeant to me as their "senior enlisted advisor." The Air Force Personnel Center ran a listing for me on one occasion, only to find we had some 30,000 senior enlisted advisors in the Air Force against a quota of roughly 3,000 authorizations.

I had long, long thought we needed to change the title. We had actually discussed some options during CMSAF Dave Campanale's tenure. We had mixed opinions at the table among the MAJCOM senior enlisted advisors. Some thought it would be seen as self-serving. One very strong advocate who shared my opinion was CMSgt Wayne Norad, the SEA for Air Force Special Operations Command. Wayne had spent a lot of time in the joint world and recognized the necessity for members from all services to be able to easily recognize the top enlisted leader, especially in a combat scenario. He had actually developed a prototype of the rank, a CMSgt tab with a star in the open field of the stripe. It was the precursor to the actual CCM [command chief master sergeant] stripe of today.

We had another hurdle. Gen. Ron Fogleman had changed all of Gen. [Merrill A.] McPeak's uniform changes that he implemented a few years prior. For instance, Gen. McPeak had removed the stars from general officer uniforms and put the rank on the sleeves of the dress uniform, similar to the Navy. There were other changes as well, and Gen. Fogleman reversed nearly all of them. He was tired of making uniform changes, and rightfully so. He had told the Air Force the uniform board was no longer in operation for a while. And so the command chief concept was tabled without action. Since Gen. Fogleman had hired me to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I was not in a position to bring a uniform change forward.

Following Gen. Fogleman's retirement, Gen. Mike Ryan (my boss in USAFE) became the Chief of Staff. I thought, "Aha, I think we may have a shot at changing this." I asked Chief Marc Mazza, the Air Force Material Command [AFMC] senior enlisted advisor to develop a talking paper and a prototype of the new stripe. I sat down with all of the MAJCOM SEAs [now known as the Enlisted Board of Directors, or EBOD] one last time and told them I planned on presenting the proposal to Gen. Ryan. I fully expected him to have me run it around the Air Staff for consideration.

It was a Thursday afternoon, and I went to see Gen. Ryan at his office in the Pentagon. We had both been traveling a lot, and so, it was time to catch up on a stack of issues and paperwork. We finally finished, and I said, "I have one last thing for you to consider. I put the talker and the visual representation of the stripe in front of him." He looked it over and finally said, "I like it! Take it to Corona next week, and I'll put it in front all the other four stars during our executive session."

I was very excited that he had made his decision so quickly, and at the same time I knew I was behind the power curve. I didn't have time to vet the concept through the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. This would not make them happy, and I knew that. I would have to take a lot of lumps from them. I immediately called all of the MAJCOM SEAs and told them to get with their four-star bosses to grease the skids before the executive session.

I had packages made for all the four stars. They went into private executive session for a couple of hours. When they emerged, Gen. Ryan handed me the packages and said, "Chief, done deal. Make it happen. They love the idea."

I had a rocky relationship with the Air Force Times. It seemed the more I tried to be open and generous with my time with them, the more they screwed up what I said. The relationship had soured to the point where I requested the editor to come to my office for a discussion. I told him to have his reporters simply print exactly what I said—their embellishments were skewing my messages to our Airmen and forcing me to constantly

correct what they had messed up. He finally acknowledged to me that if the Air Force Times did not print "edgy" material, Airmen would not buy the paper.

I wasn't going to give them the opportunity this time. So, I called one of their reporters whom I trusted, a former Army sergeant public affairs-type, and told him, "I've got a story for you and will be faxing a photo shortly. I am asking that you print the story exactly as I am sending it—nothing more and nothing less." He promised he would, and he did.

I did my best to prep the field for the announcement and used every public affairs option open to me. Of course, I did get some pushback from some chiefs—they felt somehow emasculated because one chief would have a stripe different than their own. I got numerous e-mails from disgruntled chiefs, and I responded to each of them with my rationale for making the change. I responded to each one appropriately.

But here's the point. The concept is compatible with what we do with first sergeants. We put a diamond in their sleeve so everyone knows who they are. There are certain expectations when you see the diamond. That first sergeant represents the policies of the commander, discipline within the unit, responsibility for the health and welfare of his/her unit. They are also the standard bearer for their unit—hopefully holding everyone to a higher standard.

The command chief does a similar thing—they represent the policies of the commander and are responsible for the health and welfare of the unit. They also oversee the first sergeant community at their installation.

And we needed relevancy in the joint world. While in Bosnia, I would sometimes travel with the 1st Armored Division command sergeant major. He had a distinctive chevron, which made him stand out to his soldiers. I would walk alongside two other chiefs—no one knew who I was because our chevrons were the same. They didn't know I was the USAFE senior enlisted advisor. When you walk into a room and there are 30 chiefs in there, one of them is the command chief. Our Airmen need to know who that person is.

The four stars loved it, every one of them, unanimous. They said, "Chief, if I wanted advice, I'd get advice. I need a 'Chief' who represents my command." It's another one of those culture things. I thought it was a great improvement, and I think it has served us very well since.



**TODAY COMMAND CHIEFS ARE WELL KNOWN AND WELL VISIBLE AS THE LEADERS OF THE ENLISTED FORCE. AS YOU WERE SAYING, ANYBODY CAN IDENTIFY THEM ON THE BASE. IF YOU COULD GIVE A BIT OF ADVICE TO SENIOR NCOS OR CHIEFS TODAY, WHAT WOULD THAT ADVICE BE?**

The Air Force continues to evolve and there are certainly a lot of changes happening today. Our senior NCOs and chiefs have to help the Chief of Staff and the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force with the vision. They can fight like brothers and sisters and debate privately, but publicly, they need to support the senior leadership in the Pentagon. And the vision needs to be with the thought in mind, “Where is this force going to be 20 years from now?” They need to be part of the discussion. At the same time, never forget where you came from—never forget the fundamentals, the basics.

My military training instructor [MTI], Sergeant Worley, gave me three words that I have always remembered and applied to leadership. Our flight had really screwed up one day and basically flunked a standardization evaluation conducted by three other MTIs. After they had departed our barracks, Sergeant Worley told us we “had no discipline, no standards, and we sure as heck didn’t work together as a team.” I thought about that from a leadership perspective. I was 18 years old, so I didn’t think much then. I was just trying to survive, but over the years, I began reflecting on what he said. Military discipline is taught in basic training. I have always felt we learned everything we needed to know in BMT [basic military training] to be successful Airmen. How to wear the uniform, how to be on time, how to comply with rules and regulations, core values, how to treat each other with dignity and respect. All of that was given to us in BMT.

We also learned leadership by example and that setting a higher standard bar is important. There is no room for mediocrity. When a unit is mediocre, it fails, and anyone with mediocre standards is dangerous. Great leaders always set the standard bar high and lead people to achieve that standard. I have visited countless units over the years, and that’s exactly what I’ve seen. I’ve seen leaders who set a standard bar, and guess what—others will work to achieve that standard. Conversely, I have seen leaders set a very low expectation, and guess what—Airmen will also achieve that lower standard as well. Leadership by example—it’s as simple as that. Discipline, standards, teamwork.

Finally, there is teamwork—whether you are an Airman basic or a four-star general, you have a job to do in the Air Force. You must come to work every day with your game face on—fully engaged and prepared mentally and physically to do your job. Everyone has to pull their weight. When we do that, the Air Force succeeds. We win and we lose as a team.

**IN A PREVIOUS INTERVIEW YOU SPOKE ABOUT YOUR WIFE JOHNNE AND SAID SOMETHING LIKE, “THE ONLY REASON I BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IS BECAUSE SHE NAILED THE INTERVIEW.” CAN YOU COMMENT ON THE ROLE AND IMPACT FAMILIES HAVE IN THE AIR FORCE, AND HOW THAT HAS CHANGED SINCE YOU JOINED IN THE ’70S?**

When I became the senior enlisted advisor at 12th Air Force, back in 1993, Erica, our daughter, was three years old. I said to my wife Johnne, “We need to have a conversation about what this means to our family. I’m going to be gone. I’m going to be down in South America. I’m going to places like Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, where our Air Force is conducting counterdrug operations. We have 10 wings; I’m going to be traveling to all those locations in the States. I’m going to be on the road anywhere from 200 to 300 days a year. That goes with the territory.” Obviously, that would have family impact, and I was concerned—especially for Erica, who was so young.

I told Johnne, “I can turn this job down. I can get a functional manager job somewhere. I can do some other chief’s job. That’s fine with me.” She said, “No, if that’s what you want to do, if that’s where your heart is, we’ll be behind you and we’ll follow you.” So, we went to Davis-Monthan AFB [Arizona]. The three of us spent three months in a one-bedroom efficiency apartment, waiting for our home to be built. We moved in on New Year’s Day in 1993. We sold that home eight months later when I followed General Jamerson to USAFE and became the USAFE senior enlisted advisor. Eighteen months later, we would leave Germany headed to the Pentagon. I had to report early, so Johnne was left behind to pack up the household goods and ship them. She never complained—not once during my entire tenure as a senior enlisted advisor or as the CMSAF. Spouses simply do not get enough credit—they forfeit their own careers, they have to take care of all of the home issues, handle the finances—and they constantly live in the world of the unknown, wondering if their spouse will be okay or not. Erica never complained either. She went to eight different schools . . . of course I kept her happy by bringing home the newest Barbie Doll or the newest Beanie Baby.

One day Johnne called the office, seven months in advance, and said, “I want you to block this date in June. You can have him on Christmas, Thanksgiving, and all the other holidays. He can go on the USO [United Service Organization] tour to the desert over the holidays, but I want him home on this particular day in June, and I’m giving you seven months’ notice.” So the staff said okay. My schedule was cleared that day, and I was with the family. It was my daughter’s first communion. Johnne wanted me there; it was very important to her that I be there, and I was. In all the time we served, that was the only request she ever made for my time.

She said in a previous interview that she knew the Air Force came first, that family was second. We always say family's first, but in reality it is the Air Force family that comes first. The real heroes of our military are the spouses, the children. They're the ones that stay home and deal with the drama. They deal with the broken refrigerator or the car that broke down. They deal with the finances, making sure we don't overspend. More importantly, since 9/11 there have been a lot of spouses that have had to worry continuously about the unknown. Where is my spouse today? They're over in Iraq or Afghanistan, but I don't know where. They have to worry about the chaplain who may show up at the front door someday and say your husband or your wife isn't coming home. For that we owe them our deepest respect. They serve this country as much as a person in uniform.

**ABSOLUTELY, THANK YOU. FINAL QUESTION, WHEN YOU  
THINK ABOUT THE AIR FORCE TODAY, AND SPECIFICALLY OUR  
AIRMEN, AND YOU HAD TO BEGIN A SENTENCE WITH  
“I BELIEVE . . .,” WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe that many years from now the people who are serving this nation will be seen as a great generation, just as we view the WWII vets as the greatest generation. Just as the WWII generation faced evil on a global scale, so do our service members today face evil globally. I very much believe in legacy. I spoke recently to a Veterans of Foreign Wars national convention where the average age was 66. There were a lot of World War II, Korean War veterans there, and a preponderance of them were Vietnam veterans. I talked to them about the legacy they left this generation. I told them, “When you look in this generation's eyes, you can see your legacy. You can see the legacy of courage and valor and grit and determination, all the things that made you great Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen. All of that is in the spirit of those serving and fighting today.” I believe today's generation of warriors, that have been in this continuous battle for more than a decade, are just as good as any warrior we've ever produced before, and they will be viewed as a great generation.





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **FREDERICK “JIM” FINCH**

**AUGUST 2, 1999 - JUNE 28, 2002**

Frederick J. “Jim” Finch was born on 29 July 1956 and was raised in East Hampton, New York. He developed a tough work ethic in his youth, simultaneously holding two part-time jobs while completing high school. He had attended a vocational school, studying auto mechanics, but knew there was more beyond the small confines of his hometown. He enlisted in the Air Force under the delayed enlistment program during his senior year in high school.

Finch began his career in the munitions storage area—“bomb dump”—serving at Homestead AFB, Florida, and then RAF Welford, England. He returned to Homestead and became a missile maintenance crew chief. However, his career took a different path after attending the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Leadership School.

Staff Sergeant Finch became an instructor at Homestead’s NCO Professional Military Education (PME) Center. Four years later he moved to Air University (AU) to help

develop curriculum and teach new instructors in the recently created “NCO Preparatory Course.”

Four years later, he was reassigned to the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC) as a functional manager for the Air Force NCO PME program. During this tour, he helped implement major policy changes to the PME program, including the creation of the Airman Leadership School, the expansion of the Senior NCO Academy to include master sergeants, and the automation of NCO PME quota management across the major commands (MAJCOM). Upon promotion to chief master sergeant, he transferred to Alaska as the commandant of the Pacific Air Forces NCO Academy.

In the summer of 1993 Chief Finch was reassigned as the senior enlisted advisor (SEA) for Eleventh Air Force in Alaska. During this tour, the Air Force deactivated three remote sites: King Salmon AS, Galena AS, and Erickson AS (Shemya).

In 1995 Chief Finch became the second SEA (later renamed command chief master sergeant) for the recently created Air Combat Command (ACC). At the time, ACC was the primary force provider for Operation Southern Watch and led efforts to manage Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) taskings.

In June 1999 Gen Michael Ryan selected Chief Finch to be the 13th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). During his tenure, Finch helped move the Air Force toward an expeditionary mindset. He continued to solidify the AEF concept, focused on deliberate force development initiatives, and helped implement the first “Warrior Week” at basic military training. He also led the Air Force through the beginning stages of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) following the attacks of 11 September 2001. CMSAF Finch turned over the reins to CMSAF #14 Gerald Murray on 1 July and retired effective 1 October 2002.

CMSAF Finch sat down for an interview in August 2015 to reflect on his life and career in the Air Force. During the interview, he spoke about his passion for PME, the importance of mentorship, and the intense aftermath in Washington, DC, following the 9/11 attacks. The following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

## **YOU ENLISTED IN THE AIR FORCE IN THE EARLY 1970S— SOON AFTER THE END OF THE DRAFT. WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER THEN?**

I decided to join in the middle of my high school years. I was attending a vocational school with some friends during my junior year and realized becoming an auto mechanic was not the path I wanted to take in life. I honestly didn’t know where my future was headed. I looked to the Air Force because my neighbor was an Air Force retiree. One of his sons was my best friend who had joined the Air Force a couple of years earlier. I thought, “Maybe I’ll just join the Air Force.” I started visiting the local Air Force recruiter quite a bit during my senior year of high school and enlisted before graduation. I entered the delayed enlistment program to obtain a basic training slot that summer.

After high school graduation, I quit my two jobs and took a four- or five-week vacation before starting my new life in the Air Force. Looking back now, I suspect joining the military was more about growing up—like a rite of passage to manhood. My dad had been a “Frozen Chosen” Marine during the Korean War; uncles and cousins had served in both the Army and Navy over the years.<sup>1</sup> They often spoke about their experiences traveling the world, although rarely about life in combat. None were commissioned officers; so, their expectation was that I would enlist, serve three or four years, and return home a man.

Honestly, I didn’t know what I wanted to do in life at the time. However, I knew what I didn’t want. There was no future in a small town delivering groceries, working in a movie theater, or commercial fishing. I thought there must be something better out there. My recruiter told me I had good aptitude scores and I could enlist with a guaranteed job in electronics. I had no clue what that meant, but it seemed pretty high tech and exciting in 1974; so, I signed up. As it turned out, I became an air-to-air and air-to-ground missile maintenance technician—precision guided munitions using today’s terms, or more affectionately part of the “ammo” community.

## **IN THE EARLY 1970S, AMERICA WAS SHIFTING MILITARY SERVICE AWAY FROM THE DRAFT TO AN ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE OVERALL SENTIMENT OF THE SHIFT?**

Although I knew I had to register for the draft, I wasn’t directly affected, since I joined the Air Force prior to my 18th birthday. Plus, the draft had just ended the year before. However, American sentiment was certainly antimilitary at the time. I suspect this was mostly because the Vietnam War was very unpopular.

I recall my first trip home on leave—I was in tech school at the time. I was proud to be in the Air Force and wore my white tee shirt with big blue Air Force letters across the front everywhere I went. I wanted people to know I was in the service, a member of the US Air Force, and an adult. Unfortunately, few in my hometown seemed to care, and the friends I grew up with didn’t come up to congratulate me. In fact, I felt shunned and looked down upon because I was in the military. Frankly, that was the last time I ever wore my uniform home. I also avoided wearing anything around my hometown indicating I was in the Air Force.

You saw it in other areas too. My first supervisor and many of the junior NCOs in my shop had joined the Air Force to avoid being drafted into the Army. Most had just returned from Thailand and were counting the days until they could separate. They didn’t want to be called “lifers” or give anyone the impression they enjoyed Air Force life. When it came to standards, they tended to meet them for inspections only, which we had weekly. Hairstyles were much different. During the week, some folks had their hair slicked down with “dippity do,” and on weekends, I could hardly recognize them with their long hair or their afros.

You might wonder why Airmen were like that back then. I suspect it had more to do with the fact they didn’t want to identify with the military because many Americans socially shunned or spit on them. They learned how to fit in. It was a difficult period, and I understand why some felt the need to challenge our grooming standards. We live in a much different environment today.



## **SURE. YOU WERE WORKING WITH AIRMEN IN THE BOMB DUMP, I GUESS THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.**

The bomb dump was a cool place. Ammo was, and is to this day, a close-knit community within the Air Force.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE AIR FORCE, AIRMEN, AND THE CULTURE YOU JUST ENTERED?**

Keep in mind, when I joined the Air Force, we were still wearing tan 1505s and fatigues, and there were beer machines in all the day rooms at tech school, since the legal drinking age was 18. I graduated from tech school in the spring of 1975 and arrived at my first duty station at Homestead AFB. We were part of the 31st TAC [Tactical] Fighter Wing. Since most of the live munitions were still over in Southeast Asia to support the Vietnam conflict, all we had to work on were a handful of training missiles.

My shop was run by a senior master sergeant. The other leadership included one technical sergeant and two staff sergeants. Everyone else in the 60-person shop was either an E-4 sergeant or an airman first class. The senior airman rank didn't exist at the time.

The E-4 sergeants were the first-level supervisors, because we had a plethora, if you will, of brand new Airmen assigned. We couldn't look to the E-4 sergeants for guidance, since most were ill-prepared for their supervisory role. There was no Airman Leadership School or NCO Preparatory Course for first-term Airmen. In fact, the NCO Orientation Course didn't come online until late 1976 or early 1977. There was virtually nothing to help prepare people for transition to NCO status. One day someone was an airman first class and the next an E-4 sergeant responsible for supervising, writing APRs [Airman Performance Report], and being an NCO leader. It was just assumed everyone knew what they were supposed to do.

Mostly, I just tried to get along. The staff sergeants were usually in charge. The tech sergeant and senior master sergeant were too far removed from where I was operating. I knew who they were, but they didn't dictate what I did moment by moment. I basically looked to the staff sergeants to figure out what was right and wrong. I recall thinking about the day I would be one of those guys—you know, the guy holding the coffee cup telling everyone else what to do!

In 1976 one of my close friends and I decided we would volunteer for overseas assignments. We went together to the CBPO, which stood for Consolidated Base Personnel Office—MPF [Military Personnel Flight] using today's terms—to update our dream sheets. He selected the Netherlands, and I volunteered for England. Surprisingly, about two weeks later we each received assignments—him to Soesterberg [AB], Netherlands, and me to RAF Welford in the UK [United Kingdom]. Sadly, we never crossed paths again.

I arrived at RAF Welford an airman first class. I had expected to make sergeant soon after arriving. However, the Air Force had just announced a new policy that all those promoted to E-4 would first spend a year as a senior airman to gain experience. And, they would attend a class preparing them to become noncommissioned officers. I must admit, I wasn't thrilled when I learned that my tech school buddies who had enlisted for six years and become airman first class out of basic training made sergeant before the new policy went into effect. I, on the other hand, was still going to be called Airman for another year. I was a senior airman the first year we had the rank. We changed the silver star to blue for senior airman and below chevrons. Silver stars were for NCOs only. I recall many first-term Airmen painted over the blue star upon promotion to sergeant, since they were separating from the Air Force in a few months and didn't want the expense of sewing on new chevrons. Eventually, I made sergeant during this tour. However, everyone in my shop still outranked me; so, my job remained the same—sanding missiles, painting missiles, and doing all the things missile maintenance technicians did back then. Basically, whatever our staff sergeant said to do—that's pretty much what we did.

A couple of years into that tour, I received an assignment back to Homestead and a line number for staff sergeant. I can remember how excited I was, thinking I would return to the same missile shop with a senior master sergeant, a tech sergeant, and two staff sergeants—only this time I would be one of those staff sergeants! As it turned out, we still had a senior master sergeant shop chief when I arrived. However, now there were also a couple of master sergeants and four or five technical sergeants. Soon after arriving, I became the eighth ranking staff sergeant in the shop of about 50 folks with plenty of supervision. Also, we had igloos full of live missiles that had arrived from Southeast Asia—it was a busy place. My unofficial duty title was "Assistant to the Assistant Crew Chief." So, I was in charge whenever one was on leave and the other went to lunch! It was much different than what I had initially expected.

Virtually all my original Homestead teammates had separated by the time I returned for my second tour there, and attitudes were beginning to change. We also had a few women in the shop—something new in the bomb dump back then. Over the next couple of years, people departed, and I moved up the ladder—eventually becoming the swing shift supervisor. It was surprising how fast changes happened.

I worked with some very good Airmen and NCOs during my first six years in the Air Force—my ammo years—and I still have lifelong friends from that period. However, a few of my colleagues were not so good. They resented being forced to serve in the military and seemed to take it out on whomever they could. A couple of coworkers from my shop at Welford made different life choices and consequently served a few years incarcerated at Fort Leavenworth. Overall, it was these folks and their good or bad actions who influenced and shaped my original view of Air Force life.

## **WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THAT PERIOD THAT STUCK WITH YOU OR INFLUENCED HOW YOU WOULD LEAD LATER IN YOUR CAREER?**

There were a few things I learned from that period. First, life is full of choices, and the decisions you make tend to either open or close doors. Also, when you're placed in charge, the burden is on you to ensure the job is completed—and done correctly. You simply must perform. The expectation is much different when you're responsible for others.

I yearned for leadership positions early on. However, I was a staff sergeant with over a year in grade before I received any formal training about how to be a noncommissioned officer in our Air Force. It was at the NCO Leadership School [NCOLS].

There were many lessons while at the NCOLS about communication, leadership and management, military studies, and world affairs. I learned about my personal strengths and weaknesses. And more importantly, I discovered I could compete academically with the best NCOs there. I enjoyed the competition and was amazed to graduate at the top of my class. This drastically improved my overall confidence as an NCO and made me aware of opportunities I hadn't known existed.

Another important event from that period had a significant impact on our NCO corps and how I would later view NCO professional development. The AFMIG [Air Force Management Improvement Group] study led to the creation of the senior airman rank and put us on a different developmental path for Air Force NCOs.<sup>2</sup> As I mentioned earlier, I was a senior airman the first year we had them. Since I was at a GSU [geographically separated unit], I didn't complete the NCO Orientation Course with peers in a classroom setting. The rank was unpopular because airmen first class (E-3) expected NCO status with promotion to E-4. However, it was monumental for the Air Force and for the enlisted force specifically.

I believe it was the first time we embraced the idea that we must educate and prepare people before holding them accountable for certain responsibilities. Senior airman was a one-year transition rank to E-4 sergeant that required mandatory NCO PME attendance for promotion to NCO status. Although we later eliminated the E-4 sergeant rank, the concept of education before responsibility continued. It also shaped many of my later ideas about deliberate development—especially during my time as both a command chief master sergeant and as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

## **AT THAT POINT, YOUR CAREER TRAJECTORY CHANGED QUITE A BIT. YOU BECAME AN NCO PME INSTRUCTOR.**

Yes. I was recruited to join the NCO PME Center staff soon after my NCOLS graduation. It seemed like the best option for me since I knew the Air Force was eliminating my AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] and

would reclassify those who chose not to retrain. Little did I know it would completely change my career path in the Air Force. When I joined the NCO PME Center faculty, we taught the NCO Orientation Course, which was a 2.5-day program for senior airmen; the USAF Supervisors Course, a two-week program for new E-4 sergeants and staff sergeants; and the NCOLS, a 30-day in-residence program also for sergeants and staff sergeants. Both the NCO Orientation Course and the USAF Supervisors' Course were centrally developed at Air University. However, the NCOLS and NCO academies were owned and operated by the MAJCOMs. Consequently, we were responsible for locally developing our own curriculum and tests. During my tour at the Homestead AFB NCO PME Center, our major command, Tactical Air Command [TAC], began to consolidate curriculum development so that all the TAC NCOLS programs would be similar. I recall working on some of the curriculum writing teams with instructors from other schools. I was promoted to technical sergeant about three years into my tour and became the NCO PME Center's director of education for my last year there.

## **YOU MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS WE HAVE READ THAT I THINK YOU MET A GUY NAMED RICHARD ROLLER AROUND THAT TIME.**

Yes, Richard is my brother from another mother. Technical Sergeant Roller started out as my NCO Leadership School instructor. He then became my immediate supervisor when I joined the faculty. He made master sergeant and moved to the Leadership and Management Development Center [LMDC] at Air University in early 1984. As it turns out, I joined him a year later and was promoted to master sergeant in late 1985. We then were master sergeants together. He was my next-door neighbor for a couple of years, was the best man at my wedding, is the godfather for two of our sons, and remains an integral part of our family to this day. He has been one of my mentors for my entire adult life and has known me since I was in my early 20s as a young NCO.

## **HOW DID THAT MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP BEGIN?**

I suspect I was looking for direction. I wanted to be part of something bigger than me. When I attended the NCOLS, I realized there were people who focused on issues and ideas I thought were important—like how to grow the next generation of enlisted leaders. It opened my eyes to new possibilities.

It began with Richard requesting me to join them. He asked me to become an NCO PME instructor at Homestead PME Center, and frankly, it was a pretty cool gig. When I first arrived, NCO PME instructors carried special duty identifier [SDI] 99502—which was the same as military training instructors [MTI] at basic military training. In the summer of 1980, we split from the MTIs and picked up our own SDI—99605. At the end of my four-year controlled tour, I was again faced with retraining. My missile maintenance AFSC was gone, and I was ineligible for an overseas assignment without a primary AFSC.



Luckily, Richard somehow convinced the leadership at Air University to consider me for a position. I was fortunate they called, since I was unsure what other options were available.

For background—the Air Force modified the NCO PME program from five levels to four in 1984. The NCO Orientation Course and the USAF Supervisors' Course went away, and a new program called the NCO Preparatory Course [NCOPC] stood up. It was a two-week long course taught to senior airmen at virtually every major installation in the Air Force. It included testing and other evaluations, with a requirement to pass before becoming an NCO. The rationale at the time was to re-blue our Airmen and put rigor in the program. Since this program was centrally developed and managed at Air University, it made sense they would also have a course to teach new PME instructors how to instruct and run the program at the base level. Also, at the time, there was no correspondence version of the NCOPC for those on active duty, in the Air National Guard, or in the Air Force Reserves who simply couldn't attend a resident program.

So, again thanks to Richard, I was asked to consider joining the LMDC faculty in the fall of 1984 with the initial intent of developing a correspondence version of the NCOPC. I accepted and moved to Maxwell AFB, Alabama. My next year included developing testing instruments and working with some very talented writers at the Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education to publish the NCOPC by correspondence. When that was completed, I was tasked to run the NCOPC instructors course and later became chief of the NCO PME Evaluations Branch at LMDC.

The NCO PME faculty at LMDC was led and mentored by CMSgt Jimmie B. Lavender. He was one of the finest chiefs ever, and he continues to be a source of inspiration for me today. LMDC was renamed to the Center for Professional Development [CPD] during my tour there. I was also promoted to master sergeant. Therefore, when my Code 50 was about to expire, I found myself as a senior NCO [SNCO], again, without a viable AFSC or job.<sup>3</sup>

I had always wanted to go to Alaska, and a former classmate worked at the NCO academy there. He had previously told me to give him a call if I ever wanted a job at their NCO academy. So, I called him. He was the director of education at the time. Unfortunately, he felt I had too much time in grade as a master sergeant to be a classroom instructor, and I would create a potential problem by taking a leadership position they had groomed someone else to fill. He apologized for turning me away, and I went back to exploring retraining options.

Fortunately, I was asked soon after to move to the Air Force Military Personnel Center, MPC as it was affectionately called back then. I became the functional representative for the 99605 NCO PME community. I worked there for a great personnel expert, CMSgt Chuck Hasty. He taught me about the Air Force personnel system, how to

properly staff packages and change policies, and more leadership lessons on hard work and ethics than I can count. This assignment was a four-year controlled tour—again in SDI 99605. I made senior master sergeant within the first year after arriving and was selected for promotion to chief master sergeant about three years later—before my tour was up. Unfortunately, I was now a chief without an AFSC or many crossflow options—since the Air Force didn't have a program to retrain chief master sergeants.

Fortunately, the NCO commandant job in Alaska became available. I received a call asking if I was interested in replacing the commandant who had just moved over to become the 3rd Wing senior enlisted advisor. Ironically, he was the same person who had previously turned me away from an assignment there when I was a master sergeant. I gladly accepted the position. Later, I was offered the opportunity to become the Eleventh Air Force senior enlisted advisor and then the command chief master sergeant for Air Combat Command.

All the jobs from a PME instructor at Homestead AFB to the ACC command chief began with someone asking me if I would consider doing a particular job. When I became the Chief Master of the Air Force, I realized I was always a willing participant—but never a volunteer. It was a concept that stuck with me. I kept thinking we tend to put people in boxes—volunteer and nonvolunteer—basically because of laws and regulations regarding the assignment business. Unfortunately, some start making erroneous assumptions that people who are not volunteers won't do a good job. I was willing, but I wasn't a volunteer. There are many great and willing people out there, and we must figure out how to identify them. This is an important point. I'm happy we now embrace the idea of leveraging those willing for developmental and nominative duties. We made some policy changes during my tenure to help further this concept.

## HOW IMPORTANT WOULD YOU SAY MENTORING IS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENLISTED FORCE?

It is the key to deliberate development. Part of mentoring is setting the right expectations. We all want to know what others, particularly leaders, expect from us. We also set expectations for others around us. Frankly, what I faced as an Airman is considerably different from what we expect of today's Airmen. We ask much more of young Airmen today. The expectations for NCOs are also different. I look at the bios of some current command chiefs and see amazing educational levels and operational accomplishments. Clearly, the deliberate development expectations for them differed from what was asked of us on our Air Force journey.

The bigger issue is not focusing on what changed to grow today's leaders, but understanding the needs of tomorrow. We must adjust expectations and provide opportunities now to meet those needs. In other words, what must we accomplish today so Airmen can meet the challenges they will face tomorrow?

When I was the CMSAF in 2000, our focus was on developing the right force for 2010. We were trying to figure out what enlisted leaders should look like 10 years out and what programs or policies would help get them there. The current leadership team in the Pentagon is also focused on setting people up for success down the road. Their goal should be to have qualified people on the bench to meet the requirements of our enlisted force in 2020, 2025, and beyond. That is the challenge. The force of yesterday is interesting for perspective but not necessarily relevant to future needs.

## **YOU SPENT A LOT OF YOUR CAREER IN ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION (EPME). AT ONE POINT, YOU WERE TASKED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO PUT MASTER SERGEANTS INTO THE SENIOR NCO ACADEMY, WHICH PROVED TO BE A CHALLENGE. WHY WAS THAT IMPORTANT?**

I've told the story, sometimes in an open forum that my first major task when I arrived at AFMPC as the NCO PME functional was to find a way to put master sergeants into Senior NCO Academy classes. And my last task before I left four years later was to rewrite the policies to take master sergeants back out of the Senior NCO Academy. Some might infer we thought we had made a mistake by allowing master sergeants to attend. However, both were right decisions at the right times.

In 1988 about 250 people attended each SNCO Academy class. That was the seating capacity in their auditorium. They taught five classes a year. So, if you do the math, there were 1,250 seats available annually at the Senior NCO Academy. We were also promoting about 1,700 active duty master sergeants to senior master sergeant every year. The Senior NCO Academy was, at the time, a school for senior master sergeants and chief master sergeants. So, those seats were designed primarily to educate the most senior enlisted leaders of our Air Force.

Of the 1,250 seats, 75 were blocked for Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and sister-service students—about 15 per class. That left 1,175 seats annually to meet the needs of Air Force active duty senior NCOs. The alternative for all who didn't attend in-residence was to live with only the correspondence course on their records or compete for one of the few sister-service school slots. There were no other options.

Selection to attend the Senior NCO Academy was tied to the senior master sergeant promotion list. Every year, we would promote about 1,700 and offer PME to 1,175 of them. The other 525 never had an opportunity to attend. We did allow chief master sergeants to attend if they had been overlooked previously. But, they basically took a seat from next year's E-8 promotion list. We tried to evenly distribute Senior NCO Academy seats across AFSCs by creating an order-of-merit list for each AFSC, using promotion board and test scores.

I was initially caught off guard when I learned about an initiative to allow E-7s into school. I thought, "How are we going to do this? We don't have enough seats for all the senior master sergeant promotees. Why would we give them to those not selected for promotion?" The official guidance was that master sergeants were senior NCOs, and Air Force leadership wanted to send people to school earlier.

Our task was to figure out how to find the right master sergeants to send. Ideally, we would send only those already destined to become senior master sergeants and chiefs. Of course, we didn't know how attendance would impact future promotion opportunities. There was concern that school selection as a master sergeant might, by itself, change the normal promotion order of merit to senior master sergeant for some AFSCs.

Initially, we didn't have a selection process designed to meet the immediate need. For the first year, the MAJCOMs selected master sergeant attendees. Then we started selecting them based only on the combined promotion board and test scores from each respective AFSC during the senior master sergeant promotion cycle. Those factors seemed to be the biggest predictors of future promotion and were variables people could influence. We also allowed MAJCOM commanders to add other deserving master sergeants to the list based on other factors or because some had not yet competed for promotion to E-8. Ultimately, master sergeant attendance became the driving factor to expand the Senior NCO Academy production and build a new facility.

Once we publicly stated we would allow master sergeants in school, we created a requirement that didn't exist before. Now it wasn't just 1,700 people annually trying to fit into 1,175 active duty seats. We had 30,000-plus master sergeants who were instantly eligible, and we needed a much larger school. Construction to expand the Senior NCO Academy began soon after I attended as a student—during my AFMPC tour.

The expanded facility was slated to include a 500-person auditorium, which meant we would be able to teach 500 students per class, or 3,000 annually. It didn't take a math wizard to figure out educating 3,000 people every year while only promoting 1,700 to senior master sergeant would eventually make the Senior NCO Academy a school for master sergeants.

We began placing master sergeants in school before construction began. However, it wasn't long before the issue of fairness to the senior master sergeant community came back into play. With 3,000 annual seats, we had an opportunity to capture all those senior master sergeants who had previously been denied the opportunity to attend the resident program. Keep in mind, for a couple of years, we had told some E-8 selectees their school seat would go to others lower on the promotion list—in the non-select category. It was a tough pill for those good enough for promotion but not for school.



Since we could eliminate the backlog in a relatively short timeframe, it made sense to suspend master sergeant attendance until all the senior master sergeants could get through school. So, we changed the policy back. We also began requiring resident attendance for promotion to chief master sergeant.

Out of context, it looks like we kept changing the policy—first master sergeants could attend, then they couldn't. Frankly, I doubt we would have received support for the Senior NCO Academy expansion without a policy change to allow E-7s into school. However, I was happy we went back to capture all the overlooked E-8s, since they would be our enlisted leaders for the next decade or more.

## **YOU MENTIONED EARLIER YOU WERE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING CURRICULUM FOR THE NCO PREPARATORY COURSE. YOU ALSO ATTENDED THE NCO LEADERSHIP SCHOOL, AND NOW WE HAVE THE AIRMAN LEADERSHIP SCHOOL AND NCO ACADEMY. IT KIND OF SPEAKS TO THE EVOLUTION OF OUR PME.**

It was much different. When I became a PME instructor, there were five levels of enlisted professional military education. One was a 2.5-day course for senior airmen. One was a two-week course for young sergeants and staff sergeants and lower grade Air Force civilians. There were no tests or awards involved in either of these courses—just a discussion on management and leadership issues. The next two levels, NCO Leadership School and NCO Academy, were competitive courses both to enter and to graduate. The top level was the Air Force Senior NCO Academy.

Historically, we have had NCO academies and NCO leadership schools since the 1950s. In 1973 we moved to three levels of enlisted PME with the addition of the Senior NCO Academy. In 1976 we added two more levels. In 1984 we consolidated back to four levels. In 1990 we returned to three levels—one for Airmen, one for NCOs, and one for senior NCOs. Of those levels, some were written and managed for the Air Force at Air University, while others were controlled and funded by the MAJCOMs. We didn't stand up the College for Enlisted PME until 1993.<sup>4</sup> This centralized both curriculum and course management for the enlisted PME program.

## **YOU WERE ALSO PRETTY HEAVILY INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING AIRMAN LEADERSHIP SCHOOL WHEN THAT CAME ABOUT, RIGHT?**

When we decided as an Air Force we were going to move away from the four levels of PME, I was a senior master sergeant working PME issues at AFMPC. As I recall, the topic first came up at the 1990 NCO

PME conference with Chief [CMSAF #9 Jim] Binnicker. We were at Air University discussing PME policy issues of the day, and Chief Binnicker asked us where we thought NCO PME should be in the year 2000.

We went off to discuss the question. I was in the group led by Chief Tom Nurre, commandant of the Electronic Security Command NCO Academy at Goodfellow AFB [Texas]—later he became the chief of Air Force NCO PME Policy in the Pentagon. Our recommendation was to streamline the program by matching the PME levels to the three enlisted tiers—Airmen, NCO, and SNCO. We previously had a lot of overlap—especially at the NCO Leadership School and NCO Academy levels.

The proposed template later included other Year of Training initiatives that were implemented during Chief [CMSAF #10 Gary] Pfingston's tour. The idea then was to train young Airmen at technical training, have senior airmen attend the Airman Leadership School, and send staff sergeants back to resident 7-level training schools. Technical sergeants would attend the NCO Academy while master sergeants would go back for 9-level training and begin attending the Senior NCO Academy.

We thought the money saved by eliminating NCO leadership schools could help fund TDY [temporary duty] to school for resident 7-level training. Initially, we wanted to do this training for all AFSCs. It just didn't turn out that way.

Fundamental questions in the development stage were: should we model the Airman Leadership School [ALS] after the NCO Leadership School or after the NCO Preparatory Course? Also, should students live in dorms on campus or just attend in a resident status if they lived locally? Those were big questions. Some NCO leadership schools already had dorms for their students and felt strongly about the benefits of in-residence PME. TAC had spent years creating live-in NCO leadership schools at all their installations. MAC [Military Airlift Command] and SAC [Strategic Air Command] had regional schools run by the numbered Air Forces. If the ALS was to replace NCO leadership schools, would the MAJCOMs still own them and who would pay for the TDY to school costs? Also, it might require significant MILCON [military construction] funds to build more dorms. If, however, we made the ALS a base-level program to replace the NCO Preparatory Course, we could use the existing classrooms and have AU develop the program. As you know, we opted to make the ALS a base-level program. However, TAC and later ACC took control of their Airman leadership schools and kept them in resident programs since they had existing dorms attached to their PME facilities. I believe they were the only MAJCOM to have in-residence classes throughout the 1990s.

We had to name this new PME program. As a joke, I recommended calling it the "Airmen Supervisory School." I knew it was a nonstarter since we then had the option to wear fatigues with ballcaps that included our organization acronyms—and "A-S-S" just wouldn't work! [Laughter]

Quota management was another challenge for the PME program in the 1980s and early 1990s. Since the NCO academies and NCO leadership schools were owned and operated by the individual MAJCOMs, they controlled production and wanted a voice on who attended their respective schools. TAC had NCO academies at Tyndall [AFB, Florida] and Bergstrom [AFB, Texas]. SAC had schools at Barksdale [AFB, Louisiana] and March [AFB, California], MAC had an east coast academy at McGuire [AFB, New Jersey] and a west coast school at Norton [AFB, California]. The ATC schoolhouse was at Lackland [AFB, Texas], and Air Force Communications Command [AFCC] had their NCO academy at Keesler [AFB, Mississippi]. In all, there were 18 NCO academies run by 15 separate MAJCOMs. To save TDY dollars, we used to have annual quota sharing conferences, where MAJCOM reps would offer seats at their schools in exchange for obtaining seats at other MAJCOM schools. Unfortunately, some commands were a little parochial, while others wanted to better leverage the money they were spending on enlisted PME. TAC wanted a large percentage of their seats at Tyndall and Bergstrom filled by TAC students. SAC had lots of people assigned in the Northeast, but their schools were in Louisiana and California. It was much cheaper to send SAC students from Plattsburg AFB, New York, or Loring AFB, Maine, to the McGuire NCO academy—but MAC had to be willing to share their seats. We also faced continual audits for overflying schools. ATC would often send their Keesler students in Mississippi back to Lackland in San Antonio, while AFCC would send their Kelly AFB students in San Antonio to the Keesler NCO academy. In effect, students from different MAJCOMs would pass each other on Interstate 10. Something had to be done. In the early '90s we moved from a quota sharing system to an automated quota distribution system, where we, at AFMPC, distributed annual PME school seats based on student location regardless of which command owned the students.

Unfortunately, receiving a quota at a given school didn't force the MAJCOMs to fill them as intended, since they were not by-name quotas, and overflying persisted. Consequently, the Air Force stepped in and gave all the CONUS [continental United States] NCO academies to Air University in 1993. It was the beginning of the College for Enlisted PME, or CEPME as it was called. Another benefit of standing up the college was it consolidated NCO academy curriculum development and course policies at Air University. I recall asking CMSAF Pfingston, when he was in the seat, why CEPME didn't include the overseas NCO academies. He replied, "Overflying is a CONUS problem only. There is no need to take the schools away from the overseas MAJCOMs." If you fast-forward 20 years, the Barnes Center now manages all enlisted PME, and they inherited CCAF [Community College of the Air Force] along the way. Enlisted education is now under one umbrella. We have come a long way in a short time.

## **ONE LAST QUESTION ON PME, IF I COULD. LOOKING BACK, YOU'VE SEEN IT EVOLVE AND YOU'VE SEEN THE TRUE EFFECT. HOW IMPORTANT IS PME TO THE ENLISTED FORCE?**

PME is important because it helps us focus on leadership, human relations, and personal development, but it is only part of the professional development equation. For years, it was assumed if we attended PME we were ready to go out and conquer the world. The truth is we all are simply the sum of our experiences. PME is certainly part of professional development, but assignments we've had, the organizations we've joined, and the colleges or other courses we have attended all help make us who we are.

There has nearly always been some vocal group advocating to provide PME earlier. I am not a strong proponent, since earlier is not always better. We should give people the education, experiences, and exposure to issues when it will benefit them the most—typically just before they assume new roles and responsibilities. The fundamental questions are: when will roles change during a typical career path, and how should we deliberately prepare people to fill those roles?

Senior airman to staff sergeant is a major transition. During this period, we ask people to become noncommissioned officers and move from being responsible solely for themselves to assuming responsibility for the actions of others. While promotion to technical sergeant typically moves NCOs from a working team leader role to becoming a leader of multiple teams, the expectations are closely related to those we have for first-line supervisors. However, expectations change again upon promotion to master sergeant. Not only are they senior NCOs, but they are often tasked to manage entire shops. We also ask them to think more operationally. There is a significant expectation shift from my perspective. We owe them new skill sets and exposure to the new issues they will face. The same holds true for promotion to chief master sergeant. I believe the transition from senior master sergeant to chief is much more challenging than the transition from master sergeant to senior master sergeant. We expect chiefs to think more strategically and be experts on virtually everything in the Air Force.

When roles change, ideally we should help people just prior to the transition. It doesn't work as well if the timing is off. For example, preparing someone in 2015 for a role they won't assume until 2020 is virtually worthless because they may not remember the lessons or we may not be the same Air Force by then. It should be just-in-time training. When and what are both important. However, there are lots of delivery methods suitable for preparing people. No doubt, some lessons are better learned via one method over another, but I don't get caught up in whether something is designed for a classroom setting, interactive online, or experiential. The how is less important, since there are lots of ways to get there from here.









## **YOU LEFT THE PME WORLD—**

Not by choice [laughter]. However, this is probably a good time to add that PME is only part of the deliberate development process. Other initiatives like local NCO and senior NCO professional development seminars leverage the expertise of senior NCOs at every base.

Also, first term Airmen centers, or FTACs, help smooth the transition into the operational Air Force so Airmen can have a productive start. The FTAC concept began at Offutt AFB [Nebraska] in the mid-1990s while I was assigned at ACC. It was a great idea to build friendships, solve the base detail challenge, and help Airmen during one of their most trying times—moving to their first duty station. It's normal to feel like an outsider when everyone else has an established routine and you are still trying to get out of the starting blocks. FTACs connect Airmen with others in a similar situation and help them learn about the local support network available.

We expanded FTACs throughout ACC, and by the late-90s, pushed to make it an Air Force program. Thankfully, it still operates today.

## **YOU WERE PLUCKED UP BECAUSE GENERAL [JOSEPH W.] RALSTON WANTED YOU TO BE HIS SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR AT ELEVENTH AIR FORCE.<sup>5</sup>**

It actually surprised me. To this day, I'm not exactly sure why he selected me. When I arrived at Elmendorf AFB [Alaska], I was the junior of 62 chiefs on the base and the new NCO academy commandant. In fact, that was the only Air Force job [in which] I ever began feeling very confident. I had taught at a PME center for a few years, so I understood the teaching part. I had developed curriculum and had relationships at Air University. I had worked operations and PME policy issues at AFMPC; so, I had a good handle on program intent and what we could waive in certain circumstances. And, I had a fair understanding of the manning and budget piece. It might be a little cocky to say, but I thought I knew as much about PME as the other NCO academy commandants and most likely more than anyone on the faculty at my new school. By the way, we had a great team of talented instructors in Alaska who collectively made significant improvements to the PME program and taught me a few lessons about how to be a successful leader.

A year into my NCO academy tour, I was pulled out to become the senior enlisted advisor for Eleventh Air Force. Thankfully, I wasn't fired. However, I was just getting started as a chief and hadn't considered what other jobs might be available to me.

## **WHAT DID YOU THINK YOUR ROLE WAS AS THE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR? IT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SHIFT FOR YOU. WERE YOU READY FOR THAT ROLE?**

Initially, I didn't know everything the role included. There was no formal training—although I did attend the SEA orientation a few months into the job. I knew some SEAs but didn't have a good feel for what their day-to-day responsibilities were since I had been pretty removed from that group. It's like looking at the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force role from the outside. To some it may appear easy and exciting. However, the closer you are to the position, the less awe there is. You tend to see everything the job entails and the level of effort required.

In Alaska, we had a fighter wing at Eielson AFB with a senior enlisted advisor who was making things happen up north. The 3rd Wing at Elmendorf was a large organization with lots of different aircraft and missions. The senior enlisted advisor there had a good handle on the issues and didn't need me inserting myself into wing business. We also had an air control wing senior enlisted advisor who worked mostly remote site issues in Alaska. My goal was to figure out how to get all three of them to march down a similar path as we moved forward—while keeping my boss informed on enlisted issues in the field.

I didn't feel overly challenged once I learned the expectations of my new role. It was a relatively small numbered Air Force, with only three wings and no deployment taskings at the time. I worked primarily on helping develop solid relationships with our local community partners and visiting Airmen at remote sites as often as I could. We still had a significant number of Airmen serving remote tours during my time in Alaska. We had about 300 at both King Salmon and Galena Air Stations. Eareckson AS, on the island of Shemya, had about 600 Airmen. Shemya is the next to last island at the end of the Aleutian chain—a long way from Anchorage.

They had some unique challenges at the remote sites, since they had to be self-sufficient at virtually everything. There were no stores outside the main gate . . . or even a main gate at Eareckson. Thankfully, mission changes after the Cold War allowed us to place contractors at these sites and eliminate the one-year tours for about 1,200 Airmen. They were the last of Alaska's remote assignments which ended during the '94-'95 timeframe.

The SEA tour in Alaska was my first. It gave me some exposure to working for general officers. I'm not sure I ever told General Ralston how much I appreciated him. He taught me many things, both at Eleventh Air Force and later at Air Combat Command. Although our tours together were much shorter than anticipated, it was easy to stay in step with him since we tended to agree on all the important issues. He was a great boss who always supported me and forgave my mistakes. I was fortunate to work for both him and General [Lawrence] Boese during my Alaska tour. I also learned many leadership lessons from General Boese. He inherited me at Eleventh Air Force, and I'm thankful he kept me on his team. Similarly, General [Richard] Hawley inherited me at ACC. He was a brilliant leader who valued the time of others, especially those on the staff. He championed many issues and helped me think more strategically. We inducted him onto the Order of the Sword before he retired.

## **YOU WERE ACTUALLY AT ACC WHEN WE BEGAN TO CHANGE TO MORE OF AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, AND ACC LED THAT INITIATIVE. CAN YOU COMMENT ON WHY THAT WAS AN IMPORTANT SHIFT FOR THE AIR FORCE?**

There were many things going on at the time, but you're right, we were becoming expeditionary. It's not that we wanted to, but America needed us to change. Most Airmen of the time were used to serving in a garrison force. Although we had some battlefield Airmen, we typically sent our pilots out to fight, while the rest of us stayed back at the home base in maintenance and support roles. The airlift community was TDY all the time, but they were the exception. There were some who believed six-month deployments were for Sailors, not Airmen. The Navy went to sea on six- to nine-month cruises—the Air Force never deployed. We built major bases across Europe to support NATO and brought our families with us on three-year tours. We knew who and where our enemy was, and we put our resources there.

However, soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world started changing. We were facing the reality we couldn't always predict where the next military threat was going to emerge. This made it difficult to have the required infrastructure in the right places to operate as we had for decades. We also couldn't afford to operate major bases everywhere around the world. We didn't have the aircraft, people, or resources to make it work—unless we became expeditionary. We could, however, stand up temporary bases virtually anywhere by borrowing people and assets from multiple CONUS locations.

I arrived at ACC a few years after Desert Storm. At the time, ACC had been providing forces to support Operation Southern Watch. Unfortunately, they seemed to be doing more than their fair share. For the rest of the Air Force, it was business as usual. F-15 squadrons from Langley [AFB, Virginia] and Eglin [AFB, Florida] were rotating in and

out of the theater, while other F-15 squadrons in Alaska and elsewhere had virtually no deployment taskings. Some units were being overstressed, while others had no way into the fight. We needed to bring the entire Air Force into the game.

ACC took the lead in setting up an Air Expeditionary Center. Of course, standing up a center to manage deployment taskings was easier than changing the mentality of Airmen who grew up in the Cold War era. Many had no desire to leave their families and deploy to Southwest Asia for four months to a year at a time.

I was responsible to help manage first sergeant deployment taskings within ACC. Unfortunately, I often had to task non-volunteers who were unhappy and/or unwilling to deploy. Some even offered to turn in their diamonds rather than deploy for four months. They were happy to serve in our Air Force but had no expectation to leave their families for months at a time. Consequently, we needed to change the expectations of Air Force life for future generations of Airmen.

I recall participating in a biennial review of basic military training, BMT, during Chief [CMSAF #11 Dave] Campanale's watch. BMT had historically done an amazing job of transitioning civilians into Airmen and preparing them for technical training. However, we found Airmen at BMT didn't know much about life in the operational commands of our Air Force. They didn't know about deployments or frankly what the Air Force would expect of them in the years to come.

Consequently, the MAJCOM command chiefs agreed to send BMT some videos about operational missions in our respective commands. The idea was BMT would play these videos while trainees were waiting in line or during short periods of down time. And, exposure to these videos would ultimately provide a clearer picture about serving in the Air Force. We also needed to change expectations and grow expeditionary mind-sets in our youngest Airmen. Over the next few years, this idea blossomed into Warrior Week. Later, after I retired, it was renamed The BEAST. As I recall, this fundamental shift in focus was popular in both the MTI and trainee communities.

In today's environment, people expect to deploy. Almost every AFSC has a deployment tasking. It doesn't make any difference where you are assigned. Airmen have much different expectations than we had just 20 years ago. In 1995 we were a much different Air Force. Compare the number of ribbons current Airmen wear to those worn by Airmen from other service periods. You can see far more Airmen today have been involved in multiple contingency operations. Deployments are normal business for those currently serving.



## **YOU CAN REALLY TRACE TODAY'S EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE BACK TO THAT TIME—**

You're right. Although we have been continually evolving as an Air Force, some ideas implemented during this period have had a significant and lasting impact on our Air Force. One was making the term Airman special to trainees. By withholding the label until trainees completed Warrior Week along with presenting them an Airman's coin to commemorate the occasion, transitioning from trainee to Airman became a valued experience.

I had the distinct honor of presenting the very first Airman's coin to the first flight of BMT trainees completing Warrior Week. This occurred in September 1999, soon after I became the CMSAF. I am extremely proud of this experience and cherish receiving one of the very first Airman coins minted. It holds a special place in my coin collection.

## **CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE MORE ABOUT WARRIOR WEEK?**

Sure. The leadership and MTIs at basic military training began working this initiative during Chief [CMSAF #12 Eric W.] Benken's tour. They reorganized training objectives and moved all week five training to a tent city. The intent was to provide trainees an experience like what they might later experience in a deployed environment. We called it Warrior Week. It also had a culminating event at the end of the week—typically a retreat ceremony with a keynote speaker.

Trainees could not claim the title Airman until completing this training and receiving their coin. Also, they weren't allowed to wear a blue uniform until after Warrior Week. Completion was a rite of passage, like stepping over a line in the sand. You and I may not pay much attention to the value of a week in our careers. However, I suspect those trainees felt like they finally arrived when they joined the ranks of Airmen. People tend to value whatever the institution or leaders make important. BMT curriculum has evolved since then, but I'm glad we still make a big deal out of becoming an Airman.

## **IN THE LATE 1990S, RIGHT AS YOU BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, THE AIR FORCE FACED RECRUITING CHALLENGES. YOU TOOK SOME ACTION TO IMPROVE THAT. CAN YOU COMMENT ON WHAT WE DID AND HOW IT AFFECTED THE AIR FORCE?**

Until 1999 the Air Force had always met its annual recruiting goal. We didn't focus on it much or spend funds on national television ads. Typically, the only time you saw the Air Force on TV was during some public service announcement late at night. However, when we didn't make our recruiting goal in 1999, it was like a splash of cold water in our faces. It had our attention. This was a problem that required our immediate focus.

Our new undersecretary of the Air Force, Carol DiBattiste, came on board in 1999. She had once been an Air Force recruiter, and I remembered her from our LMDC assignment together in the mid-'80s when she worked at the JAG [Judge Advocate General] school. She was a great leader and friend who became a champion for recruiting issues.

My direct role in helping the recruiting effort was to travel in uniform as often as possible and to provide the voice for the original commercials. The tag line then was "America's Air Force. No One Comes Close." We stopped using this line in 2001. Frankly, it didn't fit after the tragic events on 9/11.

In addition to establishing a significant recruiting campaign, we also believed we needed more recruiters on the street to solve this challenge. We began to focus on ways to incentivize recruiting without breaking other Air Force programs. We didn't want to make recruiting duty more lucrative than other special duty positions, break faith in our promotion system, or alienate recruiters within the enlisted force.

Our method of manning this special duty had been to only seek volunteers. We had recruit the recruiter teams who traveled around enticing Airmen to volunteer. I questioned why we waited for volunteers, because I didn't recall volunteering for any job from the time I was a staff sergeant. All my assignments began by someone asking, suggesting, or directing I move to a new position. I was always a willing participant—but never a volunteer.

I don't believe the recruiting community was initially excited with non-volunteer assignments into recruiting duty, but we started discussing ways to identify our best and brightest for this duty. Recruiters were the face of the Air Force, and in many communities, the only face. It was vital we select the right people. We also wanted mature NCOs with Air Force experience, since they might be out there virtually on their own. Our solution—identify and select people without waiting for them to volunteer.

A quick story from that timeframe—I remember receiving an e-mail from a staff sergeant at Robins AFB, Georgia. He said, "I'm a maintainer and I love my job. However, I was just tagged as a non-volunteer to attend recruiting school. I don't want to be an Air Force recruiter and am willing to go anywhere you want to send me so long as it's in maintenance. Everyone in my chain of command has tried to get me out of this duty, and no one can. You are my last hope. I'm slated to start recruiting school in about 10 days. Please help."

It wasn't unusual to receive correspondence from someone unhappy about a specific Air Force program or assignment. However, something troubled me about this note. I knew we wanted some of our best NCOs to become recruiters. However, he indicated his chain of command had unsuccessfully tried to have him removed from the list. It started raising a question in my mind—had we made a mistake?

I asked the folks in my office to track down the contact information for this NCO's shop chief or immediate supervisor. Shortly after, I had a name and phone number for the master sergeant who ran that shop. So, I rang him up. He seemed a bit caught off guard to receive a call directly from the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force in the Pentagon. We talked for a few minutes, and I shared my concern about the statement indicating everyone had tried to get this NCO off the recruiting duty list. He replied, "Yeah, he doesn't want to be a recruiter, and we have been trying to support him." I followed up with, "Are we making a mistake sending him to recruiting school?" He replied, "Actually, Chief, this young staff sergeant will make a great recruiter. He is the type of guy who will be successful anywhere you put him. He just doesn't want to do this."

I then said, "Well, we need great people to represent maintenance in recruiting duty. If he's truly an outstanding NCO, he's going to be a great recruiter for the next few years. I'm not going to help him avoid recruiting school. Please tell him I received his letter and that you and I have talked."

I also called the recruiting school when he started and asked to be kept in the loop on his progress. I just wanted periodic updates—which they provided until he graduated. After that, he fell off my radar.

About six months later I visited Robins AFB. Frankly, I had forgotten about this NCO and the recruiting concern he had. One of the stops during my visit was at a maintenance hangar with about 25 NCOs lined up. Everyone wore BDUs [battle dress uniform] except one staff sergeant who wore a blue service uniform. Although he stood out in the sea of green, I didn't think it odd. I had no idea who he was—just a staff sergeant in blues. I started moving down the line shaking hands and saying hello. When I asked him what he did for our Air Force, he informed me he was no longer assigned to the maintenance squadron at Robins. He then said, "I heard you were visiting and wanted to meet you. I'm a recruiter stationed about 100 miles from here. I sent you an e-mail a few months ago asking for your help to get me out of recruiting duty—but you wouldn't help me." It was then I realized he was the young staff sergeant from six months ago. I asked him how things were going—not sure which direction the conversation would go. And, he replied, "I just want to say thanks. I didn't know it would be this much fun."

It reinforced for me that we have great Airmen. They want to be led and to be told what's important. They want us to take care of them in a reasonable way and to appreciate what they do. You can ask them to do virtually anything, and they will step up.

## **WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?**

As far as I know—I never saw him again. He was a sharp NCO. I suspect he had a stellar recruiting tour and went on to become a great senior enlisted leader.

## **THAT'S A GREAT STORY. YOU WERE ALSO THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2001.**

Unfortunately, yes.

## **EVERYBODY REMEMBERS WHERE THEY WERE, AND I'M SURE YOU DO TOO. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT DAY FOR YOU?**

September 11th, 2001, was a Tuesday. Back then, Tuesday mornings included our weekly staff meeting with the Air Force's secretary, chief, and senior leadership staff at the Pentagon. Since the Air Force had recently changed chiefs of staff, this was General [John P.] Jumper's first staff meeting as our new chief. We held these meetings in a secure area of the Pentagon. The day began like any other Tuesday.

We were in the middle of the meeting when someone came in to interrupt with news that a plane had just flown into the World Trade Center in New York City. The big screen switched over to either CNN or Fox News to provide us live updates. We didn't know what type of aircraft it was at the time or whether this was intentional or an accident. I was sitting next to [Brig Gen James M.] Shames, who was our Air Force's top cop back then, when we watched live as a commercial airliner flew into the second tower. General Shames commented something to the effect, "Well, that was intentional. It looks like we have just been attacked." Like most Americans, we were glued to the news. It was surreal. We knew it was intentional and very bad, but we had no clue how the day would unfold. I didn't think much beyond the moment. I couldn't wait to return to my office and didn't know if any of my staff had heard or seen this bizarre news.

Shortly after, we concluded the meeting, and I beat feet to my office on the fourth floor. The staff was already glued to the TV in my office, as news outlets continuously replayed the attack.

At 9:30 I knew I had to depart. I had an editorial board slated with the Air Force Times set for 10:00 at the Military Times building in Alexandria, Virginia. And it would take 20 to 30 minutes to drive there. Keep in mind, the CMSAF office was on the ninth corridor of the fourth floor, and it typically took more than five minutes to walk to the Pentagon's river entrance on the first floor.

I turned to my public affairs NCO, Beth Alber, and said, "Grab your service dress. We have to go." As we departed the building, I remember telling Beth it was probably not a good day to be in the Pentagon with all the crazy stuff going on. We had no idea what was about to happen.



We walked to my car that was parked in the river entrance parking lot just outside the Pentagon, hopped in the car, and drove out through security towards I-395 South. As we drove around the south side of the Pentagon, the plane crashed into the north side. It was literally seconds after we departed. By the time we reached the hill, near where the Air Force Memorial is now located, I could see the Pentagon in the rearview mirror along with the fire and black smoke beginning to emerge above the back side of the building.

I said to Beth, “Hey turn around—quick, turn around. There’s something going on back there.” We didn’t see the plane but knew something had happened. Beth suggested they might just be holding fire drills or training. But, we dismissed the thought as unlikely given the earlier events of the day. So, I turned on the radio hoping for some news. About a minute or so later, someone broke in over the airwaves to announce that a commercial airliner had just flown into the Pentagon. We had just learned about the attacks on the World Trade Center that morning, and now this. It seemed almost unbelievable.

I remember pulling off the road immediately to call the office on my cell phone. Nobody answered. We didn’t know if no one picked up the phone because they had been killed or if they had just evacuated. The Pentagon is a big building, and it would be standard procedure to evacuate immediately. My very first thought was about how lucky we were to have left the building before the attack. But that thought lasted about a nanosecond. Then it switched to worrying about all the people we just left.

I-395 North was already a parking lot because of the typical rush hour traffic that time of day. And, compounding the bumper-to-bumper traffic we saw was our realization that emergency responders would close any access to the Pentagon before we could return. There was simply no way to get back. Our only alternative was to drive down to the Military Times.

While we were on the shoulder of I-395, I also called my house to speak with my wife, Pat. I wanted her to know I was okay, since she would assume I was in the building when it was hit. She didn’t answer the house phone so I left a voicemail message to turn on the TV. I told her I was fine but something had happened at the Pentagon and in New York City. I would talk with her later.

Once I hung up from that call, cell phone service was gone. I couldn’t get through to anyone. So, we drove to the Military Times building. Fortunately, they knew about the tragic events of the morning and understood we would have no editorial board that day. They were nice and offered me their landline phones to attempt to contact my colleagues. I tried using their phone but couldn’t reach anyone.

We knew we had few options at that point. We couldn’t return to the Pentagon. We couldn’t reach anyone to find out what was happening. There was a good chance Washington, DC, would shut down and they would close the I-495 beltway making it virtually impossible for me to get home to Andrews AFB. Beth lived just north of Fredericksburg in Stafford, Virginia. So, I drove Beth home.

We watched the news at Beth’s house for a few minutes, seeking updates. Then I decided I would try to drive to Andrews using the southern Maryland route. It was the long way around, but it would probably be the quickest route. The only news available was from the car radio. I recall hanging on every word as I drove north. Along the way, I learned World Trade Center Tower 1 had collapsed. Then, the second tower also collapsed. I also learned United Flight 93 had been hijacked and crashed in Pennsylvania. There were lots of bad things happening, and I was unsure when it would end. My immediate focus was on getting home to my family.

Around 12:15 I received a call from Pat to tell me everyone in my office had made it out of the Pentagon alive. I also learned SMSgt Mike Gilbert, our first sergeant functional leader, was flying to Montgomery that morning but had landed in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was okay. That was the first good news I had received all day.

I arrived outside of the Andrews main gate around 12:30. Pat had gone off the base to pick up our youngest son, Brian, from school. I waved as I passed them on the road near the base. Ultimately, I ended up stuck in traffic just north of the gate. However, I was only four or five cars back from the intersection and thought it would be just a few minutes to enter the base. There was another line of cars, over a mile long, trying to enter the base from the south. I sat there for nearly two hours waiting for my turn to enter. The Prince George’s County police were directing traffic, but things were slow since our security forces were searching each car coming through the gate. Keep in mind President [George W.] Bush was slated to return to Andrews later that day on Air Force One.

Frustrated, I exited my car and walked up to the police officer directly traffic. I was in uniform and said, “I’m the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I was in the Pentagon this morning. I live on Andrews, and I need to get on this base. I’m willing to wait my turn, but I’ve been here for a couple of hours, and you haven’t let anybody from my line through.” He replied, “Well, just bring your car up here and I will put you in the next available slot.” Frankly, I no longer cared about who else might have been ahead of me in line. I drove up to the middle of the intersection, and shortly after, he waved me through to the two short lines of cars waiting to enter the base gate.

As soon as the Air Force Security Forces saw me, they came out from the gate area and instructed everyone to move their cars to the outside of the respective lanes. It was like the parting of the Red Sea! Our defenders then escorted me down the center of the road to the gate. They said, “Chief, we have to let the dogs go through your car.” And, I said, “You betcha.” I was happy to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force that day. Pat and Brian made it home a couple of hours later.

Once home, I contacted the Air Force staff working in our ops center at the Pentagon and passed along that everyone in my office had survived the attack. They were still working on the process to account for everyone. I was told [Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld wanted us all to report for work the next day—it sent an important message that those who attacked us did not take us down.

My colleague, Chief Dawn Rich, and I drove together to the Pentagon the next morning. When we arrived, the Arlington and other firefighters were still on the roof fighting the fire. No doubt, they had been there all night. The building reeked of jet fuel, and black soot covered everything. Our office was on the side of the building opposite the crash site. We were issued protective masks and could write our names on the office walls because the soot was that thick.

Over the next week to 10 days, the parking lot became transformed into an operational staging area. What began as search and rescue sadly became a tedious recovery-and-investigative operation. Volunteers from around the country showed up to share their talents. Local businesses set up shop to provide their services free of charge. I recall a day spa brought in equipment and offered massages. Donated food and fuel just arrived. That period included the worst day of my Air Force career, followed by some of the most memorable days. I met some wonderful and talented people, some in uniform and some not, but all gave of themselves expecting nothing in return. I will forever remember the events of that period. For example, Jack Tilley, the Sergeant Major of the Army, and I met with some Soldiers who wanted to hang a large American flag from the top of the Pentagon. They asked us how it should hang so we instructed them on proper flag protocol. Little did we know that flag would become part of an iconic photo of the Pentagon attack and a symbol of our national resolve. Jack and I still speak of that event. Like everyone else who experienced September 11th, 2001, we knew exactly where we were, and the surrounding events are permanently imprinted in our memories.

I had no idea how much the world would change based on the attacks that day. September 11, 2001, was certainly a tragic day in our American history. However, I also made new friends and took away some positive memories from that period. I learned about the amazing capabilities and patriots we have in America. I also felt pride in the willingness of people from all walks of life to come together in support of a single cause—it was a new feeling I hoped would last.

## **CERTAINLY. OBVIOUSLY, THAT DAY SHIFTED THE WAY WE LOOKED AT THE WORLD, AND THE WAY OUR AIR FORCE OPERATED SPECIFICALLY. DO YOU THINK WE WERE READY FOR THAT SHIFT?**

From my perspective, we had already become expeditionary. Many in America, including some in our sister-services, tend to speak of deployments and our war on terror as if it all began in 2001 after 9/11. They use Operation Enduring Freedom as the starting point. However, Airmen have been deployed since Desert Storm in 1991. The terror attacks on the USS Cole, Khobar Towers, and elsewhere are reminders that America’s war on terror began long before 9/11. Our Air Force was engaged daily in Southwest Asia, supporting both Operations Southern Watch and Northern Watch. We never left. While some bases and missions have changed over the years, we became expeditionary almost 10 years before 9/11.

Deployment locations and expectations both have changed considerably since I retired. Many bases the Air Force operates from today didn’t exist while I was serving. We were standing up Prince Sultan AB in Saudi Arabia and building bases in Kuwait during my time. I recall visiting Al Udeid in Qatar when there were no aircraft assigned. It was still in the early stages of construction. Also, the roles and expectations of enlisted Airmen have changed a little as well. We now have more battlefield Airmen and others working outside the wire. We should be very proud of ourselves and what Airmen contribute.

## **YES. LOOKING BACK AND THINKING ABOUT WHERE WE HAVE COME, DID YOU EVER THINK WE WOULD BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY?**

This is a tough question. It’s much clearer looking back than forward, since hindsight tends to be 20/20. When thinking about some of today’s older veterans or Air Force retirees, I believe it’s challenging for many who served during Korea, Vietnam, or only in the Cold War to relate to the expectations expeditionary Airmen face today. Forty-five years of an all-volunteer force coupled with 25 years engaged in the Southwest Asia AOR [area of responsibility] have shaped America’s expectation of war. It has also become a filter for the view we have of ourselves as Airmen. The more important questions are what will America ask of our Air Force in the future and how can we best prepare the next generation of Airmen for an uncertain tomorrow? What values and expectations do current senior enlisted leaders consider important as they groom tomorrow’s Airmen?

I served the first half of my career during the Cold War. Early on, we had monthly mobility exercises and trained for NBC [nuclear, biological, and chemical] attacks. However, we never actually went anywhere, and I was a bit naïve doubting anyone would ever attack us at home during my lifetime. It was a relatively stable period. Then the world changed.



The Soviet Union collapsed, and the Cold War ended. We began to draw down our military because America wanted a peace dividend. However, peace didn't last long. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, we responded with Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It was a first large-scale force mobilization in a couple of decades, and Airmen have been deploying to that theater ever since.

The Air Force I experienced in the 1980s focused on training and development. Thankfully, professional development translated to new opportunities for senior NCOs as we took on roles previously reserved for commissioned officers. However, most of us didn't deploy and rarely went TDY except to school. This changed when I moved to Air Combat Command in the mid-'90s as the senior enlisted advisor and, later, command chief master sergeant.

When I arrived at ACC, we were still in the early stages of becoming expeditionary. My TDY schedule jumped to nearly 200 days a year visiting ACC units. I began to see a completely different side of our Air Force. The operational tempo was picking up, and Airmen were stepping up to the challenge. Unfortunately, some mission areas had a mismatch between resources and tasks. We called them "low-density, high-demand" assets and asked a lot of the Airmen and their families working in those areas. There were numerous challenges and sacrifices as families adjusted to extended deployments. It was a busy time, but I enjoyed visiting Airmen, listening to their concerns, and advocating on their behalf. It was also my first opportunity to work in a joint environment with our sister-service colleagues.

It will be interesting to see how 25 years fighting in Southwest Asia will impact the expectations future leaders have of Airmen. I served during a period of transition—both Cold War and expeditionary. However, virtually everyone serving today only knows an Air Force actively engaged around the world. They have a unique perspective on what constitutes important work.

## **DURING YOUR TENURE AS THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, AND AFTER, WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT POSITION CAN HAVE?**

The CMSAF position has evolved during the past 50 years. We are a much different Air Force than we were in 1967 when Chief [CMSAF #1 Paul] Airey stepped into the position. Changes along the journey may have seemed relatively small at the time. However, I'm confident Chief Airey would agree the role, expectations, and status have changed immensely. Also, challenges Chief [CMSAF #17 Jim] Cody faces today are considerably different—even from those of my time 15 years ago. This is not to say the challenges are harder or easier today—just different.

Over the years, I have listened to virtually all the former CMSAFs as they told stories about their respective times in the Pentagon. Sadly, I have no CMSAF [CMSAF #3 Dick] Kisling stories, since I only briefly met him once in the early '80s—a couple of years before he passed away.

The role has changed over time. I've been told the CMSAF position was not universally accepted in the beginning. It was new and not clearly defined. I've also heard there were general officers and others who didn't think it was necessary or appropriate for the Air Force to have a chief master sergeant working directly for the chief of staff. In contrast, there are no Air Force senior leaders currently on active duty who served during a time without a Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I believe each CMSAF along the way stepped up to fill the role expected of them during their time. Each had his issues of the day.

The role I had, or lane I tried to stay within, was a balancing act. I traveled extensively to connect with Airmen. I represented the Air Force, as appropriate, to the American public and to leaders in all levels of government. I coordinated policy recommendations when asked and typically commented on virtually anything affecting our enlisted force.

We didn't call it the EBOD [Enlisted Board of Directors] then, but I worked with the MAJCOM command chiefs to set the tone and direction for our enlisted force. We also created some deliberate development initiatives as part of the "Developing Aerospace Leaders" program that set the foundation for today's "Enlisted Force Development" focus.

Whenever I was in Washington, DC, it seemed my dance card was always full with boards, meetings, or office calls. I tried to spend about eight days in the Pentagon each month. Too many days and the force might feel I was disconnected. Too few and my ability to help work issues affecting Airmen would be limited since staffers would just go around me without input.

The Air Force had already transitioned to e-mails and were beginning to process all staff work electronically. Consequently, I was expected to coordinate daily on staff packages for policy issues en route to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Secretary of the Air Force. If I was out on a base visit, the staff work began after my last event of the day. The good news is we had electronic records of virtually everything; so, we pretty much solved the decades-old concern about no written history of enlisted contributions.

The protocol status for the CMSAF and sister-service equivalents changed from DV-8 to DV-4 status in the middle of my tour.<sup>6</sup> My sister-service colleagues and I had mentioned in a meeting with the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] chairman that there was a disparity between how the various services treated us at joint events. However, we were collectively unaware of any OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] initiative to change our protocol status until after the policy change was announced.

I believe the pace of operations and some of the challenges are more demanding today. I was exposed to electronic staff work, but I didn't have to deal with social media issues. My big challenge was to ignore disparaging e-mail traffic and dispel rumors shared by those with only part of the facts. Today, Airmen have instant access to information on smart phones. They freely share their views on virtually everything via Twitter and Facebook. There are others with an axe to grind who seem to twist the narrative for every policy decision. Unfortunately, access to information doesn't always make life easier. It's more challenging to identify fact from fiction. And, the leadership must adapt to new communication methods with Airmen and their families.

## **FINAL QUESTION, IF YOU WERE LOOKING AT AIRMEN AND YOU HAD TO START A SENTENCE WITH "I BELIEVE," WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe making a positive difference for our Air Force requires us to understand we are part of something bigger than ourselves. The roles we play are truthfully never about us. We each have specific assignments for a relatively short period. We owe it to the organization to train our replacement beginning our first day on the job and every day after that. The goal isn't to make ourselves irreplaceable but to help ensure long-term success by making things better for the people who will replace us along the journey.

I also believe people will continue to meet high expectations provided we give them important work to do, allow them to have a reasonable quality of life, and sincerely appreciate the sacrifices they and their families make daily.





# CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE GERALD R. MURRAY

**JULY 1, 2002 - JUNE 30, 2006**

Gerald Murray always knew that one day he may join the Air Force. His family has a long history of service going back to the Civil War, and jets fascinated him from an early age. In the late 1970s, when the economy fell flat and inflation was on the rise, Murray visited an Air Force recruiter with one simple request: make me a crew chief. The recruiter granted his wish, and in 1977, at age 21, he joined the Air Force.

Murray's first assignment was to MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, where leadership quickly recognized his maintenance skills and work ethic. Three years later, he was selected to be a maintenance aircraft instructor and transitioned to Shaw AFB, South Carolina, where his career continued on a successful glide path. He was one of the first crew chiefs to work the transition from the F-4 to the F-16 aircraft, was one of the first Airmen deployed to Kuwait in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and was selected to set up an A-10 squadron that broke records: meeting initial operational capability

faster than any squadron since World War II, deploying, then setting some of the highest sortie production rates in the Air Force.

Gen. John P. Jumper selected Murray to be the 14th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) in July 2002, and Murray immediately focused on efforts to evolve the expeditionary air force to meet the challenges of a changed world following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. He reenergized the NCO Retraining Program to balance manpower across the force, introduced the Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training (BEAST) Week at Basic Military Training (BMT), and introduced a completely revamped physical fitness test—a move that strengthened the culture of fitness in the Air Force. Murray retired in June 2006 after 29 years of service.

In November 2015, Murray sat down for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and tenure as the CMSAF. During the interview, he talked about his passion for aircraft maintenance and

the challenges of transiting to a newer-generation aircraft, his experience as one of the first on the ground in Saudi Arabia for Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, and his focus on pushing the Air Force expeditionary mind-set further. The following are edited experts from the conversation.

## **WELL CHIEF, I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU TAKING A BIT OF YOUR TIME TO SIT DOWN FOR THIS INTERVIEW.**

No, no, thank you. I think it is so important because, you know, it's hard to believe that 50 years ago now, coming up on it, that Chief Airey was our first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I think it's very important to document our history this way.

## **I AGREE. WHAT WE'D LIKE DO IS GO THROUGH YOUR CAREER AND JUST HAVE YOU OFFER YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON A FEW POINTS YOU EXPERIENCED. I KNOW YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE IN THE LATE 1970S...**

1977.

## **TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD, CORRECT?**

I was, yes.

## **THAT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR AN AIRMAN TO JOIN IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES, BUT I'M CURIOUS TO KNOW IF THE AIR FORCE WAS SOMETHING YOU HAD ALREADY CONSIDERED, AND PERHAPS IT JUST TOOK A WHILE TO TAKE THE LEAP. OR WAS IT A WHIMSICAL THOUGHT WHERE YOU SAID, "YOU KNOW, I'M GOING TO GO INTO THE AIR FORCE." HOW DID THAT PLAY OUT FOR YOU?**

Well, I have often told people that I joined the Air Force because I needed a job. There's truth to that. I was working in home construction, building homes at the time, and the economy fell flat in the mid '70s, and especially by '77 the inflation rate was running very high. I worked for my father-in-law and with my brother-in-law. I really enjoyed it and thought that was where my career would continue, but the economy didn't allow the start of another home. Unemployment was extremely high then, and so, I had to look at alternatives. I was married at the time, and so I looked at the service.

But now, back that up. There were preceding things that certainly led to thoughts of coming into the Air Force. I had two uncles that served in Vietnam—one drafted, one avoided the draft by volunteering to go to

the Air Force. I had uncles that served in Korea, World War II, and World War I. My great-great grandfather actually died as a POW [prisoner of war] in the Civil War.

Those things from my family's history, especially the two younger uncles, influenced me. And, oh by the way, I had to sign up for the draft during high school because Vietnam was going on when I was in school. So, those were some of the things and thoughts that pushed me to know that if I were to join the service, the Air Force would be where I wanted to go. And ultimately, I tell you, jets fascinated me. When I went to the recruiter I told him that if I come in the Air Force I want to work on fighter aircraft. I wanted to be a crew chief, and I got a guaranteed job with it. So, those were the things. But yes, it was a matter of, from an economic standpoint, the need for a job, but there was a history of influence toward service that led to my thoughts and actual decision to join the Air Force.

## **SO IT WAS PROBABLY QUITE AN HONOR THEN TO CARRY ON THAT FAMILY TRADITION.**

Yes.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED AND YOU WENT THROUGH BASIC TRAINING AND GOT YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT? WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF AIRMEN AND THE AIR FORCE CULTURE?**

Well, you know, a little of this comes in hindsight. I thought basic training was way too easy, you know. I grew up on the farm; I worked construction; I was really active in sports, and so, I was a little disappointed with basic training.

You roll that forward 25 years, those influences of basic training had a bearing on some of my decisions for the readiness of the force and things I put in place as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. To simplify, basic training was too easy; technical school was too short. What used to be, in my maintenance career field, six months to nine months of tech school was cut to two months. So, it was way too short. The training and preparation to go do the job I felt was not adequate. And again, things were changed over time as well.

OJT [on-the-job training] . . . a lot of OJT, and of course that affected readiness. When I got to my first base at MacDill there were 96 F-4s. I will tell you, it was daunting to step out there, but it was exhilarating; it was exciting. We got our first duty station choice in Florida; so, we were pumped, coming out of North Carolina and we get to go to Florida. It was a very exciting time.



But the mixture of a lack of standards and discipline were challenging. Hair was a big thing, you know, long hair, drugs. There were inconsistencies I found in that timeframe. It was a very interesting view of the force, because a lot of things in society that were going on in the late '70s were permeated in the Air Force as well.

What was interesting, though, was to start seeing that change. There were differences—both positive and negative. But it was an exciting timeframe out there on the flight line with a mission every day, with those jets flying, and being a part of that. That was exciting.

**YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE DOWN THERE, A CREW CHIEF AT MACDILL. AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF AIRPOWER AND HOW WE FIGHT AROUND THE WORLD, BUT AS A YOUNG AIRMAN SOMETIMES, YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT YOU ARE TO THAT FIGHT. DID THAT CLICK FOR YOU PRETTY QUICKLY?**

I think it did. I was fortunate to have, I think, one of the best trainers, a young senior airman, Jeff Pellow, that set a great example about what it was to be a crew chief—the pride of the crew chief. Even back then, you longed to have your name on the side of that aircraft. When I got my name on the side, the pride I had in that, the ownership of that aircraft, was there.

So, from a maintenance standpoint, that was one of the important things: the symbolism that leads to ownership and a feeling that you are part of the mission. The other thing, I was recognized for my performance and selected as an instructor, which started broadening my aperture, even though it was still all focused on aircraft maintenance. This was something that evolved over time—to really see the impact and importance of your position in the Air Force. That of course then has to broaden out well beyond maintenance.

I was one of the first crew chiefs identified for [training on] the F-16, and I actually recovered the first F-16 block 25 aircraft that landed at Shaw AFB. Then I went into wing training to set up all the scheduling, and I was exposed to the National Guard. McEntire Air National Guard Base in South Carolina was the first guard unit to ever receive brand new aircraft, and I had a part in that. It began my education and understanding a little bit about the Total Force.

The other thing that really, I think, highlighted that view was attending the NCO Leadership School, which was a precursor to Airman Leadership School. Being exposed to multiple people from various AFSCs [Air Force Specialty Code], not just maintenance, gave me a greater appreciation of what we did as Airman and NCOs [noncommissioned officer]

**WAS THERE SOMETHING THERE THAT MADE YOU DECIDE, “HEY, I WANT TO MAKE THIS A CAREER?” IN THE PAST, YOU’VE SAID YOU WANTED TO JUST DO FOUR YEARS, BUT YOU OBVIOUSLY ENDED UP STAYING LONGER THAN THAT. WAS IT THAT TIMEFRAME THAT DID IT FOR YOU?**

It was. I actually reenlisted before going to Shaw because that was one of the requirements, but there were a few factors in that decision. A senior master sergeant by the name of Hillary McGartland—I called him Mac, he went on to be a great chief in our Air Force—he was from Shaw, came to MacDill, and started talking to me about the potential we might have from a cadre standpoint. He was just so impressive—I mean, he was super sharp; and so, ultimately, he had some influence.

I received a bonus, so money was a factor. I made staff sergeant under four years of service. So, I had line number for staff. They offered me a bonus. I sewed on staff, and got one and one-half times my pay to go with that.

I think the other factor in that was my leadership. The leadership support I had then, and the recognition—there was recognition of being an instructor, recognition of being one of the best maintainers. Then to be selected to cadre and the influence of a senior NCO [SNCO] there, that showed me the value of what I could do.

Then the assignment at Shaw Air Force Base was only two hours from where I grew up in North Carolina, and Sherry and I were ready to start a family. There are a lot of things that go through one's mind; it's not just one piece. But it was interesting how those things gave us what we needed to decide to reenlist.

It still was not, at that point, “I'm going to reenlist and spend 20–30 years in the service.” It's an enlistment period, and ultimately, I've spoken—and have spoken for a long time—about a different way to get Airmen to look at their service. My desire is to do away with reenlistments for NCOs. I think our professionalism and where we are from a career standpoint lends to that. I'd like Airmen to take a little different view than I did. But again, those were factors that propelled me to a career.

## **INTERESTING. I THINK SOMETIMES REENLISTMENT AS YOU GET FURTHER ALONG IN YOUR CAREER BECOMES JUST A BOX YOU HAVE TO CHECK BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO KEEP SERVING.**

Exactly, exactly. You know you roll that forward, when General [John P.] Jumper selected me as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I'm thinking, "Wow this is great." Then a personnelist comes to me and says, "Chief, you don't have retainability." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, you need to reenlist because you don't have the retainability to go take another assignment." So, I go to my boss, General [William J.] Begert and I said, "Boss, can I stay in the service?" He said, "What are you talking about?" and I said, "I don't have retainability for the assignment. I've got to reenlist." (laughter)

So, we had fun with it, and actually I reenlisted in General Begert's office, and we publicized it there in the paper in PACAF [Pacific Air Forces]. But again, why does someone selected as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force have to sign another contract? Because at that time, you can't run me out of the service.

## **THAT'S QUITE A STORY. GOING BACK TO THE LEADERSHIP YOU HAD IN YOUR EARLY DAYS AS A MAINTAINER, DID THEY SHAPE YOUR LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE AND HOW YOU APPROACHED LEADERSHIP FOR THE REST OF YOUR CAREER?**

Absolutely. Like I said, having the great fortune to start out under a great trainer—Jeff went on to get his commission; he flew F-4s; retired as a lieutenant colonel—I had some great young leadership, and older leadership from that first base that had a good bearing on me. Then, of course, I talked about Chief McGartland at Shaw.

Along the way, too, I ran into some of the worst leadership I had ever experienced. In fact, a supervisor at Myrtle Beach [AFB, South Carolina], my first supervisor there, was probably the worst supervisor I have ever experienced in my life. So, I took lessons learned from that—this is the way you don't want to be. Then the other thing is trying to, you know, understand and establish my leadership: how to train, how to supervise. But I was greatly influenced by those that I served under—both positive and negative.

## **IS IT IMPORTANT FOR AIRMEN TO START THINKING ABOUT THAT EARLY IN THEIR CAREER?**

It is. In fact, I spoke to an Airman Leadership School class the day before yesterday, and there is a standard question I love to ask all young Airman. I start out with, "How many of you have served under a bad supervisor?" It's amazing to me—I say amazing, but it doesn't surprise

me anymore—that the vast majority, in such a short period of time, say they have. Then you peel that back. Why? Why is it—because we've put so much emphasis on leadership in the military—they believe they've experienced that? Have they really given thought as to why they would label someone a bad supervisor or leader, and then turn it on themselves? How do you think people speak about you? What would they say about you—good or bad? Why? Have you given thought?

So, I absolutely agree that the younger we can get people to think about their personal leadership and how they should be developing, the better. To get people to recognize, regardless if it's a career in the military, it's just life. As they're going to develop in life, how are they developing? If they can put more deliberate thought to that, especially if they're going to grow to be somebody who influences other people, is responsible for other people, and helps other people. I absolutely agree that we'd like them to think about that while they're younger.

## **YEAH, THAT'S A GOOD PERSPECTIVE. YOU TALKED ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE EARLY ON TRANSITIONING TO THE F-16. I'M CURIOUS TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE BIGGER CHALLENGES DURING THAT TRANSITION, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING THROUGH A SIMILAR TRANSITION NOW WITH THE F-35, AS YOU'RE VERY WELL AWARE.**

Absolutely. You know, I work where I do today with fifth-generation type of aircraft, which are just incredible leaps in technology above the fourth generation. It was the same thing going from F-4s to F-16s.

The fundamentals of aircraft maintenance and aircraft systems is mechanical, hydraulic, and electrical, and that was what we basically were trained on and educated in. There were some electronics there, but not near what we adapted to in the F-16. Now I've got diagnostic systems in the aircraft and fault reporting with it. It was a totally different way to go about troubleshooting, to understand the aircraft. Then to go through the growing pains of this new technology that's not completely perfected. To be able to go in and learn that, it was a huge jump for us from what we had started out in, basically, third-generation type aircraft. That's the same thing I see going on in the force today. How do we help Airmen faster adapt to using this new technology today?

What I also find interesting, though, is in many cases young people today are very attuned to the information technologies, software, computing skills, and things of that nature. It's interesting now to reverse it from our challenge. We were very adept to mechanical, electrical and hydraulics, and now we're having to go back and teach some of those fundamentals.



## **YES, IT CHANGES FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION I SUPPOSE. EARLY IN YOUR CAREER YOU WERE SENT TO INCIRLIK AIR BASE IN TURKEY. I'VE BEEN THERE TWICE; IT'S A GREAT ASSIGNMENT. I KNOW AT THE TIME, THOUGH, IT WASN'T ON THE TOP OF YOUR LIST OF PLACES TO GO.**

No, in fact, it was a complete surprise, no-notice assignment, to the point where I actually learned about the assignment by calling the [Air Force Personnel Center]. It took three weeks to get through the rotary dial system, the old dial telephones, just to have a senior master sergeant functional manager tell me on the phone that I had an assignment to Turkey. That was quite shocking to us.

We loved where we were at, the assignment at Shaw, what I was doing, and the job. I mean, things couldn't have been better. And then, "We're going where? Where is this?" We had to go get a map and find out where Adana, Turkey, was.

It was shocking to my wife, you know, the first time we had ever been out of the country, experienced anything like this, but it turned out to be one of the greatest things that ever happened to us. It opened our aperture to a world out there that we had never known growing up in the farmland in a small community in North Carolina. The mission I was exposed to—I was a crew chief on a Victor Alert pad, which was with nuclear weapons. Remember this was the Cold War era, so we actually kept aircraft cocked live with live nuclear ammunitions on them; so, an incredible mission.

And then the experiences of travel, interacting with the Turkish people and different people of all walks of life. The community ... you developed a sense of family, because you're now thrust together overseas in a way, and you become much closer with your fellow Airmen and families. It really was a huge bearing on us. It gave us a sense that being part of the Air Force is also being part of a larger extended family. So, it was a great, positive influence for us.

## **WHAT DID IT TEACH YOU ABOUT, YOU KNOW, GOING PLACES YOU DIDN'T NECESSARILY WANT TO GO?**

I think I got my choice of where I wanted to be assigned two times in the Air Force, and that was when I walked into the recruiter and told him I wanted to be a crew chief on fighter aircraft and at tech school when I got selected to go to MacDill, Florida. The rest of the time it was like, "I want to go here," and "No, you're going to go there."

It put in my head what I've always used, which is remember this is an all-volunteer force. You volunteered to go to Korea; you volunteered to go to Turkey; you volunteered to go to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. Whatever it is, you already volunteered for it when you came in and signed there.

The other thing it gave me, is to look at those things not as I didn't volunteer for it, or as something I didn't want to do, but ultimately, as an opportunity. Some of the greatest opportunities I had in the service are the things I never thought I actually would be assigned to do—either by job and position or my assignment.

## **THINGS YOU DON'T NECESSARILY WANT, THEN TURN OUT TO BE..**

Then turn out to be the best, yes.

## **THAT'S GREAT. I WANTED TO ASK YOU A QUESTION ABOUT THE UNIFORM, BECAUSE I BELIEVE YOU WERE A MASTER SERGEANT WHEN WE MOVED THE MASTER SERGEANT STRIPE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE INSIGNIA TO THE TOP, IS THAT RIGHT?<sup>1</sup>**

Actually I was a senior [master sergeant], and when it occurred I had actually sewn on chief. I was a senior master sergeant at McChord AFB, Washington, when Chief [CMSAF #10 Gary] Pfingston and General [Merrill] McPeak introduced the idea of the stripe, but it took time to get the stripes made and get them out. The sew-on date for that was 1 January 1995. Well, I sewed on chief on 1 November 1994; so actually, I take a little bit of pride that probably in history, I have worn more stripes as a chief than any chief ever will in the Air Force. I actually wore five different insignias as a chief master sergeant.<sup>2</sup>

But, to what we thought about that, I tell you we looked at that as very positive. Throughout my career, it was always a big deal to become the senior NCO. From the time I was an airman basic, we emphasized our [AFI 36-2618] Enlisted Force Structure. The Enlisted Force Structure that was there in 1977 was put in place around 1972, but if you go back to senior and chief master sergeant, those two grades occurred in 1959. So, throughout history, we had the three tiers: your junior enlisted, your junior mid-tier NCO, and your senior NCOs—that top three. So, it was a big deal to become a master sergeant in the top three. I can tell that from the get go, the decision to take that stripe off and move it to the top was looked at as overwhelmingly very positive.

For me though, I said, "Well, it costs me money." I had to buy those silver threaded stripes to go on my mess dress. I wore those on my mess dress for two months and then had to take them off, but we didn't go back to the silver thread. We actually went to the regular stripes we have today.<sup>3</sup> But, yes, I was a chief with two stripes above and actually became a chief with the three stripes above there in that transition.

**YOU MENTIONED MASTER SERGEANT HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE TOP THREE IN A THREE-TIER STRUCTURE, BUT WAS THERE A POINT MAYBE THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER WHERE YOU STARTED TO SEE MASTER SERGEANTS TAKING ON MORE OF A SENIOR NCO LEADERSHIP ROLE, OR WAS IT KIND OF ALWAYS THAT WAY?**

I think for the most part it was like that. I didn't realize it when I first came in, but I saw a lot of junior NCOs—staff sergeants, tech sergeants—with some pretty key leadership roles, not knowing that after Vietnam they had drawn down the force in a way that stripped a lot of that mid-tier and master sergeants out. That changed after Desert Shield/Desert Storm when we actually took so many senior airmen to tech sergeants out that we had an overage of master sergeants.

But for the most part, in my career, we did recognize master sergeants as SNCOs. Of course by SNCOs, the master sergeants are the highest population. We saw that, primarily, our flight chiefs were master sergeants; so, we looked at that and expected that.

When I was at Myrtle Beach as a master sergeant production superintendent, my call sign on the radio was “Boss.” The master sergeant was the Boss, and I saw that throughout different career fields. That was always the crossover point, when the responsibility given there goes up. It still holds, and I think that it's right where it is.

**INTERESTING, THANK YOU. YOU DEPLOYED TO SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE BUILD UP FOR DESERT SHIELD, AND YOU WERE THERE AS DESERT STORM KICKED OFF, WHICH HAS TO BE A FASCINATING PART OF HISTORY TO WITNESS. YOU WERE THERE AT THAT MOMENT, WHICH WAS A HUGE TURNING POINT FOR OUR AIR FORCE AND FOR THE MILITARY.**

Right.

**WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE THERE AT THAT TIME?**

You know, right at first, it was a little scary there. We had spent my entire career at that point—13 years in the Air Force—in the Cold War, in garrison. A lot of deployments were small, short deployments that we would use for exercises to make sure we kept the force ready. I used to say, jokingly, that in the first 13 years of my Air Force career they sent me TDY [temporary duty] all the time, but my longest TDY was three weeks. And they sent me from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to Honolulu, Hawaii.

Desert Shield/Desert Storm changed all of that. It was about two weeks' notice as we watched everything build up there after Iraq invaded

Kuwait, and President (George H. W.) Bush made the decision and built the coalition that we were going to go do that.<sup>4</sup>

So, I was on the first aircraft that landed there at the base we were going into. We, at the worker level, had little idea where we were at or what was going on. Was Iraq going to come on into Saudi Arabia? Was Saddam Hussein going to drive the Iraqi force into the kingdom? We didn't know that. We had little protection around us; so, it was a little daunting with a lot of apprehension there. But once that did not occur, we built up our forces. You know, I have to go back. Where I came from, an A-10 base at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, we could not have been any better prepared. I mean, we had peaked in preparation through ORIs [operational readiness inspection], OREs [operational readiness exercise], other types of training on how to mobilize, how to employ our forces. Then to be able to look at that awesome power—we had the ability to take and rapidly build up forces, bed down forces in preparation. It gave us a great deal of confidence that we were ready.

I believe, too, there was a mindset among us from the lessons of Vietnam. The leadership of our nation from the president, from the commander in chief down, had no doubt whatsoever that we were going to be victorious. We were going to take and execute a mission, and it showed in every sense. So, it was exciting and exhilarating. There was that sense of mission accomplishment that we took forward. And as we know, Desert Shield/Desert Storm was an incredible turning point in history. I think it was, in many ways, for the culture of our Air Force and who we are and what we do, and certainly our nation as well.

**WAS THERE ANY HUNCH THEN THAT 25 YEARS LATER WE WERE STILL GOING TO BE IN THE REGION?**

No. I think looking back, it really is amazing to think about it. Everything we were doing was to execute a mission to be victorious. I would tell you, I think we questioned why our leadership pulled up and stopped. But then, when the president explained to us that the mission was to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, it was mission accomplished. So, we actually came home feeling good about that. We had accomplished that mission.

Now, roll that forward. I returned back again in 1995, and then I returned back again in 1997 under Operations Southern Watch and Northern Watch because Saddam Hussein didn't learn his lesson—and this was after a massive drawdown of the force as well as a reorganization. We ended up having to deploy back into Kuwait, and we kept an established presence of aircraft and other forces there and in the Middle East through that time. That's what drove us into having to go back again, because Hussein was threatening war in the region.

By then I was at Moody Air Force Base, [Georgia]; we were a lead air expeditionary force wing. We got the call, and with a 20-hour notice











deployed the wing and established it. Of course, our ability to project power in such a rapid way was, I believe, the deterrent that kept Hussein from [invading] again.

But did we see this coming? No. Did we think we were going to be in a continuous war posture, if you will, for this number of years, since 1990? I don't think anybody saw it coming.

## **YOU WERE THERE AT THE BEGINNING, AND OF COURSE YOU'RE STILL INVOLVED WITH THE AIR FORCE AND THE MILITARY; SO, I'M SURE IT'S A FASCINATING PERSPECTIVE LOOKING BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME.**

It is.

## **WHEN YOU WENT OUT THERE THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE A SENIOR NCO, UP CLOSE LEADING AIRMEN. WHAT INSPIRED YOU ABOUT THE AIRMEN YOU LED AT THAT TIME ON THE GROUND IN THE EARLY 1990S?**

I think, and again, I look at it from the perspective of the unit I was in and our readiness, we exercised and trained, and trained and trained; that was one of the big things about the Cold War that drove us. Although we were somewhat of an in-garrison force, we did deploy and exercise. I think it was a pinnacle of time for us in the force. After the drawdown of Vietnam, then over the course of the next decade an emphasis on rebuilding our military that came from the senior leadership of our nation. Of course, through the Reagan administration there was a commitment to the military—the funding we had, the new equipment we had. We were flying new F-16s and F-15s, and we had new technologies that were going into bear with us. We had robust education and training on the force. So, when we actually then had to commit it to a mission, the focus of the mission was just incredible.

The teamwork—I was amazed. My main base there in Saudi Arabia was King Fahd International Airport; that's where we bedded down all the A-10s, special forces, our Combat Talon aircraft, and then a large part of the Army. From that main operating base, I was sent on Christmas Eve to King Khalid Military City, which is a northern Saudi Arabia base about 35 miles from the Iraqi border. It became the most-northern forward operating location. And again, from an A-10 perspective, that's exactly how we had designed the A-10: to be close into the battlefield, turn back, rearm, refuel, and turn back to it.

We took people, if I remember correctly, from about 13 different bases, organizations, and units across the Air Force and brought them together there—people that had never worked together before. We're not talking about one organization, one wing, squadron, or group. We cobbled this thing together from people that came from all of these, from European bases and different stateside bases and all different AFSCs. We put them together, and, again, our training was so well that we were able to establish that into probably one of the greatest units I've ever seen. So, the unity, the teamwork, and all of that came because we were trained in our jobs and we knew how to do it. We put together an organization and executed like I had never experienced before. That was incredibly exciting.

My boss—my immediate officer in charge—was a reserve officer. He actually wrote my Bronze Star. I had not worked for a reserve officer before, and he came in and he was leading us in maintenance. My three expeditors came from different bases; it was really fascinating to be able to see that. But again, a testament to the consistency we saw across our Air Force in the preparation of readiness and then the mindset that our Airmen had about mission accomplishment.

## **THAT'S INTERESTING. I KNOW WHEN YOU CAME BACK YOU WENT BACK TO YOUR BASE AND YOU DEPLOYED AGAIN TO SAUDI ARABIA, AND THEN YOU DEPLOYED AGAIN, I THINK, TO KUWAIT...**

To Kuwait and then Bahrain, yes.

## **AND THIS ALL HAPPENED BEFORE 9/11; SO, I THINK, FROM AN AIRMAN WHO SERVES TODAY, WE TEND TO THINK OF 9/11 AS BEING A TURNING POINT WHERE NOW WE'RE BEING DEPLOYED ALL THE TIME. AND IN REALITY, YOU KNOW, WE DID THAT QUITE A BIT BEFORE THEN.**

That's right, yes.

## **WHAT WAS THE MINDSET OF AIRMEN WHO SERVED DURING THE 1990S AND WERE DEPLOYING REGULARLY?**

I think after Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the realization and fact that the Middle East was going to be an area that was going to be unstable, the focus was that we've got to be an expeditionary force.

You have to remember, too, we drew the force down as was preceded in history after many major conflicts. Going into Desert Shield/Desert Storm, we had nearly 600,000 active duty Airmen. We were close to probably a million strong if you took all the Total Force. From an active duty Airman's standpoint, we drew that 600,000 down to nearly half that. The Guard and Reserve weren't drawn down quite as much, but all drew down.<sup>5</sup>

And now we're half our size, yet our deployments are picking up. We're having to deploy large numbers of Airmen and bed them down; so, we're finding an imbalance. How do we set a tempo that gives us predictability and readiness? How can wings carry out our training objectives we need to have from a readiness standpoint?

A lot of that time period was trying to perfect the AEF or the Air Expeditionary Force structure, pre-identifying units and giving them a posture of when they would go. That's how my deployment to Bahrain came from Moody Air Force Base. The 347th [Rescue] Wing, along with 4th [Fighter] Wing out of Seymour Johnson [AFB, North Carolina], the Gunslingers [366th Fighter Wing] out of Mountain Home [AFB], Idaho, and the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley Air Force Base, [Virginia,] were the four lead AEF wings for the fighter forces. Then your mobility forces organized in a little bit different way.

We started learning how to organize, train, and equip and be ready to put those together. That occurred during the time between 1990 and 2001. How do we set the right tempo and the right balance? How do we organize, train, and equip and be able to execute a mission, because the requirements did not go away? If anything, they were increasing over that period of time, and we were learning along the way to be able to adapt through that.

## **YOU MENTIONED THE DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS INCREASING, AND WITH THAT, SO DO THE SACRIFICES WHEN IT COMES TO TIME WITH FAMILY.**

Absolutely.

## **HOW DID THE AIRMEN RESPOND WHEN IT CAME TO THEIR MOTIVATION AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO SERVE?**

I think for the most part, for the Airmen that were continuing to serve, when they looked at those deployment time periods, they had a focus on mission that gave them a great sense of pride, accomplishment, and motivation. The flip side of that, as you talked about, is the sacrifice of the family left behind.

Then some of the imbalances of deployment after deployment started taking their toll. You take what was going on in American society—

it was a great time in our nation. Unemployment was very low; the economy was steaming very well. So, what we saw in the late '90s—I think 1999—is that we missed our recruiting goals for the first time in our history, and our retention was at the lowest we had had. So, now we are fighting the fact that not only are we having trouble retaining Airmen, we're having trouble even recruiting Airmen.

Recruiters were having to use waivers to go out and get the force. We had a big initiative there to change and push up reenlistment bonuses. We also looked at, what do we have to do to balance things with the family? And again, that AEF process was all part of that, to try to give our Airmen more predictability so we would not have as many decide the sacrifices of service were too great.

We started putting a lot of emphasis then on family: family care, family readiness, the balance in our people's lives. Because, as the facts presented themselves, we weren't keeping the human resources that we needed, and we were having problems being able to bring them in.

## **YOU BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IN 2002, RIGHT AFTER 9/11—RIGHT AS OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM BEGAN AND RIGHT BEFORE OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. THAT IS WHEN WE SAW THE TRANSITION FROM THE 1990S, WHERE WE WERE BUILDING UP THIS EXPEDITIONARY CONSTRUCT TO A FULL BORE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. WHAT WERE SOME OF THE PRIMARY CHALLENGES YOU SAW WHEN YOU TOOK THE SEAT?**

I think for me, and from the very beginning of that timeframe, there was a question about the readiness of our force and the readiness of our enlisted force. Were they as ready as they needed to be?

One of the things that became apparent very fast, as we were going into Iraq and Afghanistan, is that Airmen had not experienced the closeness into the battlefield area—into where the conflict was. Conflict was totally different in this than at any time we had ever experienced, because it was not major force in a state-on-state. We're in an area of strife, and many of our Airmen are starting to be outside the wire, exposed to things that I had never been exposed to. Desert Shield/Desert Storm was nothing like deploying into Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

So, immediately it became, "Are we preparing our Airmen the way we should be?" That took me all the way back to my experience when I came in the Air Force at basic training. Basic training had basically changed very little from 1977 to 2002. There were some tweaks—Chief [CMSAF #12 Eric W.] Benken introduced Warrior Week. There was a determination



that Airmen would become an Airman after the completion of Warrior Week, but it was still a six-week course. I touched an M16 two days in my entire six weeks of basic training. Airmen were still touching an M16 [rifle] two days in basic training and didn't touch another one for a year, perhaps until they did their qualification training. So, my thought was that basic training needed to change.

One of the immediate changes we did is begin what I termed the BEAST: Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training. Inside of that six-and-a-half weeks, we deployed them into a deployed location and gave them threats of infiltration, mortar attacks, and things of that nature to a little bit more expose them to what an encampment would be at a base like Bagram [AB, Afghanistan], or other locations.

The other was to introduce them to rifles—we were able to bring in training rifles. I wanted to put real rifles in there, and I was told, “No, we can't do that, we'd have to arm the Tis [training instructors].” And I said, “God no, we don't want to do that. They'll shoot somebody.” So, we gave them training rifles to use to give them more experiences along the way.

Of course, as we know today, I was able to gain, during my time, the funding to expand basic training to eight-and-a-half weeks versus the six weeks that we had. But, again, it was the focus on readiness. Are we focusing training correctly? For the first time, we had the in-lieu-of positions to support the Army. The Army was having a hard time being able to have the forces they needed; so, we started deploying convoy operations out of our transportation units. Our units were not set up as convoy operations; we had to learn that. We had to adapt to the type of training. We had to start sending Airmen to Army units to gain training. So, now we're blending together a force different than we had in the past. A lot of that was on the fly. That became a great part of the focus I put on the enlisted force, making sure we looked at how we measured the readiness, and prepared Airmen for a lot of duties and tasks they had not been exposed to before.

## **WHAT DID YOU NOTICE ABOUT HOW THE AIRMEN RESPONDED TO THOSE CHANGES?**

I tell you, the resiliency of our Airmen, the adaptability, we use that phrase, “Flexibility is the key to airpower.” I was amazed at just how flexible, how adaptive our Airmen were.

The convoy operations, transportation—what I saw when General Jumper and I visited units in Iraq and Afghanistan is that our Airmen had taken the Army system and how they approached convoy operations and adapted it through intelligence, communication, and all that they had as Airmen. They applied their Airmen skills, Airmen mindset to it, and we had lower casualty rates and better convoy operations set up in the Air Force. Even the Army came to recognize that the Air Force was adapting

and making changes in convoy operations and were better than they were, and it had been one of their primary skills.

We were not organized, trained, and equipped that way; yet, we adapted. Then our transporters came back, and we took the most-recent experienced Airmen and put them with a cadre of instructors out at Camp Bullis in [San Antonio,] Texas. We were actually then taking real lessons learned right in the operation area and bringing that back to train the next group that was going to go over. It just amazed me again to see the adaptability of our Airmen, the intelligence and the ingenuity they had to be able to do that.

## **THE OTHER BIG CHANGES THAT CAME WITH THE PUSH TO BE MORE EXPEDITIONARY AND MORE READY FOR THE FIGHT WAS THE FITNESS PROGRAM. YOU SAW UP CLOSE THE TRANSITION TO WHAT WE HAVE TODAY. WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO MAKE THAT MOVE FROM THE BIKE TEST?**

Well, you know, I give that to General Jumper. It was the first task I was given by the boss—actually, before I even arrived in Washington. I had dinner with him one evening, and he turned to me and said, “Chief, the first thing I want you to do . . . ,” and of course now I've got the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), my new boss, telling me my first task. And he says, “I want you to work with me real close to help bring in a new fitness program in the Air Force.” And I'm like, “Really?” (laughter)

The vision he had for it, and just how committed he was, as we were preparing for Iraq and Afghanistan, to physical fitness as part of our total health—the physical, mental, spiritual well-being. He recognized the force was not as fit as he wanted it to be.

So, ultimately throughout all of the other things in my first year, I spent time working with primarily an officer from personnel and from medical, and we hammered out the new physical fitness program that we put in place.

The other thing I looked at was understanding what it was to change. I always looked at General Jumper as being one of the greatest change agents, of understanding that part of a change is not just telling people that you're going to go do this. Part of change is recognizing how you get them to accept it, and knowing that it's a cultural change. Culture change takes a period of time. Experts would tell you that a commitment to a major change in culture in an organization takes 7–10 years. We knew we weren't going to be in the job 7–10 years; so, how did we put in place something that those behind us would continue to follow?

We also knew from the very beginning that no matter how much thought and preparation we put into it, we probably weren't going to get it

exactly right. Especially since we were using some different approaches to measurement—again, how do you measure physical fitness? With all of us with different shapes and sizes of bodies, and males and females, how do you bring those standards about? We settled on the fact that there would be running involved, there would be push-ups and the sit-ups that were going to be the strength pieces of that—sit-ups for the core, push-ups for the muscular part of it.

Then there was the waist measurement. A little bit of controversy there, but we used good science. We went out to colleges and universities, doctors in medicine and physiology. We brought all of these things in to help us. It was not just something that was a whim or “Yeah, I think I like that.” We used science as part of it as well.

But I tell you, I think it was one of the greatest things we ever did. I go back to my time in the Air Force, the physical fitness aspect was go run a mile and a half once a year, and a lot of times that was pencil whipped, especially in my field. You get out there; if you can walk it, okay, you completed it type thing. This actually brought about a very serious focus on fitness.

The funding that we put in fitness centers—I had the opportunity to cut ribbons on brand new fitness centers across the Air Force. The uniform, I mean, when I deployed into Kuwait and Bahrain, we looked like a rainbow outfit. If we went out for physical fitness, we had every color shorts and pants. Then I go over and I look at my Army and Marine brethren, and they are out there in their fitness uniforms in formation—a team effort, together. So, I went into the Boss and said, “Boss, we need a fitness uniform to go with this as well,” and he agreed. He funded that right out of his pocket. We didn’t even POM [Program Objective Memorandum] it; we just did it.<sup>6</sup> That was the other thing there—we were about changing the mind-set, changing the culture of our Airmen, and I would tell you today we are much better for it.

**YEAH, AND YOU MENTIONED THE CULTURE CHANGE AND THE TIME IT TAKES. THE FITNESS CENTERS YOU LOOK AT TODAY AND JUST THE WAY EVERYONE APPROACHES FITNESS—EVERY MORNING THE FITNESS CENTER IS FULL, EVERY EVENING IT’S FULL. YOU SEE TEAMS RUNNING AROUND BASE, AND I THINK COMBINE THAT WITH THE APPROACH IN BASIC TRAINING AND THE EXPEDITIONARY MIND-SET. WOULD YOU SAY AIRMEN ARE BETTER TODAY?**

I would tell you that Airmen today are better trained, better equipped—and I mean equipped from the standpoint that they’ve got the tools. Are they flying the oldest airplanes in the history of our Air Force? Yes, they are. I mean the fact they we’re still flying B-52s and KC-135s and F-16s that are 25–30 years old ...

I think though, from an Airman’s perspective today, the training and education is by far the highest we have ever seen in the force. Our education, our training, the readiness of the Force, and the experiences through deployments—the Airmen today, and especially the NCOs and our commissioned officers, if they are over three to four years in service, they have more deployment time, on average, than any of the force that went before them.

I don’t take anything away from the Airmen of the past, in any way. Those that preceded us back in the Army Air Corps, that helped birth us, at any given time in our nation, the commitment of the American spirit and our determination and will has been there. But I am so impressed with the Airmen today. How they have maintained where they are. A lot of that comes with the combination of education, knowledge, experience, and training they have.

**CONSIDERING EVERYTHING THAT YOU DID DURING YOUR TENURE AND THE CHANGES THAT WE’VE MENTIONED, WHAT MADE YOU PROUDEST OF THE AIRMEN THAT SERVED UNDER YOU?**

The team effort. When I was Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I told my immediate staff, “Look, when it comes to us, it’s not about me. It’s not about me as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force; it’s about us as the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.”

When I led the unit at Moody Air Force Base, taking lessons learned from the past of the great unit at Myrtle Beach in the A-10 community...to go back and reset, to take those lessons learned ... of course in maintenance, it’s all about processes, measurements, and metrics, using lagging and leading indicators, but the other part of that was establishing within the unit the team effort that it takes—and then a balance of family.

Of course, I take the lead from my wife. Sherry and I have been married the entire time. We were married before I came in the Air Force. We’re still married, and she is one of my great motivators. But to recognize and see the sacrifices that she had to make and that we made as a family through my deployments, gave me that sense that the family has to be a part of the unit as well. That’s the thing I try to impress upon people today. You can’t separate it.

Then remember, too, that we have a mission. You know, you gotta get ’er done. There is an objective out here that we’ve got to make, and that’s where the focus is: delivering the results. What we are here to do is to deliver airpower. So, those are the things I learned early and I tried to work on throughout my career.



**THAT'S INTERESTING. YOU MENTIONED YOUR TIME AT MOODY, AND I ACTUALLY FOUND THAT PRETTY INTERESTING LOOKING BACK OVER YOUR CAREER. ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS IS YOU HEADING TO MOODY AND BASICALLY BUILDING UP A UNIT AND THEN LEADING IT TO BREAK A TON OF RECORDS. WHAT WAS THE SECRET TO YOUR SUCCESS THERE?**

Well, that's that lessons learned. Myrtle Beach, you know, the leadership that I had at Myrtle Beach, the organization, everything put together. One of the great disappointments is that we closed Myrtle Beach. We drew the force down, and we set so many imbalances in the force. Stripping a force, cutting an active-duty force in half and doing that over the course of about a three-year period of time—we cut tremendous capabilities. We just riddled organizations in the force with the imbalances.

When I went into Moody, the first manpower document they gave me to set up the new unit, I was going to be 300-percent manned in master sergeants. I said, "I can't have that many." So, I went to work even before I got there, knowing I was going to be short five levels and seven levels except for the masters. No way I was going to take master sergeants and make them have to carry toolboxes. That was not what the master sergeants wanted to do. They wanted to be in charge of the flight, and yet now, look, I got to put you crewing an airplane. You've got the skills, you've developed that out there, that's what you're going to have to do, but, I was able to make those adjustments.

The other thing was that we were handed a big bill. As we moved to stand up that unit, they were already taking A-10s back into Kuwait. We knew we were going to be tasked to deploy immediately after IOC [initial operating capability]. So, we were the fastest since World War II. We declared initial operation capability in 90 days and then deployed the unit for 90 days after that. Then to bring it back after a deployment—that was all 24 aircraft by the way. We took every one of our aircraft, primarily the entire squadron. All of these people PCSed [permanent change of station] in, bedded down, established homes. You can imagine they have to get their families settled, get their kids in school, get settled down. Ninety days later we picked up and we deployed. Then it was to come home from that, and now let's put this unit together. Now, what we are going to do is build the greatest unit.

Of course my mind-set, and some will tell you I was a tough chief, but my mind-set is that any unit that I am going to be in, if it's not the best, then we're going to make it the best. And now I am the chief, and I had officers that supported that. We're going to be the best A-10 unit in the entire Air Force. We set an expectation that we are going to go do that, and we achieved the highest mission-capable rate of all the A-10s in the Air Force.

**THAT'S COOL. GOOD STORY. SO, JUST ONE FINAL QUESTION HERE FOR YOU, CHIEF. ONE OF THE THINGS WE'VE BEEN ASKING THE CHIEFS IS, WHEN YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THE AIR FORCE TODAY, THE AIRMEN WHO ARE SERVING, AND YOU HAD TO START A SENTENCE WITH "I BELIEVE"—WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe our Airmen today are the best Airmen in the world. I believe our Airmen today have the best knowledge, training, and experience our Air Force has ever seen. I believe our Airmen will continue in every way they can to ensure our Air Force is, and will be forever, the greatest Air Force in the world.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **RODNEY J. MCKINLEY**

**JUNE 30, 2006 - JUNE 30, 2009**

Rodney McKinley joined the Air Force twice. He enlisted with his high school buddies in 1974 and served as a medic for a little over three years before choosing to separate and pursue outside opportunities and an education. Four and a half years later, in 1982, he realized he missed the Air Force and enlisted again, this time as a crew chief.

Born and raised in southwestern Ohio, McKinley knew when he came in the second time that he would be committed. He put his best foot forward and vowed to be the best Airman he could be. His positive attitude led to a successful stint as a crew chief. Then, following the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991, McKinley became a first sergeant. He wore the diamond for the next 10 years, calling it the best job he had in his Air Force career.

In June 2006 Gen. Michael Mosely selected McKinley to be the 15th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). During his tenure, the

Air Force was involved in two wars. He faced a significant drawdown of nearly 40,000 Airmen, improved the physical training (PT) program, and strengthened the focus on our heritage—implementing the Walk of Heroes at basic military training (BMT), establishing the Airman's Creed, and dedicating the Air Force Memorial. McKinley retired from active duty in June 2009.

In November 2015 McKinley sat down in his home for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and tenure as the CMSAF. During the interview, he talked about his two enlistments and the challenges he faced outside the service. He also shared the background behind the Airman's Creed and reflected on the day both the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force were relieved of duty following nuclear mishaps in 2008. The following are edited experts from the conversation.

## **ALRIGHT CHIEF, THANK YOU FOR SITTING DOWN WITH US THIS MORNING. CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE FIRST TIME YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE IN 1974? WHAT LED YOU TOWARD THE AIR FORCE?**

I grew up in southwestern Ohio, in a small town—farmland country. My sixth-grade class visited the museum in Dayton, Ohio, Wright-Patterson AFB. It was a great experience going to visit that museum, and it kind of gave several of us an introduction to the Air Force; we were just enamored with it. After high school, I didn't have the funds to go to college. I played football, but I wasn't getting college scholarships or anything; so, me and a couple buddies decided to look into the Air Force.

In November of 1973, we went and visited the recruiter in Batavia, Ohio, and we decided to sign up on the Buddy Plan. Three of us signed up for the Delayed Enlistment Program, and we went to basic training on 1 July, '74, I think it was.

We finished basic training together. One went off to California to learn Vietnamese, because we were still in the drawdown of the Vietnam War. One went off to Offutt AFB, Nebraska, and I went to Seymour Johnson AFB, in North Carolina. So, that was the end of our Buddy Plan right there.

## **YOU NEVER CROSSED PATHS AGAIN?**

Never crossed paths again in the Air Force, and they both got out after four years. I was a medic. I started off in obstetrics. I worked there for nine months and then went to work in the emergency room. I absolutely loved it. I loved being a medic, there were a lot of great experiences, and I learned to work under pressure.

As a matter of fact, later on in life, as a first sergeant and command chief, people would ask, "Well, Chief, how do you stay calm under pressure?" And I would say, "Well, you know, I worked in the emergency room, and we had life-and-death situations where people die on a table." A performance report or a decoration being late is not exactly life or death. So, having been through that, as a medic, it helped me keep things in perspective. I was able to slow down, stay calm, and not get too excited over what would really stress some other people out.

## **AFTER YOUR FIRST ENLISTMENT YOU DECIDED THAT WAS IT, AND SEPARATED. WHAT LED YOU IN THAT DIRECTION?**

In 1977 we were drawing down big time after the Vietnam War, and they were offering early outs. Even though I loved my job, my next-door neighbor was opening a brand new restaurant right outside the gate at Seymour Johnson. He said, "Hey, if you get out, you can be my assistant manager." And I thought, "Wow, that is cool. I can be an assistant manager. I can grow my hair; I can grow a beard." So, I said yes. I jumped at the chance to get out, and two weeks later, I was gone. I sold my leave, and I was out.

There was nobody telling me, "Hey, you need to make sure you are making the right decision before you get out." I was married, and I just got out. When I was working at the restaurant, I was working the night shift, six days a week. I was putting in 65 hours a week, and I didn't have any benefits—no medical, no dental, nothing.

I didn't have the rights to play on the golf course anymore, or go to the gym; so, it was vastly different. I thought, "Well, I'm out, and I've got to deal with it." So, I did it for a while, then moved to Texas and managed Mr. Gatti's Pizza. I did that for a couple years, then I decided to move back to Ohio and go back to school. I ended up going back to work—I took my old APRs [Airman Performance Report] to the local hospital, and I showed them my training, and they hired me to run the emergency room at nights.

## **AT WHAT POINT DID YOU DECIDE TO ENLIST AGAIN?**

Well, I was working in the emergency room for a couple of years. I had reconstructive knee surgery, and then I got really sick. I was going to college full time and working nights. I came down with meningitis, and I was in the hospital for a while. After that I said, "You know, I'm not going to kill myself anymore. I want to go back in the Air Force. I miss the Air Force."

## **WAS IT FAIRLY EASY TO GET BACK IN?**

I went and saw a recruiter, and the recruiter said, "Yes, man, we'd love to have you back in." The plan was for me to come back in as a medic, but just before I was due to come back in, the recruiter told me, "There are no medical jobs available. The prior-service jobs are really dwindling. If you want to come back in, you need to do weapons or crew chief, but don't worry about it, you can cross-train into medical once you are in."

We had already made plans to come back in; so, I decided to be a crew chief. I went to Sheppard [AFB, Texas], to learn to be a crew chief in April of 1982, and it was like I was never out. I mean, I never really missed anything; I still was up to standards. The only thing I had a problem with is now senior NCOs were wearing shoulder boards. I came back as a senior airman, and I was walking around saluting senior NCOs. I wasn't used to shoulder boards.



## **WAS IT FRUSTRATING FOR YOU TO HAVE TO GO THE CREW CHIEF ROUTE? YOU WERE CLEARLY PASSIONATE ABOUT THE MEDICAL FIELD AND HAD WORKED THERE BOTH IN THE AIR FORCE AND OUT.**

No, it's like when the Air Force taps you on the shoulder and says they need you to go do something else. I never got upset. I thought, "Okay, well, this is a new direction."

When Gen. Moseley interviewed me for Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, he only asked one question. He said, "Chief, what do you think?" I sat back and thought, "What kind of a question is that?" I thought for a second and I said, "Well, sir, first off, I've got to tell you that my goal has never been to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. My goals in the Air Force have always been very simple: whatever job the Air Force gives me, I'm going to do the very best I can."

"I'm always going to treat people with dignity and respect, and I'm going to do the other things I should be doing as an Airman—that's my professional military education, my dress and appearance, my physical fitness—the things I should be doing in my squadron and on my base and in my local community. I've always trusted that if I do those things, my leadership would take care of me."

And he said, "Well, Chief, that's a damn good answer; I didn't want to be Chief of Staff either."

That's really been my basic philosophy. Whatever job the Air Force gives you, do your best. If you're asked to go out and dig a ditch, dig that ditch the best you can so that no one has to come back and do it over. If you're working in the dining facility and you're cooking an omelet, take pride and make sure you make that omelet the best you can. Every job is important. Every AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] is important. That was just my simple philosophy. I never got upset at the Air Force because they asked me to go do something else.

## **WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT CREW CHIEF DUTY—WAS IT WHAT YOU EXPECTED?**

When I came back in, I decided I was going to be the best crew chief I could be. We got stationed at Myrtle Beach [AFB, South Carolina], and I began working on A-10s. I learned a lot. I was dedicated, so I'd take the books home, and I'd study everything about the A-10. I progressed, and they put me in quality assurance. I became NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge] of FCF weight and balance—that's functional check flights, and weight and balance.

I did very well there. I made staff first time out, and tech second time out. Then I got an assignment to [Clark AB] the Philippines. We had F-4s in the Philippines, and so, I was a crew chief on the flight line, as a new technical sergeant. Then, out of the blue, the chief in quality assurance pulled me off the flight line and said, "We want your experience here in quality assurance." So, I went back to quality assurance and back to being the NCOIC of functional check flight and weight and balance. I also ended up being the chief inspector.

So, I really enjoyed working on the F-4 and the experiences over there in the Philippines, until the volcano came.<sup>1</sup>

## **THE VOLCANO ACTUALLY PUSHED YOU INTO FIRST SERGEANT DUTY, IS THAT CORRECT?**

Well, I made master sergeant right before the volcano. After the volcano, they closed the base, and I was notified by Classification and Training that I needed to either cross-train, do a consecutive overseas tour, or separate. And I thought, "I don't want to cross-train."

They told me we were doing away with the A-10—this is 1991—and the F-4, and there was no aircraft SEI [special experience identifier] for me stateside, so I had to find another job.

I looked at all the jobs out there and decided to be a first sergeant. In quality assurance, I made sure people followed guidelines, standards, and discipline. Then my medical background—I was very much a people person; so, I thought first sergeant would be great.

From that point on, I was on the first sergeant track. I did that for 10 years, and it was my favorite job in my Air Force career. It was actually helping people. You could have such a positive effect on so many people when you were down in the unit level. I loved it. I made senior and chief as a first sergeant, and it was great.

## **AT THAT POINT, I IMAGINE YOU HAD DECIDED TO MAKE THE AIR FORCE A CAREER. YOU HAD MENTIONED BEFORE THAT WHEN YOU CAME IN, THE SECOND TIME, YOU WERE GOING TO COMMIT TO IT 100 PERCENT. WHY WAS THAT?**

When I came back in the Air Force after being out for four-and-a-half years, I knew it was going to be a career. I look at my first time in the Air Force; I was young. I came in at 18, and I was a typical one, two, three striper. I liked having fun. I was a really good medic. I think I did a fantastic job, but I was kind of your typical young guy, living in the barracks, until I got married.

But when I came back in the second time, I was committed. I mean, I was really committed. I knew that I was going to make it a career, and I knew it was important that, whatever I did, I did my best. So, I had a different mind-set by far when I came back in the second time.

If you would have asked me, the first time, if I was going to make it a career, I would have been like, “What, are you crazy?” It was just a four-year stint. That was the plan, and then get out. But when I came in the second time, I was going to make it at least 20 years, and hopefully make master sergeant and make it a good career.

## **IS THERE A CERTAIN REASON WHY YOU MADE THAT DECISION RIGHT OFF THE BAT?**

To come in?

## **JUST TO MAKE IT A CAREER.**

No. I just knew I loved the military—I loved the mind-set; I loved the camaraderie of being around other people with the same mind-set. I just knew that was going to be it for me. Plus, I liked the other things that you don’t think about—you know, playing sports against the other squadrons, the security for the family, the medical, the dental, and the long-term retirement benefit. I knew I was going stay when I came back in; so, I knew I needed to put my best foot forward.

## **I’D LIKE TO GO BACK TO YOUR TIME IN THE PHILIPPINES . . . YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE THERE WHEN MOUNT PINATUBO ERUPTED.**

Yes. We were there, and we had the warnings. The year before we had a huge earthquake; it was like a 7.8. Many people died in that earthquake in the Philippines, and it caused a seismic shift that created the conditions for Mount Pinatubo, which had been dormant for 600 years, to erupt in 1991.

We knew it was coming, because working on the flight line you could smell the sulfur in the air. Then, one day, they told us it was pretty imminent, and that we should watch the news that night for any new information. We watched it, and they said, “Get up early in the morning and watch again at 5 o’clock.” We got up early, watched it, and they basically said, “Get out of here.”

So, there was a mass exodus from Clark AB to [Naval Base] Subic Bay. We basically just took a suitcase with us, that’s it; then, a few days later, they took a couple buses of us back to Clark so we could go back into our house and get more stuff.

I went back into the house and was trying to get more stuff, and I heard all kinds of commotion. I went out to the street where my house was on the base, and the volcano had just erupted. There was this huge mushroom cloud going over my head. The bus came by, and we had to hop in the bus and leave. We were escorted back to Subic Bay, and we stayed there for several days.

With all the volcanic ash, it was dark in the daytime. I was working at the club to help organize and keep people together. Then they decided we needed to get out of there, and we couldn’t get out through airlift; so, we all went through the South China Sea on naval ships. We went on a naval ship to Cebu [the Philippines], then we flew out of Cebu to Guam, to Hickam [AFB, Hawaii], and then to McChord [AFB, California], and then onto the next duty assignment from there.

## **AND YOUR FAMILY WAS WITH YOU?**

Yes.

## **THAT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE THE EXPERIENCE FOR THEM.**

It was an experience. It was one of those life experiences.

## **AND AS WE MENTIONED BEFORE, THAT WAS A TRANSITION POINT FOR YOU. YOU LEFT CLARK AND BEGAN FIRST SERGEANT DUTY, WHICH YOU DID FOR 10 YEARS AND WAS IT FIVE SQUADRONS?**

I think I had seven squadrons total.



## **SEVEN SQUADRONS. WHAT WAS IT THAT MAKES YOU SAY FIRST SERGEANT DUTY WAS THE BEST EXPERIENCE IN YOUR AIR FORCE CAREER?**

I think being a first sergeant was incredible. Every first sergeant will have an effect on the unit. It's either going to be positive or negative, but they will have an effect. So, I really tried to have a positive effect on people's lives. I've always said, my greatest accomplishments in my Air Force career were people. To have someone who is having a tough time in the Air Force, with life or the job, or whatever, and you grab that person and have a positive effect on them, then they go off and have a successful Air Force career, what gets better than that? I have hundreds of stories I could tell about people whose lives I was able to have a positive effect on—that was really inspiring to me. And I've stayed in contact with many of them, and it's pretty neat.

You do have some negative experiences. You have some people that are just not cut out to be in the Air Force. Sometimes the best thing for them is to go, and you've got to do that side of it, too. But I always try to do the positive thing. I try to point people in the right direction and hope they can come out of any challenge with a positive attitude. I just found that very rewarding.

Originally, it was tough to get promoted, because the first sergeant career field was so tough, but somehow it worked out; I did okay. I'm very thankful for my 10 years as a first sergeant and how it helped groom me, really, to be a command chief and then Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

## **YOU'VE MENTIONED BEFORE THAT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT PEOPLE, THEY ARE NOT TROOPS. THEY ARE AIRMEN. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT ONE?**

Yes. When I was the PACAF [Pacific Air Forces] command chief, my boss, Gen. [Paul V.] Hester was just a fantastic gentleman, a great general. As a first sergeant, I always said troops, and he called me in his office one day and said, "Chief, they are not troops, they are Airmen. They go to basic training; we tell them they are an Airman. They go to OTS; we tell them they are Airmen. At the Air Force Academy, they are Airmen. They are not troops." I said, "I've got it, sir. They are not kids either," because he always said kids. He goes, "Touché."

We still stay in touch. We talk about it, and both of us have always been on this thing to call our Airmen, "Airmen," instead of troops because, in basic training they have the coin ceremony, and they get that first coin. Up until then, they've always been a trainee, but on that moment, for the first time, they are called an Airman. It's a very special day. A lot of them have tears in their eyes. We call them Airmen; so, why do we go back later and say our troops this, and our troops that. No, they are Airmen.

You would never call a Marine a troop—they are Marines. They love being called a Marine. I like to see that esprit de corps in our Airmen, that pride to be an Airman. That's always stuck with me, and I make it a point to talk about it.

## **MAKES PERFECT SENSE. SO YOU BECAME A COMMAND CHIEF IN 2001, PRIOR TO THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS.**

Yes.

## **WHEN THE ATTACKS HAPPENED, AND YOU SAW, MAYBE, THE FUTURE—WHERE WE MIGHT BE HEADING AS AN AIR FORCE. WHAT WERE YOUR MAJOR THOUGHTS OR CONCERNS THEN?**

Well, on 9/11 I was actually flying across the Atlantic Ocean on my way to the First Sergeant Academy graduation. The announcement came over the intercom about the first plane going into the tower, and I thought, well this is not a humorous thing to be talking about. It sounded like the pilot was joking. And then they came back and said another plane had hit, and then Washington—the Pentagon.

Our plane got diverted to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and we landed at 1:30 in the afternoon. We sat in that plane until 4:30 in the morning. We were on the ramp, because there were so many planes; they didn't have anywhere for us to go. I remember we watched Shrek three times while we were sitting there. Finally, they brought a school bus to pick us up at 4:30 in the morning. They took us to a hotel, and they had sheets and a pillow on the floor for us to lie on. We hadn't seen any footage yet; so, we were all out in the hallways watching the TV.

I had to call my wife, Paula, because she didn't know where I was. All she knew was I was going to Gunter [AFB, Alabama], but she didn't know I was in Halifax, or where I was; so, I finally got to tell her I was okay.

We stayed there for a couple days, until we were able to get out of there and get our luggage. They cancelled the First Sergeant Academy graduation; so, I went back to Ramstein [AB, Germany]. As soon as I got back there, life changed—life changed forever. We were checking all the vehicles coming through the gates, we had the barriers put up, and we had several white powder incidents that we knew we needed to check out.

So, we had all kinds of scary stuff going on. I knew things had changed forever. Afghanistan came shortly after that—and here we are today. That day changed us all and changed our military forever. Security on bases will never be like it was prior to 9/11 again.

## **YOU WERE RIGHT THERE AT THE CENTER WHEN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM STARTED; YOU WERE ACTUALLY THE COMMAND CHIEF FOR THE 379TH AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING AT AL UDEID AIR BASE, QATAR.**

Yes. I was the command chief at the 379th when we kicked off the war in March 2003. I got there in January to help set the base up. We had so many aircraft and personnel coming from different locations, to include Australia and Great Britain; so, we really built tent city up very big. When I arrived, I think our base population was around 1,800. By the time the war started, we were up to 6,700. Then we kicked off Iraqi Freedom from right there at the 379th, on that very first night of shock and awe.<sup>2</sup>

We were flying tremendous missions nonstop. We had about 150 fighter jets on the ground, and they were just going nonstop. We had Airmen there working around the clock, doing a fantastic job. You go to war, and it's amazing to see people come together and turn an aircraft so fast and just do a great job. So, it was a great experience for me. I'm very fortunate that I was chosen to go there and be the command chief at a location that was so important when we kicked the war off.

## **YOU ANSWERED IT BRIEFLY, BUT WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE AIRMEN YOU WERE LEADING AT THAT TIME?**

I never had any problems with any Airmen there. We didn't have any incidents, as I recall, of Airmen doing stupid stuff. We had some very strict guidelines we followed, as far as drinking and other things, and we followed the guidelines. I met with all our first sergeants on a regular basis, as well as our chiefs, and I met and had breakfast every morning with the top people from the British and the Australian air forces, just to make sure we were all in sync. You know, it's all about relationships—success is about relationships and how you treat people, how you talk to them. So, I worked really hard on those relationships, to take care of our people and keep them out of trouble, because we were at war, and I didn't want anybody getting in trouble.

We started a recognition program there. We had formal retreats. We only had a little, tiny, dinky flag, so I put some big flags up—to include the British, the Australian, and Qatari flags—just to get us all together working as one team. I thought it was really important to keep people focused, because we were part of history, and it would be a shame for someone to be sent back home for doing something really stupid. I was really thankful for the leadership we had there. It was a great experience.

## **IF YOU COULD TALK ABOUT THE AIRMEN THEN, COMPARED TO THE AIRMEN THAT SERVED WHEN YOU CAME IN OR IN THE '80S, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WOULD BE A DIFFERENCE?**

There is a huge difference. When I came in, in 1974, we still had a lot of people in the Air Force that possibly came in the Air Force because they didn't necessarily want to be in another service. We had probably 700,000 people in the Air Force. There were probably, 5,500 chief master sergeants in 1974—only 12 were female.

We were in the middle of what we called race relations. We had race riots on an Air Force base, and the civilian community didn't like the military; it was not popular to be in uniform. As young Airmen, we mowed the yards, we took out the trash, we cleaned everybody's cigarette butts at the end of the day, off of their desks. We were doing things then that, thank God, Airmen don't have to do today.

We had so many people. In the dorms, my first sergeant was living in the room next to me. He was a master sergeant, and he lived right next door. He was a great first sergeant, but he lived in the dorms. We had a lot of NCOs living in the dorms. Nowadays, you will not find NCOs living in the same dorms as our most junior Airmen; we stopped that a long time ago.

I think the quality of Airmen we have serving today, the quality of the education that we have today, is fantastic.

One thing I do miss ... I think we had more camaraderie back then. We did more things together, as far as the sports. We had a recreation center on base, and we'd always go there and play pool and ping pong; we did a lot of things together as a unit. The clubs were always packed full.

It's a different Air Force, and I say, thank God. An Airman today, when they finish their job, they want to go home to their families. It's a more professional corps today. In our Professional Development Guide there used to be an entire chapter debating whether or not enlisted Airmen are professional. I took that chapter out. I don't even want people debating whether or not enlisted Airmen are professional. We are professionals. Every Airman should be proud to be an Airman and proud of what they bring to the fight.



**ABSOLUTELY. YOU QUICKLY MOVED UP TO THE RANKS, IF YOU WILL, THROUGH THE LEVELS OF COMMAND AS A COMMAND CHIEF, AND THEN BECAME THE 15TH CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IN 2006. WHAT WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN GENERAL MOSELEY CALLED YOU AND SAID, “HEY, YOU’RE IT”?**

Well, as I said before, I never expected to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. When General Hester said, “Hey, Chief, number 14 is retiring.” I said, “Yes, sir. I know that,” and he said, “Well, you need to be number 15.” I said, “Sir, I’m busy. I’ve got a lot of things going on in the Pacific. I just want to stay focused on what I’m doing here.” He said, “Well, Chief, that’s all great, but I’m putting you in anyway.”

I went back to work, and I was surprised that I was in the final five to be interviewed. Then we got notified that General Moseley was going to be making the phone calls. So, he called at 7:30 in the morning. I got on the phone with him, and he said, “Good morning, partner, how are you doing?” I said, “Sir, I’m doing great. Hopefully, you are doing well.” And he said, “Well, I need you to come to Washington, DC, and be my wingman.” I said, “Sir, I’m incredibly humbled. Thank you very much.” And he said, “Okay, goodbye,” and he hung up. I was thinking, “Dang, that was quick.”

Then, man, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I just sat back in my chair and thought, “Wow, I’m going to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. We are fighting two wars. We have Airmen in the fight every second of every day. We have Airmen being wounded, we have Airmen being killed, and I’m going to be their Chief.”

I called my wife and told her. We didn’t have a party to celebrate or anything. It was great being named the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force—and all the congratulations that come with it—but again, I was just thinking that we were at war. We have Airmen coming home killed in action, and this is serious.

There are some things maybe I would have thought about doing while I was the Chief, but the focus was on all the Airmen deploying, the Airmen in harm’s way. We needed to do everything we could to provide them the safety they needed, the equipment they needed, the training they needed, and the leadership they needed to come back.

We weren’t successful in that. We had many Airmen die, and that was the worst day in my Air Force career—every day I was notified that another Airman died, or another Airman was wounded, or another Airman committed suicide. I took every one of those personal.

It was an incredibly humbling experience being the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Every second of every day I was the Chief, we were in two wars; so, that was my focus. The whole time I was there, I

was trying to take care of Airmen and their families and testifying before Congress to make sure the conditions were right for us to be successful.

**IT WAS DEFINITELY A CHALLENGING TIME. WE HAD SO MUCH GOING ON, ON TOP OF THE TWO WARS, AND STILL, DURING YOUR TENURE THERE WAS QUITE A BIT OF CHANGE.**

Yes.

**ONE OF THEM BEING, DESPITE THE WAR GOING ON, WE HAD A BIT OF A DRAWDOWN WITH THE PROGRAM BUDGET DECISION (PBD). I’M SURE THAT WAS A TOUGH DECISION.**

Yes, the PBD 720.<sup>3</sup> That started while I was in PACAF and it was to drawdown 40,000 people. There were a tremendous number of meetings about how we would do it, and where all the bodies would come from, and that was a difficult thing.

As a matter of fact, when Secretary [Robert M.] Gates came on, I had a meeting with him and my peers from the other branches of service. He said, “Rod, what do you see as the number one issue in the Air Force right now?” Without hesitation I said, “The number one issue I see as I go visit Airmen is the downsizing we are going through.”

At that point in time, we were at about 324,000 Airmen, and we were on our way down to 314. I would go out and visit our maintenance units, and it was clear we were killing our maintainers. We didn’t have enough people. We were so short-handed, and we were standing up [Air Force Global Strike Command]; we were taking on cyber missions.<sup>4</sup> We were building more missions but not getting more people, and we still had to go down another 10,000.

As soon as I left that meeting, I went to see General Moseley and told him what I had told Secretary Gates. I told him about the downsizing, and said I really think we should be at 330,000. He said, “That’s fantastic, Rod. Thanks.” After that, General Moseley, myself, and Secretary [of the Air Force Michael W.] Wynne signed a letter to the Secretary of Defense asking the Air Force to grow back to 330,000.

Later on, when the Secretary of Defense fired the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force, at the end of one of his statements, he said, “I am also ordering the Air Force to go back to 330,000.”

The downsizing I saw as very tough, but you know, everything you do is about budget. When you go back to 330, it’s budget—it’s money. You’re always determining, what is the right number of Airmen that should be on active duty, Guard, Reserve, and how much of your budget are you willing to spend on personnel? I mean, that’s huge. All the senior leaders in the Air Force better understand budget very, very well, because that’s the driving force in everything we need to accomplish. Taking care of Airmen, recapitalizing our fleet—everything—you’ve got to be able to talk budget and spend your money wisely.

## **YOU MENTIONED THAT THE SECRETARY AND CHIEF OF STAFF WERE FIRED, AND A LOT OF THAT WAS BECAUSE THE NUCLEAR MISHAPS HAPPENING AT THAT TIME.<sup>5</sup> WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THE B-52 INCIDENT AND THE MOMENT THE LEADERSHIP WAS RELIEVED?**

Well, on the day that happened, I remember I stepped outside of my office into the hallway, and Gen. Moseley had stepped out of his office down the hallway. He yelled at me to come down there, so I went down there, and Gen. Moseley said, “You are not going to believe this. I just found out we flew a B-52 from Minot [AFB], North Dakota, to Barksdale [AFB, Louisiana]. It’s been sitting on the ramp for several hours, and they just figured out it has live nukes on it.”

I’m previous aircraft maintenance. I know the nuclear side of the house, and I could not fathom how that could have possibly happened. Then Gen. Moseley said, “Now I’m on my way to go tell President Bush.” And I said, “Well, tell him the truth. Tell him everything right up front.” He said, “I will,” and took off. That moment, I felt so bad for Gen. Moseley. He had to go tell the President of the United States that we just flew a B-52 from North to South with live nukes on it. It sat on a ramp, and the Air Force did not know it. It wasn’t his fault, but yet he had to take the heat for it.

That was not—in my opinion, that was not the reason he got fired. I think it was multiple disagreements between the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force [on one side] and the Secretary of Defense [on the other], and ultimately the Secretary [of Defense] pulling the trigger and saying, “You guys are out of here,” which was a very difficult day on all of us.

I was there when it happened. We were at Corona, and that was a very difficult time. Gen. Moseley hired me, and it was very emotional to see my boss go out like that. He loved the Air Force so much. I truly loved and respected Gen. Moseley.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE AFTERMATH OF THAT INCIDENT? HOW DID THE LEADERSHIP LOOK AT KEEPING THE AIR FORCE MOTIVATED AND MOVING FORWARD?**

It’s the first time in our country’s history we’ve lost a Secretary and a Chief of Staff all at once. Right after that, there was so much commotion going on. I remember telling some senior leaders, “Hey, look, we’ve got to keep our heads up. We feel bad for Secretary Wynne and General Moseley, but we are still in two wars. We still have Airmen in harm’s way. We’ve got to lead.”

There were even questions about whether or not I should resign. I asked Gen. Moseley, and he said no. He said, “The Air Force needs you now more than ever.” So, with that, I decided I was going to lead. I tried to be the best leader I could through a tough situation, a transition from Gen. Moseley to the acting chief, Gen. [Duncan J.] McNabb, to the confirmation of Gen. [Norton A.] Schwartz.

That was a very, very tough time, but at the end of the day, we still had Airmen in harm’s way. We had to lead. We had to step up and make sure we were taking care of our Airmen.

## **THROUGHOUT YOUR TENURE, YOU SAID ONE OF YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES WAS OUR HERITAGE. YOU WERE INVOLVED IN A LOT OF CHANGES THAT SHAPED OUR HERITAGE, ONE OF THEM BEING UNIFORMS. WE ALMOST WENT BACK TO AN OLDER SERVICE DRESS UNIFORM. WE STARTED TALKING ABOUT IT, BUT DIDN’T DO IT. CAN YOU SHARE SOME STORIES THERE?**

Well, there was a big push to go back to a new heritage uniform. A lot of work and a lot of money went into that. Our senior leadership really liked the idea. After Gen. Moseley was out of the office, we had a meeting at Corona, and Gen. Schwartz decided he wanted to put it to bed or move forward with it.

We were at Corona with all the generals, and it was about a 50/50 split with the four stars who were there on whether or not they wanted the heritage uniform. Then they came to me, and Gen. Schwartz said, “Chief, what do the Airmen think?” I said, “Well, I have the uniform. I like the uniform, but I’ve probably visited more Airmen in the Air Force than anybody else, and I think I have a good feel for what the Airmen think.

“First off, we have ABUs [Airman battle uniform] that are too hot, and we need lighter-weight ABUs. We have PT gear that everybody hates; you can hear us coming 20 minutes away. We don’t have cold-weather gear for some cold-weather locations; so, we’ve got to get cold-weather gear to them. We have multiple boots; we need to figure out what type of boot we are going to wear with our uniforms. So the thought of Airmen out there is, before we go spend a lot of money on a new service dress, we need to fix our existing problems.”

I’ll stick with that as a very true statement; 98 percent of Airmen felt that way. With that, we no longer pursued the new service dress. Hopefully, we’ve fixed the other problems I mentioned. I know we’ve got a lighter ABU now; we changed the PT gear. Hopefully, we’ve gotten cold-weather gear, and I think we’ve got the boots fixed.









## **YOU MENTIONED THE ABU. I KNOW YOU WERE THERE WHEN THAT WAS INTRODUCED.**

Yes. I was part of the test for the new ABU. When we tested the ABU while I was the PACAF command chief, it was really light—it was very comfortable. I liked it a lot. It was almost like we were in pajamas. You could roll it up and take it out, but when they came out, they were much thicker. It was nothing like what I tested.

So I immediately said these ABUs are too hot. The typical answer right then was, cut the inside pockets out. Well, that's not a good answer. When we spend a fortune buying these new ABUs, and they are too hot, the answer is to go cut the inside pockets out? I was on a journey from then on to try to get us new ABUs that were lighter. We are at war in the desert. Our Airmen that were deployed to the desert, they had to wear these very thick ABUs, and they were not finding them very good.

The uniform is always a very controversial subject. People either like them or hate them or—it's a tough subject.

## **AND STILL IS.**

Oh, yes. You cannot please everybody, that's for sure. I've always been big on heritage. Before I became a command chief, I really liked the history and heritage of our Airmen, but who really shaped my thinking on enlisted heritage, was the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Paul Airey.

I was at Gunter, and we were having lunch at the club. I was the command chief at the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley [AFB, Virginia] at the time, and I said, "Chief, when can I get you to visit our Airmen at Langley?" And, man, just (finger snap) like that, Chief Airey got mad, he got angry. He goes, "Dammit, Rod, I'm never going to visit that place." I was taken back, because Chief and I had a great relationship.

I said, "Chief, what's up? Why are you so angry about this?" And he goes, "Well, because Langley published a book about the history of Langley, and they only mentioned an enlisted person one time—and that was an enlisted crew chief. They didn't even put the name down. They have a lot of pilots' names, a lot of history in this book, but nowhere in there did they talk about the enlisted contributions to Langley. I'm not going back there." And he didn't.

After that, I really started thinking about our heritage, and what we can do for our enlisted force to respect our heritage. When I was the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, we decided to go back to the circled collar brass insignia on the service dress uniform. That's our enlisted heritage. If you go back and look at all the photos, the enlisted had a circled US insignia. That, and to put stripes back on the sleeves for SNCOs. Not because I was still saluting the senior enlisted, but we grew up as enlisted Airmen with our stripes on our sleeves.

Then, myself and my assistant, SMSgt. [Gerardo] Tapia, were riding around Lackland [AFB, Texas], doing a visit. I had just come back from visiting the Air Force Academy. At the Air Force Academy there's a place where they have footprints in the concrete, and it symbolizes all of those that came before you. I thought that was neat, and it was for all the new cadets coming through there. You don't know how many people have stepped in those footprints.

So, I thought, what can we do on the enlisted side of the house? It needed to be at Lackland. That's the Gateway to the Air Force for the enlisted force; so, it would be neat if we could do something on the parade ground.

I came up with the Enlisted Heroes Walk. We put a paver for each of our Medal of Honor recipients, Air Force Cross, the Silver Star, and so forth. We came up with that idea, and we talked to the leadership there at Lackland and they pushed it forward. Then in January of 2009, I did the dedication speech for it.

The idea is on BMT Graduation Day, as they take that column left, they are going to be walking across each one of those names. They still add more names, unfortunately, as we get more. It gives you a little lump in your throat when you think about what you are doing, and the names you are marching over. It kind of starts that thinking about heritage as you graduate basic training.

We dedicated the walk, and then a chief friend of mine that was in Vietnam wrote me a nice letter and said the Enlisted Heritage Walk was so special to him. He had a friend that died in Vietnam. He was a Silver Star recipient, and no one knew about him. It was like he was no longer in history, but yet, he has a paver now.

So, it's just a way to honor those Airmen, and think a little bit more about our heritage, because it's super special. Each branch of service has their own heritage, and our enlisted Airmen should really learn more about those that came before and be proud of where they come from.

## **YOU ALSO DID A COUPLE OTHER THINGS THAT YOU COULD SAY REFLECT OUR HERITAGE, SPECIFICALLY THE AIRMAN'S CREED AND AIR FORCE MEMORIAL.**

Yes. The Air Force Memorial, we dedicated that on 14 October 2006, and that was the most special day in my Air Force career. That was such a special event, to attend that with so many people from throughout Air Force history. We had about 40,000 people in the audience. We did speeches, and we had the flyovers of historical aircraft. President Bush spoke, as did the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Air Force, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and then me. To be a part of that event was just tremendous.

## **AND YOUR SIGNATURE IS ONE OF THE SPIRES, IS THAT RIGHT?**

It is. General Moseley and I both signed the tip of the tallest spire. I have a picture of that. And it's in permanent ink; so, our signatures are still up at the top today.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE AIRMAN'S CREED? AS I RECALL, YOU HAD A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT OPTIONS THERE—SOME GREAT, SOME QUITE HUMOROUS. THEN YOU SETTLED ON ONE AND BROUGHT IT WITH YOU THROUGH EUROPE TO TEST IT OUT. HOW DO THAT GO, AND HOW DID THE CREED WE KNOW TODAY BECOME FINAL?**

Well, you're right. I had a great trip to all the bases in Europe, and at the end of each of the All Calls, I recited the Airman's Creed that we really liked, and I had a great response from it. When I got back to the Pentagon, I saw General Moseley in the hallway and told him what I had done and that the response was tremendous. I said, "I think it's time to go with it." He said, "Really?" I said, "Yes, sir, I do." And he said, "Okay, I'm going to send you an e-mail this afternoon, give me a response, and tell me what you think."

He sent me an e-mail that afternoon, a very concise e-mail about the new Airman's Creed that replaces all other creeds, that this is the only creed, and so forth. I sent it back to him and said, "Sir, this is great. It all looks good." He said, "Okay, meet me in my office tomorrow morning at 7:30, and we'll talk about it."

So, I met him at 7:30 the next morning. It was me, him, and a reporter, Bruce Rolfsen, from the Air Force Times. We talked about some other issues, then General Moseley said, "Rod, are we going to do this?" I said, "Yes, sir, let's do this." He said, "Okay, we are going to go for it. We have a new Airman's Creed," and he handed the paper to the reporter. He said, "I want you to print this in the next issue of the Air Force Times, as the official Airman's Creed."

With that, General Moseley went over to his computer and hit send on the message. So, the Airman's Creed was born on that day. And if anybody asks me who wrote the Airman's Creed, my response is Airmen wrote the Airman's Creed. It took an effort from the whole Air Force to create the Airman's Creed.

## **WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE INITIAL RESPONSE AFTER THE CREED WAS ANNOUNCED? I MEAN FROM THE AIRMEN ACROSS THE AIR FORCE, NOT JUST IN EUROPE WHEN YOU INITIALLY SHARED IT, BUT JUST GENERALLY, WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE?**

Well, there was a lot of response, a lot of great response, and then some not good, because you had organizations that were hanging on to some of their old creeds. They thought those other creeds that were out there were official creeds. They weren't; they were just made up, and they had used them for a long period of time. But there were no creeds for the Air Force—nothing that the Air Force had come out and said, this is our creed.

So, there was a negative response that came out, and there still is today, I'm sure. But you think about today, probably 60 to 70 percent of the Air Force today, the only creed they've ever had is this Airman's Creed. I think the creed itself is something powerful. You read every word in there, and it's special. There's nothing in there that I think people could say, "Yeah, this is wrong, this is wrong."

Several years ago, I was talking to a crowd, and I was taking questions from tech sergeants and staff sergeants at a lunch. A tech sergeant spoke up and said, "I'm communications. I'm not a warrior. This Airman's Creed, and it says I'm warrior. I'm not a warrior." I said, "You're not?" And he said, "No." So, I said, "You know, it's amazing because, when we kicked a war off, we had people that were driving on base—transportation guys—and the next thing you know they are driving convoys in Iraq. And we've had different AFSCs that are now doing things that they never thought they would ever be doing before. So, you never know, whatever AFSC you are, what day will come that you will be at war. Plus, every single day you open your computer, you have a cyber war going on right there—every single day. So, no matter what AFSC you are, you are a warrior."



## **ONE OF THE OTHER THINGS THAT HELPED ESTABLISH THE WARRIOR MIND-SET WAS PHYSICAL FITNESS AND THE SHIFT WE MADE TO BECOME A MORE FIT FORCE. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH IT?**

During my whole Air Force career, I always was in athletics, and I always thought we should be physically fit, and for the most part, I think we were. We really tried to make sure our Airmen looked the part and were physically fit, and we had all kinds of different programs.

Then we went to that silly bicycle for a while, which I absolutely hated. But anyway, it got to the point when I was the chief where I was seeing a lot of people that were obviously not even close to being fit. So, I went to our personnel team and I said, “Give me all the statistics on how many people were passing the PT test, and the statistics showed that, man, we were one absolutely fit Air Force.

## **THIS WAS THE BIKE TEST?**

No. This is our current, the first version of the PT test we had. This is well after the bike test; this is when I was the Chief.

## **GREAT.**

So, the PT results showed that we were very fit. As a matter of fact, we probably had a better passing rate than the Marines, but I wasn’t seeing this with my first sergeant—calibrated eyes. I see a lot of Airmen on bases when I go visit that are obviously way overweight, and if they are saying they are passing their PT test, something is wrong here.

So, I asked the Air Force Audit Agency to audit the PT program. I said, “Just take the current AFI [Air Force instruction] we have and go out there and see if we, as Airmen, are following the AFI. If we are doing that, fine. Come back and tell me. If we are not, come back and give me some recommendations.”

So, they went out and visited two bases, and they came back and said, “Chief, we’ve got problems.” And I said, “I know we do; now go finish it.” So, they went to, I think around 15 or 16 different bases. It was a very extensive audit, at all locations—cold weather, altitude, you name it, overseas. And they came back with an Air Force audit that was ugly.

The thing that really bothered me about it was that a lot of it dealt with integrity. There were a lot of tests that were falsified. Waist measurements were off by as much as seven inches, and it was just ugly. It really reeked of not following one of our core values, which is integrity. So, I sent that audit to the Chief of Staff, A1, medical, and MAJCOM [major command] commanders and MAJCOM command chiefs. When they received the results of the audit, things happened very quickly.

In PACAF, Gen. [Carrol “Howie”] Chandler made some changes there immediately. He had different people that were doing the tests, and then later on, we went down the road and established a new PT program with integrity. With that, we started seeing Airmen getting out and getting more physically fit. We had more focus on better fitness centers.

I think the results we have now—you have a whole lot more Airmen fit. It helps them in the combat areas and is also going to decrease health issues. I was the DOD spokesperson for quit smoking, also; so, it’s a total health and fitness thing I was going after.

## **WHY DO YOU THINK IT WAS DIFFICULT TO REALLY ESTABLISH A FITNESS CULTURE AT FIRST, WHEN WE STEPPED AWAY FROM THE BIKE TEST?**

Well, Gen. [CSAF John P.] Jumper and Chief [CMSAF Gerald R.] Murray went to the new PT test during their tenure, and that was a good thing. When I got in there, and I started traveling around, I saw, in my opinion, integrity issues. People said they were passing the test, and I was looking and thinking, there is no way. Someone that obviously has a 46-inch waist is not going to pass the test, and why do we have someone in the Air Force with a 46-inch waist anyway?

Now the goal, as a leader, is not to kick everybody out, but as a leader, as a supervisor, is to keep your team physically fit. If you see a person starting to get out of standards, you keep them in standards. That’s why I said my greatest accomplishment in my Air Force career is people, because I would never let my Airmen get out of standards. You know, if I see my Airmen not wearing the uniform properly, or I see them gaining weight, my goal is to get them back into being the best Airman that they could be. How does an Airman get to the point where they are so far out of standards, and those supervisors just turn the eye, and look the other way? That’s not leadership. I think we had a lot of that going on.

When the new PT test came out, I think January of 2009, we gave everybody many months to get into standards. So, it’s not like, “Okay, here is the result, and you’ve got to have these new standards tomorrow.” You had nine months to get ready, or more. If someone can’t get ready in nine months, either there’s a medical condition, they don’t care, or they are so far out of standards that they can’t get there.

The goal was not to kick people out of the Air Force. If we have a program, it’s about integrity. We don’t pick and choose which AFI to follow. If this is what the standard is, if you meet that standard, good. If you don’t, you have to recognize that. Don’t fudge the numbers; don’t falsify records. We are an Air Force of integrity, and that disappointed me a lot, to see the audit results, and it obviously disappointed the MAJCOM commanders, command chiefs, and our senior leadership, because we knew we had to make changes.

I'm thankful they all stood up and did that. We are a much better Air Force today because of it. It also gives us a lot more respect from the other branches of service. We've all heard that thing before—the “chair force”—that hurts me to the core. I don't want people to look at us and think we are the chair force. We are the mightiest Air Force that's ever walked the face of the earth, or flown over it, so it's a lot to be proud out.

**ONE LAST QUESTION. WHEN YOU LOOK AT AIRMEN TODAY—  
WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE AIR FORCE AND SEE EVERYTHING  
YOU'VE SEEN THROUGHOUT YOUR TENURE WITH THE AIR  
FORCE, BOTH BEFORE YOU RETIRED AND NOW AFTER—  
IF YOU HAD TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE AIRMEN,  
AND HAD TO BEGIN THE SENTENCE WITH “I BELIEVE,”  
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe serving our country is a tremendous honor that we should take to the grave. That we have had the opportunity to wear the uniform of our country, and serve and protect, is something we should be proud of, and our children and friends should be proud of. So, I believe wearing the uniform is the highest honor we can do for our country.





## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **JAMES A. ROY**

**JULY 1, 2009 - JANUARY 24, 2013**

James Roy was born on 18 May 1964 in the small town of Monroe, Michigan, just a short drive south from Detroit. In the early '80s, the local economy did not offer a great opportunity for Roy and his newlywed spouse, Ms. Paula, so he decided to raise his right hand and join the Air Force. Not long after, they both knew the Air Force was the life for them.

Roy entered the Air Force as a heavy equipment operator and quickly learned to appreciate the busy lifestyle of a civil engineer. After his first assignment to MacDill AFB, Florida, he spent much of his early Air Force years in the Pacific—at both Osan and Kunsan Air Bases, South Korea, and Andersen AFB, Guam. Throughout his career, he gained a unique understanding of the joint force, working and training alongside Soldiers, Marines, and Sailors. The joint perspective developed into a passion for joint and combined operations that stuck with him through his years as an Air Force command chief and his tenure as the senior enlisted leader of U.S. Pacific Command.

In June 2009 Gen Norton Schwartz selected Roy as the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF), the first time a CMSAF was selected from a combatant command. Roy focused his efforts in three key areas: building and working within joint and coalition teams, deliberate development, and resiliency of our Airmen and families. He led the Air Force through the drawdown of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the push to build the next generation of enlisted professional military education (PME), and the greater focus on the joint force. He retired from the Air Force on 24 January 2013 after 30 years of service.

In December 2015 Roy sat down in his home for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and tenure as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. During the interview he talked about his passion for the joint and combined force, the concerns and challenges following the departure from Iraq in 2011, and the importance of deliberately developing enlisted Airmen. The following are edited experts from the conversation.

## **CHIEF, YOU JOINED OUR AIR FORCE OUT OF MONROE, MICHIGAN. WHAT PUSHED YOU TOWARD THE AIR FORCE WHEN YOU JOINED?**

The reason I joined the Air Force in 1982 out of Monroe, Michigan, was simple. There wasn't a lot going on in Monroe, around Detroit. There wasn't a lot economy-wise and quite frankly, Ms. Paula and I had decided we were going to marry and this was the way to get a better education, get training, and possibly go back to Monroe, Michigan. As we all know, that never happened, but that was the primary reason.

A lot was driven by the economy, but it didn't take us long once we joined the Air Force and got in with the team to decide that, you know what, this is a good thing. This provides adequately for us—the training, the education, the whole concept of the team. We had never been associated with that before; so, for us we just wanted to be a part of this outstanding team, and we still want to be a part of the team, and obviously are. But yeah, little Monroe, Michigan . . .

## **LITTLE MONROE, MICHIGAN, THAT'S COOL. WHEN YOU FIRST GOT TO BASIC MILITARY TRAINING (BMT), YOU AND MS. PAULA WERE MARRIED—**

We were. We got married in August and entered the Air Force on the 13th of September 1982.

## **YOU DID GET A HONEYMOON FIRST, RIGHT?**

We did, in Tennessee. Shortly after we married, I went off to basic training, you know, six weeks of absolute joy.

## **WHAT WAS THAT LIKE IN THE EARLY '80S, COMPARED TO WHAT IT'S LIKE TODAY?**

Obviously, having gone back to Lackland AFB [Texas] many, many times—wow, has it really changed, and I would say for the good. I think it's more the caliber of people—the caliber of our Airmen that are NCOs [noncommissioned officers] that lead and train those Airmen, I think, has really increased.

To me, going there in 1982, it was all a new world to me. I had never been out of Monroe, Michigan, except a little bit in Ohio. So, off I went to the big city of San Antonio [Texas]. You got in there and you had to follow directions, follow orders, and quite frankly, I had no problems with that. It was always fairly easy for me.

I think I had a great TI [training instructor] at the time. I made a couple of friends along the way through basic training, but obviously, after basic training, you parted ways to tech school. It was a little different than what it is today. I think people are seeking a different opportunity, if you will. For us, it was a matter of a better opportunity. I think there is a lot of opportunity out there today in the civilian sector, and I think at that particular time, there probably wasn't quite as much; so, we felt we needed this—and it grew on you.

You got there and got in the swing of the routine, the battle rhythm of basic training, and it was one of those things you don't ever forget. I've told others that basic training is the foundation. Regardless if you joined in 1982 or 2015, basic training is the foundation of that Airmanship.

The facility is a little different obviously. The type of training is a little different. Quite honestly, the training at that particular time, it was training, but I would say it wasn't the same level of precision or the same level of experience.

I often give the example of when we got ready to go out to shoot our weapon—the one and only time we went out to shoot our weapon. It was raining that day; so, we certainly couldn't go out and shoot our weapon in the rain (Laughter). We had to forego that; so, the first time I shot a weapon in the military was later at my first duty station. You know, same thing with the obstacle course. What that was then versus what it is today, with the week that we have down there with Airmen in the field. The fact that we provide them a weapon within the first week, the whole idea of “warrior” is instilled in those Airmen from day one. I think it is just absolutely tremendous. We didn't get that; it was a little bit different of an experience.

I think we all ended up good Airmen, but that was one of the reasons we changed it. Obviously, myself, along with many of the other former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force changed it because we felt there needed to be a sense of Warriorship—a sense of Airmanship—instilled within basic training.

## **YEAH, YOU CAN CERTAINLY SEE THAT NOW OVER THE YEARS, ESPECIALLY RECENTLY.**

It's different now.



## **ABSOLUTELY. YOU GRADUATED BMT AND WENT THROUGH TECH SCHOOL—YOU ENTERED THE AIR FORCE AS A HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF AIRMEN?**

Well, it was at the beginning of my career that I really got exposed to this idea of jointness. I went off to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, as a heavy equipment operator, and you know, getting that training with Soldiers—the Marines had just left, the Sailors had just left, but we certainly trained with Soldiers every day—we got to understand a little bit more about the other services. In a large degree, you appreciate the service you join; in other ways, you appreciate what your joint partners bring to the fight.

What I always found about the Air Force is that we expect a lot of our Airmen. When I talk with Soldiers, I always talk about the fact that I grew up in the 62 model, if you will. The 62 Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Juliet—those are all areas I grew up in in the Air Force.<sup>1</sup> The Air Force trained you in all of those, and they expected you to take that to your first duty station, whether that was deployed or somewhere else, and know how to operate those pieces of equipment. I think learning what the Army required was kind of an eye-opener to us. It wasn't combined as much as it is in the Air Force.

We bring great people in our military, in our Air Force. I have seen and I grew up with great Airmen that I still stay in touch with today. And that's really what it's about—the attachment you make with people while you're serving. Some of those friends I made, a few of them have gone off to do other things, even while I was still in the military. A lot have retrained, a couple went off to get their commission, a couple are in the reserves, one in the Guard, and so you got to see it from all angles. For me, going to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, was my very first exposure to a joint community and, in large part even, our total force because we had Reserve and Guard Airmen in our class and we got to know and understand them a little better.

## **YOU TALKED ABOUT THE AIR FORCE AS A FAMILY, WHEN DID THAT FIRST DAWN ON YOU? WAS IT AT TECH SCHOOL, AT BASIC TRAINING, OR WAS IT AT YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT?**

Well, as far as the team is concerned, I think you realize that right from the get go, when you get to basic training. You know, it's kind of the Airmen, the trainees against the TI—in a positive way, because that's who is training you. You want to work together as a team to accomplish the goals the TI has for you. Then when you get to technical school, it's kind of the same way. The idea is to learn as much as you can in that team concept. Yeah, you can be a good operator, you can be a good technician, but the whole team has to succeed.

For me and Ms. Paula, the idea of family began when we got to MacDill AFB as the first duty station. We realized, “Wow, this is pretty nice.” She was working at the local credit union there, and I was obviously very busy. The family idea kind of got its first gen there, but I think during subsequent assignments, we really began to understand the whole idea of the entire family.

To go back to the idea of being an airman basic. It's somewhat comical; we used to park across the street from the shop, and it would be dark. It was the fall or winter season, and I would walk across the road. I had no stripes; so, about three or four times, walking across the street, I would get saluted, and I couldn't understand why. Then I'd get to the shop, and they would say, “Oh, it's Roy. I wish you would hurry up and make a stripe because we're thinking you're a lieutenant.” It was somewhat comical, but I became very close friends with some of those folks at that shop. We used to work on cars, and go to car shows; so, that really taught us what it was to be part of a team, a winning team, and to be part of a family.

I often talk about my very first supervisor, TSgt Nathan Heard. He was a staff sergeant at the time, and I have the deepest appreciation for Nathan Heard. He was a person I looked up to. When he told me that I had 30 days to do my CDCs [career development course], it didn't matter if it was January or February, you had 30 days, and he expected those to be done. He held you to that. But also, when Ms. Paula and I got there, he was the one that showed us where we might want to consider living, where we didn't. It taught me my leadership foundation—it's more about taking care of the Airmen than just what you do at the duty section every day. Tech Sergeant Heard, you know, he's my hero. I have lost contact with him, but as a technical sergeant, I have the deepest appreciation for him. He taught me a lot, and I will always be in debt to Nate Heard.

**YEAH, IT'S DEFINITELY GOOD TO HAVE THOSE LEADERS  
RIGHT OFF THE BAT. YOU SPENT QUITE A FEW YEARS IN CIVIL  
ENGINEERING, I THINK 17 YEARS TOTAL. HOW DID THAT  
EXPERIENCE SHAPE YOU AS A LEADER, A CHIEF,  
AND EVENTUALLY THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF  
THE AIR FORCE?**

When you're a civil engineer, you always have something to do. There is always a mission; you'll never be caught up. For me, going back to my first duty station, we always had that sense of mission. The aircraft wasn't going to take off unless we first went out there and swept up the flight line and the runway. So, they relied on us, and we had that sense of mission.

The other part is a sense of mission accomplishment. I could go home every night knowing I completed what I started that day. The complete project may not be done, but the part I was working on that particular day had to be done before we went home. So, for me, maybe somewhat of a bad lesson, you don't go home until it's finished. That's a good thing sometimes—most of the time—but it can be a bad thing at times as well.

I think it taught me to overcome adversity. When you're in a duty section like that and you have more work than you can possibly ever do, you have to prioritize. Part of being the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is prioritizing what the force needs at the particular time. I went back to my roots of, "Okay, prioritize this, and then how do you accomplish it?"

When Ms. Paula and I first stepped into the office, the first thing we did was sit down with the team. We sat with a mediator to help us define what it is we were going to focus on, and those are those three priorities.<sup>2</sup> Using the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Secretary of the Air Force's priorities, we were able to gain those objectives that were required of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force; the whole team was focused on those. That's one of the things you realize as an engineer. You can't do it all yourself. There is a lot of work that goes into a project, and you're not going to complete it yourself. You have to rely on your teammates.

The other thing it taught me was, again, the early exposure to the joint team. I went right back to Fort Leonard Wood after a remote assignment, and I was standing out on the field, teaching Soldiers and Airmen how to operate the equipment. I understood that culture, and I still today understand that culture. I certainly don't understand it as much as I do the Airmen culture, but I understand that culture. I understand what they bring to the fight.

I was exposed to a lot of Marines when I was deployed to Okinawa [Japan]. One story I share was that we were remodeling the NCO Academy at Kadena [Japan], and my particular job was all the driveways, the curbs, the sidewalks. That was my job, and quite frankly we didn't have enough equipment to do the job. I went over to one of the Marine Corps bases and asked, "Hey, can I use some of your equipment to do this job?" For them, they didn't have that type of work when they were in garrison. They trained, trained, and trained, but they didn't have that real world experience. So, the agreement was, "Yeah, you can have the equipment, but you have to train some of our Marines." So, again, I was exposed to our joint war fighters. It's one of those things that, just by virtue of being a civil engineer, I was allowed the opportunity to see and work with our joint partners at that very tactical level.

**YOU MENTIONED OKINAWA. IN THE '90S YOU SPENT QUITE A  
BIT OF TIME IN THE PACIFIC THEATER. IF YOU LOOK BACK AT  
THE HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE IN THE '90S, YOU HEAR A LOT  
ABOUT OPERATIONS IN EUROPE, IN PLACES LIKE BOSNIA, LIBYA,  
TURKEY, OR IRAQ. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT THE  
PACIFIC WAS LIKE DURING THAT TIME?**

Absolutely. Obviously, the focus was in Europe, but we still had some foes in the Pacific. North Korea was the biggest focus, and regardless if I was down in Okinawa, TDY [temporary duty], deployed, or there on the Korean Peninsula, the focus remained on North Korea. I have seen the grandfather, the father, and now the son in leadership power during my tenure. So, I somewhat understand what they're going to do next, in some cases. It was different than what it is today. Having served as a US Pacific Command senior enlisted leader, I will tell you it's still focused on North Korea, but there are other focuses as well. We are focused on many other countries that quite honestly are great partners; some others are a bit challenging.

During my tenure at the Pacific Command, I was able to travel to many of those locations and really work with our coalition partners. In fact, ADM [Timothy J.] Keating charged me to be the advocate and champion for the enlisted development of our coalition partners in theater. It allowed me an opportunity to get to know a lot of them at different levels and be able to share what we have as the U.S. Air Force and Department of Defense on growth and development.

One of the other ideas while we were in the office (of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force) was this whole idea of deliberate development. We have Airmanship—that we understand. We have always understood Airmanship like no other country; we are somewhat the epitome of Airmanship. But it was the other factors I really thought we needed to focus on—working with our joint partners, working with our coalition partners. That's why we took on this whole idea of deliberate development—the experience, education, and training.



I look back at it now, and I think to myself, “My goodness.” When I first stepped in the office, we played okay. A lot of areas played very well with joint, but what we were trying to do is get the force at large to understand and appreciate the whole idea of what a joint partner means. How we can work together, what capabilities they bring, and what capabilities we can provide to that war fighter—also, what the coalition forces can bring, and what we can offer them.

When I would work with some of our allies, our joint partners and our coalition partners, it was easy for me to explain to them this idea of professionalism and the idea of mutual respect. In some cases, a country has a caste system of sorts and has a conscript force, where everybody serves versus our all-volunteer force; it’s a little bit different environment to work in. The idea that we can take the model we have as far as education, training, and experience and present that to our coalition partners and help them continue to develop—in some cases, helping them even start to develop—was a huge, huge asset to the Pacific Command commander, and it continues today.

As I look back on my time as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, we were able to get a couple of our senior NCOs into the New Zealand senior leader course, and they got full credit for the US Air Force Senior NCO Academy. I think that says a lot about the level of professionalism of our force. Number one, our Airmen, they’re absolutely up for it. Number two, our Air Force is open to the idea that this is a good thing and this can be beneficial to the Airman, certainly the organization, and the commander when they call upon us.

I look back at those opportunities, and what we did with IAAFA (Inter-American Air Forces Academy) down in San Antonio. I visited there one time, a couple of times, but one time in particular, I went there and I asked the NCOs, “Why is it that we send our NCOs to Colombia or these other places in the Americas—South America, Mid America—we send our Airmen there, we teach the course, and we bring them to us to teach, but why don’t we attend the course with them?” The last time I visited, it was very gratifying to see and hear that they had done that. Our Airmen were able to go down range and go to school with their Colombian partners. They are going to be war fighters together and learn side by side. Then the fact that we can send some of our Spanish-speaking Airmen from across the Air Force back to IAAFA to sit with all these other nations and attend the exact same course, particularly the NCO Academy—that to me, I think, highlights the level of professionalism of our Airmen, and it certainly shows that the institution is open to that and sees value in what it does for our Airmen and the combatant commander.

## **IF YOU GO BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE INITIALLY IN THE PACIFIC, AND YOU COMPARE IT TO WHAT IT IS NOW WHEN IT COMES TO THE PARTNERSHIP ASPECT—IT’S PROBABLY NIGHT AND DAY, WOULD YOU SAY?**

Oh, it’s completely night and day. You know, I was there as a young senior airman. I was stationed at Osan and traveled around the entire peninsula. I was TDY to a lot of those locations for extended periods of time doing different projects. We knew that those were Korean air bases, but we never even knew the Koreans. We never associated. I look back at that now and I think, “Wow, how much more potent of a force could we have been if we could have just done that?”

I went back four years later. I went down to Kunsan and there were a lot of Republic of Korea Air Force [ROKAF] airmen at Kunsan, and we associated with them. We would have times where we could actually talk to them. They always had needs, and we always tried to help them. Of course, we needed their understanding of the peninsula, and they were able to share that with us. Fast-forward to 2007, now as the Pacific Command senior enlisted leader, it was completely different across the entire Pacific theatre of operation.

When you have a partner country that is going through a complete defense reform, and they ask you, as the United States, for assistance, that says an awful lot about our military. In particular, for us, it says an awful lot about the US Air Force and its ability to help those countries go through a reform—a defense reform—to raise their level of professionalism.

The whole idea behind this is, why is it that the US Airmen, the US Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Coast Guardsmen are always first to the fight? Why shouldn’t it be the home team, whatever country that is? They should be the first defense. They should be first in the game. That was the idea, to raise their level of professionalism. As I look back at my tenure as the Pacific Command senior enlisted leader—and as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force—it wasn’t just about the Pacific; we did it in Europe as well. It was about working with our partners.

I think the other piece of this, the missing piece—it always came out in the end but it was never noticed up front—was how much our Airmen grow from being around coalition partners, how much our Airmen grow from being around our joint partners, and they do. You can see a complete difference. Those are the things we have got to continue to do if we are going to be of value to our combatant commanders that fight the wars.

While I was in the position of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, we did focus a lot on the coalition—but also the joint piece. We sent our Airmen back into the US Army Sergeant Major Academy, the senior enlisted course for the Navy, working with the Navy and the Coast Guard. Then, we did some work to actually bring Marines for the first time into the Senior NCO Academy, and we sent our Airmen to their courses as well. That says an awful lot about our Airmen. I think it solidifies this whole idea of a strong Department of Defense, because it's not about one service. It's not about what individually you can bring. It's about collectively as a group, what you bring to the fight. And what that team is able to produce with all of those assets.

## **LOOKING BACK ON OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, AND THE ROLES THAT AIRMEN PLAYED IN THOSE OPERATIONS, IN THOSE WARS—**

Yeah, these are nontraditional roles for Airmen; let's look back at those. Let's look back at the roles that our Airmen took on during Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. These are nontraditional Air Force roles and how did our Airmen produce? Tremendously.

On the ground, every time I would show up somewhere, I would have a sergeant major or a commander of some sort—typically a brigade commander—that would always stop me and say, “Chief, how do I get more of them? How do I get more Airmen like the Airmen I have here today?”

I remember we used to spend a lot of time going out to these PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams] outside the wire.<sup>3</sup> I always thought it was valuable, because quite frankly, number one, I needed to understand what it was our Airmen faced, what challenges they faced. If you're going to provide the training for those Airmen to go into harm's way—outside the wire every single day—you better understand it fully. If you don't understand it fully, how can you advocate? How can you champion their training? You simply can't. So, I always found it very valuable to go out and visit the far reaches of where we had Airmen. We may have had two or three Airmen on a base, on an installation that was primarily Soldiers or Marines, but it made a difference to those Airmen because they understood that somebody was interested.

I remember visiting Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan, and we had just visited the hospital there—just tremendous work our medics were doing, just absolutely tremendous. The helicopter was there and I got ready to leave, and they came to me and said, “Chief, you need to hold off for a little bit. Sergeant major is on his way back from the front line and he wants to see you.” I was like, “Oh, okay. That's great, I'll hold off for him.” So, I held off. He was the sergeant major responsible for the entire combat operations in the south. When he came to me, he said, “Chief, listen, I want you to know, and I want you to relay to every Airman, how much harder my Marines will fight when they know they have

the support of combat medics like we have here in Camp Leatherneck.” I thought, “Oh, my gosh.” I mean, I just got chills. I tried to share that with every combat medic I knew. And it's not just the combat medics, it's every single AFSC [Air Force specialty code], it's every single Airman we had out in those locations.

By the way, that Marine was a gentleman by the name of Mike Barrett. You may know him as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Mike Barrett, who became the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps while I was the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. So, needless to say, we had a very strong team. It just tells the value that our joint commanders, joint leaders, sergeant majors, and master chief petty officers see in our Airmen. It goes to the heart of who we are. We are American first. We will do whatever America needs of its Department of Defense. Sure, we have Airmen skills, and those Airmen skills will be exposed, but our Airmen—starting with basic training, where the foundation starts—build Airmen skills that lead all the way through to when we're actually in combat operations.

## **YOU MENTIONED GOING OUT AND IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AIRMEN FACED IN THESE OUTER REGIONS. WHAT DID YOU FIND TO BE THE CHALLENGES AIRMEN FACED OUT THERE, OR EVEN AT HOME STATION, OR IN A TYPICAL DEPLOYED ENVIRONMENT DURING IRAQI FREEDOM AND ENDURING FREEDOM?**

Anytime you go speak with Airmen in these types of locations, there's going to be some challenges. One of the things I realized when speaking with a lot of Airmen in those deployed locations was, number one, they missed their family. They were out there for what? To defend our nation—defend America's interest. Whether it be an Airman out in the middle of Iraq or Afghanistan working in a PRT, a combat medic down range, or a civil engineer building a new taxiway or ramp, they do it because of the US interest, our national interest. And if you talked to them at any length, you realized it was really about their family. They saw that interest as being their family. That's really what drove it home; they saw value in it.

Going back to when Ms. Paula and I first joined the Air Force, I told you we didn't join the Air Force because we had a sense of patriotism. We just had to join the Air Force and serve, but it didn't take us long to change our mind-set about why we serve—and that continues today. It's a lifelong commitment; it's a lifelong obligation. It's about the national interest, and when you drill into that, it's about the families.

Now sure, there were other things our Airmen were certainly concerned about. One of the areas I found they were always concerned about was the training and how they were equipped. These are typical things that we do, but we don't often put a lot of thought to them sometimes. When they were able to take their experience back and interject it into the next Airmen deployment, it made a big difference.









Another thing about the equipment is that we would have deploying Airmen go to an Army location for the training, and the Army would issue them another two or three bags of equipment. They weren't going back to their home duty station before they deployed; so, they were dragging whatever bags they took, two to three bags themselves, plus the two to three the Army issued them that they couldn't give back. Then they'd get to Afghanistan and they'd be shoving these bags underneath their bunks. They said, "Chief, I never use this stuff? What do I do with this?"

Lt. Gen. [Loren M.] Reno [USAF] and I were able to team together and really define what it was our Airmen needed to take.<sup>4</sup> We were able to find a way so they didn't have to carry too much with them, because if you don't hit the sweet spot, you just bog them down with a lot more equipment. They needed equipment for that particular location, but we didn't want to bog the system down.

## **YOU MENTIONED THE JOINT OPERATIONS AND THE TOTAL FORCE, THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND AIR FORCE RESERVE HAVE OBVIOUSLY PLAYED A LARGE ROLE, AND HAVE SINCE 9/11. CAN YOU COMMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION THEY PLAYED THROUGHOUT?**

Yeah, it's easy. The only way and reason we can say "mission accomplished" is because of our Total Force. That's it, plain and simple.

I shared where I was exposed to our total force partners, but then again, here at Charleston AFB [South Carolina] was a completely different set of dynamics I had not been exposed to. I look back at those days now. We had the 315th Airlift Wing, I would say partners.<sup>5</sup> When I flew with the crews, I didn't know who was who. Quite honestly, it really didn't matter. We had the iron on the ramp, we had the cargo to go down range. The crew that was available was the crew that took it. That same level of professionalism is throughout our Guard and Reserve. There is no way we could have possibly said "mission accomplished" in any of these operations if we didn't have our Total Force partners. They are crucial.

The other dynamic that our Total Force partners bring is their other careers. They bring in another skill set that a lot of active duty Airmen don't see. I think we've accomplished a lot with our Total Force partners. The idea that we send young enlisted Airmen today, right out of technical school, to a Reserve unit or a Guard unit to be trained by Guardsmen says an awful lot about where we came from. It wasn't like that when I first joined in 1982.

I was just talking with an Airman the other day, and he was telling me, "Oh yeah, I've got an assignment. I am going to go to a Guard base, and I am going to do these things." He was a maintainer, and he was so excited about that, and I said, "Why are you so excited about it?" He said, "Number one, it's a brand new experience for me; so, obviously, that's exciting." Then I started asking him a few more questions. "Do you realize you're going to be trained by some of the most skilled technicians in the Air Force? And you're going to learn a lot more than just your primary AFSC. You're going to learn an awful lot more about the Air Force and what else we do." It was different when I first came in. You didn't see the blending that we have today. It just wasn't like that, and quite honestly, it was somewhat polarizing.

When I speak over here [Charleston] at the ALS [Airman Leadership School], I always ask them, "Okay, so who's in the class?" They always tell me, "I have two Reservists in here. I have 20 active duty." I always ask, "What about joint partners?" "Well, we don't have any of those Chief; we're working on that." But you really can't tell. You get up and you talk to the class, you take questions from the class, and you can't tell. They're such professionals, and they bring so much to the fight. I know our current leadership wouldn't even think of going into combat without our Total Force partners.

I would also add, we often talk about Total Force being our active duty, Reserve, and Guard. It's larger than that. What about our Department of Air Force civilians? Quite honestly, a lot of my training at the first duty station came from the civilian workforce. A gentleman by the name of Jack Hood taught me how to operate a TD25 dozer. I had no idea, but Jack knew the dozer. He taught me everything. He taught me how to respect the dozer. I will tell you, going and taking that experience that Jack taught me about operating a dozer led to me being a much more valuable member on a rapid runway repair [RRR] team, as we prepared and continued to stay ready in Korea. I can attribute that back to our civilian workforce. Early exposure led me to a deeper appreciation for my idea of Total Force, that being active duty, Guard, Reserve, and our Department of the Air Force civilians.

**IN 2009 YOU BECAME THE 16TH CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE. FOR YOU IT WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT AS YOU WERE A COMBATANT COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER AT THE TIME. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE AND WHY IT WAS A BIT DIFFERENT?**

Yeah, the experience of being selected as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is one of both excitement and a bit of anxiety. What have I gotten myself into? Am I ready? Am I prepared for this? And also, I'm ready to get it started. I applaud Gen. Schwartz and how he went about this. Not because he selected me, but because he opened the slate up to our joint team, our Air Force senior enlisted leaders that were in those joint billets. To my knowledge, that hasn't been done before. There were a couple of us from the joint community, and the Chief of Staff saw value in that and was able to bring that talent back to the Pentagon.

Then to be selected, coming from a joint position. In fact, I remember the day I was appointed. The outgoing commander, typically the MAJCOM [major command] commander, is there with the Chief of Staff, and the MAJCOM commander would take the old hat, and then the Chief of Staff would put on the jacket with the new stripes. It's somewhat tradition. If you look at the pictures of the appointment of the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, what you'll see in that picture is a four star with whites on. It seems a little different because it's never been done before. General Schwartz being a joint war fighter himself, coming out of US Transportation Command, certainly understood the value of jointness. The idea that Admiral Keating would be asked to be a part of the ceremony appointing the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I think is outstanding.

Gen. Schwartz being the absolute professional he is, I remember him telling Admiral Keating, "No, you put that jacket on." That to me says an awful lot about where we are as a joint force, that we can have a very senior Airman in our US Air Force working in a joint community, and bring them back to be the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. It says an awful lot about us as a profession.

**FROM THE TIME YOU BECAME THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, YOU LED US THROUGH THE LAST STAGES OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. IN 2011 WE PULLED OUT OF IRAQ, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE LAST STAGES OF THAT WAR? WAS THAT A DIFFICULT TRANSITION?**

It was. It was very difficult. Just like any separation, leaving a mission — It was. It was very difficult. Just like any separation, leaving a mission, you ask yourself, "Did I do everything I could have done? Are the partners that we're leaving there fully capable? Are they capable of defending themselves, defending their nation?" We obviously provided them the adequate equipment. We certainly provided them with the knowledge, the skill, the education, and the experience working side by side with US Air Force Airmen, but there is always this question of, "Okay, but ... did we do enough?" It's always kind of a nagging thing because you could have always done a little more. But when we left, personally, I think we left a very capable force—educated, certainly equipped, and with adequate experience.

What happened after that, it will always be a nagging thing to us, because we obviously know what happened. For US Airmen, it's something that will always be in the back of our mind. The fact that the US Air Force, US Airmen had been at war since the first Gulf War, we never went home per se. The US Air Force, as an institution, never went back to garrison. We had always been at war; so, I think that was the other thing. There's a little bit of, "Wow, okay, time to relax a little bit."

There is also a little angst with that. Our deployment rate, as high as it was, and as rapid as our dwell rate was sometimes—we had Airmen deploying back to back. We had Airmen with extended deployments. We had them on year-long deployments. My fear was that we'd bring them back to garrison and, quite honestly, they were going to get a little disinterested in a mission sense. The mission wasn't going to be challenging enough for them because of what they had seen. Now, granted, that was 2011. I look back at it now and there have been other things that have drawn our attention and kept us involved.

For us, as the United States, and US Airmen specifically, you can say you did your absolute best. There is no doubt that our Iraqi counterparts have the utmost respect for US Airmen. You did your absolute best, and that's all we can ask of you.



**YOU MENTIONED THE CONSTANT DEPLOYMENTS AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN THAT REGION FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS. ONE OF THE OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF THAT IS JUST THE RESILIENCY OF THE FORCE. YOU TACKLED A LOT OF THAT WHEN YOU SAW THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPREHENSIVE AIRMAN FITNESS. WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT TO PUT A LOT OF EFFORT TOWARD THAT?**

Comprehensive Airman Fitness, we borrowed that. It was actually Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. We borrowed it from the U.S. Army. If you see something that works very well, why reinvent it? We're a joint team; so, why not try to use and take what our joint partners are using? Although they had different pillars, the four pillars we placed were what our Airmen needed.

It goes a little bit further than just the Airmen. It was also the families. Because of the dwell rates the way they were, the length of deployments, the speed turning of deployments, and the different types of locations our Airmen were deploying to, I thought it was important—as did Gen. Schwartz—that we help our Airmen through predeployment, deployment, and postdeployment. Everybody wanted to look at resiliency as a postdeployment thing; it was an action that happened after you were back.

For us, the A1 Gen. [Richard Y.] Newton, and then later Gen. [Darrell D.] Jones, and the A4/7 Gen. Reno, we were able to put this together in a way that I think really helped our Airmen. Not just after deployment, but from predeployment and then throughout. That was the idea behind Comprehensive Airman Fitness. That was the idea behind resiliency. I think that team—the Air Staff team—our idea was what's best for our Airmen? We need them. We have a need for their services, whether that be a year from now or on a constant churn. We have a need for their services. How best do we help them go through that situation? How best do we help their families work through those situations? I think we found something in the Comprehensive Airman Fitness.

The other part that was a little bit alarming—and we had to do a little bit of policing up with this—was the whole idea of well, you're an Airman and you deployed, but certainly you didn't see those things you're telling me, because you're an Airman and you were behind the wire. Well, that's not true. If you look at our force that we had deployed, and continued to deploy, it's not just those Airmen behind the wire; it's the Airmen that go outside the wire every single day. It's the truck driver on a convoy. It's the PRT, it's the combat medics, and it's our EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] members. It's our civil engineers that are out there in the middle of a bare base building something up. It's our defenders that are out there on the perimeter beyond the wire of the installation.

We had a very difficult time helping others understand that for our Airmen, if they tell you they've seen something, they've seen it. They have seen the destruction of war. They have seen the difficulty of war. They have seen that, and it was a little bit challenging to get some to understand. If an Airman is telling you what they saw while they were deployed, they saw it. They saw the death and destruction, and if they tell you they need help, they need help. So for us, providing them that sense of resiliency before they deployed, and certainly on that other end postdeployment, we saw much better-equipped Airmen—and for that matter, their families.

One of the areas that Ms. Paula was able to champion was this idea of key spouses. Why do we have key spouses? The idea behind key spouses was so our families, when deployment hits or TDY hits, or maybe they just need somebody to talk to, there is somebody in that organization they can talk to or at least go to for assistance. I have to applaud Ms. Paula for, in my opinion, institutionalizing the whole idea of key spouses.

Where do we get that from? Well, there's this thing called the ombudsman program in the Navy. Why reinvent the wheel? Something that's worked throughout history, why reinvent it? Obviously, it looks different. It operates a little bit differently; it operates as Airmen and their families need it. The key spouse program, to me, is so critical to the success of our mission, the success of our Airmen. I just can't see us doing this without our key spouses. Whether that's a young technical sergeant spouse that has a lot of energy and wants to do this, or the commander's spouse, the chief's spouse, the first sergeant's spouse, it really doesn't matter—somebody that can help our families deal with those situations as they come along and help them feel a part of the team.

Ms. Paula always talks about how it wasn't until certain points in our career where she really felt she was attached to the mission. We have been in some units where you didn't always feel a part of that, at least the family didn't. But we've been in others where we still stay in touch with the squadron commander because they made us feel a part of that team. To me that is, and I hate to use the word key, but that's the key to success. So Comprehensive Airman Fitness, resiliency, key spouses, they all go hand in hand. That is something we absolutely needed to do, something we absolutely need to carry on.

**WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THESE PROGRAMS, THEY ARGUABLY SHIFTED OUR FOCUS TO WHERE IT NEEDED TO BE. WHEN YOU LOOK AT AIRMEN NOW, AFTER THESE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FOR A FEW YEARS, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE DIFFERENCE WHEN IT COMES TO RESILIENCE?**

I look at Comprehensive Airman Fitness, key spouses, and resiliency—I look at it as a whole. It’s the idea that an Airman not just tolerates the situation but actually grows out of the situation. That’s something we always talk about as Airmen. Use your experience to help you grow and help other Airmen grow.

And I refuse to call it a program, because none of them are ever a program. It was really an institution; it was really an idea, a concept of being able to have Airmen, that when faced with adversity, can work through it, but just as important can grow through it and then teach others as well.

**ONE OF YOUR OTHER FOCUS AREAS WAS DELIBERATE DEVELOPMENT, AND I KNOW YOU TOUCHED ON THIS A LITTLE BIT; BUT, A BIG ASPECT OF THAT WAS PUTTING THE RIGHT AIRMAN IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME. WE HEARD THAT A LOT, AND ENLISTED DEVELOPMENT TEAMS ARE A GOOD EXAMPLE. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHY THAT HAPPENED AND WHY WE NEEDED THAT?**

I think the reason we needed that focus at that particular time is because, if you look at the force today, we are continually going down in size. I always tell Airmen we are half the size we were when I first joined the Air Force, and it continues to go down. Our Airmen have to be knowledgeable. They have to have that education, experience, and exposure much broader than I had when I first came in the Air Force. So, for me, to focus on this whole idea of deliberate development, of making sure you have the right Airman at the right place at the right time, both for the institution and for their continued development, was so important.

This isn’t just a novel idea. It wasn’t something that was just my brain child. It was something our other formers [former CMSAFs] helped me with. They molded me with the understanding that we needed to get to this location. We always had a goal, but how do you get there? The concept of deliberate development was put into place well before my time as the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, but I was able to carry it out.

I was able to publicize it in a way that we did and start the enlisted force development panels. We were able to institutionalize having an

enlisted member in legislative affairs and in international affairs. Not just assigned there but to be an actual action officer, to go through the training, to go sit in one of the senators or congresswomen or congressmen’s office, be a valuable member to them, and then bring that back to this institution called the United States Air Force. That makes us better. That makes us better every single day.

As we continue to bring the force down, the idea of being multitasked, multiskilled, for me at least—and I think most agree with this—it lends itself to be much more professional, much more ready for whatever the combatant commander needs on the ground. So, it’s only going to make us better. It has made us better, and it will continue to make us better into the future.

**ONE OF THE PHRASES THAT WE ALL HEARD WHEN YOU WERE IN THE POSITION WAS PME NEXT. WHEN YOU WERE ESTABLISHING THAT, MOVING US IN THAT DIRECTION, WHAT DID YOU SEE AS THE VISION OF PME IN THE FUTURE?**

PME Next, let’s put it in context. Myself coming up with an idea just didn’t happen. These things had to be modeled, had to be tried. At that particular time, I had this gentleman at AETC [Air Education and Training Command] by the name of Jim Cody who was helping me model this idea of PME Next. The whole idea was that we need to make sure Airmen are getting the right PME at the right time.

I can tell you story after story of Airmen, I say Airmen in general terms, but say a master sergeant that goes to the Senior NCO Academy and retires in a year or retires in six months. What value does that have to the organization? PME Next, the idea was to provide the right training at the right time for the right person. That was the genesis of this.

And let’s put it in context. We had this little thing called sequestration that was starting, and it was budget cuts. We had this model on the shelf. Chief Cody and his team, along with us, had this on the shelf. We needed a nudge to get us there. For me, maybe a little nudge like, “Hey, I need some money from you.” You’re not going to have the exact money pool you had for PME, regardless of what it is.

It’s a concept I believe in. It’s a concept we had developed, and we needed a means to help us get it launched. Unfortunately, when you look at these kind of things, all too often people think, “Well I need some type of positive push in order to get this thing launched.” And for us, some would say we just did it because of the budget cuts. Well, we had it; we just needed something to get it launched. It just happened to come at the same time we were going through a budget situation, and we were going to have to cut some of the PME. It gave us that way ahead to provide the all-important enlisted PME to the right Airmen at the right time at the right place.



## **AND THE EDUCATION IS BETTER.**

Oh, absolutely. Again, PME Next, by doing that, we have increased the caliber of—certainly the caliber of Airmen—but we’ve increased the caliber of curriculum two- or threefold.

## **IT’S MUCH TOUGHER NOW, THEY SAY.**

Well that’s good. It makes you better. It makes you a better Airman. I hear the same thing. PME Next is tough. A lot of people thought it was just going to be a throwaway course that you can just do online and be done with it. It is an online course, that was the idea behind it, but it’s pretty tough. It’s challenging and that’s what we want. We want challenging, because if we train and educate the way we fight, we’re going to be much better warriors, much better Airmen.

## **ABSOLUTELY. I HAVE ONE FINAL QUESTION FOR YOU CHIEF, ONE WE’VE ASKED ALL THE CHIEFS. WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE AIRMEN SERVING TODAY IN 2016, AND YOU HAD TO START A SENTENCE WITH “I BELIEVE,” WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

I believe we have the absolute best-trained, best-equipped, best-led, all-volunteer, professional, combat-hardened Airmen we have ever had.

I absolutely sleep safe and sound knowing that our Airmen are on sentry. If we look at the legacy of all those that have gone before us, we have built it up to the point where the next generation is going to be even better. Not that I made it better, but I will tell you the next generation is absolutely better. I couldn’t be prouder than I am of the Airmen who serve today and the Airmen who will serve in the future.







## CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE **JAMES A. CODY**

**JANUARY 24, 2013 - FEBRUARY 17, 2017**

James Cody was born on 19 June 1965, and raised in Lakeville, Massachusetts. Like many who live along the northeastern coast, he developed a fondness for fishing and sailing. In high school he was an athlete, excelling in track and field, but his goal was always clear: he would follow in his father's footsteps and join the Massachusetts State Police. He joined the Air Force as a stop gap, something he could do until he became old enough to apply for the police force. But once he joined, he fell in love—with a fellow Airman and the Air Force—and his goals changed.

Cody became an air traffic controller, and in technical training, he met his future wife and fellow Airman, Athena. They were both assigned to Ramstein Air Base, Germany and quickly became well known in the air traffic controller community. They were hard workers, and well-trained and professional Airmen. They excelled in each assignment, serving at Pease Air Force Base (AFB), New Hampshire; Vandenberg AFB, California; Osan Air Base, Korea; Incirlik Air Base, Turkey;

Langley AFB, Virginia; and many other installations. In 2005, Chief Cody stepped away from air traffic control to become a command chief, serving thereafter at the expeditionary task force, wing, numbered air force and major command levels.

In January 2013, General Mark A. Welsh III made Cody the 17th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). Immediately upon assuming the position, Chief Cody committed to the continued evolution of the enlisted force. He identified various policies and processes, and with the support of the Air Force Chief of Staff and Enlisted Board of Directors (EBOD) moved each of them forward to ensure the enlisted force was prepared for future challenges.<sup>1</sup> Among the changes were a new enlisted evaluation system and weighted airman promotion system. He also evolved enlisted professional military education (EPME) and introduced Airmen's Week at basic military training (BMT). He retired from the Air Force on 17 February 2017 after more than 32 years of service.

In January 2017 as his tenure was coming to a close, Cody sat down for an interview to discuss his Air Force career and his time as the CMSAF. During the interview he talked about serving with Athena as a join-spouse couple, the challenges of evolving an enlisted evaluation system, and the reasons behind Airmen's Week and changes to EPME. The following are edited experts from the conversation.

## **ALRIGHT CHIEF, WELL YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE IN 1984. AS I UNDERSTAND, THAT WAS RIGHT OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL. WHAT PUSHED YOU TO JOIN THE AIR FORCE THEN?**

I came in the Air Force to get out of the Air Force, to be honest with you. I was very much focused on becoming a state trooper in Massachusetts. That's what my dad had done, and what I wanted to do. I was tapped and ready to go to college. I had applied and been accepted, but as I got closer to graduation, like a lot of young people, I decided I didn't want to do that. I just wanted to go in the state police. Despite some objections from my parents, who were pushing me to go to college, I decided to join the Air Force. I figured I'd do this for four years. I would get on a state police list in that four years and then get out and go back home. That's what pushed me to join. This was to do something, while I waited to do something else.

## **I GUESS THE NEXT QUESTION IS WHAT CHANGED, BECAUSE OBVIOUSLY THAT DIDN'T PAN OUT.**

I think what changed is I came in the Air Force. I don't come from a military background, nor did I have any family members who were serving in the military. My stepdad was in World War II, I had an uncle who was a pilot, but I just didn't have that exposure. I came in the Air Force and was exposed to different people, the different aspects of life. We went to Germany. Athena and I got married. We had our son. Even then, I think for a fairly significant period of time we both planned on separating, and neither one of us had these great aspirations of making the Air Force a career.

It really changed when it was time to get out. We were at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire. This is 1988–1989 time frame. They did a base realignment and closure [BRAC], and were closing Pease. Athena and I were working in the tower and RAPCON [radar approach control system] there, as air traffic controllers. We were dual rated, and they came to several of us and offered us the opportunity to get out. At that time during BRAC, even if you had retainability, if you wanted to get out, you could get out.<sup>2</sup> They would rather not move you. The Air Force said we could get out, and the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] said they would hire us the next day to stay right there. Just take the uniform off. Certainly, as you'd expect, we talked with our families about it. Our families didn't have that strong military background; so, they were like,

“Heck yeah. Get out.” We were only 2½ hours away from where I grew up at that point. That's when Athena and I talked and asked ourselves, “Okay, what are we going to do?”

Initially I would tell you we were leaning towards getting out and just working through the logistics of that. That's when we started talking about all the things we loved about the Air Force. We liked our job. We liked air traffic control, but we loved being Airmen in the Air Force. We loved what it represented, how it made us feel, the people that we were doing it with. That started moving us in this direction, and we decided we we're going to stay in and do this for a career.

## **YOU MENTIONED ATHENA. OBVIOUSLY SHE HAS HAD A BIG INFLUENCE IN YOUR CAREER. I KNOW YOU MET HER VERY EARLY IN YOUR CAREER, I BELIEVE AT TECH SCHOOL [TECHNICAL TRAINING SCHOOL] IS THAT RIGHT?**

Yeah, we did. We met at tech school. Athena was about a month ahead of me coming in the service. I joined in November. She joined in October. We were both air traffic controllers. We met each other the very first night that I arrived at Keesler [AFB, Mississippi], for tech school. It was New Year's Eve 1984 that I arrived there. I met her that evening. We just met. No real thing beyond that. She was ahead of me. Obviously, through school we got to know each other. As we were going through school we became really good friends. That friendship became a lot more, and we ended up both going to Germany.

She was supposed to go to Keesler Tower. I was going to Tyndall [AFB, Florida], which was supposed to be my first assignment. They had a program back then where they were trying to get people into radar approach control facilities. They came to our class towards the end, and they asked if we wanted to go to a RAPCON. If you wanted to go overseas for three years for an extended long tour as a single person, you were guaranteed a RAPCON assignment. I jumped on that and said, “Yeah, I want to do that.” Then they ended up closing Keesler Tower because they were going to do some renovations on it. They went back to Athena and offered her an assignment to Germany. She had been an exchange student over there when she was in high school, so she decided to go. Here our paths are now both going to Germany. A little over a year later we were married.

## **HOW ABOUT THAT. I KNOW SHE HAD A GREAT CAREER HERSELF.**

She had a phenomenal career. I wouldn't be sitting her today if it weren't for Athena. Athena is a retired chief, did a little over 26 years on active duty, all that but one year as an air traffic controller—one year as a group superintendent. A phenomenal career. If I were going to give anybody the majority of credit for any success I've had, it's certainly going to be her.



## WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU TWO FACED AS A JOIN-SPOUSE COUPLE?<sup>3</sup>

I think in the beginning, a lot of it came down to the perceptions of others. You know, you're an independent Airman. You come in the Air Force, put the uniform on, and you're an Airman in your own right. Although, especially when you're younger, people don't think of you that way. Certainly, people who are probably old enough to be your parents are looking at you in a different way. What one does affects the view of the other. We were fortunate. We weren't bad Airmen. We were good Airmen working hard; so, we had good reputations. There were always concerns. We couldn't work together, couldn't work in the same facility. People were always worried about stuff like that, especially when we were young. We, over time, gained a reputation that we were very professional. We never called each other by our first names. We always used either our operating initials or Airman so-and-so. We made a concerted effort to maintain a very professional relationship at work. Over time, it became less of a factor. Air traffic control is not that big of a community. Your reputations will always precede you. I think that worked to our advantage over time.

The challenge was assignments. I went on a remote assignment without her because a join-spouse assignment just wasn't going to happen. We met back up in Turkey. Those things become a challenge, and certainly as we progressed in rank, it became even a greater challenge because there are less positions at the more senior enlisted ranks in air traffic control facilities. That really was the impetus behind me leaving air traffic control. It was either one of us get out of the military, or one of us leave air traffic control. I was an air traffic control functional at Air Combat Command. Athena was going to make chief. That was going to be challenging if she couldn't get those positions she needed for her own development. I ended up getting on the command chief list and getting hired on that. We feel fortunate that, throughout our career, we could do it. It doesn't mean there weren't many separations. We had our remote assignments, deployments, and PCSs [permanent change of station] moves that didn't align up exactly on time. In the long run, when you think about 26 years in uniform together, 31 years married together in the military, we're pretty fortunate and blessed.

## YOU TWO WERE BOTH YOUNG AIRMEN WHEN THE AIR FORCE WENT FROM THE AIRMAN PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) TO THE ENLISTED PERFORMANCE REPORT (EPR).<sup>4</sup> WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT THE FEELINGS OF AIRMEN AS WE WENT THROUGH THAT TRANSITION?

That hit both Athena and I. We were brand new staff sergeants when that transition took place. Chief [James C.] Binnicker, our Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force at that time, made this transition. There was much of the same exact discussion that we had as we went through this recent change and evolution that we did over the last four years.<sup>5</sup> What happened was they came up with a new form. It detailed things out differently, dramatically differently in the descriptions, to try to control inflation.

I've talked with many of my predecessors on this subject. You know, we didn't have any of the communication mediums we use today. We didn't have social media. None of us had computers on our desks. We weren't going to the Internet. If the information didn't come down in some written format that you were reading or somebody briefed you, it was just the unknown.

The reality is they did discuss having some level of quotas, but they couldn't agree on that at the time. When they rolled that out, they established expectations. Basically, the expectations were that only one person in any work center would get the highest rating: a five. They didn't put any numbers or restrictions to it, they just wrote out this generalized statement of expectations. Right off the get go, people did try to comply with that. Senior leaders put out directives and expectations. It personally affected me and Athena. It had everything to do with timing. I certainly wasn't a better Airman than Athena, but timing-wise during that transition, when we were getting our first EPRs, I was ahead with my training. I had already completed all my training; so, I got one of those fives, and because Athena was in training and not fully upgraded in the opposite facility, she got a four, because there was only going to be one five for staff sergeants. That was obviously a sting for her, a sting for us, but certainly personally and professionally for her because, again, I wasn't a better Airman than her or a better supervisor. Quite the contrary.

That situation took place in all kinds of work centers. And because there was such an uproar and there wasn't a strong commitment from the beginning that we would put any type of quotas on it, we almost immediately walked away from that in the first year. Six months to a year later, we went away from it and basically said there were no expectations, just follow the instruction. We immediately transitioned right back to where we were, and that is complete inflation. The vast majority of Airmen received the top rating. It didn't have the value it intended to have on performance. Every former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force will acknowledge that that was the case, and there were attempts to look at the system. There were attempts to see how we could rein it in. We certainly made tweaks on the form over

time and changed the wording, but nothing fundamentally changed with the construction of it. The system had been inflated for decades. The force had been frustrated with it, and it affected us personally as Airmen. It wasn't about performance.

## **HOW MUCH DID THAT EXPERIENCE INFLUENCE YOUR APPROACH TO THE CHANGES OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS?**

I think we learned lessons from those original discussions. I had a great opportunity before Chief Binnicker passed away to sit down with him on multiple occasions and talk about this. As the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force that led us through the transition from APRs to EPRs, he gave me a lot of good counsel on how to go through this and how to not fall into the traps that they did.

First and foremost, he told me that if we don't somehow put restrictions on it—if we don't put a force distribution quota or some type of limit on how many people can be rated at the very top end as it would relate to their advancement abilities—then don't change anything. He said we would just go through a lot of churn and it wouldn't change anything. That was a guiding principle we had as we worked through this, once [Chief of Staff] Gen. [Mark A.] Welsh gave us the direction to go out and make sure performance counted. He gave it to me and the EBOD to work. Again, I had a lot of dialogue with several of the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force on this, gaining their perspectives and understanding how they viewed it.

Ultimately, the team that was in the seat during my tenure came up with what we have now. I think we've hit it where it needs to be today, to be honest with you. The force was frustrated. The force was demanding a change. I'm not sure they were prepared for that change. It's easy to cast the stone at what you're doing. And there were countless challenges with the rollout of the new system. I think all the necessary elements were there in the previous system, in writing in the AFI [Air Force Instruction], but it just didn't have the control measures to ensure it worked as planned the first time out. Human nature being what it is, people are going to gravitate towards inflation. It's just what people do. It's not because they're bad people. It's because the easiest thing to do is to say somebody's doing good. The easiest thing to do is to let somebody else make the decision. The hard thing to do is to tell the Air Force who's next from your perspective.

## **A MAJOR CHANGE LIKE THAT REQUIRES STRONG LEADERSHIP. I'M SURE THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER, ESPECIALLY AS A YOUNGER NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER (NCO) YOU WERE IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THOSE EXPERIENCES THAT INFLUENCED THE WAY YOU LED AS A COMMAND CHIEF, OR AS THE CMSAF?**

I tell this story a lot. It was a lesson I was fortunate to learn early in my career, by somebody that is just a dear friend, a brother, to me. He was my first trainer at Ramstein Air Base, then subsequently became one of my supervisors. Then he was my best man when Athena and I got married. That's retired MSgt Dennis Larsen. I probably wouldn't even be in the Air Force if he wasn't sitting there giving me some direction as a very young Airman.

We went to Pease together. It was the first time I was a watch supervisor, which is a little different than frontline supervisor. It's different than being a reporting official for somebody and providing feedback and setting expectations. This is about how you run a crew. You have a crew of air traffic controllers. You're on the top line. You assign positions, make sure things are going right—that type of thing. Back then I didn't have the awareness of how the whole process works, which I would gain years later. They would put the most junior people on the top line, and the more senior people would be in the coordinator positions, working the positions and training people because they had greater experience. They would put inexperienced people on the top line to gain that experience.

What I learned early on is, one, I thought I was the best air traffic controller out there, like a lot of our young Airmen do. You can be pretty hung up on yourself when you're younger sometimes. Maybe not everybody, but I self-admit that I certainly felt that way about myself. I knew how to do things. I had learned the books; I understood the things that I thought were right, and that's how I did things. And if you didn't do it that way, you were wrong. I didn't have the maturity or the temperament, I guess, and the confidence to be honest with you, in myself that it could be done any other way. If people weren't doing things the way I thought they needed to be done, I'd be quick to tell them to do it the way I wanted them to do it. It didn't necessarily mean the way they were doing it was wrong, but in my mind, it was. As I was trying to get some experience, and the team was helping me get experience as a supervisor, I was acting like that.

One night after a swing shift, which means we got off at 11 o'clock at night, we were in the parking lot and my buddy Dennis, DL, called out to me. He was a tech sergeant, and I was a staff sergeant. He said, "Hey, CY. I need to talk to you." I was like, "Yeah, what's up?" I was thinking this was a normal, friendly conversation. He said, "You better just knock it off, or they're gonna kill you." I was totally oblivious, which probably makes this even sadder. I was oblivious to what he was talking about. He basically goes



on to tell me, chapter and verse, how I was just being a tyrant. I was not giving anybody any breathing room. I was all over everybody's back, and they were tired of it. He said if I didn't stop it, and if I didn't start letting them do their job and just take care of the stuff I needed to take care of on the top line, then they were going to beat me. They might have back then. They could have got to that point of frustration where they might have taken me in the back there and given me a beat down just because they were fed up with me. I say that in jest of course.

I fought him on it, as you can imagine, as a young person. I gave him every excuse and told him how the things I was doing were right. I was proud of myself. At least I thought I was. I thought I was doing it right. I fought back on him, and I was frustrated. One, because I was getting negative feedback that I didn't want or think I deserved, and two, I was getting it from my friend. It wasn't that it was a tech sergeant giving me feedback, it was somebody I cared about and I thought cared about me. Of course, he did. That's why he was giving it, but I didn't see it that way at the time.

I had about a 30-minute ride home. After the adrenaline from that interaction settled down—and I can remember this day like it was yesterday, and I always have—I started to reflect on what just happened. After I got through my own denial phase by myself and I started to decompress a little bit and calm down, I started to think about what he was saying. The moment that solidified in me that I needed to listen to what he was saying and not what I was feeling about it, was the fact that I had another swing shift the next day. As I was thinking about this, I thought to myself, “Okay, so I'm pissed at my buddy Dennis, and I'm pissed that I got this feedback, but now I have to somehow muster up and go back into that RAPCON and take the top line with 15 people, and now I know what they think of me.” I thought they were thinking one thing about me, then I understood they thought something dramatically different. That was hard.

What I learned from that is, this just isn't about you. This whole idea of supervising people, being in leadership roles, it isn't about you. It's about making sure the people you have the privilege of leading can be successful. Your role is to give them the tools they need to do the job that they're being asked to do. In turn, that's where your success will fold out, is in their success. I share that as a lesson I've constantly tried to remind myself. I can honestly say that even though I learned that lesson, and I was fortunate to learn it very early in my career, I didn't always heed that advice. I'm still a human being. I'm still an emotional being like anybody else, but at some given point, I always reflected on that experience. That's just one. I could give you countless different leadership examples that I've learned, good and bad, from people. That was the foundational lesson for me—a basic principle of what is important when it comes to leadership, and a little bit of self-reflection early on.

## **A FEW YEARS LATER YOU WERE STATIONED AT INCIRLIK AIR BASE IN TURKEY. I BELIEVE THAT WAS IN THE MID-90S. IT WAS AFTER DESERT STORM AND DESERT SHIELD, BUT THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A LOT GOING ON IN TURKEY. OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT<sup>6</sup> OPERATED OUT OF THERE, AND OF COURSE IT THEN TRANSITIONED TO OPERATION NORTHERN WATCH.<sup>7</sup> WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE SENTIMENT AND FEELING OF AIRMEN AT THAT TIME?**

Where we were, I don't know that we thought about war in the way we think about it post 9/11. It was a post-Desert Storm/Desert Shield environment. It wasn't completely uncontested, but there wasn't nearly the level of combat engagement that we had post 9/11. We were over there in Turkey, and we had combat missions going up every day, unless Turkey decided we couldn't fly that day so they could do some of their own stuff. I think the sentiment was things had changed dramatically from the Cold War, but what did that mean? I don't know that we fully appreciated it. We weren't growing as an Air Force then. We were still probably getting smaller and smaller. I know we were, because when I was in Korea, just prior to Turkey, we did some major drawdowns. We were still doing operations over there, and we had a sense that we were transitioning to a constant presence in that region—like what happened after the Korean War. The region was going to be another footprint that we had. We were going to be in this region, and it was going to be normal day-to-day business. There will be some missions, but mostly we would get back into an organize, train, and equip mode.

We did have a lot of things going on. At this stage of the game, I was a technical sergeant—a watch supervisor getting into the training aspect of what we were doing as air traffic controllers.

Things were changing. There were deployments. There were a lot of missions going on in Turkey, but we still had this idea that we were going to be normalizing a bit.

## **HOW DID THAT CHANGE AFTER 9/11?**

I think everything changed after 9/11. We go into stop loss.<sup>8</sup> What are we going to do? What is our response going to be? What does this mean to the country? How are we going to respond? Is it going to be an initial one-time big response and then this is over? To a degree, I think based on history that's how the force would have fought it. We would have thought, “Okay, we're going to find out who this enemy is. We're going to thwart this enemy, and then we'll get back to where we are today in the region.” The reality was that this was a much more complex enemy than we thought, and a much more dynamic environment to fight in. We had to step back and realize what we were good at, what we were capable of, and where [we] lacked as an Air Force. Certainly, my predecessors would have a better

vantage point of everything that was going on in the Air Force to ensure we were prepared and ready to respond. This goes back to [CMSAF #13 Jim] Finch's, [CMSAF #14 Gerald] Murray's, and [CMSAF #15 Rod] McKinley's timelines.

When I think about that, we weren't an expeditionary force to the degree that we needed to be an expeditionary force. We didn't have all the skill sets refined the way we needed them to be refined. I think our special operators were the most prepared, but even they weren't fully prepared for what our nation was asking them to do. The dramatic evolution of all of that has been remarkable. It's hard to characterize it fully. I would say the force was somewhat in shock. We had to ask ourselves, what does it mean to be an Airman? Things just dramatically started to evolve and it took our focus in a different direction.

## **LET'S FAST FORWARD A LITTLE BIT. YOU LATER BECAME A COMMAND CHIEF AND THEN SERVED AS THE 18TH AIR FORCE COMMAND CHIEF. YOU WERE THERE IN 2010 WHEN THE EARTHQUAKE HIT HAITI.<sup>9</sup> MANY AIRMEN FROM 18TH AIR FORCE AND AIR MOBILITY COMMAND RESPONDED THROUGH OPERATION UNIFIED RESPONSE, AND I KNOW YOU WENT DOWN THERE AS WELL.<sup>10</sup>**

Yep, we went down there.

## **CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE AND WHAT THOSE AIRMEN SHOWED YOU AT THAT TIME?**

This was unique for us in a way and a little unique for me because of where I started out as a command chief. I started out at the 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force [EMTF]. There were two EMTFs, the 15th was on the West Coast, and the 21st was on the East Coast. They used to be numbered air forces, the 15th Air Force and 21st Air Force, but the Air Force is constantly evolving and changing and they were turned into expeditionary mobility task forces that had contingency response wings that fell underneath them, which then had contingency response groups. The groups had air mobility squadrons in the Pacific and European theaters that fell underneath them. The contingency response wings and contingency response groups were set up to respond with quick reaction forces from a mobility standpoint. We could go in there, open the base, and start running mobility operations. I saw that when I was in the EMTF.

The response to the earthquake in Haiti was a different thing because it wasn't on American soil. We were going into another country. There were many different countries coming in at the same time—all there to aid the nation of Haiti. It was much different than responding to a natural disaster in your own country. What I saw was that team of Airmen displaying a tremendous set of skills. We got into Haiti immediately. We

brought in our mobility assets. We got the airfield open. We secured the airfield. We started working the logistics with all the nongovernmental organizations that were trying to get into the country to bring aid and support. We coordinated that with a very small team of Airmen on the ground. The Army came in also, and many other folks came in after that. But we gained access and control very quickly to that airfield. Opening that airfield was the beginning of bringing hope back to that country that was just devastated, just devastated.

The 12th Air Force command chief at the time, Layton Clark, and I went down there just before the Super Bowl that year and spent time with our Airmen. You can't even describe the destruction. The ability of our team to get in there and take the lead from a global standpoint was pretty impressive. We brought hope and light. I'll tell you a story about how impressive our Airmen are.

You can imagine that things were getting desperate there. The people knew there was food and water on the airfield. It was a logistical challenge to distribute the food and water in a safe and effective manner. It took a little bit of time to stand things up. [Maj Gen Darryl Burke], who is the AFDW [Air Force District of Washington] commander was down there as part of the joint task force at the time.

We wanted to help them out, but we were working with a sovereign country and they needed to have a lot of say in how that took place. Every day the situation intensified more and more, especially as the people saw the supplies on the airfield that we had not distributed to the different areas. There were a few altercations, and there were some peacekeepers there. Our role was not to engage with any of the Haitian people in any combative way, but there were certainly some citizens there that acted aggressively out of frustration.

We had two young Airmen defenders, two strippers that were guarding one of the gates. As you can imagine, the access to the airfield was open prior to our arrival; so, trying to secure the airfield in this situation was challenging. The gates were very flimsy. It was difficult to close things off. And these two Airmen started to get rushed. Basically, the crowd said, "We're coming on." We had two defenders with a Humvee guarding the gate. They were carrying loaded weapons, but they were not cleared to engage and fire back. These two young defenders had the presence of mind to not escalate but deescalate the situation. They thought quickly enough, and moved quickly enough, to close the gates just enough so they could block the way. One of them closed the gates and the other got in the Humvee and drove it and secured the gate with the Humvee as the blockade behind the gate, which stopped the people from coming on. Really, if they had come through that gate, they would have gotten onto the airfield, and we would have had to let them take everything.

That's the kind of Airmen we have. They're just innovative and have the presence of mind to act appropriately in those situations, and they are trained for that. That's what we could do as part of 18th Air Force. That ability to bring in that life-sustaining supplies was amazing.











**A COUPLE YEARS LATER YOU WERE THE COMMAND CHIEF AT AIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMAND (AETC), WHICH WAS AROUND THE TIME WHEN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE REPEALED DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL.<sup>11</sup> I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THAT TRANSITION AND THE SENTIMENT OF AIRMEN AT THAT TIME.**

Sometimes it's much ado about nothing. You can appreciate that. I say that with a great sense of respect for the way we went through it and the challenges some people felt might exist versus what did exist. For years prior to the repeal, there was a large contingent of folks that didn't like that we had a rule like that. The idea that you would tell somebody "don't tell us something" smacks in the face of what we believe. I think we worked through it in a very methodical way. We educated the force to be respectful of the implications of a decision like that, when you have a policy such as we had. If you didn't have that policy, it's a different discussion. Society was evolving, along with perceptions and feelings on this. I think what we underestimated as an Air Force, which worked to our advantage to a degree, was that most of the force was younger. This was a nonissue for them. It was probably a greater concern for those that had been in the service longer.

There is also the religious aspect of this, people have strong beliefs. We tried to step through all of that as the Department of Defense in a very respectful manner. The fact is people have strong convictions one way or the other, and it can be challenging. I think as an institution, as the Department of Defense, we took the right approach and continued to move forward to where we sit today.

Here's the bottom line. If you can serve and you can do the mission that the military needs you to do, then you should have the opportunity to serve. Like I said, I think we learned some things along the way. I think there was greater concern than necessary in some areas. The day changed, and things changed—and it was great for those Airmen because they no longer had to live a separate life to serve their country. It was right to give them that ability to freely and openly be who they are. I think that's right for everybody, and I think the force is good with that, just as society is.

**THE REPEAL OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL SEEMED TO LEAD TO A GREATER FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, AND AS YOU MENTIONED THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CONTINUES TO GROW ON THAT. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT'S SUCH A SIGNIFICANT FOCUS?**

I think a lot of people are uncomfortable talking about diversity. For all the obvious reasons—it can be emotional. It can be hard sometimes to say the right thing and have people not take it the wrong way. That's why people get scared talking about it.

If you look at the aggregated definition of diversity, it doesn't just talk about gender, race, or religion. It talks about everything. It talks about socioeconomic background, education, and more. It's a plethora of things that would fall under the broad definition of diversity. The challenge is most people are more narrowly focused when they think about diversity. They think about gender. They think about race. They may think about religion. They may think about heterosexual or homosexual. They tend to categorize people a bit more specifically than when you talk about education and when you talk about socioeconomic background.

It comes down to the acknowledgement that there is phenomenal strength in diversity, meaning the varied perspectives that everybody would bring to the table. The broadest of definitions of that is important. It's proven time and time again to be a huge strength to any organization, beyond just the United States Air Force and the Department of Defense. If you consider the most diverse organizations, you can see a level of capacity and capability that exceeds those that are not diverse. If everybody is thinking the same, then everybody is kumbaya-ing to the same answer, and that may be the absolute wrong answer. When you bring in these diverse groups of people with different backgrounds, different upbringings, and different perspectives and realize that we need to reflect society, you start to appreciate that.

I do think we still must acknowledge that while we can all—from an enlightened perspective—appreciate that broad definition of diversity, that is not how we are measured every day. We are measured in a different way. That is, if the pictures on the wall don't look like the force that is out there in the field, then we're not diverse—even though we might be by that broad definition. We could be very diverse. We could have 15 people that look identical to me, and we could be very diverse. The only thing that wouldn't be diverse is the fact that we look like each other. The problem is you will probably not be measured by that in most circumstances. If there is not a diverse picture of women, African-Americans, Hispanics—everything that makes up the strength of our Air Force—and if you can't see yourself as a young Airman, then it doesn't feel like an organization that is inclusive and is leveraging the diversity and strength that we bring.

I believe we are consistently and continually making strides in that direction, but by no means are we there. We have work to do. Secretary [of Defense Deborah Lee] James has pushed this forward. Gen. Welsh did the same. Gen. [David L.] Goldfein has, and their predecessors for sure. It's incremental advancement in this area, but the idea that we're there? We're not there. A tremendous amount of strength rests there; that's an absolute. There's just no question about it.

**YOU WERE SELECTED AS THE 17TH CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IN NOVEMBER 2012 AND BEGAN THE POSITION IN JANUARY 2013. TWO MONTHS LATER, SEQUESTRATION WENT INTO EFFECT.<sup>12</sup> WHAT WAS THE SENTIMENT IN THE PENTAGON AT THAT TIME, AND PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT WAS THE FEELING AMONG THE FORCE?**

I think, for the most part, the initial feeling for the force was anxiety, but nothing else because, to be honest with you, for most Airmen on a day-to-day basis not much changed. In 2014, a lot changed. We became smaller. We started to feel the overall impact of the budget cuts.

I think in the Pentagon it created a sense of urgency. You know, "Holy smokes, what does this mean, not just to today but to the future?" The Secretary of Defense, with the Chairman and the other Joint Chiefs were thinking, "Okay, what are we going to do here?" We were a busy, busy military, and the demand signal from combatant commanders wasn't decreasing. We were still heavily engaged globally and that was not slowing down. How are we going to do all that with the type of budget we're talking about? It created a sense of stress, anxiety, and disbelief.

Initially there was a lot of disbelief. I can tell you, when I first came into the job and was making my first office calls with our elected officials and those on the staff, the sentiment was clear: "We will not go into sequestration. It's not going to happen." I can't tell you how many people told me that. "It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen." Then bam, it happened. It caught us all off guard.

It certainly needs to be repealed. It certainly continues to have a big impact on our Air Force, although getting the two-year bipartisan budget agreements gives us a little bit of stability, but it by no means is the way to run an organization like this. We must be able to plan through a fiscal year defense plan. We must have 20- and 30-year visions and plan how our Air Force is going to look into the future. Without some type of budget certainty, it makes it very challenging.

**DESPITE THOSE CHALLENGES, YOU STILL MOVED THE ENLISTED FORCE FORWARD IN MANY DIFFERENT AREAS. WE TALKED ABOUT THE CHANGES TO THE EPRS. YOU ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED THE WEIGHTED AIRMAN PROMOTION SYSTEM (WAPS). WHEN DID YOU KNOW THAT WAS ALSO GOING TO BE SOMETHING YOU TOOK ON?**

The reality is the conversation took place long before I came into the position. It's taken place with all my predecessors. Chief [CMSAF #16 Jim] Roy really did want to get after this. He did, but given his time and tenure when Gen. Welsh became the Chief of Staff, he deliberately talked with Gen. Welsh and said, "It needs to be somebody that can take this on and try to get us all the way through this." They made the conscious decision that it would be the 17th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force that took this on because they only had a little over six months together.

It was one of the first things that Gen. Welsh and I talked about. He said, "Performance has got to count, and we've got to get the evaluation system and the promotion system moving in the right direction." I had that initial conversation with him, and his intent was that this challenge should be given to the senior enlisted leadership of the Air Force, not just advising but completely taking it on and owning it. We took it on from the beginning, and then as we got into the implementation, the policy, and the logistics part of it we brought back in the A1 community, and they helped us work through that.<sup>13</sup>

I think Airmen were surprised initially. They had been saying we needed to change it for years. The typical response had been, "We've got a good system. Just do it right." I've said that many times, and I believed it. It was a good system if you did it right. The problem is we weren't doing it right. We had to acknowledge that we were never going to do it right. I think we put people back on their heels a little bit, especially those Airmen that came at us hard and said we needed to fix it. When we said, "Yeah, you're right, and we're going to change it," they were like, "Okay, what do I do with that?"

It took some time for us to do it right. I think there was a little bit of euphoria at first. Then they wanted details. Then there was disbelief. Then there was skepticism. Then there were the armchair quarterbacks poking holes in it. We went through all that, and there will always be a small part of that. By and large, we took on some big things and made some big changes. Certainly, things could have been done differently along the way. I don't know that there's anything anybody did that couldn't have been done somewhat differently. I don't know which ones you'd pick and what effect they would have, but you could certainly have dialogue about them.



I am very confident we are where we need to be and have hit the mark on what Gen. Welsh asked us to do. I do think we are serving the force better. I do think there's some legitimacy behind it, and we're gaining confidence with it daily. I think it's at a place now where, if we're smart, and if we continue to keep our finger on it and evolve it over time, we won't find ourselves in the same situation.

I talked often with the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force, and I value their perspectives and insight on this more than most. I asked all of them, "Why did you leave it for us? This is not a new problem." To be honest with you, they all wanted to get after it. To a one, they would have liked to have gotten after it. They recognized the challenges with it. They tried to, but from a timing standpoint with all the other things that were going on in the Air Force, it just didn't seem like the right time. I think we were at the point where there was never going to be a good time. This is just what it is. You're either going to get after these things and fix them or you're never going to fix them. At some given point, you have come to the realization that it's time.

We took this on as an Air Force. I just happened to be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force when we did it. It was the entire force that worked through this and will continue to work through this.

## **YOU ALSO INTRODUCED DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIAL DUTIES.<sup>14</sup> WE'VE BEEN INTO THAT FOR A WHILE NOW. WHY DID YOU FEEL THAT WAS IMPORTANT?**

Developmental special duties was something I had been working on the entire time I was at Air Education and Training Command. We initially looked at this for the technical training instructors, who I had responsibility and oversight for, from a broad perspective, as the command chief for Air Education and Training Command. When I got to the command, one of the very first things the chiefs brought to me was that we weren't getting the instructors we needed for the pipeline [initial skills training] courses. In some career fields, we were getting the most eligible nonvolunteers. It was creating a great challenge for them to produce because they couldn't put some of their Airmen on the podium to teach. They didn't meet some of the requirements to be on the podium.

You can obviously see how that's a real disconnect. We worked for two years with Chief Roy, the EBOD, and the Air Staff to implement a version of this, a nomination process for a developmental special duty with some deliberate action to select folks. I don't want to say it languished because I worked on it the entire time I was there, but I was just not able to get it over the finish line. I brought that with me into the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force position and said, "Hey, we still need to look at this."

At the same time, we had the terrible, horrific situation that came to light at basic military training, with a very small percentage of our MTIs [military training instructors].<sup>15</sup> It was certainly not a reflection or representation of our MTIs in any way, shape, or form. There was a very, very, very small contingent of folks that were doing some pretty terrible things. Unfortunately, that community in our Air Force, by the behaviors of a very small contingent of people, tarnished our reputation.

When we did the forensics on that, and when we looked at all the investigations that were done as result, we realized we didn't have a process in place to ensure we had our top Airmen in those positions. We had a very high level of confidence that we had great NCOs down there, and they were performing exceptionally well—but we knew we could do better.

I think that was the tipping point. I was then able to work with the EBOD and look at these developmental special duties. We looked at all special duties, but decided which ones would require a nominative process. We worked with the Air Staff to come up with a better process that included direct involvement by commanders, and we raised the criteria. We worked with the functional communities to make sure we had the right Airmen at the right time in their careers serving in these developmental positions.

I think our confidence level has risen dramatically. I certainly know we're manning those positions at the highest levels we've ever done historically. While we haven't completely eliminated poor behavior by everybody, the numbers are very, very, very small. They're not in the same areas we had concerns with previously.

## **YOU WERE ALSO THE CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE THAT INTRODUCED THE TERM "BLENDED LEARNING" INTO AN AIRMAN'S LEXICON.**

Yeah, blended learning. That could be debated, whether it was blended learning or not. Depends on who you're talking to.

## **WHAT WAS THE VALUE OF GOING TO A BLENDED LEARNING MODEL, WHERE NOW AIRMEN HAVE TWO DIFFERENT PORTIONS OF PME: THE DISTANCE-LEARNING PORTION FOLLOWED BY AN IN-RESIDENCE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE?**

It was something we had been working on prior to my tenure as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. It's the continued evolution of how we deliver education. We had been working on this model for quite some time. As the command chief for AETC, I had presented the blended learning model. Chief Roy was very focused on that. The senior enlisted leaders that made up the EBOD at the time, of which I was one, were all very engaged in this. Over the last few years, we moved all the way through this. It was always going to be a long transition that came in phases.

Essentially, as we continued to look at the professionalization of the force, the development of the force, it was clear our behaviors and actions were not necessarily aligned. We would tell people they had to do a distance-learning course, only to later send them to an in-residence course that taught the same material. That's not valuing and respecting people's time, for one thing. Everybody doesn't want to do that.

The blended learning model allowed us to deliver foundational knowledge that every Airman could receive based on their year group, just continuing education. It wasn't tethered to an Airman's actual grade but how long have they had been in the service. If you've been in the service this long, this is what you should know about our Air Force. This is going to help you at your current rank or help you advance to the next rank.

Then later, Airmen would be in a window for in-residence education. When we sent Airmen to school, we were not going to reteach them anything. Everybody that came in would have that same level of foundational knowledge, and we would provide a leadership experience that isn't instructor-centric. It's not an instructor standing at a podium reading to you. It's an Airman coming in with everybody else that has the same level of knowledge. Now an instructor is facilitating an experience that brings them all to a higher level of understanding and education. We could deliver it to more people in a very consistent manner across the force.

That was the essence of the blended learning model and why we made that decision. I think you could debate with some whether they would consider it blended or not. It's a two-part process. We will give you the foundational information in distance learning. We will say you have met the requirements to continue to advance once you've done your distance learning, but there's a 100-percent commitment to provide a 100-percent opportunity for people to attend the in-residence experience. That doesn't mean everybody will. Nobody will ever go to every level of PME, just because of circumstances. It's no different than under the previous system. The opportunity is still there.

It's a model that you can find in every other major university. You go to any college, even as a full-time in-resident student, and you are going to take some distance learning. You're going to do it. They all have that kind of course curriculum. Air University, which the Senior NCO Academy and all our NCO Academies align under, is an accredited university. We should be delivering education in a manner consistent with the evolution of education.

This was an approach to not lessen the bar but to raise the bar for everybody. That's what I think we did. We are delivering more education to more people now than we have ever done historically. We are no longer being disingenuous about it. We are clearly stating to people when and

what they must do. If they don't, they can't keep moving forward. We should be clear-text with people. If you don't do this, you can't go beyond this point. Make the choice. I think that's fair. I think in any professional organization that environment exists.

## **PROFESSIONALISM WAS ALSO A BIG FOCUS THROUGHOUT YOUR TENURE WITH GEN. WELSH. THE AIR FORCE REFRESHED THE LITTLE BLUE BOOK, NOW TITLED AMERICA'S AIR FORCE: A PROFESSION OF ARMS. PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANTLY YOU INTRODUCED AIRMEN'S WEEK AT BASIC TRAINING. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT AIRMEN'S WEEK IS AND HOW THAT CAME ABOUT?**

I'll start with the former first, the Little Blue Book. To be honest with you, Chief [Lee E. Jr.] Hoover is the guy that penned this for us. He took all the information we wanted and brought it together. We were getting questioned because of some of the things I talked about earlier, with the military training instructors and some other situations in the Air Force and across the Department of Defense that highlighted inappropriate or unethical behaviors. While we certainly would stand in front of anybody and talk about the professionalism of Airmen and show how we are a professional force, there were certainly a lot of indicators out there that could challenge that position and were challenging that position. We had to look at ourselves internally and say, "Okay, really where are we at with this?" Saying it doesn't make it so. Saying you're not doesn't mean you're not either, but you've got to be able to quantify this somehow.

If you were to look in what used to be our PDG, our professional development guide, which is now the Airman's Handbook, it used to say you become a professional when you cross into blue. That's when we would quantify this transformation. You are a part of the profession of arms. The interesting part was we didn't have a definition of the profession of arms. We utilize that term broadly and loosely: "You are part of the profession of arms." But what does that mean? That's when we looked at the Little Blue Book with our core values and said, "It's probably time that evolved."

The original Little Blue Book came out during Chief [CMSAF #12 Eric] Benken's tenure, after some things took place where it called into question our professionalism yet again. Our core values have a history, but that's when they came out in the Little Blue Book. This current evolution of the book was our opportunity to say, "It's not just about the three core values. It is about being part of the profession of arms." We wanted to fully articulate what it means to take the oath and commit to service in the Air Force. The book needed to be something that people can read and say, "This is what I'm part of in the profession of arms. This is what bonds us together." That's what we did.



Now to the Airmen's Week part of this. Under Chief Roy's time as the 16th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force we reviewed BMT, like we do every three years. When we did the review, we realized that basic military training was seven-and-a-half weeks of training that we were delivering in eight-and-a-half weeks. That's why you get people saying it's hurry up and wait and all this other stuff. When we looked at this, and again, we were fiscally constrained at the time, we said we can do basic training in seven-and-a-half weeks and not take anything out. We were still going to get the same Airmen.

The one thing that became a part of that discussion, which was valid, was the thought that there's value to all the marching around Lackland [AFB, Texas] when you consider the whole transformation from citizen to Airman. That was the major point of discussion back then. Why go to seven-and-a-half weeks instead of eight-and-a-half when you're going to drop them right into the pipeline training. For some, that's too fast—and then they're right into their operational bases.

The timing wasn't right then to cut basic training down to seven-and-a-half weeks. I always knew we could. When I came up here, we started to have more in-depth conversations about the profession of arms, professionalism, and this idea of dignity and respect. General Welsh talked about that a lot. Secretary James talked about it. We all were focused on creating a culture of inclusiveness, where Airmen treated each other with dignity and respect.

We were working through that in various meetings. We looked at things we could do. Then OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] stood up their professionalism working group. That's when I went to General Welsh and asked to bring some folks in to look at basic training again. Instead of cutting the training down to seven-and-a-half weeks for efficiency purposes, let's look at what we could do with that extra week to help these Airmen come into the profession of arms. That was the impetus to the change.

Most of us that have gone through basic training, whether you're an officer or enlisted Airmen, can appreciate that experience. I commonly refer to it as the fog of BMT. You know you were there. You know something happened, but you're excited it's over. You'll have flashbacks to different moments during the training, but it was too fast to comprehend what just happened. You've had your whole life up until this point, and now suddenly, in two months, you're this different person.

What we were hoping to do is develop a capstone event, which we ended up calling Airmen's Week, and let the Airmen go through that. Let's let them cross into the blue and become Airmen. Once we give you that title, things are different. Whether you know it or not, they're different. We wanted to take some time talking with them about what that difference means. We wanted to let them absorb and reflect on what just happened and then have a conversation.

That is the essence of Airmen's Week. We bring in people from all over the globe. It's not just Americans that join our United States military. It is a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, upbringings, and values, and they're coming into an organization that absolutely expects them to live up to our core values and high standards. I think what we're getting out of that is, one, a more professional Airman. Two, we are getting a more confident Airman. They now understand what just happened at basic training, and what is about to happen and what we expect going forward. It's this idea that now you're a part of the family; you're part of our Air Force; you're part of this profession.

## **HOW DO YOU THINK THE CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALISM AND DIGNITY AND RESPECT HAS CHANGED—NOT JUST IN YOUR TENURE BUT THROUGHOUT YOUR ENTIRE CAREER?**

It's dramatically different. There is no comparison in my opinion. That doesn't mean we had a bunch of unprofessional people and that they weren't great Airmen and great patriots. They absolutely were. I wouldn't be sitting here today if I wasn't mentored and coached by them. We are so much better today because of them. Not because of any bad things they did, but because of their commitment to continue to elevate the force. I think we should thank them for that. I think we should take that as our responsibility to do the same for future generations of Airmen. We hold ourselves to the highest of standards—we really do. The things that people would do when I first came in, much of that accepted by society, is no longer accepted by society; so, we evolve with that.

Nothing I'm saying is disparaging, but the idea that you would even contemplate doing some of those things in today's all-volunteer professional military, it just wouldn't happen. It wouldn't play for a second. I think we have taken the work that those who have gone before us have done, and we have continued to build on it. I think we will continue to build on that into the future. That doesn't mean it will be perfect, because it won't be perfect. I just know it will be better.

There is nothing wrong with leaning towards old school on certain things, but it can't be an anchor to your evolution. What are you holding on to, and what are you letting go of? That's what is important. There are certain things—our heritage, our pride and history, and the service and sacrifice—that we must hold on to. We owe those folks a debt of gratitude. To forget them would denigrate their legacy. But we can't celebrate anything that they did that was wrong. The fact is it might have been okay then, but to celebrate it today when it's not okay doesn't make sense. You wouldn't do it.

I'm proud of our Air Force. I'm proud of where we're going. It's not without challenge. It always is when you're trying to institute change, especially when things hit to people's core. When it gets to who they are and what they feel and what they believe. There are differences in that for many different reasons. How you walk that fine line of being respectful to everybody can be difficult. It has been difficult for us.

I think what we should be proud of is the fact that we acknowledge those differences exist. We don't just take this one hard line. We are open to the dialogue. We're looking for the best possible answer. It doesn't mean it's going to be the perfect answer, but the force must continue to evolve. The country absolutely demands and expects that we are professional. It expects that we are the epitome of every American.

**LAST QUESTION. CHIEF [CMSAF #18 KALETH] WRIGHT IS GOING TO BECOME THE 18TH CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE VERY SHORTLY. HE'S GOING TO TAKE THE BATON AND JUST CARRY IT FORWARD. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON CHIEF WRIGHT, AND WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO SEE FROM HIM?**

I am really, really excited for our Air Force. I'm absolutely confident he is the right chief to be the 18th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. There's just no hesitation. He is going to take our Air Force to places that I was never going to be able to get us, or anybody else. He is fully qualified and excited about the opportunity. Both he and Tonya will represent all Airmen and their families phenomenally well.

He brings his own background. We all come into the seat with our own life experiences, our own career experiences, and that's great. There is no one path to that position. He's the right chief at the right time in our Air Force. He will have my unequivocal support, as well as Athena's, as well as the support from all that have gone before us. He and Gen. Goldfein and our next Secretary of the Air Force and the entire team will face challenges, but I am 100-percent confident they will overcome them. We always do.



## AIREY NOTES

1. The Air University Library online research center is located at [http://dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/StreamGate?folder\\_id=0&dvs=1475862113665~250](http://dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1475862113665~250)
2. Paul Airey was born at Saint Luke's Hospital in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on 13 December 1923.
3. An Aldis lamp is a visual signaling device used for optical communication during World War II.
4. Paul Airey married Shirley Elizabeth Babbitt of Quincy, Massachusetts, on 2 February 1946. They had three children: Ellen, Dale, and Shawn.

## HARLOW NOTES

1. The Air University Library online research center is located at <http://dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=70668>.
2. Donald Harlow was the youngest of nine children, and one of two boys. His father died when he was two years old. As a sophomore in high school, he was the only child left at home, "so it was necessary for me to leave school."
3. ATC was the predecessor to Air Education and Training Command (AETC). On 1 July 1993, the Air Force established AETC by merging ATC and Air University. AETC headquarters is at Randolph AFB, Texas.
4. SAC was the Air Force's major command in charge of America's land-based strategic bomber aircraft and land-based intercontinental ballistic missile strategic nuclear arsenal from 1946 to 1992. In 1993, as part of a major, post-Cold War reorganization, the Air Force disestablished SAC. In 2009 SAC's role was reactivated and designated as Air Force Global Strike Command.
5. The DCS/Personnel was the senior Air Force officer responsible for plans and policies covering all military personnel. Today the position is referred to as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services.
6. In 1952 the Air Force designated the Airman ranks as basic Airman (no stripe), Airman third class (one stripe), Airman second class (two stripes), and Airman first class (three stripes). In October 1967 the titles and terms of address were revised to Airman basic (no stripes), Airman (one stripe), Airman first class (two stripes), and sergeant (three stripes).
7. Following his retirement, CMSAF Donald Harlow served as a congressional lobbyist of the Air Force Sergeants Association, testifying multiple times as a voice of the enlisted force.
8. MAC was the Air Force's strategic airlift command until 1992, when it was reorganized and designated Air Mobility Command.

## KISLING NOTES

1. The Air University Library online research center is located at <http://dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=70674>.
2. John H. "Jake" Schuffert's comic strip first appeared in Task Force Times, providing US personnel serving in occupied Germany with a much-needed dose of daily laughter.

3. The 48th Tactical Fighter wing was at Chaumont Air Base in France until 1960, when the wing redeployed to Lakenheath AB, United Kingdom.
4. The last active-duty air force chief warrant officer, CWO4 James H. Long, retired in 1980. The last Air Force Reserve chief warrant officer, CWO4 Bob Barrow, retired in 1992, receiving an honorary promotion to CWO5—the only person in the USAF to ever hold this rank.
5. TOPCAP is also referred to as high year tenure.
6. The Stripes for Exceptional Performers program was established in 1980.
7. In 1975 Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David C. Jones established the AFMIG. Jones was concerned with the quality of Air Force personnel management. He asked Lt Gen Kenneth L. Tallman, who would serve as the deputy chief of staff, personnel, HQ USAF, to gather a group of people from all ranks from all over the Air Force to discuss management issues and propose solutions.

## BARNES NOTES

1. The Air University Library online research center is located at [dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=70680](http://dtlweb.au.af.mil/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=70680).
2. Two significant events led to Air Force integration. The first was an executive order from Pres. Harry Truman. Executive Order 9981, issued on 26 July 1948, stated, "It is essential that there be maintained in the Armed Services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatments and opportunity for all those who serve . . . it is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons the Armed Services without regard to race."  
A few months earlier, the Air Force had begun to study the impact of segregation on its ability to accomplish the mission effectively. Lt Gen Idwal H. Edwards, Air Force DCS/P, directed Lt Col Jack Marr, a staff officer in the office of Air Force Personnel to study the issue. In the end, the study found waste and inefficiency in only employing African Americans in certain capacities.  
The study influenced Gen Carl Spaatz, the first Chief of Staff of the Air Force, to issue a statement on integration in April 1948. Spaatz promised that Air Force African-Americans would soon be "used on a broader professional scale than has obtained heretofore." He stated that all Airmen would be guaranteed equal opportunity regardless of race and that "the ultimate Air Force objective must be to eliminate segregation among its personnel by the unrestricted use of Negro personnel in free competition for any duty within the Air Force for which they may qualify."  
A year later, on 11 May 1949, the Air Force officially released letter No. 35-3 stating that "there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity in the Air Force without regard to race, color, religion or national origin." Desegregation of units began immediately, and on 1 June 1949, Air Force basic training officially ended racial segregation, assigning recruits to squadrons by gender and time of arrival only.  
For a complete study on Air Force integration, we recommend, Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates: 1945–1964* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1978).

3. Class 26 is a designation for aircraft used as ground instructional training equipment only.
4. At one point, technical training had a self-pacing process, where Airmen studied the material at their own pace.

5. The Moskos theory refers to the institution–occupation thesis developed by Charles Moskos. In his thesis, he argues that an all-volunteer force would move the service away from a military institution, where men and women sacrifice individual self-interest in favor of a higher good, to an occupation, where men and women choose to work strictly for monetary rewards.

## GAYLOR NOTES

1. Pres. Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 on 26 July 1948, stating, “It is essential that there be maintained in the Armed Services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatments and opportunity for all those who serve...it is hereby declared to be the policy of the president that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons the Armed Services without regard to race.”

A year later, on 11 May 1949, the Air Force officially released letter No 35-3, stating that “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity in the Air Force without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.”

2. Olive drab one piece coverall.

3. Gary AFB was transitioned to the Army and renamed Camp Gary in 1956. It closed in 1963.

4. The WAF was formed in 1948 as a way to bring women into the Air Force in limited roles. Originally, WAF was limited to 4,000 enlisted women and 300 female officers, all of whom were encouraged to fill a variety of ground duty roles—mostly clerical and medical—but were not to be trained as pilots.

In 1976, when women were accepted into the USAF on an equal basis with men, the WAF program ended, but not before many milestones were achieved and marked along the way in preparation for today’s USAF woman.

The first WAF recruit was Sgt Esther Blake, who enlisted on 8 July 1948 in the first minute of the first day that regular Air Force duty was authorized for women.

## MCCOY NOTES

1. The PDG is a book of Air Force information that enlisted Airmen use to study for the Weighted Airman Promotion System testing. In 2015 the book evolved into the larger Airman Handbook.

2. Maur Hill High School is a college prep high school in Atchison, Kansas.

3. Sampson AFB, New York, was an Air Force basic military training base from 1951 to 1956. With the influx of enlistees due to the Korean War, the Air Force opened Sampson as well as Park AFB, California, in addition to Lackland AFB, Texas.

4. Many PME academies were shut down due to funding issues during the Vietnam War.

5. With the exception of NCO Academies in US Air Forces in Europe and Pacific Air Forces.

6. The Weighted Airman Promotion System was introduced in 1969.

7. Gen John M. Paxton Jr.

8. Kincheloe AFB was in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The base closed in 1977. K. I. Sawyer was in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The base closed in 1995.

## ANDREWS NOTES

1. Fairfield Air Force Station was a little station on a site adjacent to Travis AFB, California. It was home to the 3083rd Aviation Depot Group, and its primary mission was to store and maintain nuclear weapons. The site dissolved in July 1962 and is now part of Travis AFB.

2. The Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) was activated on 1 April 1961, assuming the supply and maintenance missions from the Air Material Command. Functions of AFLC merged with those of Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) to form Air Force Materiel Command on 1 July 1992.

3. AFSC split from Air Material Command in April 1951, assuming primary responsibility for research and development (R&D) of new weapons systems. Functions of AFSC merged with those of AFLC to form Air Force Materiel Command on 1 July 1992.

4. EWQ was a precursor to today’s senior Airman Below-the-Zone promotion program.

5. During CMSAF Eric Benken’s tenure, he changed the title of senior enlisted adviser to command chief master sergeant (CCM). With the change came the new insignia featuring a star in the chevron that identified the command chief master sergeant to the troops.

6. The two-tier promotion system was an Air Force initiative to balance the shortages and overages among the various AFSCs. Airmen competed for promotion under WAPS in two groups. The first group was comprised of all those eligible Airmen in AFSCs known as chronic critical shortage (CCS) skills, and the second group was comprised of all those eligible Airmen in the non-CCS AFSCs. The AFSCs designated as CCS skills received a five-percentage-point higher selection rate than the non-CCS skills. For example, if the non-CCS selection rate was 25 percent, then the CCS rate was 30 percent.

7. Airman Performance Reports were the predecessor to Enlisted Performance Reports. They were established in 1960 and used a one–nine rating scale. The major complaint of the APR was that it was overinflated; every Airman received a nine rating.

In 1989, in an effort to uninflate performance reports, CMSAF Jim Binnicker introduced an enlisted evaluation system that included enlisted performance reports (EPR) with a one–five rating scale and a performance feedback worksheet. When the Air Force released the EPRs, they provided an expectation that only a small percentage of Airmen would receive the highest “5” rating. While the expectation stuck for a few years, the EPRs soon became inflated as well. By 2013 roughly 85 percent of Airmen and NCOs and 90 percent of SNCOs received a “5” rating.

In 2015 CMSAF Jim Cody introduced a new Enlisted Evaluation System that included updated EPRs, Promotion Recommendations, and “Forced Distribution,” which limited the number of top promotion recommendations a commander could give his or her promotion eligible Airmen.

## PARISH NOTES

1. The AQE was used by USAF Recruiting to determine qualification for voluntary enlistment in the Air Force.

The first Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery [ASVAB] test was introduced in 1968 as part of the student testing program. The Air Force began using the ASVAB test in 1973.



2. The Speckled Trout was a C-135C Aircraft that was the primary transport aircraft for every chief of staff of the Air Force from 1974 to 2006.
3. In 1985 the average promotion wait to senior airman was 42 months. According to Parish “it floated and depended on vacancies and the amount of money available for promotions.” Parish worked to promote qualified Airmen to E-4 at a set point in their first enlistment, thereby allowing them a shot at the rank of staff sergeant before their first four years ended.

## BINNICKER NOTES

1. Janet R. Bedarnek, ed., *Generations of Chevrons: A History of the Enlisted Force* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 143, <http://media.defense.gov/2010/May/26/2001330290/-1/-1/0/AFD-100526-031.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Today the personal equipment career field is aircrew flight equipment [1POXI].
5. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 144.
6. Jimmy Carter, “Executive Order 11998–President’s Commission on Military Compensation,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7731>.
7. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 146.
8. US Air Force Summary, FY 1988/1989 (amended); US Air Force Statistical Digest, FY 1991.
9. The Air Force requested an additional 6,500 NCO authorizations for fiscal year (FY) 1987. The promotion cycles in FY 1986 were made with the expectation that the request for more authorizations would be approved, but it was not. The lack of additional authorizations, combined with higher than usual retention rates, meant the Air Force had very few vacancies for promotions in 1987.
10. John Ginovsky, “End of EM Promotion Delays in Sight,” *Air Force Times*, 27 July 1987, 1.
11. James C. Binnicker, “America’s Best and Brightest,” *Sergeants*, August 1987, 10–11.
12. Ginovsky, “End of EM Promotion Delays,” 1.
13. In 1985, in an effort to save costs, the Air Force mandated extensions for overseas tours. Binnicker’s top priority when stepping into the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force position was to find out how Airmen were reacting to the extensions.
14. “Airman’s Interview This Month: CMSAF James C. Binnicker,” *Airman*, July 1987, 8–9.
15. Ibid.
16. Steve Weber, “Binnicker Considers EES as Main Accomplishment,” *Air Force Times* 50, no. 52, 6 August 1990, 13.
17. “Airman’s Interview This Month,” 8–9.

18. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 149.

19. After the initial implementation of the APR in 1989, the Air Force made a number of initial changes to ensure fair ratings across the board. One of the changes was to clarify that there were no quotas, but the expectation was to rate Airmen fairly and accurately. Additionally, the Air Force put considerable effort into educating the force throughout the year 1990.

20. Steve Weber, “Binnicker: Education about EES a Priority,” *Air Force Times* 50, no. 26, 5 February 1990, 6.

21. Ibid.

22. Weber, “Binnicker considers EES,” 3.

23. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 147.

24. Ibid., 150.

25. Ibid.

26. A1C Jarrod Grammel, “Enlisted Village Cares for AF Widows, Families,” *Air Force News Service*, 14 August 2012, <http://www.af.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/223/Article/110631/enlisted-village-cares-for-af-widows-families.aspx>.

27. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 151.

## PFINGSTON NOTES

1. Janet R. Bedarnek, ed., *Generations of Chevrons: A History of the Enlisted Force* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 158, <http://media.defense.gov/2010/May/26/2001330290/-1/-1/0/AFD-100526-031.pdf>.
2. Ibid., 159–60.
3. In September 1990, a month after Pfingston assumed the role of the CMSAF, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney relieved General Dugan after the general had revealed war plans to reporters. Gen Merrill A. McPeak was selected to replace General Dugan.
4. US Air Force Statistical Digest, FY 1991.
5. US Air Force Statistical Digest, FY 1995.
6. The 1992 Year of Training initiative was a top-to-bottom reevaluation of Air Force training and skill development. It resulted in a number of initiatives and organizational changes.
7. During the Cuban missile crisis, Pfingston was assigned as a B-52 crew chief at Castle AFB, California.
8. Bedarnek, *Generations of Chevrons*, 157.
9. Ibid., 157–58.
10. Ibid., 158–59.
11. Ibid., 160–61.
12. “Airman’s Interview This Month: CMSAF Gary R. Pfingston,” *Airman*, September 1990, 8–9.

13. TSgt. Sarah L. Hood, “Update from the CMSAF,” Airman, January 1994, 16–17.
14. Ibid.
15. Bedarnek, Generations of Chevrons, 163.
16. Hood, “Update from the CMSAF,” 16–17.
17. Ibid.
18. “Assurances in Times of Uncertainty,” Sergeants 32, no. 1 (January–February 1993): 14–15.
19. Gary R. Pfingston, “Moral Obligation,” Sergeants 30, no. 5 (June 1991): 10–11.
20. “Down to Earth,” Sergeants 30, no. 1 (January–February 1991): 10–12.
21. “A Walk around the Air Force,” Sergeants 31, no. 1 (January–February 1992): 34.
22. Ibid.
23. Colleen A. Nash, “Airman’s Advocate,” Air Force Magazine 73, no. 12 (December 1990): 72–73.

## CAMPANALE NOTES

1. Today, a senior enlisted leader of a wing is called a Command Chief.
2. The Mobility Airlift Command transitioned to the Air Mobility Command on 1 June 1992.
3. Operation Uphold Democracy was a military operation on 18 September 1994 designed to intervene in Haiti and remove the military regime that overthrew the elected Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.  
At nearly the last minute, President Carter persuaded the military leader in Haiti to relinquish control, and the mission changed to an airlift peacekeeping mission.

## BENKEN NOTES

1. A Quonset hut is a lightweight, easy to assemble, prefabricated steel structure. It has a semicircle cross section, which gives the hut its particular look. It was inexpensive and took little skill or manpower to construct, yet it was robust and able to withstand the elements.
2. San Quentin State Prison is a petitionary for men, located north of San Francisco, California. It opened in July of 1852 and is the oldest prison in the state.
3. On 29 January 1973, the US military draft (Selective Service) ended, and the military transitioned to an all-volunteer force.
4. CMSAF Benken served from 1970 to 1999.
5. According to the US Air Force Statistical Digest of Fiscal Year 1970, in January of 1970, the Air Force had 842,667 Airmen in all components (Active, Guard, and Reserve).

6. “Hollow force” refers to a military service that appears strong and ready for combat missions but in reality suffers from manpower and equipment shortages, as well as decreased mission readiness.

7. The Berlin Wall separated West Berlin from East Berlin and East Germany from August 1961 to 9 November 1989.

8. Operation Northern Watch enforced the no-fly zone over Iraq from the 36-degree north latitude line to the Turkish and Iranian borders. It operated out of Incirlik AB, Turkey. The operation continued for more than a month after the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom and officially ended on 1 May 2003. Operation Southern Watch enforced the no-fly zone over Iraq from the 32-degree latitude line south to the borders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It operated out of bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain and continued until March of 2003, when the United States began Operation Iraqi Freedom.

9. The Fulda Gap is a valley in central Germany, which was a focus area during the Cold War. It was widely considered the likely location for an attack and subsequent battle against the Soviet Union.

10. Partnership for Peace (PfP) was established in 1994 as a bilateral cooperation program between Euro-Atlantic partners and NATO. It allowed countries to develop an individual partnership with NATO to increase stability and decrease threats in the region.

11. The Aviano 2000 Program was a NATO initiative that began in 1995 as a result of increased operations from Aviano AB. In 1992, USAFE withdrew from Torrejon AB, Spain, and the 401st Fighter Wing and 16th Air Force moved to Aviano AB, Italy. NATO agreed to support a massive construction project to revitalize Aviano, which prior to the move was not widely used. The program ushered in hundreds of new construction and renovation projects, including new communications and utilities infrastructure, recreation centers, and dormitories. The program included 300 construction projects with a total cost of \$565 million, one of the largest single DOD construction programs.

12. Following the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, the Serbs, led by Slobodan Milosevic, targeted Bosniak and Croatian civilians in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The campaign killed more than 100,000 people and displaced more than two million in just three years. In July 1995 Serb forces expelled 25,000 women and children and killed up to 8,000 men and teenage boys in the town of Srebrenica. The killings are known as the Srebrenica massacre, the largest massacre in Europe after the Holocaust.

13. On 14 December 1995, following more than three years of civil war and strife in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia signed a peace settlement in Paris. The agreement authorized NATO to intervene with 60,000 military personnel (20,000 US service members) to implement and enforce peace and facilitate the reconstruction of the country. The next nine years saw three successive NATO peace enforcement operations: Operation Joint Endeavor, Operation Joint Guard, and Operation Joint Forge.

## FINCH NOTES

1. In November 1950, 8,000 fighters, mostly US Marines, weathered the coldest North Korean winter in a century, surrounded by 120,000 Chinese soldiers. Their only lifeline was a 15 foot-wide, danger-riddled mountain road leading to the port city of Hungnam. For two weeks, these intrepid warriors conducted a grueling 78-mile withdrawal, one of the longest in American military history. It took 13 days and cost many lives. For more information, see Thomas McKelvey Cleaver, *The Frozen Chosen: The 1st Marine Division and the Battle of the Chosin River* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2016).



2. The Air Force Management Improvement Group (AFMIG) grew out of discussions in March 1975 between Gen David C. Jones, chief of staff, USAF, and Lt Gen Kenneth L. Tallman, USAF, shortly before Tallman became deputy chief of staff for personnel. General Jones was concerned about the quality of Air Force personnel management. He asked General Tallman to gather together people from all ranks and from all parts of the Air Force to discuss a wide range of management issues and propose possible solutions to problem areas. Among the issues discussed were management of the NCO force, what an NCO is, how an Airman becomes an NCO, and what kind of recognition, responsibility, and authority should come with the NCO rank. The AFMIG also suggested several ways to raise the prestige of senior and chief master sergeants. In addition, the AFMIG led to a number of management changes in facilities, billeting, and mess halls. Lt Gen Kenneth L. Tallman, oral history interview, 11–12 December 1984, 135–41.

3. According to Air Force Instruction 36-2110, Assignments, a Code 50 is an enlisted Airmen “assigned duties in units or activities whose tour is limited to preclude prolonged assignment outside normal duties.”

4. The College for Enlisted PME, called the Thomas N. Barnes Center, was developed in 1993.

5. Lt Gen Joseph W. Ralston was the commander of Eleventh Air Force.

6. The Department of Defense establishes an order of precedence for executive schedule, general officer/flag officer, civilian senior executive service employees, and some specific senior leader positions within the department. The list is used to identify official visit activities, assignment of government quarters, seating arrangements, and similar requirements at official functions and other administrative matters. Each senior leader falls under a precedence “code” that determines the order of precedence. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force position, as well as the each of the service senior enlisted leaders and the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC) is currently coded as DV-4.

## MURRAY NOTES

1. The original master sergeant stripe was six stripes, all pointing downward. When the senior master sergeants’ (SMSgt) and chief master sergeants’ (CMSgt) stripes were introduced in 1959, they were the only two insignias to have stripes pointing upward: one for SMSgt and two for CMSgt. In 1991, CSAF Gen Merrill McPeak and CMSAF Gary Pfingston revealed new chevrons in a test status, taking one stripe off the bottom and putting it at the top, starting with master sergeant. Senior master sergeant had two stripes up with five down, and chief master sergeant had three up with five down.

2. CMSAF Murray wore the 6-down, 2-up CMSgt stripe for two months before moving to the new 5-down, 3-up stripe in January 1995. He then wore the command chief star insignia and the CMSAF insignia without the Great Seal of the United States and two stars in the center blue field. The seal and stars were added to the CMSAF insignia during Murray’s tenure. He debuted the new stripes on 1 November 2004.

3. The change to the chevrons in the early 1990s also included the removal of the silver-tinted stripes, which were replaced by the larger, bold white stripes worn on the service dress, mess dress, and blue uniforms today.

4. In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Iraqi forces occupied the capital, Kuwait City, and Saddam Hussein soon annexed the country as

the nineteenth province of Iraq. In response, the US government initiated Operation Desert Shield to deter and contain potential attacks against neighboring countries. In two weeks, the United States had based fighter, attack, reconnaissance, electronic warfare, airlift, and tanker aircraft in the Gulf region.

In November 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678 authorizing member states, cooperating with the government of Kuwait, to use “all necessary means” to enforce a prior resolution that demanded Iraq withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait. On 12 January 1991, Congress authorized the use of US armed forces against Iraq, pursuant to Resolution 678. When the UN’s 15 January deadline for withdrawal passed, Pres. George H. W. Bush signed a national security directive authorizing US military action. At 3:00 a.m. local time on 17 January 1991, coalition aircraft set forth on the largest air campaign since the conflict in Southeast Asia.

5. In 1990, prior to Desert Storm/Desert Shield, there were 539,000 active-duty Airmen, 84,000 Reserve Airmen, 117,000 Air National Guard Airmen, and 261,000 civilian Airmen—more than one million total. By 1995, those numbers had dropped to 400,000 on active duty, 78,000 in the Reserves, 110,000 in the Air National Guard, and 187,000 civilians for a total of 775,000 Airmen. In 2000, a decade after Desert Storm/Desert Shield, the numbers had dropped down to 353,000 on active duty, 74,000 in the Reserves, 108,000 in the Air National Guard, and 162,000 civilians for a total of 697,000 Airmen.

6. The Program Objective Memorandum (POM) is the service’s plan to allocate resources, covering the five-year Future Year Defense Program (FYDP).

## MCKINELY NOTES

1. On 15 June 1991, Mount Pinatubo erupted. Just prior to the eruption, nearly 15,000 American service personnel were ordered to evacuate Clark AB. The noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) was called Operation Fiery Vigil. At that time, Clark AB was one of the largest US bases overseas.

2. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, coalition forces launched more than 1,700 air sorties and missile launches against Iraq, including 300–400 cruise missile strikes on day one. The massive initial force was based on the “shock and awe” military strategy. The concept is to project overwhelming power and spectacular displays of force focused on the psychological destruction of the enemies will to fight, rather than the physical destruction of the opposing military force.

3. Program Budget Decision (PBD) 720, Air Force Transformation Flight Plan, 28 December 2005, proposed reducing the active force by about 40,000 personnel to meet Air Force recapitalization and modernization requirements.

4. Air Force Global Strike Command was activated on 7 August 2009.

5. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates relieved both Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen Michael Moseley, on 5 June 2008. The move came following two nuclear mishaps. The first, on 30 August 2007, occurred when a B-52 bomber mistakenly flew from Minot AFB, North Dakota, to Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, armed with six nuclear warheads. The second, in March 2008, happened when the Air Force discovered it had mistakenly shipped secret nuclear missile fuses to Taiwan in August 2006. In his statement, Secretary Gates said his decision was because “the focus of the Air Force leadership has drifted with respect to perhaps its most sensitive mission.”

## ROY NOTES

1. Similar to an Air Force specialty code, the Army has a military occupational specialty (MOS). Today's MOS designators have changed since CMSAF Roy joined the Air Force and began training in 1982. However, when CMSAF Roy joined the Air Force his single AFSC correlated with multiple Army MOS codes, including 62E (heavy construction equipment operator), 62F (crane operator), 62G (quarrying specialist), 62H (concrete and asphalt equipment operator), and 62J (general construction equipment operator).
2. CMSAF Roy had three priorities during his tenure as the 16th CMSAF: building and working within joint and coalition teams, deliberate development, and resiliency of our Airmen and families.
3. The Department of Defense created and designed provincial reconstruction teams to help with the reconstruction, security, and governing of Afghanistan.
4. Lieutenant General Reno was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Installations, and Mission Support, Headquarters US Air Force. He retired on 1 February 2012.
5. The 315th Airlift Wing is a reserve wing out of Charleston AFB, South Carolina, that provides and delivers global combat-ready C-17 airlift, expeditionary combat support, and aeromedical evacuation anytime, anywhere. CMSAF Roy was the command chief master sergeant of the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston AFB from September 2002–May 2004.

## CODY NOTES

1. The Enlisted Board of Directors is made up of major command command chiefs and Airmen serving as combatant command senior enlisted leaders.
2. Dual rated is the term an air traffic controller uses when they are qualified and “rated” to serve in both the air traffic control tower and the radar approach control.
3. Join-spouse is a term used to mean two members who are married and both serving in the military.
4. In 1989 CMSAF Jim Binnicker led the transformation from Airman Performance Reports, which rated an Airman's performance on a 1–9 scale, to the Enlisted Performance Report, which rated an Airman's performance on a 1–5 scale. The impetus behind the move was overinflated APRs, where every Airman received a 9 rating.
5. CMSAF Cody led an overhaul of the EPR system to once again combat overinflation. The new system, implemented in 2014, introduced promotion recommendations, forced distribution and restricted stratification, which together limited the number of top promotion recommendations a commander could give his or her Airmen.
6. Operation Provide Comfort was a humanitarian mission to provide relief supplies to the ethnic Kurds in northern Iraq. It occurred in different phases from 1991 to 31 December 1996.
7. Operation Northern Watch enforced the no-fly zone over northern Iraq and monitored the Iraqis to determine their compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. The operation was based out of Incirlik Air Base and consisted of US, Turkish, and British forces. It began on 1 January 1997 and ended 17 March 2003.

8. Stop loss is a term used when the Department of Defense is given the authority to retain service members past their separation or retirement date. It was imposed for brief periods in 2001, 2002, and 2003.

9. On 12 January 2010, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck the Caribbean island nation of Haiti. The earthquake killed more than 200,000 people and left more than 895,000 people homeless.

10. Operation Unified Response was the US military's humanitarian mission following the earthquake in Haiti. Airmen flew more than 400 missions into Port-au-Prince, delivering nearly 6,000 support members and 19 million pounds of cargo.

11. Don't Ask, Don't Tell was a law banning homosexual men and women from openly serving in the military. The law was repealed on 20 September 2011.

12. Sequestration refers to the automatic spending cuts resulting from the Budget Control Act of 2011. The law went into effect on 1 March 2013 and mandated \$1.2 trillion in cuts across federal agencies over 10 years. The Air Force was forced to reduce flying hours, stop flyovers and air shows, temporarily cancel tuition assistance, furlough civilian employees, and reduce overall manpower among other measures intended to cut costs across the board.

13. A1 is the designation for the Manpower, Personnel, and Services directorate of Headquarters Air Force.

14. Developmental special duties are unique leadership roles where an Airman has the responsibility to mentor and mold future leaders. To ensure the highest quality Airmen are assigned to these positions, the Air Force implemented a nomination process. The nomination process provides commanders, through their respective major command, an opportunity to nominate their best Airmen to fill these critical positions. The positions are Academy Military Training NCO, Airman & Family Readiness NCO, USAF Honor Guard NCO, Career Assistance Advisor, First Sergeant, Military Training Instructor, Military Training Leader, PME Instructor, Recruiter, and Technical Training Instructor.

15. In 2011 and 2012, 17 military training instructors were convicted of misconduct with trainees—from fraternization, rape, adultery, and sexual assault. The misconduct involved 43 female trainees who were victimized by their instructors during and after basic military training.



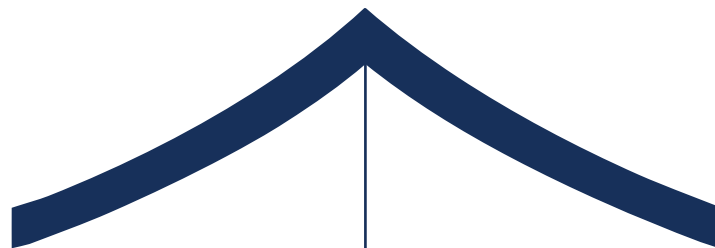
# A CHRONOLOGY OF THE AIR FORCE ENLISTED CHEVRONS



The following chronology is primarily derived from the research of TSgt Barry L. Spink, outlined in the document A Chronology of the Enlisted Rank Chevron of the United States Air Force, and published by the Air Force Historical Research Agency on 19 February 1992.<sup>1</sup>

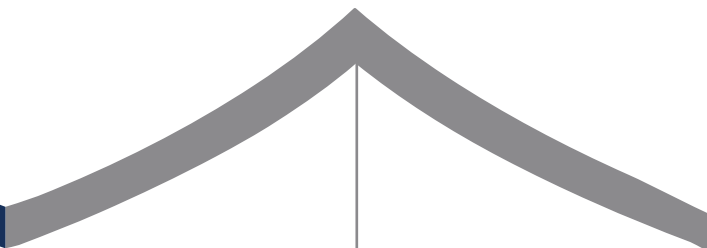
# A CHRONOLOGY OF THE AIR FORCE ENLISTED CHEVRONS

18 SEPTEMBER  
**1947**



When the Air Force became a separate service, it retained the enlisted ranks and chevrons used in the Army Air Forces (AAF) and continued to refer to the enlisted members as Soldiers.

9 MARCH  
**1948**



Air Force leaders, including Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), gather to approve new enlisted chevrons for the US Air Force. New chevrons had been tested at Bolling AFB, Washington, DC, and were selected by 55 percent of the Airmen who were polled to determine the preferred style of the new stripes.

Gen. Vandenberg approved the choice, and the Air Force implemented the new chevrons. There is no documentation that discusses the rationale behind the design, although some believe the stripes represent a combination between the shoulder patch worn by members of the AAF during World War II and the insignia used on aircraft. The size of the chevrons was four inches wide for men and three inches wide for women.



20 FEBRUARY  
**1950**

24 APRIL  
**1952**

22 SEPTEMBER  
**1954**

SAILORS  
**AIRMEN**  
SOLDIERS

Gen. Vandenberg directs that enlisted personnel be referred to as “Airman” (singular) and Airmen (plural) to distinguish them from Soldiers, Marines, and Sailors.

The Air Force publishes Air Force Regulation 39-36, changing the names of the lower ranks and formalizing the restriction of noncommissioned officer (NCO) status to staff sergeant, technical sergeant, and master sergeant. The chevrons remained the same; however, discussion began to change the chevrons for the classes of Airmen (first, second, and third). A design was proposed with horizontal stripes, reserving the angled stripes we know today for NCOs. Gen. Vandenberg approved the new stripes in December of 1952 but ordered them not to be procured until the stock of existing chevrons was depleted. Four years later, in March 1956, the stock was depleted and the proposal to change the stripes was again submitted to the new CSAF, Gen. Nathan F. Twining. Gen. Twining disapproved the change, stating simply “No change to be made in insignia.”

Gen. Twining approves a distinctive chevron for first sergeants, adding the traditional diamond in the V above the master sergeant chevron. At that time, master sergeant was the only approved rank for first sergeants.



20 MAY  
**1958**

Congress passes the Military Pay Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-422), authorizing two additional enlisted grades of E-8 and E-9. The primary reasons for establishing the two grades were to clarify responsibilities and authorities among the many master sergeants and to resolve enlisted retention issues due to a lack of promotion opportunities. Air Force leaders developed titles and chevrons for the new grades. Their main intent in the process was to build on the existing structure and chevrons but differentiate between the junior Airmen, the skilled sergeants, and the supervisory level ranks. Major commands provided their input,



and senior master sergeant (E8) and chief master sergeant (E9) were the most popular. There were a number of ideas for the new chevrons, including adding additional stars or diamonds to the current chevron, but the final choice was to add two additional stripes pointing in the opposite direction and superimposed on top of the current chevron. The first senior master sergeants were promoted on 1 September 1958, and the first chief master sergeants were promoted a year later.

5 FEBRUARY  
**1959**

The Air Force releases a new governing regulation for enlisted ranks, changing the name of “basic airman” to “airman basic.”

BASIC AIRMAN  
**AIRMAN BASIC**

3 APRIL  
**1967**

CMSgt. Paul Airey becomes the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) and dons the new CMSAF chevron. Several designs were proposed for the new chevron, including an additional stripe on top of the existing chief master sergeant chevron (6 down, 3 up). However, after CMSgt. Donald Harlow modeled the proposed chevron, Air Force leaders determined it was simply “too much.” Harlow, who at the time was working in the Executive Services Division,



Office of the Vice Chief of Staff, modeled an additional design that added a surrounding wreath around the star in the existing chief master sergeant chevron. When Air Force leaders asked Harlow which chevron he preferred, he chose the chevron with the wreath due to its simplicity.

19 OCTOBER  
**1967**

The Air Force changes the titles and terms of address for the first four grades, restoring the NCO status to the E-4 grade. The change aligned the NCO ranks in the Air Force with those of the other services and allowed many Airmen to reach the NCO “sergeant” rank during their first enlistment, which was thought to be a factor in retention.



**AIRMAN**



**AIRMAN FIRST CLASS**



**SERGEANT**

1 JUNE  
**1976**

Air Force leaders change the E-2 through E-4 grade structure to further establish a three-tier enlisted force structure (Airman, NCO, and senior NCO). The change included an additional E-4 rank of “senior Airman.” New criteria was established for senior Airman to advance to the NCO “sergeant” rank (also E-4 and often referred to as “buck sergeant”), including 12 months’ time-in-grade and completion of the NCO Preparatory Course. Additionally, the change included new chevrons for senior airman and below. The chevrons replaced the silver star in the chevron with a subdued blue star, which was often difficult to see from a distance.



**SENIOR AIRMAN**

12 MONTHS TIME  
IN GRADE

COMPLETION OF NCO  
PREPARATORY COURSE

**BUCK SERGEANT**

19 MARCH  
**1991**

Gen. Merrill A. McPeak, CSAF, announces the termination of the E-4 NCO “sergeant” rank with the intent to improve the ratio of NCOs to Airmen. E-4 sergeants were allowed to continue with the rank until they were promoted to E-5 “staff sergeant” or separated from the Air Force.





OCTOBER  
1991



Gen. McPeak and CMSAF Gary Pfingston reveal proposed changes to the enlisted chevrons. The proposal returned the silver star to all chevrons and moved one of the stripes from the bottom of



the master sergeant, senior master sergeant, chief master sergeant, and CMSAF chevrons and placed it at the top. After a long test and transition period, the new chevrons became mandatory on 1 October 1997.

1 NOVEMBER  
1998

CSAF Gen. Michael Ryan and CMSAF Eric Benken implement the new insignia and title chief master sergeants serving in senior enlisted advisor positions. The new title was command chief master sergeant, which included a chevron with an additional star located in the blue field.



1 NOVEMBER  
2004



CMSAF Gerald Murray introduces a new chevron for the CMSAF. The process to establish a new chevron began in October 2002 and included a number of design proposals. One such proposal simply moved the wreath and star to the center blue field; however, Air Force leaders felt it did not capture the spirit of the position. The Air Force needed a chevron that clearly identified its top enlisted leader but maintained the heritage of the position and chevrons. The approved chevron left the wreath and star in the lower portion of the chevron and in the middle added the U.S. American eagle insignia with two stars on either side.

