

Generations of Chevrons

A History of the Enlisted Force



Edited by

Janet R. Bednarek

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**AIR FORCE HISTORY AND MUSEUMS PROGRAM
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This book is dedicated to the memory of four great chief master sergeants of the Air Force:

CMSAF **DONALD L. HARLOW**

1920–1997

CMSAF **RICHARD D. KISLING**

1923–1985

CMSAF **ARTHUR L. “BUD” ANDREWS**

1934–1996

CMSAF **THOMAS N. BARNES**

1930–2003

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P R E F A C E

I am extremely excited about this book becoming a reality. It began with a vision by Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force David Campanale to document the history and contributions of the enlisted force. Through the years many people have grasped the vision and moved it forward. The finished product is one that will make every Airman proud to be part of the United States Air Force.

Keep in mind this is not an all-inclusive history—that would take volumes. Instead, this is a snapshot into generations past through the experiences of the 14 Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. My hope is that each reader finds inspiration and insight as they examine the issues and contributions of our enlisted forefathers.

I am privileged to be a small part of the team that created this book on behalf of the enlisted men and women of the “World’s Greatest Air Force”—past, present, and future.

CMSAF Gerald R. Murray

FOREWORD

In the mid 1990s, several individuals in the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (OCMSAF) began working on biographical sketches of the former chief master sergeants of the Air Force (CMSAFs). Based primarily on published materials, these sketches traced the careers of each of the men who had served in the top enlisted post in the United States Air Force (USAF). In addition, the authors wrote essays dealing with various aspects of enlisted history, such as the role of the first sergeant, enlisted training and education, and the enlisted uniform. The manuscript also contained data on the number of active duty enlisted personnel, the names and tenures of the CMSAFs, and a list of people who had been awarded the Order of the Sword. The goal was to produce, in a single volume, a sense of the history and heritage of Air Force enlisted personnel.

The Air Force History Support Office (AFHSO) at Bolling Air Force Base (AFB), Washington, D.C., reviewed the original manuscript, “Enlisted Footprints.” While the historians and editors there saw value in the project, they noted that, because the manuscript had been put together by many people working somewhat independently, it needed an overall editor. Initially, the idea was to replace the individual essays with one overall essay on enlisted history, copyedit the biographical sketches for consistency, and select more informative appendixes. This initial work was completed in 2001.

However, by the time the manuscript had been completed, the goals had changed. The end product still had to be a history of USAF enlisted personnel, but the biographical sketches needed greater depth and to focus more on the achievements of the chief master sergeants of the Air Force and the issues they faced. Moreover, the essay on enlisted history was to be further refined and expanded.

In late 2002, the OCMSAF and the AFHSO once again subjected the manuscript to a more comprehensive editorial review. The process included questionnaires for and interviews of the surviving former CMSAFs. The chiefs were eager to see the project through and were very helpful in providing the information needed to edit and expand their biographies. The Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), the Enlisted Heritage Hall, the Air Force Sergeants Association, and the AFHSO all provided research assistance.

The final product, *Generations of Chevrons*, builds on two works previously published by the Air Force History and Museums Program: *The Enlisted Experience: A Conversation with the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force* and *Foundation of the Force: Air Force Enlisted Personnel Policy*. The biographical sketches, which were central to the project from the start, remain and add a very human element to the history. Our hope is that this work, especially the historical essay, will add to the growing conversation on the meaning and importance of major themes in USAF enlisted history.

INTRODUCTION

A History of the USAF Enlisted Force



Janet R. Bednarek, Ph.D.

Histories of the United States Air Force and its predecessor organizations have focused on pilots, planes, and the use of air power. While certainly a large part of the service's history and heritage, these studies do not tell the whole story. In the last dozen years or so, a number of people have begun a serious examination of the history of the enlisted members of the U.S. Air Force.¹ Just as it became clear that economic and business histories would not be complete without looking at rank-and-file workers, so those studying USAF history found that a full picture demanded an inclusion of enlisted personnel.

These enlisted histories, though still few in number, nonetheless illuminate several important themes and trends in the history and heritage of the USAF enlisted force. First, enlisted airmen have always been seen and valued primarily for their high level of technical and/or occupational skills. Whether serving as aircraft mechanics, computer operators, personnel clerks, or military policemen, airmen have always been among the most intelligent and highly trained enlisted individuals in the U.S. military. Second, the emphasis on skills and training has helped to promote a professionalization of the USAF enlisted force. Third, the Air Force has always prized an enlisted force with a high percentage of skilled, professional, career noncommissioned officers (NCOs). And, finally, over its long history, the USAF enlisted force has become more diverse in terms of skills, race, and gender.

As an organization, the U.S. Air Force has generally supported policies that promoted its ability to recruit, train, and retain an enlisted force matching

the above characteristics. The Air Force has not always matched its practices with its rhetoric concerning the enlisted force, but overall the trend has been in the direction of emphasizing training, education, and professionalization.

Enlisted members, particularly senior noncommissioned officers, have played crucial roles in supporting the service's vision for its enlisted force. Again and again, they provided the day-to-day, ground-level leadership that held things together in the face of the many challenges confronting the service. Through the ups and downs in the provision of pay, housing, and medical care; the Korean and Vietnam Wars; the integration of African Americans and women; the transition to the all-volunteer force; and the end of the Cold War, U.S. Air Force NCOs stepped up to the leadership challenges presented them. They are a proud group with their own heroes, schools, professional organizations, traditions, and memorials. As the Air Force looked to its enlisted personnel for crucial leadership in its first half-century, it will in all probability continue to rely on its enlisted leadership as it enters the twenty-first century.

ESTABLISHING THE ENLISTED FORCE

The U.S. Air Force can trace its lineage back to the creation of the Aviation Section within the Army Signal Corps in 1907, and the USAF enlisted force can also look to that date as the beginning of its history. The Aviation Section began with an authorized strength of 110 enlisted members. The leaders of the Aviation Section decided from the start that, given the technical demands associated with the airplane,



An enlisted ground crew handles an inflated balloon at Ft. Myer, Virginia, in 1908.

they would focus their recruiting efforts on men already in the U.S. Army, who had completed their basic military training and thus could begin technical training immediately. Transfers between organizations within the Army meant that the men had to begin their service within their new organization at the rank of private; nevertheless, enough veteran Army enlisted members saw sufficient promise in the new Aviation Section that they initiated the transfers and began filling the ranks in the fledgling organization.²

There were benefits to a transfer into the Aviation Section, the most important of which was the opportunity to acquire technical training. By 1914, after a period of development, the Aviation Section had created a training structure that emphasized a certain degree of specialization and comprehensive testing for certification. To gain certification, a trainee had to show proficiency in airframe maintenance and repair and in engine construction and maintenance. Upon earning a certificate as a mechanic, a specialty that held the title Air Mechanic

until 1926, the enlisted member received a 50 percent pay raise. This contributed to the early emergence of an image of enlisted personnel within the Air Section as being highly skilled technically and different from the enlisted force in the rest of the Army. They were airmen.³

These technically trained enlisted airmen served during a time when aircraft technology was advancing very rapidly. Although the post-World War II period also saw a number of significant advances, the rapidity and scope of change between 1917 and 1945 was truly impressive. Enlisted members who began service in World War I and served full thirty-year careers would witness during that time a dramatic transformation of the military airplane. The Curtiss JN4-D or "Jenny," in service as a trainer in 1917, was a wood and fabric biplane weighing 1,430 pounds and powered by a 90-hp OX-5 engine. It had a maximum speed of 75 miles per hour and could stay aloft for two and one-half hours. In contrast, the Boeing B-29, best known for the long-range bombing missions in the Pacific at the end of World War



Telephone operator of the 28th Balloon Company, March 1919, Washington, D.C.



During World War II, the shortage of spruce used in aircraft and the shortage of loggers in the northwest United States prompted the Army Signal Corps to establish a Spruce Production Division, using soldiers as loggers in the forests. Here a group of enlisted men stand beside a twenty-ton section of a spruce tree they are transporting to a mill in Washington state.

II, was a highly complex, all-metal machine weighing 133,500 pounds. Powered by four 2,200 hp radial engines, it could reach a maximum speed of 357 mph and had a range of 3,700 miles. By the time the USAF became an independent service and these hypothetical enlisted members ended their thirty-year careers, the United States military had entered the jet age. Enlisted airframe or powerplant mechanics during this formative period would need to constantly upgrade their skills in the face of this kind of rapid technological development.

Throughout the period before World War II, the training for enlisted personnel became less general and more highly specialized. Before the United States entered World War II, first the Army Air Corps and then, after June 1941, the Army Air Forces (AAF)

moved even more aggressively into a training system that emphasized specialization. For example, the classification scheme for mechanics included eight functional groups and forty-seven subclassifications. Eventually, the training system produced technicians, mechanics, and repairmen qualified to work on specific tasks on specific airplanes. And there were new specialties in such areas as electronics, radar, and medicine. The need for highly trained specialists, in turn, reinforced the long-standing policy of recruiting only the most intelligent and technically oriented individuals. The AAF saw continued success in gaining the largest percentage of those scoring highest on the Army's General Classification Test and Mechanical Aptitude Tests. This, in turn, further reinforced the elite image of the enlisted airmen.⁴



Photo specialists piece together individual reconnaissance photos to make a photo map.



Enlisted weather observers (left to right) Larry Windt, William Franklin, and John P. Casey inflate a weather balloon at the AAF weather station, Keflavik, Iceland.

The changes in training reflected the expansion of the enlisted specialties. From the beginning, enlisted airmen have served in a number of air power support roles, and those roles became more numerous and diverse over time. During World War I, for example, in addition to serving as aircraft mechanics, enlisted personnel in the Air Service acted as photo specialists, balloon squadron specialists, and pilots. Others served in the Spruce Division, responsible for vastly increasing the nation's production of spruce, a vital construction material in early airplanes. Enlisted personnel serving in the Ordnance Department

helped to make sure that the guns mounted on the early airplanes were installed correctly and remained in good repair. They also shouldered the responsibility for loading bombs properly and safely on the often-fragile pioneer bomber aircraft.⁵

During the 1920s and 1930s, enlisted airmen began to take on a number of other roles. While mechanics remained among the most highly prized of the enlisted specialists, the fledging Air Service and its successor organization, the Air Corps, also needed armorers, clerks, radio operators, painters, welders, and a whole host of other enlisted specialists. By the mid-1930s, the Air Corps had organized its enlisted occupations into twelve broad trade groups: 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. Further, as noted, the enlisted serving in these various specialist occupations needed to upgrade their skills continually as the rapid evolution of aircraft technology brought increasingly sophisticated and complex aircraft into the service.⁶

And the late 1930s brought the first of the new, large bombers. The enlisted air crewmen on these aircraft served primarily as gunners. The B-17, for example, had a crew of ten, seven of whom were enlisted gunners. In fact, after mechanics, aerial gunners made up the second largest group of enlisted specialists during World War II, with more than three hundred thousand trained for that specialty. Enlisted aircrew, thus, joined officer pilots as vital members of the teams that would deliver air power during World War II.⁷

The ability of the Air Service/Air Corps to recruit and retain the highest quality enlisted personnel varied across time, particularly in the interwar period. During the 1920s, perceptions about slow promotions and the health of the U.S. economy often made recruitment and retention difficult. However, the technical training offered with enlistment did act as a strong incentive. During the 1930s, the depressed U.S. economy made recruitment and retention easier.

Though promotions remained slow, the pay and benefits available to Air Corps enlisted personnel appeared attractive. As noted, the Air Corps had the authorization to pay for skills. Therefore, as enlisted personnel increased their skill level, their pay could increase significantly, even in the absence of promotion to a higher grade. The pay available to the Air Corps enlisted members not only put them in a better position than the enlisted personnel in other branches of the Army, but it also compared quite favorably with available civilian wages. Add to that the glamour associated with aviation, and the Air Corps proved quite successful in recruiting, training, and retaining a high quality enlisted force.⁸

Further challenges came with the admission of African Americans to the Army Air Corps/Army Air Forces in 1941. The Tuskegee Airmen were officer pilots who helped to break down racial barriers in the U.S. military in general and in the AAF in particular. Not all of the African American personnel serving in the AAF during World War II were officer pilots, however. Others were enlisted members serving in segregated aviation squadrons. At first, these enlisted members were allowed only to drive trucks or tend lawns. African American leaders soon complained. The Army sent veteran enlisted personnel from its existing segregated units to provide basic training to the new recruits. And the AAF enrolled African American enlisted members in technical training classes at Chanute Field in Illinois, where, by virtue of their small numbers, they attended the same classes as white trainees. As Judge William O. Hastie, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson's Civilian Aide on Negro Affairs, reported, "The men did well."⁹

But because of segregation, the AAF trained only enough African American mechanics, radiomen, and other technicians to serve the segregated flying units. Most of the African American enlisted members serving in the AAF were assigned to Air Service Command (ASC), where they served as drivers and laborers, very traditional roles for African Americans in the military. They also experienced racism and discrimination. Segregation did ease as the war went on, but racism remained a great prob-

lem.¹⁰ The newly independent U.S. Air Force, which began its organizational life with a commitment to integration, nonetheless had a difficult history to deal with before it could reach both integration and equality.

In contrast, the AAF seemed quite willing during the war to integrate women into its organization, within limits. For example, women could not serve as pilots, even in noncombatant roles, and the famous Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) were civilian employees. But the AAF was willing to utilize women officers and enlisted in other roles. In fact, it was the first Army command to employ women. Of the approximately 100,000 women serving in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during the war, about 40,000 served in the AAF. By early 1945, more than 1,600 women served as officers and more than 30,000 women served as enlisted.¹¹

The AAF admitted enlisted women to all of its noncombat schools, and it was willing to train women for technical and mechanical jobs. But the



This member of the WAF assigned to the Combat Operations Center at Continental Air Defense Command headquarters, Ent Air Force Base, Colorado, worked behind the plotting board in the command post, writing backward so that the information was readable by the battle staff on the other side of the board.



In 1967, MSgt. Duane C. Sopp, from Flint, Michigan, instructed members of the South Vietnamese Air Force on the operation of the F-5 aircraft engine. Enlisted airmen served in various capacities during the Vietnam War.

service often found that it made more sense for the women to serve in jobs matching their civilian skills. So, although enlisted women served as weather observers, radio operators, and mechanics, about half served in administrative or office jobs. At the conclusion of the war, the final report of the head of the Air WAC Division, Lt. Col. Betty Bandel, concluded that the women had served well and had proven their value. Issues such as housing; separate training; conflicts with civilian workers; and fraternization, concerning both officers and enlisted, remained unresolved, but she believed that they posed no great obstacle to women's continued service in the AAF.¹² However, though the AAF had been ready to integrate women into the service during wartime, it was a different story once the war was over.

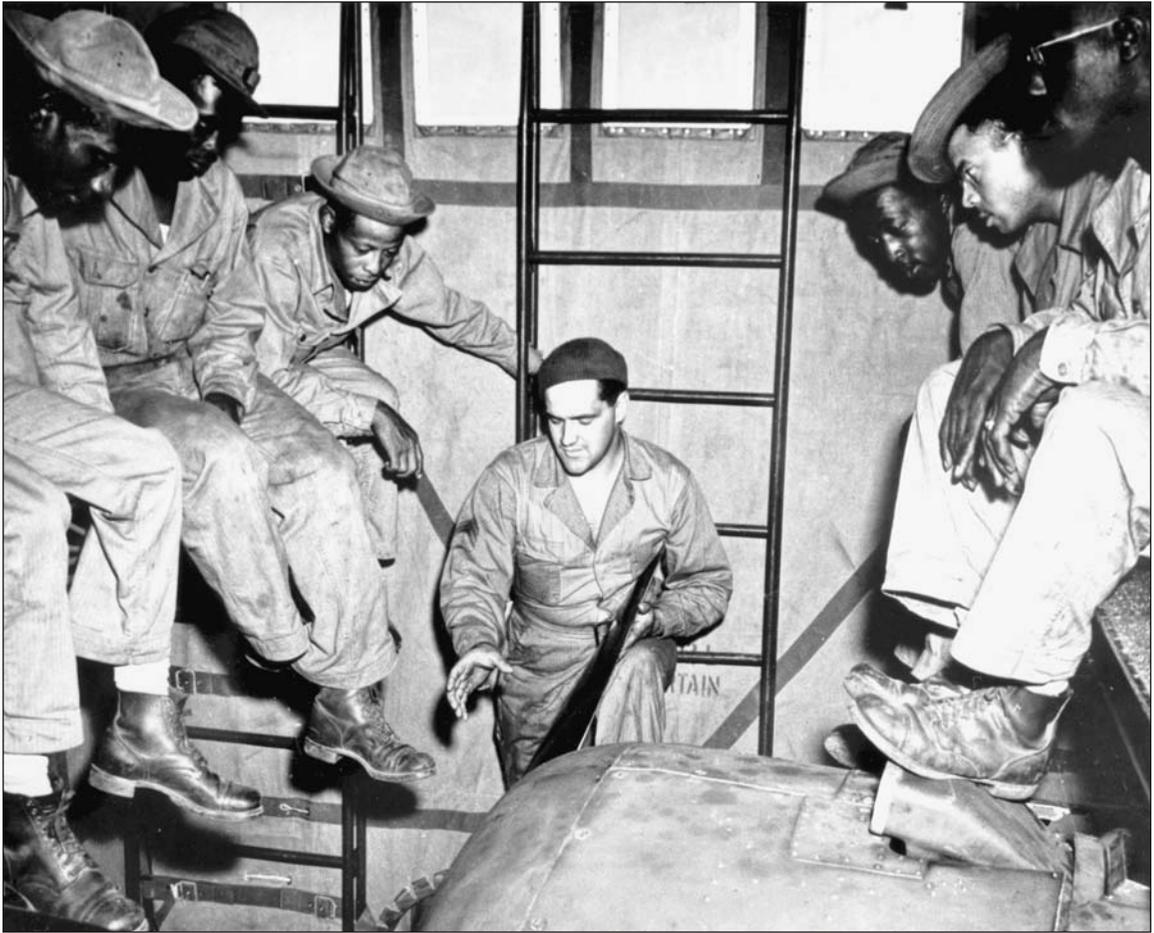
Throughout the history of the U.S. Air Force and its predecessor organizations, officers—almost exclusively—flew and enlisted served in support roles. Occasionally, however, and especially during a brief period during World War II, enlisted men joined the ranks of pilots. Interestingly, although at times officials considered the idea of training enlisted men as navigators and bombardiers, for the most part officers served in those specialties. Thus, while a few enlisted members were able to serve in the air specialty with the highest prestige, their role in the air primari-

ly involved filling support positions, especially that of gunner.¹³ Within that context, the total number of enlisted pilots was never large, and many ended their careers as officers. Nonetheless, there was a time when enlisted members successfully flew as military pilots.

Though he retired as a colonel, Vernon Lee Burge began his military flying career as the U.S. Army's first "soldier pilot." In 1912, the Army sent Burge to the Philippines to serve with pioneer Army aviator Lt. Frank B. Lahm at a newly established flight school located at Fort William McKinley. Lahm had orders to train two officers as pilots. When only one officer volunteered, Corporal Burge stepped forward. Lieutenant Lahm agreed to provide instruction to his mechanic. Flight training began in April 1912; by June, Burge had earned a Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) aviator's certificate. When Lahm sent in the required paperwork, the Army informed him that it did not authorize training enlisted pilots. Nonetheless, Burge and a handful of other enlisted pilots, also trained under somewhat informal arrangements, earned their wings before Congress officially established limited authority for training enlisted pilots. By World War I, many of these pioneer enlisted aviators, including Burge, had received commissions.¹⁴

Training of enlisted pilots continued with the U.S. declaration of war in 1917. By the end of the war, it became clear that the Army still officially disapproved of the training and service of enlisted pilots. For example, despite legislation in 1914 and 1916 that had called for the training of enlisted pilots, the Army concluded that the grade of "enlisted aviator" had never been established; therefore, enlisted pilots were not authorized to wear the military aviator badge. In many ways, according to the Army, enlisted aviators officially did not exist. New legislation in 1920 temporarily ended any authorization for the training of enlisted aviators.¹⁵

Despite the fact that the Army proved very reluctant to acknowledge their existence officially, enlisted pilots continued to serve during the 1920s. In 1923, the Air Service once again authorized flight



In 1941, African-Americans were first admitted to the Army Air Corps/Army Air Forces. The Tuskegee Airmen, some of whom are pictured above receiving instruction in aircraft maintenance at Selfridge Field, Michigan, were officer-pilots.

training for enlisted servicemen. Those selected for training were already serving as noncommissioned officers and were experienced airplane mechanics. This enlisted pilot training program lasted until 1933, when the Hoover administration's economy measures in response to the onset of what became known as the Great Depression ended the program. Seventy-eight NCOs sought flight training under the program; thirty-three graduated. Those who received their wings under this program flew a variety of missions. They carried passengers, piloted reconnaissance flights, and scouted routes for possible airways, thus participating in the kinds of public demonstrations of aerial might and proficiency that aimed at building public

support for military aviation. And when the Air Corps agreed to fly the mail in the wake of the cancellation of the civilian airmail contracts, enlisted pilots flew a number of support missions.¹⁶

The onset of the Great Depression brought an end to the Air Corps enlisted pilot training program, but the ranks of the enlisted pilots continued to grow. The economic hard times led a number of former military pilots to enlist. Some of them had served on active duty with reserve commissions as officer pilots; others had been discharged upon completion of their flight training and the awarding of the reserve commissions. Regardless, many saw enlistment as a viable option, even though they served and flew as

privates. Up to one hundred men who received training as cadets between 1923 and 1933 eventually joined the military as enlisted pilots. The Air Corps, though, remained uncomfortable with the idea of enlisted pilots. The National Defense Act of 1926 had officially required that 20 percent of Air Corps pilots assigned to tactical squadrons be enlisted pilots, but the Air Corps never came close to meeting that requirement. The number of enlisted pilots on active duty rose to a pre-World War II high in 1935, when 117 enlisted pilots served. A number of these were former reserve officers who went on to receive Regular Army commissions before World War II. By 1940, therefore, the number of enlisted pilots had once again decreased to a mere handful. Most of the remaining few returned to the officer ranks when they were recalled to active duty as officers after the United States declared war.¹⁷

By early 1941, as it became clear to many that the United States could no longer avoid involvement in the conflict that had erupted in Europe in September 1939, the Air Corps began to explore the idea of



WAC Cpl. Evelyn Rivers served as a teletype operator at Lockbourne Air Base, Ohio, in December 1947.

once again training enlisted pilots. As envisioned, the new program would offer flight training to enlisted members who, lacking the required college degree, were otherwise barred because they were ineligible for commissioning. After completing the training, the men would serve as sergeant pilots. The new program became a reality with the passage of Public Law 99 in June 1941. Army enlisted members would



WAF Sgt. Lois Spahn worked as a control tower operator at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C., in July 1951.

enter flight training as “aviation students.” Upon graduation, they would receive the rank of staff sergeant, regardless of their rank before they began training. While an opportunity for privates and corporals, the program represented a sacrifice for interested enlisted members who had already attained the rank of technical or master sergeant. And the men had to agree not to marry for three years following the completion of training. Despite the built-in disincentives, 122 enlisted aviation students reported for the first training class. Subsequent classes also readily filled. As the number of enlisted pilots rose, the AAF grew increasingly uncomfortable with their presence. The image of pilots as a special and elite group, held by much of the leadership of the service, hindered its ability to fully accept the idea of enlisted pilots. As early as November 1942, the AAF, under authority of Public Law 658, decreed that upon graduation, aviation students would hold the rank of flight officer—equivalent to a warrant officer rank—not staff sergeant. By early 1943, the AAF authorized the promotion of all sergeant pilots to the rank of flight officer. Eventually, most flight officers received commissions as second lieutenants.¹⁸

When the U.S. Air Force was established as a separate service in September 1947, two enlisted pilots remained on active duty. Both had received commissions during World War II and then separated from the service. Both then reenlisted at their permanent grade of master sergeant and retained their wings. MSGt. Tom Rafferty died in an aircraft accident in 1949. MSGt. George Holmes retired in 1957.

The U.S. Air Force and its predecessor organizations all valued the technical skills of enlisted members. At a number of times, the Air Service and then the Army Air Corps experimented with the idea of enlisted pilots. In the end, however, 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.

The formative period, 1907–1947, resulted in an image of the enlisted airman as a highly skilled, intelligent person. The service provided extensive train-



U.S. Rep. L. Mendel Rivers (D., S.C.), shown on the right during a 1965 visit to South Vietnam, piloted major revisions in the enlisted promotion policy.

ing in order to allow its enlisted members to serve in a wide variety of roles, though in the end it barred them from becoming enlisted pilots. With its independence, the U.S. Air Force faced the challenges of developing the personnel policies necessary to allow it to recruit, train, and retain exactly the type of enlisted person it desired. In devising those policies, the service focused on a number of areas, such as promotion reform and quality of life issues, including pay, housing, and medical care. Professional military education (PME) for enlisted members witnessed its somewhat tentative beginnings. And the new United States Air Force revised its rank structure to better recognize the contributions of its noncommissioned officers, especially the most senior NCOs.

ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT AIR FORCE

Between 1947 and the late 1950s, the newly created U.S. Air Force witnessed an important period of transition and transformation. During a period of often rapid and massive swings in the number of personnel serving, Air Force leaders in many ways had to create a distinctive culture and identity for the service. They also had to confront a widely perceived problem—the loss of prestige associated with service in the NCO ranks. The actions taken to address these issues

and to create an Air Force culture included new uniforms for all and a new rank structure for the enlisted. To reinforce this new culture, the Air Force began its first early efforts at PME for its enlisted personnel. It also sought means to recognize and utilize more fully its more senior NCOs. Additionally, recruiting and retaining the type of highly skilled enlisted personnel desired required a sustained effort to improve pay and benefits. Housing shortages and problems with the promotion system received particular attention during the 1950s. Larger forces at work in U.S. society also influenced the Air Force, as African Americans and, to a lesser extent, women sought broader and more equal roles. And finally, new Cold War missions and advancing technology meant new skills and occupational specialties for USAF enlisted personnel.

In 1945, more than eight million Americans were in uniform in the U.S. Army. Within a year, that number dropped to just under two million, including 1,435,496 in the Army and 455,515 in the Army Air Forces. By 1947, the newly created U.S. Air Force had only 305,827 individuals, including 263,082 enlisted members, on active duty. The numbers rose gradually in 1948 and 1949 before experiencing an upward spike with the commencement of the Korean War in 1950. By the time of the ceasefire in 1953, the USAF had 977,593 individuals on active duty, including 846,824 enlisted members. Active duty numbers peaked the year before with 983,261, including 854,519 enlisted. In 1952, at the peak point in enlistments, enlisted airmen represented 87 percent of the total force. By 1959, the active duty enlisted force had dropped to 707,219. Enlisted personnel as a percentage of the total force also dropped by 1959, standing at 84 percent in that year.¹⁹

During World War II, the total number of individuals in uniform in all of the services soared from 1,801,101 in 1941 to 12,055,884 in 1945.²⁰ For the most part, these were citizen-soldiers, drawn into the services “for the duration” and fully expecting to return to civilian life once the war ended. This rapid expansion overwhelmed the veteran noncommissioned officers in all of the services. There were not enough



SSgt. Mitchel H. Baker used his collection of snakes at the Cam Ranh Bay veterinary office to identify poisonous reptiles encountered by troops in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

of them to fill the new positions, and they did not have the time or the opportunity to provide much training to those new to their ranks. As a result, all of the services came out of World War II facing the issue of the proper role of the noncommissioned officer. In the peacetime Army, for example, individuals worked for years to attain NCO status. That hard-won status afforded them a measure of prestige as well as responsibility and authority. In wartime, in contrast, NCO status could be won within months. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Paul W. Airey, for example, enlisted in November 1942. He went from private first class to sergeant, bypassing the rank of corporal, the first NCO rank, and had attained the rank of sergeant by August 1943. In addition, the manpower needs of World War II resulted in a higher percentage of NCOs in the total enlisted force. In December 1941, only 20 percent of enlisted personnel served as NCOs; by 1943, 50 percent were NCOs. Many of these citizen-sol-

diers acquitted themselves well; nonetheless, the rapid growth of the NCO ranks often seemed to diminish the position, image, and prestige of the non-commissioned officer.²¹

In the earliest years of Air Force independence, the service took a number of steps to address the issue of NCO prestige and to establish its separateness from the U.S. Army. These included the adoption of new uniforms and the development of USAF designations for a number of enlisted ranks. Until the early 1950s, Air Force enlisted members continued to wear what was essentially surplus Army garb while the service worked to produce enough of the new uniforms. This new uniform, designed in 1948, had an important characteristic: both officers and enlisted would wear the same basic uniform. In the Army, officers wore better-constructed uniforms made with higher quality materials. This had led to some resentment among the enlisted personnel. In the spirit of unity and teamwork, the leadership decided that there would be one USAF uniform in Shade 84 Blue.²²

As the new uniforms became available in the early 1950s, the U.S. Air Force also adopted new

rank designations. It retained the same basic seven-level structure as that of the U.S. Army, but the rank titles took on a decided USAF sound. Instead of private, corporal, and buck sergeant, the Air Force had airman basic, airman third class, airman second class, and airman first class. Only the top three ranks—staff sergeant, technical sergeant, and master sergeant—remained unchanged.²³ The revised rank structure also changed the point at which an enlisted member attained NCO status. Corporals and buck sergeants kept their stripes but lost their NCO status as they became airmen second class and airman first class, respectively.²⁴ As CMSAF Richard Kisling recalled, those who lost their NCO status did not welcome the change, and it even temporarily hurt revenues at NCO clubs. He did, however, believe that it brought some additional prestige to the senior non-commissioned officers who remained.²⁵ CMSAF Thomas Barnes, who made staff sergeant in 1952, believed that the change did create a clear separation between the noncommissioned officers and the rest of the enlisted force.²⁶ At the same time, efforts also focused on making the enlisted not only look like airmen, but also think like airmen.



Mechanics stood by their planes during inspection at Randolph Field, Texas, in October 1938.

“Professional” and “professionalism” have proven very controversial terms when used in relation to the military. The classic definitions of a military professional, proposed by scholars such as Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, are rather narrow, focusing almost exclusively on the role military officers play as “managers of violence.”²⁷ And while these definitions encompass the generally recognized characteristics of a profession—expertise, responsibility, and corporateness—they have come under criticism from a number of quarters. The critiques include the charge that these definitions failed to take into account changes over time—changes in technology, in professional military education, and in the roles and responsibilities of officers and enlisted personnel. Also, the examples upon which Huntington and others built their definitions seemed limited to the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy.²⁸ Later scholars developed a far broader view of what constituted a profession and, thus, offered a vision of a profession that could include U.S. Air Force noncommissioned officers.²⁹

In his work, *Foundation of the Force: Air Force Enlisted Policy*, published in 1997, Mark Grandstaff drew on the scholarship of Robert Wiebe and Andrew Abbott, both of whom developed a broad definition of a profession and identified what they termed a “subordinate profession”—a profession such as that of nurse within the larger medical profession in which doctors are members of the dominant profession. Grandstaff also drew on the work on Harold Wilensky, who identified the process by which an occupation might attain professional status. These steps included “establishing schools, setting standards, providing longer training, demanding commitment to the profession and the group, promoting and creating a professional association, and finally, establishing a code of ethics, eliminating internal competition, and protecting the client.”³⁰ Grandstaff wrote that the U.S. Air Force began the process of transforming enlisted members into professional airmen as early as the 1950s. Early actions taken by the service included creation of career programs and a new promotion system for enlisted personnel, further revisions to the

rank structure to recognize the increased role and responsibility of the noncommissioned officer, the preservation of the Army tradition of the first sergeant, and the initial establishment of schools for enlisted professional military education.³¹

In the early 1950s, the Air Force leadership took actions aimed at upgrading the skill levels of the enlisted force generally and enhancing the position of the noncommissioned officer in particular. In 1950, the Air Force introduced its Airman Career Program, designed to accomplish two fundamental goals. First, it established a career path for each enlisted career field. Second, it tied promotion more closely to merit. This moved the Air Force away from the promotion system it had inherited from the Army. Before World War II, eligibility for promotion was based on achieving certain skill levels, but actual



Two enlisted members of an Air Force ground control team are shown coordinating an airborne operation.

promotion depended upon unit vacancies. Each unit had a certain number of positions available at each grade. Until a position opened, no promotion was possible, regardless of an individual's skill. Vacancies were filled based on both skill and longevity. In times of rapid expansion, such as during the Korean War, the unit vacancy rule was less of an issue. But during times of static or decreasing manning levels, the unit rule worked to slow down promotions at the expense of morale. Under the new Airman Career Program, and a new quota system implemented in 1953 that formally eliminated the unit vacancy requirement, the Air Force moved toward a promotion system in which an enlisted member moved up in rank on the basis of job knowledge and skill level, rather than on longevity or unit vacancies. The service struggled, however, due to the lack of data processing equipment fully capable of managing this more complex system.³² So, while this was a step in what many considered the right direction, problems remained.

The Air Force also wrestled with the problem of how best to recognize the growing responsibilities of its senior noncommissioned officers. The practice of recognizing them by promoting them to the rank of warrant officer proved problematic, and the service seemed unable to decide whether warrant officers were officers or enlisted. With an eye to addressing a number of personnel issues, the Air Force supported the creation of two new senior enlisted ranks: senior master sergeant (E-8) and chief master sergeant (E-9). The new ranks offered to the service's master sergeants (E-7s) further promotion opportunities and recognized better senior supervisory positions. The new ranks did not immediately bring increased responsibilities, but they laid the groundwork for senior NCOs to gain more responsibility over the following decades.³³

With the idea of enhancing the role of its non-commissioned officers, the Air Force also retained an important enlisted role from its Army heritage. The position of first sergeant has a long tradition in the U.S. military, dating from before the Civil War. The role of the "top kick" involved the assumption of a great deal of day-to-day management and responsi-



In 1967, Donna M. Shutter (standing), an educational specialist, and Florence L. Pelekai, a personnel clerk, processed personnel records at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

bility. Tasks required of the first sergeant included completing vital paperwork, enforcing discipline, acting as both a personal and career counselor, helping to shape unit policy, and maintaining unit facilities. Overall, the first sergeant was the person most responsible for the morale and welfare of enlisted personnel. The Air Force created the career field for first sergeants in 1951. Over the years, the job description saw a number of revisions, and it was even temporarily eliminated in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But, generally, the basic emphasis on managerial and leadership responsibilities remained.³⁴ In 1973, the service established the predecessor of what is today the First Sergeants Academy at Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB)—Gunter Annex, Alabama.

A number of those who went on to serve as chief master sergeants of the Air Force recognized the importance of the role of the first sergeant, and several served as a first sergeant at times in their careers. CMSAF Paul Airey declared that next to serving as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, his favorite job was that of first sergeant, a job he held sev-

eral times during his long career. Even those who did not hold the job recognized its importance. CMSAF Robert Gaylor believed that his success as the senior military policeman on a base depended on the relationships he built with the first sergeants. He would often work with the first sergeants when dealing with young airmen who ran afoul of rules and regulations, resolving issues informally. As he concluded: "A good First Sergeant was worth more than his weight in gold, a good First Sergeant who really cared about people. He'd rip your knickers if you were out of line, but if you had a problem he was the one to go to."³⁵

Education has been central to the professionalization of the USAF enlisted force. As noted, the predecessor organizations of the U.S. Air Force always placed a premium on recruiting and retaining the best educated and most highly skilled enlisted personnel. Up through World War II, most training focused on developing technical skills. After the creation of the independent U.S. Air Force, the service continued to emphasize technical skills and education, but during the 1950s, the Air Force added professional military education to the types of training available to its enlisted force. These schools emphasized leadership and management skills.

The service's first noncommissioned officer academy (NCOA) opened in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1950. Gen. John K. Cannon, the commander in chief of United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), ordered its establishment, but the school remained open for only about a year. In 1952, the Strategic Air Command (SAC) opened another NCOA in England. This school remained open for a longer period, and other commands soon followed the SAC example.³⁶ⁱ

While generally emphasizing leadership and management skills development, the precise curriculum of the Air Force NCO academies has changed over the years. In the mid-1950s, for example, the Second Air Force's NCOA included within its curriculum "ten hours of Military Management (Organizational Phase); twelve hours of Military Instructor Training; twenty two hours of Speech; ten hours of Problem Solving," out of a total of 265 hours of in-

struction.³⁷ By the late 1950s, the major subjects taught at NCOAs included world affairs; USAF history, communicative skills; supervision and management; human relations and leadership; drill and ceremonies; military customs; courtesy and protocol; physical training and conditioning; and military justice.³⁸

As early as the 1950s, the Air Force found that retaining a skilled, professional career enlisted force also depended on the ability of the service to meet expectations in pay, housing, and medical care. Studies completed for Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson recommended that Congress act quickly to address issues of pay and incentives for reenlistment. The Air Force worked hard to publicize the conclusions of the Womble Committee, named for its chair, RADM J. P. Womble, Jr. In 1954, Congress responded with a law reforming the incentive pay system for reenlistments, increasing the rewards for reenlistments by younger service members, thus encouraging them to become part of the career force. The following year, Congress reformed the pay system by increasing the size of the raises available to those in the middle grades, creating further incentives for these members to continue as career airmen. These were the people with the training and experience the Air Force needed to retain.³⁹

The problems associated with housing were probably most acute during the late 1940s and 1950s. In fact, the Air Force declared housing its major personnel problem in 1948. An investigation in 1949 found USAF personnel living in "garages, tents, and decrepit World War II post housing." While the United States as a whole also experienced a housing shortage at this time, the lack of housing provided by the Air Force was identified as an issue affecting retention and morale. Housing grew as an issue between the late 1940s and the early 1950s, as the percentage of the enlisted force who were married and had families increased from 29.7 percent of the total to 44.1 percent.⁴⁰

By 1952, under the Wherry Mortgage Insurance Act of 1949, the Air Force was busy building base housing. The number of houses built on bases and

those built by private contractors off base, available for rent to military families, grew but not quickly enough to meet needs. By 1955, the service faced a housing shortage estimated at 250,000 units. As bad as conditions were at and near U.S. bases, the situation was even worse for personnel stationed overseas, where high costs and cultural issues complicated the situation. Further, the housing available to single enlisted airmen through the mid-1950s consisted mostly of World War II open-bay type barracks.⁴¹

In 1955, the Capehart Amendment to the National Housing Act called for the construction of 17,000 units of military housing per year. The law assigned 8,100 of the total per year to the Air Force. This act brought enough of an improvement that, by the late 1950s, airmen were reporting a general satisfaction with the quarters available to them.⁴² Part of this might also be due to the explosion of housing construction generally in the United States during the 1950s.

While recruiting, training, and retaining enlisted personnel seemed basic issues at all stages of Air Force history, the late 1940s witnessed the introduction of another set of issues that would prove vital and persistent in many ways to the present—the integration of African Americans, other nonwhites, and women into the military.

Within a year of becoming a separate service, the U.S. Air Force, along with the other services, faced the challenge of making the racial integration of the military work. On July 26, 1948, President Harry S Truman issued Executive Order 9981. The order did not specifically mention integration, but its call for the military to follow a policy of “equality of treatment and opportunity to all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race” led to actions associated with making the military one of the first integrated institutions in the United States.

The newly created U.S. Air Force had already been studying the issue of integration before the issuance of Executive Order 9981. It had concluded that the policy of segregation hindered the service from making the most efficient use of its manpower. And its first deputy chief of staff for personnel, Lt.



In 1950, Gen. John K. Cannon (shown here before he became commander-in-chief of USAFE) ordered the establishment of the first noncommissioned officer academy.

Gen. Idwal H. Edwards, simply stated that integration was the right thing to do. The service had a history of some integration but also of persistent discrimination dating to the days of the Army Air Forces during World War II. As a younger service, though, with perhaps fewer negative traditions to overcome compared to the more senior services, the Air Force generally managed to implement Truman’s order rather smoothly. Integration, while not universally accepted, did have the support of a number of officers and enlisted, many of whom engaged in activities that foreshadowed tactics used by later civil rights advocates when they insisted that local businesses serve the African American personnel at nearby bases.⁴³

CMSAF Robert Gaylor recalled an incident in Texas in 1958. He managed the Lackland Air Force Base baseball team, which included three African American players. On the way to a game, the team stopped at a restaurant in Uvalde. The person in charge at the restaurant told Gaylor that he would be willing to feed the African Americans in his group, but that they would have to eat outside. Only the whites could enter the restaurant. Gaylor told the man that either all of them would come in to eat or



TSgt. Jim Cook (left) served as NCOIC of the Life Support Section, 56th Air Commando Wing in 1967. He is pictured checking a pilot's survival and flying equipment.

none of them would. He and his team got back on their bus and went on to Del Rio, where they found a place where they all could eat.⁴⁴ Though certainly one could find examples like this of other individual efforts to work in the spirit of integration, organizationally the Air Force faced a number of challenges over the next decades as it strove to make true integration an institutional reality.

Under the pressure of an executive order and the reality of efficient manpower utilization, the Air Force moved toward the integration of African Americans. When it came to women, on the other hand, their participation, though required by law, was far from enthusiastically accepted. The Women's Armed Service Act of 1948 opened military service to women, but it limited participation to two percent of the regular forces. Based on the successful use by the Army Air Forces of female personnel, both officer and enlisted, during World War II, the new U.S. Air Force seemed perhaps best positioned to fully utilize female personnel. Instead, the entry of women into the service was marked by segregation and smaller than planned numbers.

As noted, women had served in the U.S. Army during World War II in the Women's Army Corps. A number of these women had been assigned to the Army Air Forces and became known as Air-WACs. The AAF had welcomed their service, and, during the war, women filled positions in a wide variety of career fields, even that of aircraft mechanic. In 1948, thus, the prospects for women in the U.S. Air Force seemed promising. The reality proved far different. First, while at the same time rejecting the Army's corps system for the Air Force as a whole and working to fully integrate African Americans, the Air Force nonetheless created a separate organization, Women in the Air Force (WAF), for its women officers and enlisted members. While some of the women who had served in the Women's Army Corps during the war welcomed this organization, it worked against the full integration of women. For example, while women were assigned to various organizations at a base, they went to a separate WAF squadron for "guidance, counseling, and off-duty supervision." Second, though the Air Force was authorized 4,000 enlisted women in June 1948, only 1,433 women enlisted in the new service. That total grew to only 3,800 in June 1950. Recruiting women, both officers and enlisted, to fill even the modest number of positions authorized remained problematic. In part, the failure to fully fill the ranks reflected social attitudes in the country at the time. None of the services seemed capable of convincing Americans in general, and women in particular, that the military represented a suitable career choice for a woman. And, finally, the Air Force severely restricted the number of specialties in which enlisted women could serve. Of the 349 specialties identified by the new service, 158 were closed to women.⁴⁵

Though USAF enlisted women saw their roles shrink during the 1950s, for enlisted men the initial years of the Cold War, with its "hot" Korean War, meant the creation of a number of new career fields. The Korean War witnessed the contributions of the enlisted members of the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS), part of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS). Enlisted members of the

AACS served as air traffic controllers, radio operators, radar technicians, and equipment repairmen. The Air Weather Service (AWS) was another part of MATS. This worldwide air traffic control system demanded the services of a number of enlisted specialists, including flight engineers, dropsonde operators, and flight maintenance technicians. Another part of MATS, the Air Rescue Service (ARS), provided its enlisted members with a number of challenging assignments. Enlisted personnel not only maintained the service's aircraft, which included both fixed-wing and rotary-wing (helicopter) craft, but enlisted medical technicians provided the first medical aid to those rescued. Enlisted personnel also served as photo processors and photo interpreters in reconnaissance squadrons during the Korean War.⁴⁶ⁱ

And, finally, the early Cold War saw enlisted personnel taking on the role of missile crewmen. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Air Force began training enlisted missile technicians. They became responsible for maintaining those powerful weapons in a state of continuous readiness. Missiles had to be ready to be launched with a 15-minute notice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Missile crews, both officer and enlisted, served in isolated locations. The Air Force and the Strategic Air Command realized early on that those serving in missile crews would need to be carefully trained, well-screened, career airmen.⁴⁷

THE VIETNAM YEARS

The controversial nature of the Vietnam War placed great stress on people serving in the military during the 1960s and early 1970s. Those stresses, together with the pressures created by the civil rights and women's rights movements and persistent complaints about pay, benefits, and, especially, promotions, created the environment in which fundamental changes occurred. The demands of the war itself opened new roles for enlisted personnel. These new roles, in turn, resulted in situations that produced some of the first enlisted heroes of the U.S. Air Force. The 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed difficulties associated with recruiting and retaining a quality enlisted force. Congress and the Air Force responded to a number of

issues, most importantly to complaints voiced about the promotion system. The full integration of African Americans and women remained challenging. Through the turmoil, USAF enlisted members continued to grow professionally. While progress was often uneven, the Vietnam War years saw the creation of a professional organization, the eventual expansion of professional military education, and the establishment of the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). With the growing professionalism of the enlisted force came greater responsibility, especially for senior noncommissioned officers. Other landmark changes of this period included the creation of a top enlisted post at the Air Staff level and at many other subordinate levels of the USAF organization.

The Vietnam War saw enlisted airmen filling more varied roles. Some of these roles were traditional, such as gunner and loadmaster, but they involved service on aircraft that had previously not been armed. For example, during the Vietnam War, the United States converted a number of cargo air-



Sgt. Steve M. Northern, from Riverside, California, completed 51 combat rescues during two consecutive tours as a pararescueman in Southeast Asia.

craft—from the C-47 to the C-130—into gunships. The enlisted gunners on these new craft actually served as gun loaders. The aircraft pilots aimed and fired the guns, but the enlisted aerial gunners made sure that the rapid-fire guns remained loaded and operating. The loadmasters on these cargo-aircraft-turned-gunships released hot, explosive, and dangerous flares over the target areas, illuminating them so that the pilots could aim the guns. In addition, an expanded Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) continued the work of its predecessor organization, the Air Rescue Service. The ARRS included among its enlisted specialties that of pararescuemen (PJs). The ARRS is credited with saving over twenty-six hundred lives in Vietnam as a result of its work. The Vietnam War also witnessed the creation of the tactical air control party (TACP) and the combat control team (CCT). Consisting of both officers and enlisted personnel, the TACP coordinated close air support for ground troops. Combat control teams acted as air traffic controllers at remote airstrips, directed fighter strikes, provided control for emergency airdrops, and aided aerial evacuations.⁴⁸

Individuals filling a number of these new roles emerged as new enlisted heroes. The first U.S. Air Force enlisted Medal of Honor winner, AIC John L. Levitow, served as a loadmaster on an AC-47 gunship. During a combat air patrol over South Vietnam in February 1969, orders came to divert to the Army post at Long Binh, which was under mortar attack. While attempting to knock out the mortar positions, the gunship, Spooky 71, was rocked when a mortar landed and then exploded on the plane's right wing. Levitow and a fellow crewman, Amn. Ellis Owen, who had been dropping parachute illumination flares from the cargo compartment, were knocked to the floor. One of the flares activated within the cargo compartment, giving off toxic smoke and threatening to explode. Airman Levitow, though suffering from shrapnel wounds, made his way to the flare and covered it with his body. He then moved himself and the flare to the cargo door of the aircraft and tossed the flare out of the plane moments before it fully ignited. Levitow suffered severe burns, but he saved his fel-



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. McConnell announced creation of the position of chief master sergeant of the Air Force in 1966.

low crew members and the gunship. After recovering from his wounds, the twenty-three-year-old Levitow returned to fly twenty additional combat missions before completing his term of enlistment as a loadmaster at Norton Air Force Base, California. President Richard Nixon presented him with the Medal of Honor on May 14, 1970.⁴⁹

After leaving the Air Force, Levitow continued to work on behalf of his fellow service members. For twenty-two years, he held various positions in the area of veterans' affairs. Before his death, he was involved with veterans' affairs programs for the state of Connecticut. Levitow was remembered as a hero throughout his life. All noncommissioned officers, after studying their promotion books, know that he was the lowest ranking airman to earn the Medal of Honor. Due to the efforts of CMSAF Sam Parish, the top graduates of the Air Force's airmen leadership schools receive the Levitow Honor Graduate Award.

The headquarters building for the 737th Training Group at Lackland Air Force Base is named in his honor. In 1998, John Levitow had the opportunity to inspect the cockpit of the C-17 named for him, the *Spirit of John L. Levitow*. That same year, his name was added to the Walk of Fame at Hurlburt Field in Florida. After a lengthy battle with cancer, John L. Levitow died on November 8, 2000. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.⁵⁰

Shortly after the death of the USAF's first enlisted Medal of Honor winner, Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters presented the nation's highest military honor to the family of A1C William H. Pitsenbarger on December 8, 2000. The actions that resulted in this posthumous award took place in April 1966. Pitsenbarger was the pararescueman on the crew of one of two helicopters, part of Detachment 6, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Bien Hoa, called in to rescue members of Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, who were deep in the Vietnamese jungle, surrounded by Vietcong. The first helicopter experienced a number of problems, including a lack of direct communication with the soldiers below and the fact that the litter kept snagging on the jungle cover. When Pitsenbarger's helicopter arrived, he asked to be put down on the ground, believing that way he could help more people, more quickly. Once on the ground, Pitsenbarger began to help extract the wounded. He did so while facing intense ground fire. During the course of the rescue, automatic weapons fire severely damaged Pitsenbarger's helicopter, call sign Pedro 73, and it had to withdraw. Pitsenbarger remained on the ground, aiding the wounded and returning enemy fire. He continued to work until he was hit at least four times by enemy fire, including a fatal round to the head. He was twenty-one years old.

Though Pitsenbarger was nominated for the Medal of Honor at the time, a number of the witnesses were so severely wounded that they could not offer timely testimony of his bravery. Instead, Pitsenbarger's family received his Air Force Cross in September 1966. In the years that followed, Pitsenbarger's extraordinary heroism did not pass unnoticed by the Air

Force. A number of memorials, buildings, streets, and awards bear his name. His fellow pararescuemen, though, never abandoned their efforts to have his award upgraded. In 1996, the Airmen Memorial Museum, an arm of the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), gathered evidence of the events, including the testimony of surviving members of Charlie Company. Representative John Boehner (R-Ohio) formally requested the upgrade in 1999. With the support of Secretary of the Air Force Peters, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 included the authorization for Pitsenbarger's award. Pitsenbarger's father accepted the Medal of Honor on his behalf.⁵¹

Enlisted airmen also filled a number of noncombat roles in Vietnam. These included their traditional roles as aircraft and engine mechanics as well as acting as ordnance experts, construction engineers, in-flight refueling boom operators, firefighters, and civic actions personnel.⁵²

Certainly, the stress and turmoil associated with the Vietnam War complicated the ability of the Air Force to recruit and, more importantly, retain quality enlisted personnel. On the home front, those choosing to serve in the military often found themselves the focus of an undercurrent of antimilitarism that swept across the country, particularly on college campuses. Men and women in uniform often became the targets at which Americans aimed their anger concerning the war.⁵³ CMSAF Paul Airey, however, noted that more basic issues such as promotions and quality of life—pay, housing, and medical care—played important roles as well. The unpopularity of the war could not be ignored, nor could these more fundamental issues. Many of the most severe criticisms centered on the promotion system.

Complaints focused on the inadequate implementation of the system and also on the perceived unfairness of the entire promotion process. Enlisted personnel complained repeatedly that the process was neither systematic nor understandable. Much of the discontent was centered on the promotion board system. The questions board members could ask were not standardized, and it also seemed as if there

were no standards for answers. CMSAF Robert Gaylor pointed out, for example, that one board member might decide that because candidates for promotion had taken a number of Extension Course Institute courses, they were, therefore, worthy of promotion. Another member of the same board could conclude, instead, that these individuals were not doing their jobs because they were spending so much time taking courses. The whole process seemed overly subjective.⁵⁴

The concerns of the USAF enlisted force finally garnered the attention of Congressman L. Mendel Rivers (D-South Carolina), the long-serving chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. He chaired a series of hearings that resulted in a major revision of Air Force enlisted promotion policy. Known as the Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS) and adopted in 1970, it made promotion contingent on a number of clearly defined, weighted criteria. These included time-in-grade and test scores. This new, more objective system received a warm welcome from enlisted personnel. The chief master sergeants of the Air Force serving during the development and early years of the system praised it highly, even going so far as declaring it the best promotion system ever.⁵⁵

Less enthusiastically embraced, but also aimed at opening up opportunities for advancement, was TOPCAP (Total Objective Plan for Career Airmen Personnel). Coming three years after WAPS, it created an “up or out” career path for noncommissioned officers by setting a high-year-of-tenure mark for the various enlisted ranks. Under the original TOPCAP program, E-5s had to retire after twenty years of service, while E-9s could stay to thirty years. Like WAPS, TOPCAP aimed at creating the ideal enlisted force structure.⁵⁶ However, CMSAF Paul Airey decided that, by the mid-1980s, TOPCAP had perhaps outlived its usefulness. CMSAF Thomas Barnes further noted that it seemed to have forced some key NCOs to leave the Air Force and that it resulted in a drop in the overall experience level in a number of career fields. CMSAF Donald Harlow personally

concluded, in the mid-1980s, that while it met the needs of the time, perhaps it was time for the Air Force to reconsider the program.⁵⁷ The service eventually revised TOPCAP in 1991.

The Air Force also focused a great deal of attention on addressing quality of life issues for its enlisted members, including such key issues as pay, housing, and medical care. The service worked repeatedly to address such issues. 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. The Weighted Airmen Promotion System seemingly provided a long-term answer to promotions. Long-term answers to quality of life issues, however, seemed more elusive.

Finding answers, though, was and remains crucial. As has been pointed out, the lifestyles of military personnel and their families differed from that of

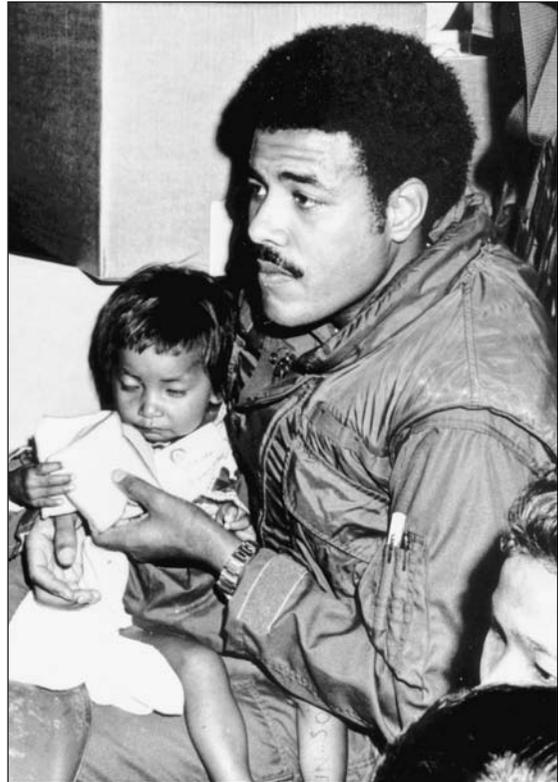


During the Vietnam War, Air Force sentry dog handler A2C Leonard Bryant, of St. Louis, Missouri, patrolled the fence at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam, with his German shepherd Nemo. The military is generally considered the most integrated U.S. institution.

any other work organization. The special stresses included “frequent moves, isolation from extended family, frequent and sometimes prolonged periods of separation of service members from their spouses and children, residence in foreign countries, and the potential for violent injury and death.” Though individuals in other occupations can experience some of these same stresses, “military life has a unique combination of them,” and “most military families experience all of them at some point in their career.”⁵⁸ The Air Force leadership, and NCO leaders in particular, had to give special attention to these quality of life issues in order to recruit and retain the high-quality enlisted force required.

Medical care, especially that for military dependents, proved important to the retention of Air Force enlisted personnel and witnessed reform during the 1960s. Up until the mid-1950s, the benefits available to military members compared favorably to those available to private sector employees. By the mid-1950s, though, the private sector had moved to expand significantly its fringe benefits packages. Included in these were medical benefits for both employees and their dependents, and 70 percent of industrial workers had a health benefit package that included dependent medical care. The military, on the other hand, made no provisions for medical care for dependents beyond offering access to military medical facilities on a strictly space-available basis. The authorization for medical care for retirees and dependents on this space-available basis came in 1956, with the passage of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) Act. Though technically available, medical care remained difficult to acquire for service spouses and children.⁵⁹ In response to concerns voiced, CHAMPUS was expanded in 1966 to include more individuals, including the spouses and children of retired members, and a greater range of medical care and services.⁶⁰

The Air Force also faced continuing issues involving the full integration of African Americans and women. While, as noted, the military had formally



SSgt. Michael L. Greene of the Eleventh Air Force Hospital, U-Tapao, Thailand, is shown holding an orphan during a flight from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in April 1975. Enlisted airmen have been integrally involved in rescue missions worldwide.

integrated by the 1950s, discrimination still occurred. Further, integration and equality are different, and the integration of the Air Force did not mean that its African American members immediately enjoyed complete equality, either in the service or in U.S. society. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s that pushed for the full integration of society and the full equality of all African American citizens clearly touched and influenced events in the Air Force. The young African American men and women who joined the service in the 1960s and early 1970s had been in many ways shaped by the accomplishments and by the frustrations of the movement. The Air Force had to respond, and it initiated its social actions programs in 1969. These programs aimed at tackling problems that ranged from overt racism to

the misunderstandings bred of a lack of awareness of cultural differences. Two years later, the military as a whole established the Defense Race Institute (DRI), which offered training to both officers and enlisted personnel to provide them with the skills to deal with race and human relations issues. Those trained at the DRI were then charged with educating their fellow service members.⁶¹

CMSAF Thomas Barnes, to date the only African American to achieve that rank, spoke extensively of the challenges raised by the civil rights movement and Americans' negative and positive responses to it. Many of the problems, he believed, grew out of cultural ignorance or insensitivity. Non-commissioned officers in particular had to learn to deal with a wide variety of issues—everything from haircuts to language to music.⁶²

Before serving as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Barnes, then a chief master sergeant and Air Training Command's (ATC's) senior enlisted adviser (SEA), had to deal with one of the most serious post-World War II racial incidents in the Air Force. In 1971, a group of young African American airmen had barricaded themselves inside the dining hall at Laredo Air Force Base, Texas.⁶³ They were frustrated by the fact that command staff at their base seemingly refused to do anything about the discrimination these airmen faced on and off base. By the time Barnes arrived, the airmen had been in the dining hall for most of the night, communications had been cut off, and armed police had surrounded the facility.

Barnes realized that the best way to deal with the situation was to get someone inside who could talk with the airmen and assure them that their issues would be addressed. That someone turned out to be Barnes, who gained access to the dining hall when some of the airmen inside recognized him and allowed him to come in through a window. He then assured the airmen that their message had been heard—not only by the military, but by the civilian community as well, as the incident received widespread media attention. He finally convinced them that continuing their sit-in would be wrong, because it would begin to affect the mission capability of the

base by preventing people from eating. To continue their protest despite that fact would put it “in an entirely different category.”⁶⁴ The young men agreed, and the sit-in ended peacefully.

African Americans were not the only members of the service feeling the bite of discrimination. Women serving the Air Force had to fight to ensure their right to serve in positions of prestige and responsibility. Even though the need for manpower expanded as U.S. involvement grew, the participation of women in the military declined in the 1960s. The vast majority of enlisted women in the military served in what U.S. society deemed traditional female roles—clerical, administrative, and medical. Such actions and attitudes were devastating to the morale of women in the military.⁶⁵

The position of women especially eroded during Gen. Curtis E. LeMay's tenures as vice chief of staff and then as chief of staff of the USAF. Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, appointed Women in the Air Force director in 1965, was unsure whether or not LeMay wanted to eliminate the WAF entirely. It was clear, however, that the number of women serving in the U.S. Air Force had declined to an all-time low of 4,700 at the time of her appointment. Under Holm's leadership, the service gradually expanded the number of career fields open to women, both officers and enlisted. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, while failing of passage, nonetheless also created political pressure for action. The number of women serving in the Air Force increased during the 1970s, the opportunities open to them expanded, and the separate WAF was eliminated in 1976.⁶⁶

The professionalization of the enlisted force also continued during the Vietnam War, often in the face of some substantial challenges. In the early 1960s, Air Force enlisted personnel formed a professional organization to advanced enlisted issues. Enlisted professional military education matured, albeit at an uneven pace as enlisted leaders had to fight to reestablish schools that had been eliminated as a result of budget pressures caused by the Vietnam War. They achieved a major victory with the establish-

ranks. With some encouragement and persuasion from its enlisted leaders, the service recognized that these senior NCOs needed additional training to prepare them for their increased leadership and management duties. The SNCOA opened at Gunter Air Force Base, now Maxwell Air Force Base-Gunter Annex, in Montgomery, Alabama. Those who study there receive instruction in military professionalism, leadership planning, civil service personnel management, executive decision making, and organizational management.⁶⁹

In addition to establishing the various academies, the Air Force also created other venues for its enlisted members to continue their education. In 1950, the service had established the Extension Course Institute (ECI) to provide correspondence programs for members. The institute offered over four hundred courses, including a number that closely paralleled those offered at the noncommissioned officer academies.⁷⁰ Then, in 1972, the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) came on the scene. It offered general education and management courses and two-year degree programs aimed at broaden-

ing “the noncommissioned officer as a technician, manager and citizen.”⁷¹

Enlisted professional military education and other educational opportunities played important roles in the professionalization of Air Force enlisted personnel. Equally significant were the advances made generally in recognizing the importance of NCO leadership. This recognition often came at an uneven pace, as it had with respect to professional military education. Within the military, especially between 1968 and 1972, young service members expressed deep resentment at the fact that they were being asked to fight a very unpopular war. The early chief master sergeants of the Air Force spoke of the challenges they faced, both as senior noncommissioned officers and as the top enlisted person in the Air Force in meeting the problems associated with the Vietnam War. In the opinion of many of these men, the problems stemmed from Pentagon policies that worked to undermine the role and prestige of the NCOs. For example, they pointed out that, during the 1960s, the Pentagon, whether explicitly or implicitly, sent the signal that it was acceptable for young ser-



Women in the Air Force are no longer offered only administrative and support positions. Among the myriad options available to female enlistees are jobs as ground and flight crew members, missile facilities technicians, and security forces members.

vice members to take their complaints directly to their commanders, bypassing the senior NCOs.⁷² In the face of these challenges, Air Force noncommissioned officers needed, more than ever, to develop strong leadership skills in their role as the most immediate supervisors of the enlisted force. Within this context evolved the efforts to establish a top enlisted post in each of the services.

The position of chief master sergeant of the Air Force grew out of both the experience of the USAF and examples set by the other services. In some ways, it came up through the ranks, but then it gained powerful support in Congress. The idea was to create the position of an enlisted adviser to the chiefs of staff of the Air Force and the Army, the chief of naval operations, and the commandant of the Marine Corps. It was thought that, in light of the ongoing personnel issues, as well as those surrounding the role of the noncommissioned officer and the professionalization of the enlisted force, it would be helpful to have strong voices for the enlisted in the halls of the Pentagon. By the summer of 1967, each of the services had created such a position.

Groups representing enlisted personnel first raised the idea of a senior-level enlisted adviser. The Air Force Association's Airman Council, now known as the Enlisted Council, voiced the idea of creating a "top NCO" post in 1964. The council members believed that it would improve communication between the rank and file and the leadership of the Air Force. Service leaders studied the idea but decided not to take any action.⁷³ That same year, the Army's Sergeants Major Personnel Conference made a similar recommendation to the Office of Personnel Operations, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. The Army initiated staff studies to examine the possibility. The idea received the personal support of the chief of staff of the Army, Gen. Harold K. Johnson. He and other Army leaders believed that the position "would promote confidence within the enlisted ranks and simultaneously increase the prestige, operating effectiveness, and career incentives for senior enlisted personnel." The following year, the Sergeants Major Personnel Conference once again recommended the

creation of such a position. Within weeks, the Army began to move in that direction.⁷⁴

Immediately, however, those proposing the creation of a top NCO position began to encounter resistance. In many ways, the arguments first voiced in the Army echoed those later raised in the Air Force and in the Navy. Opponents' major concern was that such an action might create a separate enlisted chain of command. It had to be made clear that the person occupying this role would do so in a strictly advisory capacity. General Johnson helped to address many of the concerns raised, and on July 4, 1966, General Orders No. 29 officially created the position of sergeant major of the Army (SMA). The first sergeant major of the Army, William O. Woolridge, a combat veteran of both World War II and Vietnam, took the oath of office on July 11, 1966.⁷⁵

General Johnson had originally anticipated that his actions would lead to the creation of similar positions in the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. When action was not forthcoming, Congressman Rivers—who, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, had been hearing a great deal about problems facing enlisted servicemen and women—proposed a bill mandating the creation of such a position in the other services. The bill stayed in committee, however. When congressional staff conducted an investigation, they found that the Marine Corps had created the position of sergeant major of the Marine Corps in 1957. However, the noncommissioned officer occupying that position did not really have the same relationship to Marine Corps leaders that the Army had granted SMA William Woolridge. The incumbent, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Herbert Sweet, reported to a colonel, not to the commandant of the Marine Corps. After Woolridge assumed office, though, Sweet called Woolridge to report that he had been moved to an office next to the Marine Corps commandant.⁷⁶ It remained for the Air Force and the Navy to take action.

The Navy had established a task force to study a range of personnel issues, especially those that affected retention, in 1964. The task force published its results on February 14, 1966. One of its recommen-



John L. Levitow is one of six enlisted airman to receive the Medal of Honor.

dations called for the establishment of a “Leading Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.” The Navy began immediate action on a number of the commission’s recommendations, including the one dealing with the creation of a senior enlisted post. As they had been in the Army, objections were heard. Again, the main fear was that such a post would interfere with the chain of command. Nevertheless, Navy commands sent forward the names of hundreds of individuals who might fill the new position during the fall of 1966. A master chief selection board reviewed the nominations and narrowed the possible candidates down to eleven individuals. A special board then reviewed those packages and selected Master Chief Gunner’s Mate Delbert Defrece Black as the first master chief petty officer of the Navy (MCPON). He took office on January 13, 1967.⁷⁷

With top enlisted positions already or about to be established in the Marine Corps, Army, and Navy,⁷⁸ the Air Force continued to debate the idea through most of 1966. In October of that year, however, the Air Force leadership decided to create such

a position. Gen. John P. McConnell, the chief of staff, announced the decision and called for nominations. The selection criteria reached the major commands in November. To be eligible for the new position, a candidate had to be a chief master sergeant (E-9) and had to have served in that grade for at least two years; in addition, he had to have served at least twenty-two years on active duty, be a high school graduate, and have a service record that reflected high degrees of integrity and professionalism. Unlike the Navy, the Air Force limited the number of nominations to twenty-one: each command could nominate at least one person, and major commands could nominate two. A selection board headed by Brig. Gen. William S. Harrell met and forwarded the names of three finalists to the chief of staff. The three finalists met with General McConnell in January 1967. That same month, McConnell announced the selection of CMSgt. Paul W. Airey as the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force. He began his tour in July 1967.⁷⁹

The first few men to hold the title “Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force” had to establish the credibility and authority of the office in a time of great challenge and turbulence. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was reaching its height, the civil rights movement required that the Air Force closely examine the degree to which it lived up to the ideals of integration, and women were also pushing for an expanding role in the service. By 1973, the draft had been abolished, and the Air Force had to learn how to recruit and retain the best enlisted members in the context of an all-volunteer force. And while the service’s leadership officially supported the job, the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force was, in reality, moving into uncharted territory.

As expected, most of the responsibility for shaping the new position fell to its first incumbent, Paul Airey. He spent his first few weeks in office introducing himself to the Air Force leadership, military and civilian, and to certain members of Congress. He also worked to establish the procedures by which the office would operate. One of his chief goals was to win broader support for the position itself by over-



In 1966, the family of A1C William H. Pitsenbarger received his Air Force Cross posthumously from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. McConnell. Thirty-four years later, Pitsenbarger's selfless heroism was acknowledged by the upgrade of his award to the Medal of Honor.

coming the perception that the Air Force had created it only because of the threat of action from Congressman Rivers. Although he was uncertain how strongly General McConnell agreed with the idea in the first place, Airey was certain after a few months that he had the chief of staff's full support.⁸⁰ CMSAF Donald Harlow and CMSAF Thomas Barnes further noted that they needed to establish their credibility not only with the service's leaders but also with the enlisted force. The first chief master sergeants of the Air Force found themselves in an important middle position between the leadership and the enlisted personnel. They needed to explain Air Staff policies to the members in the field and to represent the needs and concerns of the enlisted effectively to the Air Staff. And they needed to learn how to negotiate the often tricky territory of the Pentagon and the halls of Congress. The early chiefs found these challenges daunting but also exciting, and most seemed to relish the opportunity to take the new position and build it into an important and effective professional leadership position.⁸¹

As a result of the work of CMSAF Paul Airey and his successors, those holding the job have moved beyond their "official" responsibility "to advise and assist the chief of staff and the secretary of the Air Force in matters concerning enlisted members of the

Air Force" by taking on a number of additional duties, including

- Representing the enlisted force at ceremonies and official social functions.

- Serving as a point of contact for other services and civilian organizations on issues that affect the enlisted.

- Representing the enlisted force on a variety of boards, including Air Force Welfare, Uniform, Commissary, Army and Air Force Exchange Service, Air Force Aid Society, and Outstanding Airman of the Year boards.

- Serving as advisor to the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the CMSAF Selection Board.

- Accompanying the Chief of Staff on base visits—and conducting still other visits on his own.⁸²

Many of those who have served in the CMSAF position have concluded that in the years since its creation, senior Air Force enlisted members have witnessed a significant increase in their ability to communicate with senior service leadership.⁸³

With the creation of the top enlisted position, the chief of staff had a senior enlisted adviser. Soon thereafter, commanders at other levels of the Air Force saw the utility of having such an adviser on their staff. The appointment of such individuals

began in the field. For example, before he became the third chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Richard Kisling was named the chief master sergeant of the Security Service. Kisling's commander asked him to investigate the situation of the enlisted members of the command—what they were thinking, what personnel programs were working, what problems they were facing. Kisling then reported back to the commander. Shortly thereafter, and as the idea of establishing such a position spread to other Air Force commands, the service officially authorized the appointment of individuals to such a position and standardized the job title as "Senior Enlisted Adviser." This position proved a training ground for future chief master sergeants of the Air Force. For example, CMSAF James McCoy served as Strategic Air Command's first senior enlisted adviser beginning in 1975. While in that position, McCoy chaired two worldwide conferences for senior enlisted advisers. Both Kisling and McCoy believed that their time as senior enlisted advisers prepared them to serve in the top spot. CMSAF Thomas Barnes, though uncertain as to whether service in the position was a necessary prerequisite to service as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, also viewed the establishment of senior enlisted advisers as a positive development. He be-



SSgt. Harry H. Cash, a flight engineer with the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, adjusts the direct viewing device on an HH-53 helicopter, April 1971.

lieved that it was "an extremely good thing because it made a network of immediate contact points for the person occupying the position of CMSAF."⁸⁴ The title "Senior Enlisted Adviser" was never universally accepted. In the late 1990s, during the tenure of CMSAF Eric W. Benken, it was replaced by the title "Command Chief Master Sergeant" (CCM).⁸⁵

POST-VIETNAM THROUGH THE REAGAN YEARS

The period between the end of the Vietnam War in the mid-1970s and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s witnessed dramatic swings in the fortune and status of the U.S. military. In the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War, the services faced a number of significant challenges. One of the greatest involved the end of the draft and the switch to a purely voluntary military. The Air Force seemed, for a number of reasons, best positioned to make this transition; nonetheless, it also had to deal with a number of fundamental issues, including the further integration of a larger number of African Americans and, more controversially, women into the ranks. At the same time, the transition to an all-volunteer military came during a period great stress. The Vietnam War had soured the public's view of the military, and the budgets of the late 1970s hurt readiness. This was known as the period of the "Hollow Force." The advent of the Reagan administration in 1981 marked the start of generally better conditions and, in many ways, an improved image of the military. However, one important benefit—retirement—saw a significant reduction during these years.

Congress abolished the draft in 1973 and introduced the all-volunteer force (AVF) in 1974. The reasons behind the end of the draft and the creation of the AVF were many. Most immediately, the Vietnam War and problems with the selective service system speeded the transition. But, overall, the change came due to longer-term forces, including the Cold War, the need for a relatively large military "in place," and demands for a better standard of living that made traditional military life unattractive.⁸⁶ In the past, the Air Force had never relied on the draft directly: draft-age men often chose to enlist in the Air Force instead

For their actions in Somalia, SSgt. Jeffrey W. Bray (left) and MSgt. Scott C. Fales (center) received Silver Stars. TSgt. Timothy A. Wilkinson (right) received the Air Force Cross.



of being drafted into the Army. But now it had to compete for members along with the other services.

In terms of recruiting, the Air Force was seen as having a number of advantages over the other services. First, compared to the other services, the USAF had relatively few enlisted members expected to serve in combat conditions and thus was viewed as having a higher degree of “civilian equivalence.” The Air Force also rated highly in terms of perceived prestige as well as the working conditions and the lifestyles its enlisted members could expect to experience. And it also appeared that because the Air Force anticipated and planned for the advent of the all-volunteer force in a perhaps more efficient way than the other services, it experienced fewer difficulties in making the move.⁸⁷

Nonetheless, the challenges posed by the all-volunteer force were real, and they included successfully integrating a larger percentage of both women and African Americans within the enlisted force. They also included convincing young airmen that indeed the Air Force offered a great opportunity to take on responsibility at a younger age than in the civilian world. And it involved efforts, particular by the senior NCO leadership, to help protect the military retirement system, which was recognized as a major incentive that could be used to encourage reenlistments, particularly to second-term enlistees and above.⁸⁸

Many issues involving race and discrimination continued into the 1970s and 1980s. But, in some ways, the more prominent issue during this period in-

volved gender. With the advent of the all-volunteer force and the need to meet accession goals, the percentage of women serving in the Air Force increased rapidly in the mid- to late 1970s, from 6 percent in 1976 to 10 percent in 1979. The percentage then varied, generally rising, from between 11 percent and 14 percent during the 1980s.⁸⁹

The chief master sergeants of the Air Force who served during the 1970s acknowledged a number of difficult issues the Air Force had to deal with in integrating women more fully, but they generally believed that women deserved the right to serve in the force. CMSAF Robert Gaylor stated, “[P]eople should have the opportunity to do that for which they have been trained and prepared, and which fits their desires.” He added, “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 get in there, but they should be given a chance to show whether they can do it or cannot do it.”⁹⁰

In the early 1980s, a number of circumstances arose that challenged the role of women in the mili-

tary as whole. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter called for a resumption of a program to register individuals for the draft. This immediately raised the question of whether or not women would now be required to register along with the men. In turn, discussion of that issue soon evolved into one involving the role of women in combat. The often heated debate led to a number of legislative and judicial decisions that exempted women from registration for the draft and continued to restrict them from combat. Though some individuals, including some military leaders, believed that such decisions signaled an opportunity to further limit the participation of women in the military, other circumstances soon intervened to actually expand the number of military women. President Ronald Reagan’s plan to build up U.S. military strength depended in many ways on the services’ ability to recruit more women. In January 1982, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger issued a statement in which he reaffirmed the Reagan administration’s support of women in the military and expressed the goal of expanding the roles available to them.⁹¹



During World War II, SSgt. J. R. Gilmore, from Merced, California; SSgt. William M. Finney, from New York City; and SSgt. Donald J. Stewart of Erie, Pennsylvania, served as enlisted pilots flying L-5 liaison aircraft.

As the Air Force opened up opportunities for women, its noncommissioned officers, who are often responsible for providing the most direct “leadership on the spot,” as CMSAF Robert Gaylor described it, were challenged to make sure that, despite the changes, the mission was still accomplished.⁹² CMSAF James C. Binnicker believed that, despite efforts made, women continued to experience discrimination. Eventually, though, he asserted, the Air Force succeeded in eliminating many of the barriers faced by women, and he stated, as have many other former chiefs, that he believed that a woman would soon serve in the top post.

The period between the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the beginning of the Reagan administration in 1981 became known as the era of the “Hollow Force.” It was a time when the U.S. military might have looked like that of a superpower, but, underneath the surface, it suffered from poor readiness, inadequate training, falling retention rates, and low morale. By the late 1970s, the pay situation had deteriorated so severely that many in the military threatened to follow the example of some European militaries and form a union.⁹³ During a period of high inflation and general economic stagnation, the military found its pay raises capped at levels below that of inflation. Many were forced to take second jobs. As a result, the reenlistment rates for career airmen—those with between six and thirty years of service—declined significantly in the late 1970s. The reenlistment rate for first-term airmen plunged by over 10 percent. When CMSAF James McCoy took office in 1979, he was warned by his predecessor, CMSAF Robert Gaylor, that the “Air Force [was] probably in the worst shape that it has ever been in.” Gaylor frankly blamed it on “an administration that doesn’t really care for the military.” CMSAF Gary R. Pflingston remembered serving as a young senior noncommissioned officer during the late 1970s. He described the situation as “not very good” and recalled “killing” work routines, lack of parts, and inadequate training. General conditions and retention rates did not improve until the 1980s.⁹⁴

The post-Vietnam drawdown of military personnel strength essentially ended in the early 1980s. With the inauguration of the Reagan administration, the military began a period of growth, both in personnel strength and in budgets. Though the expansion in overall personnel strength was not particularly dramatic, it did mark a reversal of the decline. Air Force enlisted numbers increased from 455,909 in 1980 to 495,244 in 1987, the height of the so-called Reagan buildup.⁹⁵ In some ways, spending on the military increased more dramatically than the personnel numbers, and this brought relief, not only in terms of new equipment and spare parts but also in quality of life. As CMSAF Arthur L. “Bud” Andrews pointed out, many of the pay and benefits complaints of the late 1970s ended with a substantial military pay raise in 1980.

In one area, however, the military witnessed an important revision of a crucial benefit. As noted, the promise of a significant retirement benefit had always been an important tool for recruiting and retaining career military personnel. Such a benefit, however, comes with a cost. In the 1980s, Congress twice took measures to decrease the costs of military retirement by first revising and then significantly reducing the retirement benefit. In 1980, Congress changed the formula for determining the amount of a person’s retirement pay. Under the original system, for example, after a twenty-year career, a service member was entitled to a pension equaling 50 percent of their final pay rate. In 1980, Congress introduced the “high-three” formula. Retirement pay would no longer be based on the final pay rate; it would now be based on the average of the pay earned during service members’ three highest-earning years—for most, their last three years in the service. This served to reduce a member’s retirement pay by an average of 5 to 7 percent.⁹⁶

A more fundamental change in the retirement system came in 1986. Known as “Redux,” the new plan reduced the retirement benefit at twenty years to 40 percent based on the high-three formula. At the thirty-year mark, the retirement benefits of the 1980 plan and the 1986 plan reached equality (75 percent

Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, photographed in 1986, was named for Cpl. Frank S. Scott, the first enlisted man to die in a military accident.



based on the high-three formula); but for those serving between twenty and twenty-nine years, the Redux plan meant a 12 to 15 percent reduction of their retirement benefit. During congressional deliberations, CMSAF Sam Parish and other military leaders opposed the measure, but it nevertheless passed. By the late 1990s, CMSAF Eric Benken identified the retirement system adopted in 1986 as one of the key factors hurting retention of career airmen.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR TO THE PRESENT

Though the Cold War ended, challenges to the U.S. military remained and in some ways increased. Throughout the 1990s and into the new century, U.S. forces have been deployed in support of contingency operations all over the globe. The increased demands placed on the military have come at a time when the number of people serving has decreased, partly because of budgetary pressures. Those same pressures also led to changes in benefits. While the changes in medical benefits proved the most unpopular, the need to meet even reduced recruiting goals and to maintain retention goals resulted in some positive reforms in terms of housing and retirement. And unlike other periods of drawdown and budgetary constraints, the 1990s saw a renewed commitment to en-

listed professional military education. Most importantly, though, in the late 1990s, the Air Force engaged in a fundamental reorganization of its forces to better meet current and projected demands.

In the autumn of 1989, the world order shaped by the Cold War came to an end. The pivotal moment came in November 1989 when the Berlin Wall—symbol of the division between east and west, democracy and communism—fell. The number of individuals serving in the U.S. military had begun to decline as early as 1988. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, came an expectation of a “peace dividend” and a more dramatic reduction in spending on the U.S. military. Despite the fact that the 1990s would soon prove a decade of great activity and obligation on the part of the military—from Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the early 1990s to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003—the number of individuals serving in the military declined rapidly.

What was true of the military overall was true of the USAF enlisted force. Until the late 1990s, the number of enlisted had fallen below 300,000 only once before in the history of the U.S. Air Force, in 1947: fifty-two years later, at the end of 1999, the number stood at 299,373. The number of enlisted members continued to fall until 2001, when it

reached a post-1947 low of 280,410. At the end of fiscal year 2002, however, the number showed a small rebound to 292,268.⁹⁷ As CMSAF Gary Pfingston noted, the Air Force moved aggressively to meet the demand for personnel cuts. For the most part, it was able to meet its goals without resorting to involuntary separations.

Personnel cuts were only part of the picture. Medical care and other benefits became subject to the same budgetary strains as those facing the military as a whole in the 1990s. Yet medical care remained an important incentive for those considering careers in the military. Facing escalating costs and the realities of a post-Cold War drawdown of forces, all the services revised their health care programs in the mid-1990s. CHAMPUS was replaced by TRICARE, a combined Air Force, Army, and Navy health care program that combined medical service in military facilities with patient care provided by civilian health care professionals. The advent of the TRICARE program led to a great deal of protest, especially from military retirees. They argued that as the services had sought to recruit and retain career officers and enlisted beginning in the 1950s, service members had been promised free medical care in military facilities for life. Under the new TRICARE program, military retirees had to join the Medicare program once they reached age sixty-five. The services argued that the rising costs as well as the rising number of military retirees—in 1995, retirees outnumbered active duty personnel for the first time—made it impossible to continue to deliver on the promise of free, lifelong medical care in military facilities. Retired CMSAF James McCoy, the first enlisted person to serve as president and then chairman of the board of the Air Force Association, concluded that the promise of free medical care had been broken with the creation of TRICARE. However, he asserted that the best option was to work to improve TRICARE. Since its creation in 1995, TRICARE has been expanded and revised.⁹⁸ Medical care as a military benefit for both active duty and retired members has been and will remain an important issue for the Air Force and the other services as they continue to

try to recruit and retain high-quality candidates as officers and enlisted members.

In terms of benefits, some progress was seen. As CMSAF Gary Pfingston pointed out, the Air Force paid particular attention to housing for young airmen during the 1990s. CMSAF James C. Binnicker had first raised the issue, but it was during Pfingston's tenure that the Air Force adopted the Vision 2020 policy, later known as the DoD (Department of Defense) one-plus-one dormitory standard. Under this policy, airmen would have their own living area.⁹⁹ Both Pfingston and Binnicker believed that it made no sense that under Air Force housing policies, Binnicker's young son, for example, was authorized his own room in base housing while eighteen-year-old airmen were required to have roommates.

Perhaps the most significant advance came in the form of a revision of the retirement benefit. As noted, Congress adopted the Redux system in 1986. By the late 1990s, it emerged as one of the issues driving retention problems. In 2000, Congress offered a new alternative. Service members who entered the service on or after August 1, 1986, could, at the fifteen-year mark in their careers, make a choice of retirement systems. They could choose to switch to the same high-three system enjoyed by service personnel who entered between September 8, 1980, and July 31, 1986. Or, they could choose to stay under the Redux system and receive a \$30,000 bonus. The assumption was that members choosing the bonus would invest the money. Depending on their investment decisions, the bonus could provide the basis for a considerable nest egg. Though not as generous as the system offered to those who entered before September 8, 1980, the action in 2000 marked a significant improvement in the retirement benefit.¹⁰⁰

In the 1990s, unlike during the Vietnam period when noncommissioned officer academies closed, the Air Force gave increased attention to enlisted education and training despite the drawdown and the other pressures facing it. In 1993, the service established the College for Enlisted Professional Military Education (CEPME). Located at Maxwell Air Force Base-Gunter Annex, the new college provides a cen-

tralized chain of command and a cadre of curriculum developers for each level of enlisted PME, and its overall mission is to prepare enlisted personnel for positions of leadership and responsibility. The creation of the CEPME was part of a larger reform movement, highlighted during the “Year of Training,” that also included the elimination of the E-4 sergeant rank, after which the existing NCO Leadership School was renamed the Airman Leadership School (ALS). The reorganization also reemphasized the connection between professional military education and promotion. Since the mid-1990s, promotion to the rank of staff sergeant required completion of the ALS; to master sergeant, completion of the NCOA; and to chief master sergeant, completion of the Senior NCOA. All schools had to be completed in residence.¹⁰¹

The 1990s also brought changes significant to women in the Air Force. During the 1990s, the percentage of enlisted women rose from 14 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2000.¹⁰² Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm dramatically demonstrated the increased importance of military women in general. The performance of women during that conflict raised again the fundamental question of equality. Between 1992 and 1994, Congress, the President, and the Department of Defense acted to remove the remaining barriers to women serving in combat. A handful of specialties are still closed to them because of physical strength limitations. But, as CMSAF Gary Pfingston noted, enlisted women now serve in nearly every Air Force specialty code (AFSC) for which they are qualified.

Though the Air Force, like the military as a whole, was drawing down in the 1990s, the operational tempo (OPTEMPO), was increasing. Immediately after the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Air Force engaged in two major operations. The first, Operation Just Cause, began on December 17, 1989, and ended on February 14, 1990. This operation focused on removing from power Gen. Manuel Noriega, Panama’s military strongman, and bringing him to the United States to face trial on drug trafficking and money-laundering charges. The ultimate goal in-

involved not only bringing Noriega to justice but also returning democracy to Panama. Though personnel faced difficult weather and other problems, Operation Just Cause fulfilled its objectives.¹⁰³ A few months later, U.S. troops were involved in the largest U.S. military operations since Vietnam, Operation Desert Shield followed by Operation Desert Storm, actions aimed at driving invading Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. CMSAF Gary Pfingston, who served in the top enlisted position during this time period, believed that the performance of enlisted members during these operations clearly demonstrated their dedication and professionalism.

With the rapid conclusion of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the drawdown began in earnest. Nevertheless, the Air Force participated in no fewer than six major contingency operations between the conclusion in March 1991 of Desert Shield/Desert Storm and January 1996. These operations took USAF personnel to such far-flung locations as Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti and lasted from months to years, with Operation Southern Watch still ongoing. The high demands of these operations, coupled with the falling number of personnel, resulted in great stress upon the forces. By the late 1990s, these stresses, combined with a strong economy, hurt USAF recruiting and retention goals.¹⁰⁴ In response to the continued high OPTEMPO, the Air Force underwent a fundamental restructuring. It had to transform itself organizationally from a Cold War garrison force to what it called the Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF).

The idea behind the EAF dates back to 1994. In October of that year, Iraqi forces once again threatened Kuwait. Most of the U.S. forces that had deployed to the region in 1990 and 1991 had returned home. To meet this renewed threat, the United States had to deploy forces very quickly. The United States was able to deter renewed Iraqi action, but the deployment uncovered a number of problems. To address those problems, and to more generally prepare the Air Force for rapid deployment, Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman asked the commander of Air Combat Command (ACC), Gen. Joseph W. Ralston,

to develop a plan for standing air expeditionary forces (AEFs). The goal was “to be able to deploy a package of ‘shooter’ airpower—including air-to-ground, and defense suppression airplanes—into a theater and begin generating combat sorties within 48 hours of the ‘execute’ order.” By 1997, the Air Force had executed four AEF deployments. Each AEF drew on thirty to forty aircraft from three or four wings.¹⁰⁵

Following these early experiments, the Air Force began a series of operational exercises in 1998. That year’s Expeditionary Force Experiment, EFX 98, for example, aimed at testing and refining the AEF concept. The goal of these exercises was to test the warfighting capabilities of the air expeditionary forces and whether or not adoption of the AEF concept would help to address the many stresses caused by the increased OPTEMPO of the late 1990s. As the concept evolved, the Air Force moved to divide itself into ten AEFs. Each AEF would be available for a ninety-day deployment at a predictable time within a fifteen-month cycle. Further, each AEF could plan for twelve months between each period of vulnerability for deployment. The AEF members could use those twelve months for rest, normal training, and preparing for their next potential deployment. Initially, the AEFs involved primarily fighter aircraft. As the concept matured, more assets—including bombers, gunships, and reconnaissance aircraft—became part of the package. At the same time, though, the Air Force worked to reduce the size of the deployment by learning to operate “lighter, leaner, and more lethal.”¹⁰⁶

CMSAF Frederick Jim Finch recalled that the creation of the Expeditionary Aerospace Force involved not just an organizational change but a cultural change as well. He noted that the Air Force had to transform structurally and also had to reeducate its people. Personnel had to learn to move from a garrison-based Cold War force mind-set to that of an expeditionary force. This cultural education began at basic training, where enlisted recruits engaged in Warrior Week, a week of field training aimed at

preparing them for the conditions they might encounter as a member of an air expeditionary force.

In 1947, the year the Air Force became an independent service, 263,082 enlisted members served in its ranks. At the end of the fiscal year 2002, the number of USAF enlisted stood at 292,388. The similarity in numbers, however, masks the tremendous and often volatile changes that have shaped the U.S. Air Force in the last half-century. The airmen serving in 2003, for example, are in many ways far different from those who served in the past. First, today’s enlisted members are much more diverse. Over time, women and nonwhites have come to serve in far greater numbers and make up a growing percentage of the force. Second, today’s airmen are far better educated. In the late 1940s, only about half of the enlisted force had a high school diploma. Today, only a small percentage of enlisted members lack such a diploma, and the number of enlisted with college and advanced degrees has grown.¹⁰⁷ Third, today’s airmen are more professional. Over more than fifty years, the U.S. Air Force has institutionalized the notion of a professional enlisted force, embodying it in the current PME and training structure. But in other ways, today’s enlisted members share much with their predecessors. They are still valued for their skills and, when called, they serve at locations all over the world. And, at a fundamental level, pay and benefits, quality of life, and training remain at the core of their day-to-day concerns.

Today’s enlisted force can learn much from the past. The passage of time involves both continuity and change, and over the course of any individual career, an enlisted member could experience much of both. Through the study of their own enlisted heritage, they can learn that many issues remain, despite much effort to solve them, and they can prepare themselves for the possibility of sudden and sweeping change. Through the biographies of the former chief master sergeants of the Air Force included here, they can see how more than a dozen very successful enlisted members coped with both continuity and change over their own careers.

1. These studies include Mark R. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force: Air Force Enlisted Personnel Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997); Janet R. Bednarek, ed., *The Enlisted Experience: A Conversation with the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995); and Janet R. Bednarek, "Not Soldiers—Airmen: The Development of the USAF Enlisted Force," *Air Power History* 39, no. 2 (summer 1992): 29–31. For a study of professionalization of the enlisted in the Army, see Ernest F. Fisher, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Noncommissioned Office Corps of the U.S. Army* (1994; reprint with a new foreword, Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 2001).
2. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, pp. 7–10.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–47.
5. Airmen Memorial Museum, *Unsung Heroes: A History of the Enlisted Airmen from the Dawn of Flight to Desert Storm* (Washington, D.C.: Airmen Memorial Museum, 1997), pp. 50–60.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 77–84.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–103.
8. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, pp. 27–36.
9. Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 141, 146–48.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–56.
11. Mattie E. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1985), pp. 281, 769.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 282–95.
13. See Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training, 1907–1945* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), pp. 313–49, 421–50.
14. Lee Arbon, *They Also Flew: The Enlisted Pilot Legacy, 1912–1942* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pp. 1–3, 22–26, 35.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 35–49.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–77.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–89, 111–13.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 122–51.
19. Department of Defense (DoD), *Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 2000* (Washington, D.C.: DoD, Washington Headquarters, Directorate of Information, Operations and Reports, 2000), pp. 47–48, 64–65.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
21. Fisher, *Guardians of the Republic*, pp. 249–59.
22. William I. Chivalette, "History of the Air Force Enlisted Uniform," (Washington, D.C.: The Airmen Memorial Museum, The Airmen Heritage Series, 1997), pp. 5–6.
23. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, p. 140.
24. *Ibid.*
25. CMSAF Richard Kisling, "Enlisted Force History," Draft, Address given to the Senior NCO Academy, ca. 1980–1981 (typewritten manuscript available

in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.).

26. Telephone interview with the author, October 22, 2002.

27. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1957), esp. pp. 7–18; and Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

28. This last critique could also be extended to much of the classic work on the enlisted, in particular that of Charles Moskos, whose studies of the U.S. enlisted force are based almost exclusively on examinations of Army units. See Charles C. Moskos, Jr., *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970).

29. For a sense of the evolution of a definition of professionalism and an evaluation of the Air Force's NCOs as fitting with the definition of a professional group, see SMSgt. George H. Day, "Nonsense, Common Sense, and the Professional NCO," *Air University Review* 29, no. 5 (July-August 1978): 66–72; Bednarek, "Not Soldiers—Airmen," pp. 29–31; and Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, pp. 3–4, 191–200.

30. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, pp. 194–95.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 195–200.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 138–44; Bruce D. Callendar, "The Evolution of the Air Force NCO," *Air Force Magazine* 69, no. 9 (September 1986): 170, 173.

33. Callendar, "The Evolution of the Air Force NCO," p. 169.

34. MSgt. Paul J. Turner, "USAF's Middleman," *The Airman* 2, no. 6 (June 1958): 16–18.

35. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 86–88.

36. MSgt. Frank J. Clifford, "School for Zebras," *Air Force* 38, no. 4 (April 1955): 28–29; TSgt. Harold L. Craven, "Schools for Air Force Sergeants," *The Airman* 2, no. 10 (October 1958): 12–13; Ted R. Sturm,

"They Make Military Managers," *The Airman* 10, no. 2 (February 1976): 17–18.

37. Clifford, "School for Zebras," pp. 28–29.

38. Craven, "Schools for Air Force Sergeants," pp. 12–13.

39. Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, pp. 173–76.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–65.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–66.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

43. Purposeful action on integration was not taken until ten months after Executive Order 9981 was issued. But Gen. Carl Spaatz, the first Air Force chief of staff; Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington; and Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Eugene Zuckert were all on record as supporting integration even before the issuance of the order. Lt. Gen. Idwal H. Edwards, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, had studied the issue and had concluded as early as the spring of 1948 that segregation resulted in waste and inefficiency. Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates, 1945–1964* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1978), pp. 86–142; Oral History Interview of Gen. Idwal H. Edwards by Maj. Alan Gropman, February 10, 1973, typed transcript, p. 10, K239.0512–915, in USAF Collection, Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell AFB, Ala.

44. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 38.

45. Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, rev. ed., (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1992), pp. 113, 129, 130–47.

46. Airmen Memorial Museum, *Unsung Heroes*, pp. 186–95.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–26.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 248–56, 263–64. For more detailed discussions of some of the combat roles played by USAF enlisted in Vietnam, see SMSgt. James A. George, "They Work the Night Beat," *The Airman* 11, no. 10 (October 1967): 44–47; Sgt. John C. Gundersdorf, "90 Acres of Hell," *The Airman* 15, no. 4 (April 1971): 24–26; Lt. Carol Habgood, "Com-

- bat-Ready Communicators,” *The Airman* 10, no. 3 (March 1966): 26–28; and Lt. Jerry Poppink, “Pararescueman!” *The Airman* 10, no. 8 (August 1966): 12–14.
49. Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961–1973: An Illustrated Account*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1984), p. 363; John L. Frisbee, “The Saving of Spooky 71” at <http://www.afa.org/magazine/valor>.
50. “Medal of Honor recipient Levitow dies” at <http://www.af.mil/news/Nov2000>; SrA. Oshawn Jefferson, “Levitow’s legacy will live forever” at <http://www.afsdivision610.org/levitow2>.
51. John T. Correll, “Pitsenbarger, Medal of Honor,” *Air Force Magazine* 84, no. 2 (February 2001): 26–32.
52. Airmen Memorial Museum, *Unsung Heroes*, pp. 265–71. For a more detailed discussion of other roles played by enlisted in Vietnam and throughout the USAF, see Ed Blair, “Strength of the Giants,” *The Airman* 16, no. 9 (September 1972): 32–36; SMSgt. James A. George, “Those ‘No Sweat’ Knuckle Busters,” *The Airman* 12, no. 1 (January 1968): 4–7; Capt. Carroll S. Shershun, “A Tiger in Every Tank,” *The Airman* 11, no. 4 (April 1967): 30–34.
53. For an overview of the antiwar movement, see Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990). For more contemporary views, see Maj. Joseph W. Kastl, “Antimilitarism in the Age of Aquarius,” *Air University Review* 23, no. 1 (November-December 1971): 32–38; and Herman S. Wolk, “Antimilitarism in America,” *Air University Review* 23, no. 4 (May-June 1972): 20–25.
54. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 112–13.
55. Jacob Neufeld and James C. Hasdorff, “The View from the Top: Oral Histories of Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force,” in David R. Segal and H. Wallace Sinaiko, eds., *Life in the Rank and File: Enlisted Men and Women in the Armed Forces of the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom* (Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), pp. 121–22.
56. See Maj. Norbert R. Kaus, “They Call it TOP-CAP,” *The Airman* 15, no. 9 (September 1971): 11–15.
57. Neufeld and Hasdorff, “View from the Top,” p. 129; Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 114–15.
58. Mady Wechsler Segal, “Enlisted Family Life in the U.S. Army: A Portrait of a Community” in Segal and Sinaiko, *Life in the Rank and File*, pp. 184–85. Though Wechsler Segal based her work on the examination of life on a U.S. Army post, she emphasized that enlisted families in all of the armed services shared these experiences.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 177–79; Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 79.
60. Ted R. Sturm, “Don’t Overlook CHAMPUS,” *The Airman* 14, no. 4 (April 1970): 27–31.
61. See Sgt. Craig Pugh and Robert K. Ruhl, “Up Front—Where the Action Is,” *The Airman* 25, no. 2 (February 1981): 37–42; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, pp. 318–19.
62. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 104.
63. For an overview of the Laredo incident, see Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 104–105; Neufeld and Hasdorff, “View from the Top,” pp. 123–24.
64. Neufeld and Hasdorff, “View from the Top,” p. 123.
65. Holm, *Women in the Military*, pp. 175–85.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 171–85, 246–88, 313–46.
67. Air Force Sergeants Association, “Fact Sheet, September 1989” (International Headquarters, P.O. Box 50, Temple Hills, Md.).
68. Lt. Col. Ernest M. Magee, “The Evolution of NCO Academies,” *Air University Review* 17, no. 6 (September-October 1966): 57; MSgt. Ken Allen, “Academies of Leadership,” *The Airman* 12, no. 6 (June 1968): 26.
69. Sturm, “They Make Military Managers,” pp.

16–17.

70. Fact Sheet, United States Air Force, Secretary of the Air Force, Office of Public Affairs, subj: Extension Course Institute, no. 87–42.

71. Fact Sheet, United States Air Force, Secretary of the Air Force, Office of Public Affairs, subj: Community College of the Air Force, no. 86–1.

72. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 89–99.

73. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs* (Arlington, Va.: Air Force Association, 1984), pp. 5–6.

74. Mark F. Gillespie, Glen R. Hawkins, Michael B. Kelly, and Preston E. Pierce, eds., *The Sergeants Major of the Army* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1995), p. 6.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 50; Fischer, *Guardians of the Republic*, pp. 343–44; Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 6. Though Congressman Rivers's bill failed to emerge from committee, he carefully monitored the actions of the services. CMSAF Richard D. Kisling believed that Congressman Rivers played an essential role in the creation of the top enlisted positions. Enlisted Council, *The Chiefs*, p. 7.

77. Charlotte D. Crist, *Winds of Change: The History of the Office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, 1967–1992* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and the Naval Historical Center, 1992), pp. 3–4. Originally, the Navy's top enlisted person held the title "Senior Enlisted Adviser of the Navy." In April 1967, the name was changed to master chief petty officer of the Navy, to make it more similar to the titles in the other services.

78. The Coast Guard established its top enlisted position in 1969. Charles L. Calhoun served as the first master chief petty officer of the Coast Guard.

79. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, pp. 6–7.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

81. For an extended discussion of the challenges

faced by the first few CMSAFs, see Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 123–36.

82. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 4.

83. Neufeld and Hasdorff, "View from the Top," p. 131.

84. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 125–26.

85. For an example of the discussion surrounding the title "Senior Enlisted Adviser," see Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 8.

86. Morris Janowitz and Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "Five Years of the All-Volunteer Force: 1973–1978," *Armed Forces and Society* 5, no. 2 (winter 1979): 172–73.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 187–88.

88. For a brief discussion of the impact of the all-volunteer force, see Walter J. Boyne, *Beyond the Wild Blue: A History of the U.S. Air Force, 1947–1997* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 227–28.

89. Based on statistics available on-line at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/demographics/demograf/>.

90. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 142.

91. Holm, *Women in the Military*, pp. 347–98.

92. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 141–42.

93. For more on the military union movement, see T. Roger Manley, Charles W. McNichols, and G. C. Saul Young, "Attitudes of Active Duty U.S. Air Force Personnel Toward Military Unionization," *Armed Forces and Society* 3, no. 4 (August 1977): 557–74 and Lt. Col. William V. Rice, Jr., "Unionization of the Military: A Fable for the Seventies?" *Air University Review* 25, no. 5 (July-August 1974): 55–58.

94. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 143–44; Neufeld and Hasdorff, "View from the Top," p. 127.

95. DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

96. Tom Philpott, "The New World of Retirement Options," *Air Force Magazine* 83, no. 2 (February 2000): 59.

97. See DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*;

pp. 64–66. The most recent available total for USAF enlisted can be found on-line on the DoD, Directorate for Operations and Reports, Statistical Information Analysis Division web site at <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/military/rg0210.pdf>.

98. For information on the controversies surrounding the establishment and perceived limitation of the new Tricare system, see Suzann Chapman, “Sizing Up Tricare” at http://www.afa.org/magazine/perspectives/sizing_up_tricare.html; John T. Correll, “Issue No. 1” at <http://www.afa.org/magazine/0298issue.html>; and “It’s Showdown Time on Tricare” at <http://www.afa.org/magazine/0400tri.html>.

99. Suzann Chapman, “The Housing Problem,” *Air Force Magazine* 79, no. 4 (April 1996): 41.

100. Philpott, “The New World of Retirement Options,” pp. 59–60.

101. SMSgt. Murray, “Enlisted Professional Military Education: A Journey Through Time,” U.S. Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall student paper, February 22, 1996, pp. 8–9; MSgt. Kammie Short, “CEPME Internationally Recognized as Center of Excellence for Professional Military Education,” *Maxwell-Gunter Dispatch*, February 7, 1997, p. 12.

102. Based on statistics available on-line at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/demographics/demograf/>.

103. A. Timothy Warnock, ed., *Short of War: Major USAF Contingency Operations, 1947–1997* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000), pp. 167–78.

104. See Bruce D. Callendar, “The Recruiting and Retention Problems Continue,” *Air Force Magazine* 83, no. 6 (June 2000), pp. 64–68.

105. John A. Tirpak, “The Expeditionary Air Force Takes Shape,” *Air Force Magazine* 80, no. 6 (June 1997): 30.

106. See Robert Wall, “Expeditionary Nerve Center,” *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 8 (August 1998): 64–66; Bruce D. Callendar, “The New Expeditionary Force,” *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 9 (September 1998): 54–56; John A. Tirpak, “The Long Reach of On-Call Airpower,” *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 12 (Decem-

ber 1998), pp. 22–26; and John A. Tirpak, “The EAF Turns One,” *Air Force Magazine* 83, no. 10 (October 2000): 20–25.

107. Tracing the educational achievement levels of USAF enlisted can be challenging. Up through the 1970s, the DoD *Selected Manpower Statistics* provided the figures by service. After the mid-1970s, however, this publication simply reported the educational achievement of all enlisted, not providing separate statistics for each service. The USAF Military Personnel Center at Randolph AFB does provide USAF-specific statistics on educational achievement levels beginning in FY 1976. However, the Air Force reported the statistics differently than had the DoD. The DoD statistics were cumulative in nature. For example, in 1959, the DoD reported that 65.6 percent of USAF enlisted had earned a high school diploma. This statistic included both those who had only earned a high school diploma as well as those who had gone on to college. The USAF figures since 1976 were not cumulative. For example, the Air Force reported the number of enlisted who had only a high school diploma. It did not include in that figure those who had gone on from high school to earn college or even advanced degrees. Without careful use of the figures, one could underestimate the educational achievement level of USAF enlisted. Looking at the year 2001, though, it is clear that the vast majority of USAF enlisted now have at least a high school diploma, because only 6,351 have an unknown level of educational achievement (6,170), no high school (4), or a General Education Diploma (GED) (177). See DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Statistical Services Center, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (OASD) (Comptroller), January 31, 1959), p. 45; DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Directorate for Statistical Services, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), February 2, 1962), p. 43; DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Directorate for Statistical Services, OSD, April 15, 1968), p. 36; DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Directorate for Statistical Services, OSD, April 15, 1970), p. 34; DoD, *Selected*

Manpower Statistics (Washington, D.C.: Directorate for Information Operations, DoD, OASD (Comptroller), May 15, 1974), p. 42; DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Directorate for Infor-

mation Operations and Control, DoD, OASD (Comptroller), May 1975), p. 41. For USAF statistics since FY 1976, see <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/demographics/demograf/>.

**CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS
OF THE AIR FORCE**



Paul W. Airey

April 3, 1967–July 31, 1969



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April 3, 1967–July 31, 1969



Paul Wesley Airey became the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force on April 3, 1967.¹ Lyndon B. Johnson was President of the United States, Harold Brown was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. John P. McConnell was the Air Force chief of staff. During Airey's little more than two-year term, U.S. involvement in Vietnam reached a peak, in terms of the troops involved and, in many ways, of the protests against the war. The number of enlisted personnel in the Air Force reached 761,507 in 1968 before falling slightly to 722,507 in 1969.²

Paul Airey was born on December 13, 1923, and was raised in Quincy, Massachusetts, an overwhelmingly Navy town. During World War II, Quincy's Fore River Shipyard operated at full tilt, producing such famous ships as the USS *Wasp* and the USS *Quincy*. In that booming atmosphere, Airey's earliest plan was to join the Navy. At age eighteen, less than year after Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Airey quit high school to enlist. An unpleasant experience with a Navy recruiter, however, changed his mind about that branch of the service. He opted instead to enlist in the Army Air Forces on November 16, 1942—a decision he never regretted.³

Airey went to accelerated basic training in Atlantic City and at Brigantine Field, New Jersey. "The entire town of Atlantic City was taken over by the Army Air Forces for basic training," Airey recalled. "All of the hotels were used by the various squadrons." Basic trainees learned close order drill and customs and courtesies—the usual subjects that went into the making of a soldier. Airey said trainees also were given a significant responsibility: "We had complete blackouts on the coast to prevent our ships from showing up as silhouettes out on the water," he said. "Due to this action, and to the fact that the Germans had landed some spies on the east coast, we also trained to patrol the famous Atlantic City boardwalk against a German landing."

Airey left basic training for radio operator school at Scott Field, Illinois. Following a promotion to private first class, he went to aerial gunnery school at Tyndall Field, Florida. When he graduated from that school in August 1943, newly promoted Sergeant Airey and his classmates traveled by troop train to Salt Lake Army Air Base, Utah, for crew assignment and refresher training in radio operation. His crew was assigned to Gowen Field, Idaho, for B-24

transition training and eventually reported to Fairmont Army Air Base, Nebraska, to help form and activate the 485th Bombardment Group. Airey was promoted to staff sergeant while at Fairmont.

By March 1944, Airey and the 485th Bombardment Group were on their way to join the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy, via Puerto Rico, British Guiana, Brazil, Senegal, and Tunis in Tunisia. “On the leg from Atkinson Field, British Guiana, to Belém, Brazil, the radio operator was issued a coop with some pigeons,” Airey said. “It was a long stretch across the Amazon jungle. [If] you went down, there was no radio equipment that you could use, so we had pigeons to use in case we crashed in the jungle. We lost several planes in the Amazon Basin during those years. I guess those pigeons logged many an hour going back and forth.”

The crew stopped in Tunis for two months to await the completion of a runway in Italy. There, for the first time, the war struck close to Airey:

...something happened that had a profound effect on me.... It started out as rumor that the convoy which most of my squadron was coming over on was hit by German planes in the Mediterranean Sea and the whole shipload was lost. This was very strongly denied as a vicious rumor. Rumors aided the enemy. Those who spread rumors could be court-martialed. However,...it was all true; we lost the entire squadron. The ship was carrying gasoline and explosives and received a direct hit shortly after nightfall. There were no survivors. My entire squadron had disappeared—all the ground crews, the orderly room—there was no one left.⁴

Once in Europe, Airey flew missions to some of the most heavily defended targets in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Romania. Airey once flew over Ploesti, though he was not on the mission that made it famous. He remembered the flak as both frightening and frustrating—all one could do was watch it. While he never saw it so thick that you could walk on it, as some grimly joked, he did see “it so thick that it darkened the sky, almost blotted out the sun.” Once at the initial point, aircrews were not allowed to take evasive action because they had to fly in formation to the target. “Flak took a terrible toll, and many thousands of casualties could be attributed to it. Thousands of POWs [Prisoners of War] could testify that flak was what got them.” A few months after arriving in Europe, Technical Sergeant Airey and the crew were shot down on his twenty-eighth mission. Their B-24 was hit by flak shortly after they bombed oil refineries on the outskirts of Vienna, Austria. “I can recall the pilot feathering one engine and then another,” said Airey. “By this time, we were well across the Danube [River] over Hungary.” The oil pressure in a third engine started going down, and the pilot ordered everyone to get out because, as they all knew, the B-24 could not fly on one engine and would go into a spin.⁵



Airey and his wife, Shirley Babbitt
Airey, on their wedding day,
February 10, 1946

Airey had hoped that the crew members would be able to get out if their aircraft were ever hit. “I’d seen other planes go down over a target,” Airey recalled.

I’d seen B-24s go into a spin. I’d stood at the waist window praying for the chutes to come out, and no chutes would come out. Centrifugal force prevented them from bailing out.... So when the pilot said, ‘Go,’ there was no hesitation on my part. Right out the camera hatch I went.⁶

All of the crew members got out. They bailed out at 18,000 feet—so high that Airey had time to tear up his radio operator code card and look for possible places to hide after landing. The welcome on the ground was not friendly. “I never got out of my harness,” Airey remembered. “I landed, and they

were waiting for me, and I received some punches. They were very angry. I was happy to see the authorities show up.” Airey and his fellow crew members were rounded up and incarcerated for several days in a large civilian prison in Budapest. After processing, they were placed in groups of twenty and taken by train to Stalag Luft IV, a POW camp for Allied airmen near Gross Tychow, in German Pomerania, now part of Poland, a journey that lasted several days.

“The first thing that struck home was the fact that I knew so many people who were already POWs,” Airey said. “To a degree, it was comforting to be around old friends, even if we had to meet under those circumstances.”

On February 6, 1945, Airey and six thousand other prisoners were ordered to march west from Stalag Luft IV to an unknown destination. “The Germans didn’t want us to fall into Russian hands,” he said, “so they herded us around. Nearly ninety days later, we were still marching, with only a short layover at Stalag 11B. It was pretty primitive. We stayed in barns at night, sometimes out in open fields; sometimes we were fed and sometimes we weren’t.”

Men died from disease, malnutrition, exposure, and exhaustion before their liberation by the British Second Army on May 2, 1945. When he was freed, Airey was suffering from dysentery and weighed less than one hundred pounds. He was taken to France and then spent three months on recuperation leave in the United States.

Following his experiences in World War II, Airey remained firmly grounded in the principles of duty, honor, and devotion to country. “Even as a prisoner of war,” he said, “I was

giving much consideration to staying in the military. I liked it. There was something about it I wanted. I came back from that recuperation leave and reenlisted.”

Though Airey found much about the military to admire, there were certain features of his early career he was glad to see fade into the past. When Airey entered the military, for example, the men with whom he had served ranged from college graduates to those who could not read or write. The latter would never be allowed in the U.S. Air Force today, he noted. In addition, in the 1940s, local judges often “sentenced” men to the military. And military prisoners were paroled in order to come on active duty. Travel between duty stations also left much to be desired. During the war, Airey and his fellow soldiers frequently endured long and uncomfortable trips by troop trains and transports. During the 1940s and into the 1950s, enlisted personnel had to report to a pay table once a month to receive their pay. Depending on the size of the unit, this activity could take up an entire day. The state of medical care in the 1940s through the 1950s was also different. Airey believed that many airmen worked while sick because of the perception they would be seen as “malingering” or “goldbricking” if they went on sick call. Doctors during that era were considered officers, rather than medics, and were referred to by rank, not by the title doctor. This led to a military atmosphere and not the doctor-to-patient relationship that Airey sees in military medicine today. And until the mid 1950s, the military was not required to provide medical care to military dependents.⁷

But the positives outweighed the negatives, and Airey decided to stay in the service. After the war, he married his high school sweetheart, Shirley Babbitt. He spent the next six years as a radio school instructor at what in 1948 became Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He was promoted to master sergeant in 1948 and was sent to Naha Air Base, Okinawa, in 1951. As noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of wing communications, he devised a corrosion control assembly line for aircraft radio and radar equipment and, as a result, was awarded the Legion of Merit for saving money and extending equipment life.

In 1953, Airey was offered a position he would later believe to be one of the most important in the Air Force. He took the job of squadron first sergeant at Scott Air Force Base. During the next twelve years, he served as first sergeant, guiding airmen and noncommissioned officers, at the 3318th Training Squadron, Scott Air Force Base; the 3407th School Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi; the 611th Aircraft Control and Warning Site, a remote base in the mountains on the Chiba Peninsula, Japan, where he was promoted to senior master sergeant in 1960; the 478th Fighter Group, 468th CAMRON (Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance) Squadron, Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, where he was promoted to chief master sergeant in 1962; the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Grand Forks; and the 4756th Civil Engineering Squadron, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.

“I still think the first sergeant is a key position in the United States Air Force today. As much emphasis should be placed on that position as possible,” Airey said. The first sergeants



Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown (left), CMSAF Paul Airey, and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Paul McConnell at Airey's installation ceremony

of today must deal with day-to-day leadership and discipline problems, and they must also deal with families. Unlike in the early years of the Air Force, now the majority of enlisted personnel are married. Airey also noted that the first sergeants must be able to deal with both men and women. First sergeants must know their jobs and be able to offer help when needed. They must also know when they cannot offer help, and when they need to look elsewhere for assistance. Airey stated that the first sergeant must be a role model and must always keep as the top priority the welfare of the enlisted people. However, the first sergeant must balance that with the realization that the mission of the unit and the mission of the Air Force are paramount. "My many years as a first sergeant was of great help for me when becoming the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force."⁸

He also believed that establishing the position of senior enlisted adviser was a major advancement for the enlisted forces:

The establishment of the Senior Enlisted Adviser (SEA)—now Command Chief Master Sergeant—was a major development in upgrading the enlisted force. The position places a senior NCO in direct contact with a commander, which enables the SEA to represent the enlisted people in the command on all matters pertaining to health, welfare, morale, discipline, and organizational problems. It is also a training ground for future Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force.⁹

Airey realized that, in addition to his service as a first sergeant, education was essential to advancement and preparation for higher rank. When stationed at Scott Air Force Base, he earned an associate degree in business administration at McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois. He took follow-on courses at the University of North Dakota and Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, Florida.

When Airey was appointed chief master sergeant of the Air Force in 1967, he was the first such noncommissioned officer charged with the responsibility of aiding and advising the secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force chief of staff on all matters pertaining to enlisted service members.

Before his appointment, Airey never expected he would get the position: "I thought, 'Whoever gets that job 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." According to Airey, twenty-two hundred chief master sergeants were eligible for the job at the first selection. Several records reviews and in-person board interviews reduced the number to twenty-two semifinalists. From that number, three were chosen: Conrad Stevens, from Military Airlift Command (MAC); "Red" Marsh, from Pacific Air Forces (PACAF); and Airey. They went to Washington, D.C., and were interviewed by several senior officers, including the vice chief of staff, Gen. Bruce Holloway, and the chief of staff, Gen. John P. McConnell, who selected Airey as the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

Of his selection, Airey remarked, "I can honestly say of the twenty-two hundred, I never will be convinced that I was the most qualified or the most eligible. I ended up with the job—so you go out and do the best you can."

Almost immediately upon assuming his new responsibilities, Airey began tackling the problem of personnel retention, an issue he identified as one of the greatest challenges he faced. The first-term reenlistment rate was the lowest it had been in twelve years. While fighting raged in Vietnam, the Air Force was battling to retain 25 percent of its first-term enlisted force. Airey, however, did not attribute the great decline in reenlistments to the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam. Rather, he saw it as a consequence of a number of issues, including "poor pay, numerous remote assignments, good civilian employment opportunities, and an inequitable promotion system."¹⁰

"We had people who were in grade for ten years or more, in frozen career fields with absolutely no opportunity for promotion," he recalled. The Air Force had what was referred to as "hard-core" and "soft-core" career fields, terms that Airey despised because he believed that it took all career fields to make the Air Force a viable team.

Airey was informed that Representative L. Mendel Rivers (D., South Carolina), who then chaired the House Armed Services Committee, began receiving thousands of letters from embittered enlisted people regarding promotions. He formed a subcommittee to investigate the services' enlisted promotion systems. That investigation resulted in some criticism of

the Air Force's promotion system. To tackle the problem, the service assembled a team, on which Airey acted as an adviser. His efforts helped to produce the Weighted Airman Promotion System, which eliminated the old local enlisted promotion boards and equalized promotion opportunities across career fields. It established clear, weighted criteria for promotion, including test scores and time-in-grade. Airey, who remembered the days of local promotion boards when promotion depended in many cases on how well one did within a "fair-haired boy" system, noted that WAPS is the most equitable promotion system for enlisted personnel in any of the U.S. armed services. With minor changes, the WAPS adopted in 1970 remains in effect today.

Though he applauded the Weighted Airman Promotion System, Airey did not agree with all of the measures taken to enhance retention. He believed that the Air Force lowered standards, and he strongly objected to the decision to create the "buck sergeant" rank, giving E-4s noncommissioned officer status. Even though retention did go up once that decision was put into effect, Airey stated, "I do not believe it was the right way to go."¹¹

Airey was also a strong advocate for enlisted professional military education. He believed that senior and chief master sergeants needed more advanced management training than was available at the major command academies, and he suggested that an Air Force-level senior noncommissioned officer academy be established.

"I looked upon it more as an inducement, something to strive for," Airey said. "It would be the tops in professional military education, and one who went through it should graduate with much pride." Establishment of the academy was not approved until 1971, two years after Airey stepped down from the Air Force's top enlisted position. The Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy opened at Gunter Annex, Alabama, in 1973.

During his tenure as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Airey made four visits to Vietnam, twice with the chief of staff and twice on his own. He always came back from these trips feeling proud of what he had seen and of what the troops were doing.¹²

After completing his twenty-seven-month term as CMSAF, Airey returned to Tyndall Air Force Base as the first sergeant of a combat crew training squadron because he wanted to complete thirty years of service. He is the only former chief master sergeant of the Air Force to have remained on active duty.

Airey is very proud of the enlisted force of the early twenty-first century. He notes, "We have young airmen performing duties that are being done by field grade officers in foreign air forces. The NCO force is the best it has ever been and we are the envy of foreign air forces all over the world."¹³

Airey and his wife, Shirley, stayed in the Florida panhandle after he retired. He became the regional director of the Air Force Sergeants Association and held that position for ten years. He now spends most of his time on speaking engagements for the Air Force. He is also a member of the Air University Foundation, a member of the board of trustees for the Airmen

Memorial Museum, and a member of the Airmen Memorial Foundation. The Aireys have three children and two grandchildren.

Airey lived his values of duty, honor, and devotion to country, and, as the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force, he instilled the same desire in many other service members. On the day he took office, he told his fellow airmen the following:

I pledge myself to work for ever better utilization of the more than three quarters of a million Air Force enlisted members. I am particularly interested in the areas of retention, career development, educational progression, and civic responsibilities. I plan to get out and talk to airmen all over the world. In this way I hope to develop recommendations to the Chief of Staff on how we can continue to improve the working situations in which personal pride and service can best be combined to accomplish our mission.

I welcome this opportunity to work toward making our Aerospace People an increasingly valuable asset to the Air Force and to the Nation.¹⁴

In accomplishing many of the goals he set for himself, he also firmly established the position of chief master sergeant of the Air Force. He faced the critics and—while he did not win over everyone—convinced many of the importance and value of the position.

He is very proud that his oldest son, Dale Paul Airey, followed him into the Air Force and flew over eleven hundred combat sorties as a loadmaster on a C-123 with the 19th Special Operations Squadron out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base in South Vietnam. Dale later became commandant of two leadership schools and retired as a first sergeant with the rank of chief master sergeant. He now teaches in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program.¹⁵

When asked about his greatest accomplishments, Airey demurred. He responded, “Let history answer.”¹⁶ “I did my best to do what I was trained to do,” Airey said. “That’s how I want to be remembered.”

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by SMSgt. Valerie McGovern.
2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 2000* (Washington, D.C.: DoD, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate of Information, Operations and Reports, 2000), p. 65.
3. Janet R. Bednarek, ed., *The Enlisted Experience: A Conversation with the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995), p. 25.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 41, 80–81.
8. As part of this project, each surviving former chief master sergeant of the Air Force was presented with a copy of the biographical interview and a questionnaire. They were asked to make changes and corrections to the interview and to answer the questionnaire. They were allowed to respond to the questionnaire in the manner easiest for them. Some responded by telephone, some by tape recording, some by e-mail, and some in writing. CMSAF Airey chose to provide a handwritten response to his questionnaire (hereinafter Airey Questionnaire). A copy of the Airey Questionnaire and Airey's response are available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
9. Airey Questionnaire.
10. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs* (Arlington, Va.: Air Force Association, 1984), p. 11.
11. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 107.
12. Airey Questionnaire.
13. *Ibid.*
14. United States Air Force, *Information Sheet*, "Statement by Chief Master Sergeant Paul W. Airey, First Chief Master Sergeant of the United States Air Force," SAF-OIPC, Pentagon, Washington, D.C., OXford 7–9835.
15. Airey Questionnaire.
16. *Ibid.*

Donald L. Harlow

August 1, 1969–September 30, 1971



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August 1, 1969–September 30, 1971



Donald L. Harlow became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1969.¹ Richard Nixon was President of the United States, Robert Seamans, Jr., was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. John D. Ryan was the Air Force chief of staff. U.S. involvement in Vietnam was beginning to diminish as he began his new assignment, but it would not end before his retirement in 1971. In Vietnam, a few months before Harlow became the highest-ranking enlisted member, A1C John L. Levitow's courageous act saved the crew of Spooky 71. The following year, Levitow became the lowest-ranking airman awarded the Medal of Honor. In 1969, the number of enlisted personnel in the Air Force stood at 722,936. When Harlow retired, the number had dropped to 624,980.²

Donald Harlow was born in Waterville, Maine, on September 22, 1920, one of two boys and the youngest in a family of nine children. His father died when Don was two years old. As his older siblings grew up and moved away, Harlow found himself the last child still living at home. To help his mother, he left high school during his sophomore year and took a variety of jobs. He worked at a grocery store and a movie theater and then got a job at a department store, working for more than three years for a man he remembered as "one of the greatest bosses I ever had." Under his guidance, Harlow quickly learned the value of good business skills. "[The boss] gave me all kinds of opportunities to use my own initiative to get the job done," Harlow said. On the day he left the store, his boss told him something he never forgot: no matter how good others say you are, or how good you believe you are, there is always someone who will come along and do the job just a little bit better. Harlow left Maine to finish his education in Groton, Massachusetts, where he graduated from the Lawrence Academy in 1942. He had worked as a hotel night clerk and music instructor to pay his tuition bills at the private prep school.³

In August 1942, at age twenty-two, Harlow was drafted. He reported to the Army Air Forces at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and entered basic training at Atlantic City, New Jersey. After basic training, he went to technical school at Buckley Field, Colorado. His first duty assignment took him to Eagle Pass, Texas, where he served as an armament and gunnery instructor, teaching cadets to fieldstrip and reassemble their weapons and to synchronize firing the guns through the propellers of the aircraft on which they were mounted.

After a year at Eagle Pass, Harlow transferred to Matagorda Island, located off the coast of Texas. There he continued to teach armament and gunnery to second lieutenants fresh from pilot training, and he developed an end-of-course test. "I found [the job] very fascinating," he recalled. "I love teaching, and it was a great challenge. There was so much opportunity as an instructor, and I found there was so much I could do to help others."

When a hurricane forced his unit to leave Matagorda Island in the spring of 1945, Harlow sought a different field of employment. He believed that service members were not treated very well in personnel matters such as finances, family care, and career planning. He went to the personnel office at Foster Field in Victoria, Texas, and asked for a job. "I took a chance because I figured, if I went into personnel, I could help people develop their personal lives and their careers," Harlow said. He happened to be in the right place at the right time, and he was put in charge of processing records, working for a female major at a time when most female Air Force officers were nurses. Harlow had found his niche in personnel and was excited and challenged by the tasks he performed there. He was promoted to staff sergeant and worked continually to find new ways to do a better, more efficient job.

When World War II ended, Harlow was discharged. He mustered out in 1946, but, knowing he would be subject to recall for the next fourteen years, he joined the inactive reserve. He decided that if he did have to come back into the service at some time, he did not want to have to start all over again. By staying in the inactive reserves, he could maintain the rank he had earned during the war.⁴ His wife, Dorothy, had been living with her parents in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, while Harlow was in the service. At the time of his discharge, Harlow's mother had become ill, so Harlow and Dorothy moved briefly to his hometown of Waterville. Between 1946 and 1950, Harlow embarked on a career in the civilian sector. He and his wife moved to California, where he attended the California College of Commerce at Long Beach and taught three undergraduate classes. However, before he earned enough credits to graduate, a business machine company hired him as a sales training instructor. He earned a respectable \$400 per month at the Clary Multiplier Corporation. His life as a civilian was cut short by the Korean conflict.

Harlow's return to active duty came in August 1950. He reported to Travis Air Force Base, California, and was told he would be returning to the armament field. Instead, he asked to see the personnel officer. Harlow handed the officer his portfolio and told him he had not seen a gun in years and did not know much about current armament. The personnel officer assigned him as the sergeant major of personnel for the 5th and 9th Maintenance Squadrons at Travis. He received promotion to the rank of technical sergeant in December.

When the Air Force decided to open a base in the North African country of Morocco, Harlow had to make one of the biggest decisions of his life. He was required to stay on reserve status for only two years, but to go to Morocco he needed to reenlist.

I told the colonel I worked for that I never made a big decision without talking to my wife. I took leave and went to Long Beach, California, where Dorothy and our two young daughters were living at the time. I explained to her that I wasn't sure she and the children would be able to go overseas with me. Of course, there were all kinds of tears, but we finally decided. My thoughts were that I had a good job, working with good people—so we decided I would stay in the Air Force.

Harlow was promoted to master sergeant in July 1951 and reported to the 5th Air Division as personnel sergeant major at Rabat, Morocco. For the next three years, Harlow also found himself working in other positions, such as manager of the noncommissioned officers' club for a year and as steward of the officers' club for eight months. It was not long before he earned a reputation for taking seemingly complex tasks, examining them, and finding simple management solutions.

In July 1954, Master Sergeant Harlow became personnel sergeant major at the 3635th Survival Training Wing at Stead Air Force Base, Nevada. In May 1955, he became detachment sergeant major, Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (AFROTC) Detachment 815, at Southern Methodist University in Texas. He also served as tactical instructor and director of the AFROTC band and as noncommissioned officer in charge of cadet training during the 1956 AFROTC Summer Encampment at Harlingen Air Force Base, Texas. While there, he earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration from the California College of Commerce.

Harlow was then assigned as sergeant major of personnel at Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire. In his off-duty hours, he used his musical talent as director of a forty-eight-voice Protestant choir for the Pease base chapel. He and Dorothy also got involved in the base youth activities program. An active member of the International Toastmasters Club at Pease, Harlow reached the club's fifth level at the Canadian/New England open competition. He was a busy member of the Strategic Air Command speakers' bureau and was elected president of the largest parent-teacher association chapter in New Hampshire. His activities were rewarded at Pease when he was promoted to senior master sergeant in June 1960 and was made chief master sergeant in April 1963, with only sixteen years in service.

He went on to serve as personnel supervisor and first sergeant for the Air Force element at United States European Command (USEUCOM) headquarters in Paris. He was the senior Air Force member and chaired the rules committee of the Joint Service Noncommissioned Officers/Commissioned Officers Mess Board of Governors for USEUCOM. He also directed the Camp des Loges chapel choir, composed of active-duty members and dependents from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

Normally, Harlow would have served a four-year tour at USEUCOM. However, his tour was cut short in 1965, when the Air Force assigned him as the sergeant major of executive



Harlow, shown speaking with airmen in April 1970, directed his attention to the problems and concerns of the young troops.

services in the Office of the Vice Chief of Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. During his tour at the Pentagon, he adopted the following maxim as his philosophy: “Nothing that is needs to be, just because it was.” He worked with his supervisor, Col. Harry Russell, and the enlisted personnel there to reorganize executive services into a smaller, more efficient operation by applying the personal and business skills he had developed earlier in his life. He served as master of ceremonies at several retirements for both officers and enlisted personnel assigned to the Pentagon, and he conducted Pentagon tours for visiting dignitaries.

“I never asked those under me to do what I myself would not,” Harlow recalled, “and I never expected those above me to make exceptions to the rules for me, based on my prominent position in the vice chief’s office.” He was a critic of regulations he believed were unnecessary or unfair, and he did not hesitate to share his own ideas. He was outspoken, but his reputation was solid.

In 1967, he was selected Outstanding Airman for Headquarters Command, Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C. In honor of his selection, he and Dorothy were guests at the Air Force Association convention in San Francisco, California.

His personal and professional abilities resulted in his appointment to the Air Staff committee that shaped the charter for the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. One of his many recommendations while on that committee was to fill the position with chief master sergeants who had twenty-two years of service, under the agreement that they would serve a two-year term. Harlow had no idea when he made his recommendations and voiced his opinions that he was developing the rules for a position he soon would occupy.

Harlow was not a man who took things for granted, so he was surprised when he was chosen to replace Paul Airey in the top enlisted post. “There were twenty other people in the

running, but there were four chiefs that I specifically remember. I said to myself, ‘They are the best for the job, as far as I’m concerned.’ But I went through the interview and returned to work—never dreaming I would be selected.”

Harlow recalled that it was tough to follow the act of Paul Airey, the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force. But as the second to take the reins, Harlow cut a path through the misunderstanding, confusion, and mistrust that surrounded the position. Harlow’s challenge was to keep the way clear for those who followed in his footsteps.

An ever-vigilant Harlow made several recommendations to the Air Staff during the twenty-five months he served as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, but he did not see the fruits of many his efforts until several years later. Although some would scoff at anything but instant gratification, Harlow learned long before entering the military that a person’s greatest contribution is knowledge, which is necessary for change, and that change takes time. Yet, once in office, Harlow learned some tough lessons:

You go out to all the bases and meet with all the chiefs, and you think they’re going to jump up and do what you want because you’re the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Well, it doesn’t happen that way. Those people don’t necessarily admire you. Some are envious. You can see it in their eyes when they look at you across the table. They think they should be Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force because they’re just as good as you. And some of them are right. They are just as good as you. So you have to show them why they should help you. You have to sell yourself each time.

[The commanders] thought I was going to spy on them, tattle, and get them in trouble. Airey had a tough job being the first because many general officers would tell him, “I want you to know I voted against this position. We don’t need guys like you running around the Air Force creating problems.” But Airey persevered and was great for the position, as he spent a lot of time with the senior NCOs, explaining and garnering support for the position.

During the Vietnam War, Harlow directed his attention to where he thought it was most needed—to the young troops and their problems, including racial tensions, assignment concerns, and promotion problems. He listened to the young enlisted personnel, took good notes, and reported his findings to the chief of staff. Harlow was also known for his blunt honesty. When a young airman told him he was getting out because he wanted to let his hair grow long, Harlow wished him well. “I think he wanted me to give him a sales pitch,” he recalled, “but it was a stupid reason to leave the Air Force.”

Although some problems proved harder to solve than others, Harlow took a thoughtful approach to the issues of the younger troops and their families. He took action only after careful consideration of the perspectives of those who looked to him for guidance.

At one time, his staff was receiving many complaints from the wives of enlisted members. When the chief visited a base, the women reported, the troops were not getting home until three or four in the morning because they had been told they could not leave the club until the chief left. “Of course, they didn’t realize the chief was in bed no later than eleven o’clock,” Harlow said, with a chuckle. The solution? No more dining in, he announced; only dining out. “And the wives would come, and what was really amazing is some of these young, two-strippers—both men and women—would attend [wearing] the mess dress uniform. They would spend their money because they wanted to be part of the program, the Air Force, and the social event. I was so proud of those kids.”

His no-nonsense approach to daily operations and his keen ability to listen helped Harlow advise the chief of staff on matters concerning everything from uniform wear to promotions, assignments, and family assistance. He readily admits, however, that many of his recommendations did not result in changes to policy during his tenure:

It takes time, and, besides, all these types of recommendations probably affect something else. How does promotion affect the job? How does training affect promotion? For example, if an individual is reassigned, and he is supposed to be testing for promotion and doesn’t get the opportunity—well, that’s not good. I firmly believe each one of us [the chief master sergeants of the Air Force] served at the right time, for the right reasons, under different circumstances. Subsequently, each one of us has contributed more and more to the overall composition of our present force.

A student at the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy studied the careers of the first chief master sergeants of the Air Force. He concluded that Harlow made two significant contributions during his tenure as CMSAF. First, he championed an early reform of the newly established Weighted Airman Promotion System and, second, he helped bring about a revision of the regulation dealing with eligibility for flight pay.⁵

The effort to revise the Air Force’s enlisted promotion policy began during the tenure of CMSAF Paul Airey. After hearing repeated and widespread complaints, Representative L. Mendel Rivers, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, called for special hearings. The House Special Subcommittee on Enlisted Promotion Policy Review took testimony from August to November 1967. Prompted by the subcommittee, the Air Force proposed a significant change in its policies. The service presented its new program to the subcommittee in 1968 and received a favorable report. As a result, the Air Force implemented its new policy with its clearly defined and weighted criteria—such as test scores and time-in-grade—on June 1, 1970.⁶ As good as the new system was, Harlow soon identified and worked to fix a weakness. The WAPS criteria included off-duty education. However, many career fields did not easily allow for such education. Harlow worked to give less weight to that particular criterion, creating a more level playing field for promotion across career fields.

In terms of enlisted flight pay, at a time when the Air Force was pushing for its noncommissioned officers to attend in-residence courses, personnel in such courses were away from their duties so long that they lost their eligibility for flight pay. Harlow led the campaign to allow personnel to stay on flight pay status while pursuing in-residence professional military education.

When asked to identify his “greatest satisfaction,” Harlow named the fact that he was able to help the position of the chief master sergeant of the Air Force grow and gain in prestige during his term. He believed that it became more accepted by the Air Staff and by commanders.

He pointed to a number of instances that he believed demonstrated the position’s increased acceptance and prestige. For example, in a first, the Air Force Association asked him to serve as the master of ceremonies at the annual awards banquet honoring the Outstanding Airmen of the Year. Further, the secretary of the Air Force asked him to present a reading at a USAF service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.⁷

Harlow counted as his greatest disappointment the fact that “so many of the initiatives that the Air Force took and wanted to take were somewhat stymied because of the system.” According to Harlow, “the system” included the decision-making process in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill. He believed that “the system” worked on the notion that all of the services had to be treated the same. It failed to take fully into account the different missions and requirements of the services. As Harlow explained, some initiatives that would have served Air Force needs died because they were not seen as valuable or were objected to by the other services.⁸



Chief Harlow and his wife, Dorothy, attended the Air Force Sergeants Association International Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in August 1982.

When Harlow retired in 1971, he was well armed with knowledge of the Air Force system, and he waged war where he thought it would make the most difference—on Capitol Hill. As the senior lobbyist for the Air Force Sergeants Association, he took his messages to the House of Representatives and to the Senate, and he was well known for getting results.

As Harlow recalled, “I learned while I was in the position of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force that a lot of things could not be resolved administratively within the Air Force or the Department of Defense. They had to go to Congress. I saw problems that needed to be corrected and could only be [corrected] through legislation.”

Harlow attributes part of his career success to his tenacity in the military and as the “super salesman on Capitol Hill.” One of the protracted battles he took on was the fight for equal per diem pay for officers and enlisted personnel. He patiently continued to push for it, but it was twelve years before he finally saw results. Also through his stubborn persistence, enlisted parachute and explosive ordnance disposal troops gained the same hazardous duty pay for doing their jobs as that given to the officers.

Harlow is proudest of the fact that he served as chief master sergeant of the Air Force and as a lobbyist at a time when someone had to fight for enlisted equality. In the late 1970s, some military members were threatening to join a military union. According to Harlow,

In July 1975, the American Federation of Government Employees stunned the military community by announcing that it was studying the feasibility of unionizing military members. It was a catalyst because I think some members of Congress saw that military lobbyists were telling the truth. That was a big victory because it made people on the Hill more responsive to our problems. I wanted higher pay for enlisted people, more medical care dollars, and a better deal for military widows. Most important, I wanted to change the way that too many powerful people in Washington thought about enlisted men and women. Enlisted people were viewed as second-class citizens by some.

In a January 9, 1978, supplement to the *Air Force Times*, Harlow described the problem:

Officers have more basic pay because they have more responsibility, which is fine. But officers also receive more per diem pay, more flight pay, more hazardous duty pay, better housing, and better hospital accommodations for their wives. Compared to enlisted people, officers endure less regimentation of their private lives by the military services.

Many of these inequities are based on simple tradition. Most people—including enlisted men and women—once expected officers to get a better deal simply because they were officers. But the social turbulence of the last decade and the country’s reliance on an all-volunteer force have brought sweeping changes in the way enlisted people think about themselves and their jobs. They no longer will tolerate the wide gap between their lifestyle and that of officers.

Harlow and others got the attention of congressional leaders, and the quality of life for enlisted members began to improve. His contributions were key to several victories, including the establishment of the survivor benefit plan and saving the federal subsidy for commissaries. And, of course, there is no military union.

Harlow relied heavily on his sense of humor when things got tough. Humor, he has said, helped him to stay young. Before his death on June 18, 1997, he spoke several times a year at graduation ceremonies at professional military education schools. “I am particularly fond of those who work long hours in very technical jobs in base hospitals,” he said, “and I often drop by to remind them what an important job they perform in today’s Air Force. I also spend time with PME instructors before graduation ceremonies to commend them on the great job they are doing with tomorrow’s leaders.”

Long after departing from the Pentagon and Capitol Hill, Harlow continued to participate in committee work. He served as a member of the Air Force Retiree Council and as chair of the Richard D. Kisling scholarship fund, a fund established by CMSAF Sam Parish during his tenure.

After Harlow retired from the Air Force, he was inducted into the Order of the Sword. According to Harlow, it was his work as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, “trying to correct the inequities that couldn’t be resolved otherwise,” that helped him to earn the nomination.

“I want to be remembered,” Harlow said, “as somebody [who] likes people, enjoys doing what he does, and continues, even after leaving the service, to contribute to the overall professionalism of our Air Force and our enlisted corps.”

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by SrA. Deborah Van Nierop.

2. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

3. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*

5. SMSgt. D. DuFrane, “Background Paper on Significant Contributions to the Enlisted Force by the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force (CMSAFs),” July 11, 1997, SNCOA Student Files, Research Institute, Enlisted Heritage Hall, Maxwell AFB-Gunter Annex, Montgomery, Ala.

6. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 10, 110–11.

7. Oral History Interview of CMSAF Donald L. Harlow by Hugh Ahmann, December 9–10, 1980, typed transcript, pp. 254–55, K239.0512–1260, IRIS No. 1049795, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

8. *Ibid.*



THE ORDER OF THE SWORD

Induction in the Order of the Sword is an honor reserved for people who have given outstanding leadership and support to enlisted people.

The induction ceremony occurs at a formal evening banquet held to honor the inductee as a “Leader among Leaders and an Airman among Airmen.” The entire event is conducted with the dignity that reflects its significance as the highest recognition enlisted people can bestow on anyone.

Each command that has an Order of the Sword develops its own selection and induction procedures.

(Taken from Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, Volume I, Promotion Fitness Examination Study Guide, Chapter 7)

RECEIVING THE HONOR

On May 20, 1980, Donald L. Harlow became the first enlisted recipient of the Order of the Sword. The proclamation read:

Whereas this proclamation is issued by the Noncommissioned Officers of the Tactical Air Command proclaiming you, CMSAF Donald L. Harlow, a chief among chiefs and a leader among men, who has established a new epitome of leadership in the Distinguished Assemblage of United States Air Force leaders as our champion in the fight to stop the erosion of military benefits.

Established in 1522 by Gustavus Vasa (Gustav I) of Sweden, the military Order of the Sword is presented in a ceremony conducted by noncommissioned officers to honor officers and civilians who have made significant contributions to the enlisted corps. Although he made several improvements to the corps during his tenure as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, it was not until after he retired in 1971 that Harlow made some of his most significant contributions, as a lobbyist for the Air Force Sergeants Association.

Of the 176 people who have received the Order of the Sword, including four civilians, Harlow remains the only enlisted member to be so honored.

Richard D. Kisling

October 1, 1971–September 30, 1973



Richard D. Kisling

October 1, 1971–September 30, 1973



Richard D. Kisling became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on October 1, 1971.¹ Richard M. Nixon was President of the United States, Robert Seamans, Jr., was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. John D. Ryan was the Air Force chief of staff. During Kisling's two years as the Air Force's top enlisted person, the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy opened at what was then Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Before his retirement, three future chief master sergeants of the Air Force—Thomas Barnes, James McCoy, and Sam Parish—would graduate as part of the academy's first class. In 1971, the Air Force had 624,980 enlisted personnel. By 1973, it had 571,790.²

Richard Kisling was born in 1923 and was raised on the Iowa farm his grandfather had homesteaded. One of ten children, he and his family struggled through the Great Depression and dust bowl years. His parents were respected members of the local community. His mother worked as a schoolteacher, and his father served as the township assessor for over twenty-five years. Though his parents sometimes strained to feed their large family, Kisling remembers his childhood as happy and secure. His parents taught him many lessons including the importance of having integrity and following the Golden Rule—doing unto others what you would have them do unto you.³

His childhood environment also set the stage for his service in the military. "When I was growing up, there was a great feeling of patriotism and a desire to do something for the country," Kisling recalled. He received an initial deferment from military duty because he worked as an inspector at the grain exchange in Sioux City, Iowa. The job was considered "war essential," and men working there were exempt from service. But a few months before his twenty-first birthday, in July 1944, Kisling's draft status was changed to 1-A. The Allies had landed in Europe on June 6, 1944, and, as they drove across France, casualties were mounting. Because replacements were needed, the Army started drafting men who had previously been deferred.

Kisling went to Fort Crook, Nebraska—now Offutt Air Force Base—for his preinduction physical. In less than a month, he was ordered to report for duty. "At that time, I had hopes of getting into the Navy or the Army Air Forces. It just happened to be my lucky day, and I got picked for the infantry," Kisling recalled, with a laugh. He went to Little Rock, Arkansas, for

seventeen weeks of combat infantry training. Most of the instructors were combat veterans, many of whom had earned Purple Hearts, and the training was rigorous and realistic.

He volunteered for paratrooper duty, for an extra fifty dollars a month, but an attack of appendicitis cut short his airborne trooper career. That illness was a lucky break, because many of the men in paratrooper training with him perished in the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne, Belgium, in December 1944.

Private Kisling's military travels took him to Camp Gordon, Georgia; Fort Meade, Maryland; and Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts. In the spring of 1945, he finally boarded the SS *Mariposa*, an old luxury liner that had been converted to a troop ship. "The ship was very crowded, and we changed course every three minutes to avoid German submarines. It took us about twelve days to get to Europe. We landed in Marseilles, France, where we piled [into] trains and headed up to Germany," he said.

The war in Europe ended within a month of Kisling's arrival in France. He was assigned to the intelligence section at 3d Infantry Division headquarters in Salzburg, Austria. When the division moved to Germany, the intelligence section negotiated the repatriation of displaced persons with the Soviets and monitored the repatriation process.

"This was a very complex and sensitive mission," Kisling noted, "and we soon learned that we could not trust the Russians." The Soviets consistently falsified the number of people being repatriated through their checkpoint to the Western Zone. When their numbers were challenged, they vehemently denied any responsibility. Seeing these political machinations almost immediately after V-E Day was a lesson for the young soldier. The gunfire had ceased, and the Cold War had begun—and he had witnessed it at close range.

Kisling did not intend to stay in the service. "I thought I would go back to Iowa, get my old job in the grain exchange, and then decide if I was going to be a farmer or go back to school," he said. He was anxious to get home, but the experience was disappointing. Civilian life seemed boring. He missed the GI camaraderie, and he wanted to travel. After only ninety-three days as a civilian, Kisling reenlisted and volunteered for an overseas assignment. He went to northern Italy, where he was assigned to the 80th Infantry Division. After a few months, he was offered an early release from active duty.

"When I got back to the states, I found I could take terminal leave, get paid for all the leave I hadn't taken while on active duty, and reenlist in another branch of service," Kisling said. He recalled that in Europe during the war, as he and his fellow infantrymen slogged along muddy roads, they frequently were passed by Army Air Forces men riding in dry, comfortable trucks. That memory was not lost on him, and, when he reenlisted in 1947, he joined the Army Air Forces, soon to become the United States Air Force. By April 1947, he was headed to his first duty station in his new branch, at Chanute Field, Illinois—a place where he found that the Army's air arm had developed very different military culture:

When I moved into the open-bay barracks at Chanute, I couldn't believe it. Here were master sergeants, tech sergeants, staffs, and one- and two-strippers talking about their work and socializing—all on a first-name basis. In the Army, you didn't call anyone of senior rank by his first name. You could ask a question in the line of duty, but otherwise only if they spoke to you first. I couldn't believe this and thought, my gosh, what a change!

Kisling worked as a clerk in the modification shop of a mobile training unit—the forerunner of today's field training detachments—and he soon became a supply specialist. In that capacity, he ordered the first jet engine the Air Force used to make mockups for trainers. He found the work interesting and considered going to technical school.

A brief hospital stay to treat a shoulder problem, however, changed his direction. Kisling was told that regulations for patients being released allowed him to go wherever there was an opening in his specialty. The sergeant in the processing unit told Kisling about “the nicest little base in the Army Air Forces. Beautiful airfield and the weather is nice year 'round.” Kisling headed west to Hamilton Field, California—a hasty choice and a major turning point in his professional and personal life.

When he arrived at Hamilton in June 1948, “they put me in the enlisted branch at Headquarters, Fourth Air Force,” Kisling said. “At that time, we didn't have personnel specialties—we were classification specialists. The branch chief, MSgt. Donald Shank, had a hell of a good training program.” Shank trained his men in all phases of personnel work and took a personal interest in them. “He was a strong, positive role model—the first such military supervisor I had,” Kisling said. Under Shank's tutelage, Kisling decided he had finally found his preferred career field. He liked helping to resolve problems while dealing with people one-on-one. While still at Hamilton, he married Alene O'Dell on July 2, 1949, and their life-long partnership began.

Kisling volunteered for the European theater and went to Wheelus Field, Tripoli, Libya, in April 1950. He was assigned to the 1261st Air Transport Squadron, Military Air Transport Services. It was not the post he had wanted, but the assignment turned out well. “I went in there as a staff sergeant and was promoted rather quickly to tech sergeant. After about six or seven months as the chief clerk in the squadron, I moved up to become the first sergeant,” Kisling said. That promotion was unexpected. “The squadron commander and the first sergeant didn't get along,” Kisling remembered. “The commander called me in and said, ‘Tomorrow morning, you're the first sergeant. If you can do the job, you're a master. If not, I am going to bust you to staff sergeant.’” He did the job and left Wheelus in March 1952 as a master sergeant.



During his two-year assignment at Wheelus Field in Tripoli, Libya, Kisling (shown above in 1951) was promoted from staff sergeant to tech sergeant to first sergeant to master sergeant.

Kisling next reported to West Palm Beach, Florida, with three Air Force specialty codes: first sergeant, personnel, and administration. But again his expectations did not match the outcome:

In 1952, you didn't know what your job was going to be when you went to a base. I reported to the base personnel office and the NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge] said, "Sarge, I will give you two choices—you can go to the military police squadron or you can have the food service job." That is really a choice? I thought I was going to a flying squadron. So I took the food service squadron. I ended up having the only outfit on base that was still standing reveille. We had a lot of AWOLs [absent without leave] and all sorts of disciplinary problems. It was a rough outfit.

Six months later, he welcomed a transfer to the 1739th Ferrying Squadron in Amarillo, Texas. Although Kisling was assigned as the first sergeant, the unit's commander had something else in mind. He asked Kisling to run the personnel department, breaking it away from the orderly room and running it independently. Kisling accepted and was back in the career field he enjoyed.

In February 1954, he applied for duty with the recruiting service and went to Abilene, Texas, for an interview. The Southwestern Recruiting District needed someone right away, so ten days later the Kislings headed for Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. At that time, Army

and Air Force recruiting efforts were combined, and they shared the same stations; but, shortly after Kisling's arrival, the two separated. Air Force recruiting moved to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to set up recruiting school and the 3504th Recruiting Group. Although Kisling did not work in the field as a recruiter, his contributions to the unit were recognized in 1956, when he was named Outstanding Support Airman of the Year for the Air Force Recruiting Service.

While the Kislings lived in Texas, their two daughters were born—Kathy in Amarillo and Karen in San Antonio. The old Wherry quarters at Lackland were crowded for the family, so Kisling used his last reenlistment bonus of \$1,300 as a down payment on a small house. There were a lot of new expenses, and Kisling did what so many enlisted personnel have done over the years: he moonlighted to supplement his \$300 monthly take-home pay. Selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door in the evenings and on Saturdays, he made more money than he did as a master sergeant.

After almost four years in Texas, Kisling was a prime candidate for an overseas assignment. Once again, he volunteered for Europe and received orders to the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing, Chaumont, France. This was his first Air Force combat unit and one of the first bases where the concept of a consolidated personnel office was being tested.

They were flying F-86 planes and later transitioned to F-100s. It was different. When I got there I was the personnel sergeant major for the air base group. It wasn't long before we took the records out of the groups and consolidated them all, and I became the base personnel sergeant major. I think it served a purpose during that time, although I have always felt we were better off with the records in the squadrons. I feel we lost a lot of the personal, individualized touch when we consolidated.

In September 1958, Kisling was promoted to senior master sergeant in the first group of Air Force people to wear the supergrades.

When his three-year assignment in France ended in 1959, Kisling and his family returned to the United States and to an assignment as the base personnel sergeant major at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. His office was the test site for Tactical Air Command's consolidated base personnel office. In December 1959, when the Air Force announced its first promotions to the new rank of chief master sergeant, Kisling was on the list. In recognition of his efforts at Nellis, he was also named Twelfth Air Force Outstanding Airman of the Year.

Kisling began thinking about retiring with twenty years of service. Interested in settling where he and Alene would enjoy retirement, he took a position as a technical adviser to the Reserves at March Air Force Base in California. The Kislings bought a house, expecting to establish some roots at last. But Reserve headquarters converted all the personnel adviser authorizations to maintenance, ending Kisling's tour only a year after his arrival.

Because he wanted to stay in California, he found a job as base personnel sergeant major at George Air Force Base, where the first F-105 wing, the 335th Tactical Fighter Wing, was forming. When the Cuban missile crisis erupted in October 1962, the base went on alert and deployed planes, with pilots and support people ready around the clock. The threat of war was very real, and military members and their families were caught up in the uncertainty and potential chaos.

A year later, Kisling had decided to stay in the service, and he sought one more overseas tour—this time with an assignment at Security Service. There were openings in Turkey and Germany, and the Kislings chose Germany. He became the personnel sergeant major for the European Security Region in Frankfurt. The new job meant traveling two weeks a month, making technical personnel visits, and talking with first sergeants and troops about assignments, billeting, and other issues.

When his tour in Germany ended in 1967, Kisling was assigned to U.S. Air Force Security Service headquarters (USAFSS) at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas. That same year, the Air Force selected its first chief master sergeant of the Air Force. The new program and position caught Kisling's attention, and he told his family that it was the job he most wanted. Two years later, he was USAFSS's nominee for that position. Don Harlow was selected, and Kisling was chosen to fill a new role—USAFSS senior enlisted adviser. The USAFSS commander charged him with learning what the enlisted people were thinking and how the personnel programs were working. Kisling believed that his efforts in this new job would better qualify him to become the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, if he were nominated again:

To a degree [I was] really an IG [inspector general] because I went out and found out about any problems. I came back from trips with a fistful of things to talk about—from living conditions to training issues—anything in the book that the troops wanted to talk about. Back at Kelly, I'd talk to the general. I didn't have to make written reports, which was good. It was a simple thing of going in and having an outbrief with him, the chief of staff, and the deputy commander—then going to the directorates.

Career motivation was always a part of it. I talked to a lot of people one-on-one to explain what the Air Force had to offer and why they should stay in for a whole career.

In 1971, Kisling was again the USAFSS's nominee to be the next chief master sergeant of the Air Force. Twenty-four other chiefs competed for the position, and, when the field narrowed, Kisling was one of three finalists chosen to go to the Pentagon for an interview. Two weeks later, he was named the chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

Once in the Pentagon, Kisling went to his new boss, Gen. John D. Ryan. Kisling told him that he believed that in order to go out to the field and talk about what was happening at the chief of staff level, he and the general needed to meet regularly. General Ryan responded



When Air Force Chief of Staff John D. Ryan (at the center) started to pin CMSAF Kising's new brass in the wrong place, Kising's wife, Alene, gave him some good-natured help.

that he wanted to meet with Kising every ten days to two weeks. With that in mind, Kising then tackled his new job.⁴

His first challenge involved the long list of bases requesting a visit from the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. At many of these bases, service personnel expected him to be able to discuss particular issues and problems. Kising set about learning all he could about the Air Staff's position on those issues and problems before leaving on his visits. As he noted, "I could see nothing worse than the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force arriving at a base and in a meeting unable to answer the questions or provide the rationale for the decisions."⁵

As he undertook his new role, Kising found an enlisted force struggling through the development of a new Air Force. "We had become too sophisticated and centralized," the chief noted. "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 we did our officers. We depended on the process of osmosis, if you will, to teach them. Most [senior NCOs] felt we needed a first-class PME system for our enlisted force." So Kising placed those concerns in the forefront of discussion at the Pentagon. His persistence paid off when the first Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy was approved by Congress in the

autumn of 1972, and officially opened its doors at Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, the following January.

In an interview, Kisling was asked if he believed there was any significance to the fact that the Senior NCO Academy was located at Gunter Air Force Base rather than at nearby Maxwell Air Force Base, the home of Air University. Kisling believed that a lack of space was the prime reason for locating the academy at Gunter rather than Maxwell. He further stated that in hindsight the decision to locate at Gunter was a good one. He believed that it helped the new school. "I think it probably has more prestige being away from the officers, separated from the rest of A[ir] U[niversity]." Maxwell did not offer the office, classroom, or billeting facilities such a school needed. At Gunter, the Air Force constructed what Kisling described as a "first-class facility" for a "first-class school." He also noted that noncommissioned officers from the other services who attended school at Gunter rated the Air Force school as "just head and shoulders above the rest."⁶

Before the Senior NCO Academy accepted its first students, however, Kisling had one more battle to fight:

There was a lot of talk about making [this academy strictly for] first sergeants. I felt all of our senior NCOs needed this type of professional military education; to limit it to only one career field would be wrong for the entire Air Force. The Senior NCO Academy should be putting the finishing touches on these people. It should be the equivalent of Air War College.

These...[academy graduates] came back to their units...better qualified and motivated. They certainly had their horizons broadened and, in many cases, they were more ambitious than they ever were before. It was the best thing that happened to the Air Force in thirty years.

The academy was a giant step forward in education and personnel development, but Kisling strongly believed that there was more to leadership and management than what was taught in a classroom. He saw management as a subset of leadership, not as a separate endeavor.

Kisling had learned from his three enlisted supervisors that a true leader treats people with respect, is honest and sincere in his dealings with them, and exudes leadership twenty-four hours a day, without being caught up in his own importance. Describing his commitment to effective and humane leadership, the Enlisted Council of the Air Force Association wrote this about Kisling:

The effective leader takes the time to listen: 'Even if you already know what someone is going to say, you have to let them put it into their own words,' the chief said. Chief

Kisling has always maintained that people are of great importance, and that a proper concern for them as individuals is a prime quality of every outstanding leader.

Like most of his generation, Kisling learned leadership fundamentals through experience. Since he had not had an opportunity to attend any professional military education courses, he considered himself extremely fortunate to have been on the first selection list for promotion to chief master sergeant.

He believed that, prior to the mid-1970s, the Air Force did a good job of technical training but a poor job of professional military development for the total enlisted force. In a 1972 interview, he said, "A lot of our young Air Force people have never had a serious conversation with an adult. They have never talked about their objectives in life or expressed their personal feelings. Professional military education alone is not enough to mould NCOs because an individual has to be in a situation where he can see leadership by example."

He also believed that many enlisted people did not understand how they fit within the Air Force as a whole. He noted that

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 Air Force Base [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.⁷

Kisling believed that by the time he finished his tour as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the office had grown and the Air Staff had come to realize more of its value. He saw that the Air Staff increasingly included him in briefings on issues before taking final action.⁸

Kisling retired on September 30, 1973. Staying involved in Air Force activities, he worked for the Air Force Sergeants Association for eighteen months and then went back to the Pentagon's directorate of personnel as a management specialist and program analyst. He was still employed by the Air Force when he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease in January 1985. He died on November 3, 1985. Throughout four decades of military service, Kisling's efforts helped improve the quality of life for the enlisted force. His concern for such enlisted issues as housing, pay, promotions, education and training, and assignments earned him the respect of his peers and the nickname, "the GI's man in Washington."

The hallways of the Senior NCO Academy at Maxwell Air Force Base-Gunter Annex reflect Kisling's contributions and forethought. In 1986, Kisling Hall was dedicated to the former CMSAF in recognition of his tireless efforts to promote professional military education. In 1995, a life-size bronze statue of the chief was added to the lobby of the academy—a

memorial made possible by contributions from civilians and from members of every part of the Air Force.

At the statue's dedication ceremony, Gen. Billy Boles, commander of the Air Education and Training Command, credited Kisling with establishing many Air Force programs that benefit enlisted members: "He knew what to do, . . . and he knew how to do it and make everyone come out a winner," the general said. "No one ever lost an argument with Dick Kisling. He always had his way, and you thought it was your idea. He did that with gentle persuasion."

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographic interview is based on material researched and compiled by SSgt. Ginger Schreitmueller.

2. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

3. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 17.

4. Oral History Interview of CMSAF Richard D. Kisling, by Hugh Ahmann, December 14, 1982, June 13, 1983, and September 11 and October 4, 1984, typed transcript, pp. 224–25, K239.0512–1363, IRIS No. 1070822, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Thomas N. Barnes

October 1, 1973–July 31, 1977



Thomas N. Barnes

October 1, 1973–July 31, 1977



Thomas N. Barnes became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on October 1, 1973. At that time, Richard Nixon had begun his second term as President of the United States, John L. McLucas was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. George S. Brown was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ During Barnes's four years as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended. On May 15, 1975, TSgt. Wayne Fisk became the last U.S. combatant to engage hostile forces in Southeast Asia. The drawdown that had begun in the late 1960s continued and accelerated. In 1973, the number of Air Force enlisted personnel stood at 571,790. By 1977, the number had fallen to 469,878.²

Thomas Barnes was born in 1930 and was raised in Chester, Pennsylvania, where his father served as the pastor of that small city's largest black Baptist church. Chester claims that it served as an important link in the Underground Railroad, helping slaves to escape from the South before and during the Civil War. In the 1930s and 1940s, when Tom Barnes grew up there, it was a city with integrated neighborhoods and schools. Chester also hosted a number of war-related industries during World War II. Barnes, whose father died when he was fourteen, worked part-time for a shipbuilding company to support the war effort and to help support his family.³

In 1949, Air Force recruit Tom Barnes boarded a train headed to San Antonio, Texas. During the long ride, he made friends with the other recruits. The young men, a few black, the majority white, were together until they reached Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, where Barnes got what he called "the shock of my life." The previous year, President Harry S Truman had issued Executive Order 9981, which called for equality of opportunity in the nation's military. However, this action did not bring about an immediate transformation of the services. The newly created U.S. Air Force and its sister services took several years to complete the integration process. The Air Force was still segregated when Barnes arrived for basic training—his first real experience with racial segregation after growing up in an integrated community. While his new white friends began training immediately, he was held in casual status until enough other black recruits arrived to form a flight.⁴

After basic training, Barnes began his career in aircraft maintenance with a stay at Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois. At aircraft and engine school, Barnes chose to specialize in



Following basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, eighteen-year-old Tom Barnes studied aircraft maintenance, with a specialization in hydraulics.

hydraulics because of an inspirational vision presented by one of his instructors, who told the young trainee that a hydraulic system could lift the world, if you could find a place for it to stand. The study of hydraulics proved fascinating to Barnes, and he soon developed a passion for the system.

After technical school, Barnes headed to his first assignment. In those days, travel between assignments was a far more complicated and time-consuming process than it is today. Instead of heading directly to his new unit, Barnes headed to Camp Stoneman, California, a replacement depot. Also known as a “repo depot,” this was a facility where enlisted personnel had to report to await the processing of their orders. While waiting at Camp Stoneman, Barnes worked in supply, helping to issue clothing and other

items to personnel headed overseas.

By late 1949, the Air Force had desegregated most but not all of its units. After finally leaving Camp Stoneman, Private First Class Barnes went to his first duty assignment with the 4th Troop Carrier Squadron at McChord Air Force Base, Washington. There, unlike in basic training, he found himself at the leading edge of Air Force integration efforts. This was a squadron that had not been integrated, and Barnes was one of the first blacks to join it. As he later noted, “It was an experience for them, and an experience for me, needless to say.”⁵

Being one of the first blacks in a newly integrated unit certainly presented challenges. However, the unit also offered Barnes an opportunity for more specialization in C-54 maintenance as he continued his studies in hydraulics at Great Falls, Montana. He returned to McChord, and, shortly thereafter, his unit shipped out to Ashiya, Japan, to fly missions supporting the war in Korea. The troops worked twelve-hour shifts on a thirty-day temporary duty assignment that lasted a year.

While working on the C-54 transports, Barnes developed an interest in flying and a desire to become a flight engineer. Because he could not return to the United States for flight engineer training, a crew chief pal taught him the art of flight engineering and let him fly resupply and medical evacuation missions in his free time. Barnes worked hard and mastered

the duties of each crew member. But training was not his only hurdle. He had to pass a check flight with an officer grading his performance. There were no black flight engineers in the unit, and the officers in charge were in no hurry to make Barnes the first. Repeatedly, he was denied certification.

That finally changed on a day when crew rest and mission taskings kept the other flight engineers busy. On a C-54 maintenance test flight, the test pilot had no choice but to take Barnes with him. That day, the unwilling pilot and the man who would become the Air Force's top enlisted member reached an understanding in the air. Somewhere between engine featherings, free falls, and stalls, there grew an interdependence that made the flight a success. As Barnes recalled, "We got on the ground. He looked me straight in the eye, and said, 'I had no intention of certifying you, but, after today's workout up there, I see no way to deny that.'"

By the time Barnes finished his tour in Japan, he had been promoted to sergeant. He had accumulated 750 flight hours over enemy territory and had earned the Air Medal. Barnes then went to Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts, to join the 1253d Air Transport Squadron, where he worked as a flight engineer on the C-54. The unit soon gained a new designation, the 30th Air Transport Squadron, and Barnes gained the opportunity to work on the new C-118. He then volunteered for duty with the 1308th Ferry Group at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, delivering airplanes to overhaul depots and returning them to their home units. The tour at Kelly gave Barnes a chance to use his fluency in Spanish and to witness the new and improved basic training at nearby Lackland Air Force Base. He viewed the training as new because it seemed less "Army." The basic training he went through focused greatly on physical conditioning. The basic training he witnessed while at Kelly still had its share of exercise drills, but it also had a greater focus on academics. It was also improved because integration had reached Lackland.⁶

In 1952, Barnes moved to Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, where he continued to work as a flight engineer and crew chief on a number of aircraft, including the B-25, T-11, C-45, and C-47. Shortly after arriving at Andrews, Sergeant Barnes became Staff Sergeant Barnes. Though he had been a noncommissioned officer since promotion to corporal, Barnes achieved staff sergeant rank the same year the Air Force revised its rank structure. Among other changes was the limitation of NCO status to staff sergeant and above, at that time technical sergeant and master sergeant. The change came with some controversy, but Barnes believed it helped to define clearly the special position of the noncommissioned officer.⁷ By the time he left Andrews six years later, he had been promoted to technical sergeant.

Barnes's next stop was Loring Air Force Base, Maine, where he earned promotion to master sergeant and entered the senior NCO ranks and the world of Strategic Air Command. Barnes now experienced a different type of flying mission. Following the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, SAC went on a twenty-four-hour airborne alert. The bombers flew armed with

nuclear weapons. The alert missions had code names like “Hard Head” and “Chrome Dome.” These became a permanent part of Barnes’s lexicon. As he recalled, flights “were twenty hours and thirty minutes in length on the one hand, and twenty-four hours on the other,” Barnes said. “The airplanes took off, went to an orbit point, orbited, and then were re-fueled while orbiting. They used extra crew members to accomplish these missions. The expansiveness of our air capability was really developed during that period.”

Barnes later spent a year at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, where he served as a senior controller for all assigned aircraft, and then followed that assignment with a tour in Southeast Asia. He was the first of those who served as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force to have firsthand experience with the Vietnam War. At Ubon Air Base, Thailand, he worked on F-4 fighters. As a member of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing “Wolfpack,” he worked with Col. Robin Olds and Col. Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr. Barnes recalled a tremendous sense of purpose and esprit de corps alive in all members of that unit.

After duty in Thailand, Senior Master Sergeant Barnes and his family relocated to Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. He worked there first as a T-38 line chief and later became the noncommissioned officer in charge of maintenance control. When the wing sergeant major retired, Barnes, who had been promoted to chief master sergeant in December 1969, got a significant career break. Without even applying for the job, he was selected as the wing commander’s new senior enlisted adviser in 1970, the year that the Air Force first officially authorized SEAs. His first challenge in that new role was to help to settle a growing dispute between the San Felipe school district and the air force base. The district was losing federal impact funds because base personnel sent their children to the schools in the Del Rio district. Barnes had a personal stake in the situation because he had six children in different grades. The solution he helped to reach was to merge the two districts into one. At Laughlin, he also worked to foster better relations between the base community and Mexican authorities, and he negotiated to get airmen released from jail in Mexico.

In 1971, Barnes caught the attention of the commander of Air Training Command, Lt. Gen. George Simler. Taking a close look at the undergraduate pilot training bases in the command, Simler liked what he saw at Laughlin. He sent word to Laughlin’s wing commander that he wanted his senior enlisted adviser to move to headquarters to do for the command what he was doing for Laughlin. Simler wanted Barnes to report immediately to Randolph Air Force Base. Then he wasted no time introducing Barnes to all of the ATC wing commanders in a clear show of support for his new adviser.

This assignment proved to be a pivotal point in Barnes’s career. Simler and Barnes traveled together frequently. For Barnes, the most exciting part was the method of travel. Simler traveled in the airplanes his pilots used for training. He and his aide, an instructor pilot, would fly in one airplane; the chief and an executive officer flew in another. “It was a real



As the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Barnes traveled a quarter-million miles annually, visiting enlisted airmen around the world. He is shown above (left) being welcomed at Yokusuka Air Base, Japan.

thrill to fly across the country in a formation with your boss, in the back seat of a high-performance airplane,” Barnes recalled.

Barnes credited Simler with giving him opportunities to move his career toward greater heights: “He extended me great responsibility. He propelled me into some things I never dreamed I would be involved in.” The men were a great team, and Simler’s sudden death was a terrible blow to Barnes. The general was killed on September 9, 1972, when his T-38 crashed on takeoff from Randolph Air Force Base. Earlier that day, Simler had been notified of his promotion to four-star rank and told that he would be moving to the Military Airlift Command (MAC). He spoke with Barnes about his promotion and his plan for Barnes to join him at MAC headquarters at Scott Air Force Base. “He was supposed to fly in a T-39,” Barnes remembered. “He then decided he was going to go in a T-38....I witnessed his death in that airplane—one of the most tragic days of my life. I saw the whole thing.”

The chief experienced many highs and lows in his days as Air Training Command senior enlisted adviser. He also saw, firsthand, both good and bad examples of how the Air Force could deal with the growing racial strife on its bases and within its ranks. The 1960s and early 1970s were times of great change and challenge in terms of race relations in the United States. In many ways, the military reflected the turmoil in the larger society. At Laughlin Air

Force Base, the leadership went to the young black airmen and asked them what could be done to improve their situations. Also, the surrounding community proved more open to the airmen than were many other communities.⁸

At Laredo Air Force Base, in contrast, Barnes observed that the leadership failed to try to deal with issues and the community proved quite hostile to the black airmen. Late in 1971, racial unrest escalated into a potentially dangerous incident at Laredo. Several angry black airmen locked themselves in the base dining hall. “They’d been in there most of the night,” Barnes recalled, “almost to the early morning hours; hadn’t torn up a thing; had eaten only what was out and hadn’t broken into anything to get food out. In general, they stayed within the confines of the mess hall...[security police] surrounded the place; had a D-8 Caterpillar bulldozer ready to smash the door. There were armed police in flak jackets all around it, waiting for an order. Nobody was going to come out in that environment.” The only answer was to get inside the hall, get some answers from the airmen, and get the word back to the commander. The only man for that job was Tom Barnes.

Barnes flew in from San Antonio to see if he could help to end the standoff. “It’s not the easiest thing in the world,” Barnes said later, “to face a group of angry young men who have run out of hope; who feel they must use desperate means to express their frustrations, disappointments, and dissatisfactions.” But he succeeded and was praised for defusing the situation.

Two years after the Laredo incident, Barnes, already well known and well respected, received the highest recognition. During a basic training inspection, he got a phone call from his boss, Gen. William McBride, telling him he had been chosen as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. Following a hurried trip to Washington, D.C., Barnes was sworn in to his new position, with Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. George Brown on one side and his wife, Marie, on the other.

Thomas Barnes was the first black to serve in the highest enlisted post in any of the services. The Army did not have a black sergeant major of the Army until 1996. The Marine Corps selected its first black sergeant major of the Marine Corps in 2001. Neither the Navy nor the Coast Guard had, as of March 2003, selected a black for their top enlisted job. When asked if he saw himself as a trailblazer, Barnes answered yes and no. Being the first of his race to hold such a position was important. However, Barnes believed that he had been selected primarily for his overall abilities, not his race. Certainly, as the Air Force faced a future of growing diversity within the ranks as a result of the move to the all-volunteer force, his race was not inconsequential. It did help to send some kind of message. Yet, he knew—and his accomplishments in the job substantiate this—that his record, not his race, proved the deciding factor in his selection.⁹

Barnes held the office for four years, including two one-year extensions of his initial two-year commitment. During his four-year tenure, Barnes regularly received applause for

his ability to communicate with anyone. In his view, listening is the best thing a chief can do for the troops. “Listen. Discern levels of a problem, and go to the appropriate authority,” he said. Barnes did not just hear about a problem and then run to the chief of staff. He would visit other bases in the same command and see if they all had the same problems. “If I could isolate a problem at one base, I didn’t bring it back to the Pentagon. I’d take it to the base or wing commander,” he said. “You can’t ever afford to overlook the four-star-level management of a command.... They are the major supporters to the chief of staff. The chief of staff and the four-stars run the Air Force. If you cross one of these guys, you’re a dead duck.” As a result of his leadership style, the word spread throughout the Air Force about how proactive the chief was and how he let the bases and commands solve their own problems with whatever assistance was needed.

As the highest ranking enlisted member of the Air Force, Barnes was the spokesman for all enlisted airmen, and he often testified on Capitol Hill about quality of life issues. His greatest contribution came in the area that inspired his greatest passion and ranked among his largest challenges and most significant accomplishments: working to ensure equality among ranks and races. Barnes tackled many difficult issues during his tenure as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, but none was as personally frustrating as the issue of racial inequality. Society’s problems had permeated the Air Force. The black power movement was in full swing in the United States by the time Barnes took office, and black airmen faced harsh scrutiny for everything from hairstyles to slang terms.

“Groups of blacks would get together off duty,” Barnes said, “and they wouldn’t go to the club, the bowling alley, or the pizza parlor. They’d get on the corner right under a street light, just like [back on] the block. The security police had the bad habit, every time they saw a bunch of blacks, of thinking something bad was happening, and they had to go break it up.”

Most of those police actions led to violence, and Barnes spent a lot of time breaking up disturbances before they became fights. As chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Barnes was there to advise commanders, and, as a black man, he had insight into the frustrations of black airmen. He urged commanders to get racial sensitivity training, and he was able to help black airmen. Barnes was also active in promoting racial equality. He took great pride, for example, in his role in coordinating some of the events that brought about the Air Force Social Actions program in 1969 and in improving the program after he became chief master sergeant of the Air Force. He stated that

There was a need to address those societal problems that had entered the Air Force and, during my tenure, the Social Actions program became a means of addressing the inequities in the system. It was a look at what was beginning to happen. I played a part in getting all that together, and that carries... forward today.

Barnes continued to work to eliminate the systemwide denial of opportunity that placed minorities primarily in nontechnical jobs, such as cook and clerk. He assisted in organizing a team of people from different areas of the Air Force who traveled throughout the service to assess barriers to communication and to recognizing the value of every person as revealed in practice. His accomplishments in these areas are still felt today.

Barnes did not limit his efforts at promoting equality to the area of race. He also ranked among his challenges and achievements his efforts to convince the Air Force to use women in nontraditional roles. He saw no reason to bar women from jobs that through training and testing they had proven capable of handling. This was a significant problem not only in the Air Force but in the other services as well. According to Barnes, the Marine Corps seemed the most opposed to the idea and even worked hard to prove that allowing women in nontraditional roles would not work. Barnes labored to break down barriers for women in the military.¹⁰

Finally, Barnes ranked his efforts to promote enlisted professional military education as among his most important contributions. Barnes had witnessed the lack of deep commitment to enlisted professional military education: the Air Force all but halted it in a cost cutting exercise during the Vietnam War. As a result, Barnes charged, the Air Force had non-commissioned officers who were good technicians but who did not know how to lead and how to manage people. In the early 1970s, he believed, the Air Force was still “playing catch-up.” He did not believe that anyone should advance in rank without professional military education. Barnes worked to establish more firmly the service’s commitment to enlisted PME and labored on this issue in cooperation with his counterparts in the other services who were also concerned with strengthening enlisted PME.¹¹

During his tenure, Barnes traveled an average of 264,000 miles annually, visiting bases and interceding for airmen worldwide. After his military retirement, Barnes kept his hand in Air Force business with speaking engagements at military functions. The Fort Worth, Texas, community took advantage of his experience by making him a member of the Carswell Air Force Base Reuse Committee. He helped to conduct a study of the environmental impact of the base on the Fort Worth community and aided the committee with other issues until the base closed. He became a news databank of current Air Force issues and kept up with everything from personnel concerns to the newest weapon systems.

Barnes retired after twelve years as vice president and director of employee relations for the Associates Corporation of North America and lived in Bonham, Texas, on a sprawling ranch that he shared with his grandchildren, forty cows, a donkey, and three horses. And he continued to seek new levels of achievement. Until slowed by an injury, Barnes competed in the rodeo sport of team penning. In this event, a team of riders works to cull a designated animal out of a small herd and drive it to an enclosure. The best teams can complete this task in

seconds. Barnes's home is full of the trophies won by his team at several levels of competition.¹² Barnes died on March 17, 2003.

At the beginning of his tenure, the question most frequently asked of Barnes was, "What programs will you implement for blacks?" "The answer was none," Barnes recalls. "I told them I work for all blue suiters."

Barnes pointed to his managerial skills, developed through professional military education; his communication skills; and his ability to do many tasks at once as the qualities that helped him to forge a successful career. He will also be remembered for paving the way for anyone who thinks he or she cannot make it to the top. Recalling his life's work, he said the following:

I'd like to be remembered as a role model for people who believe they can't get there. I don't mean to brag, but I hope it inspires somebody...I was qualified and just happened to be black. I was not naive. I knew there were people who felt my selection was tokenism or [was intended] to lend visibility to the Air Force Equal Opportunity Program...It was an honor to have been chosen on the basis of my qualifications, as opposed to my race or my gender.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by TSgt. Trish Freeland.

2. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

3. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 19; Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 28.

4. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 19.

5. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, p. 64.

6. CMSAF Barnes chose to respond to his questionnaire (hereinafter Barnes Questionnaire) by means of a telephone interview, notes from which are available in the files of the Office of Air Force History at Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

7. Barnes Questionnaire.

8. Bednarek, *The Enlisted Experience*, pp. 104–105.

9. Barnes Questionnaire.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

Robert D. Gaylor

August 1, 1977–July 31, 1979



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August 1, 1977–July 31, 1979



Robert D. Gaylor became the fifth chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1977. Jimmy Carter was President of the United States, John C. Stetson was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. David C. Jones was the Air Force chief of staff. The Air Force was nearing the end of the post-Vietnam drawdown. The number of USAF enlisted personnel had dropped from a high in 1968 of more than 761,000 to a total slightly less than 470,000.¹

Robert Gaylor was born in 1930 in Mulberry, Indiana. His teen years were strongly influenced by the events of World War II and by people returning to Mulberry from military service. The second of eight children, he wanted to get out on his own, travel, and learn a skill following graduation from high school. In September 1948, he enlisted in the Air Force.

About the same time Gaylor arrived at basic training, President Harry S Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which called for equality of opportunity in the U.S. military. Change did not come overnight, however, and Gaylor arrived at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, at a basic training facility that was still very much segregated. For Gaylor, who had grown up in Indiana and had never met an African American, the situation was quite shocking. Although he had no experience with integration, he also had no experience with segregation. He thought that African Americans had clearly demonstrated their ability to serve in the military during World War II. He did not understand the continued segregation that resulted in them being billeted separately, eating separately, and even being punished separately, as the military prisoners on the base were also segregated by race. He also came to realize that African Americans were allowed to enter only certain career fields and that they were barred entirely from entering technical fields. He saw the African American recruits only when they were out marching. He never had an opportunity to talk with any of them. He found that quite disappointing and the whole situation a terrible social injustice.²

In December 1948, as a veteran of fourteen weeks of military experience, Gaylor was handed three career choices upon arrival at Waco Air Base, Texas—cook, fireman, or military policeman (MP). Options offered at that time were based on local needs, rather than on personal aptitude.

“I was initially disappointed,” Gaylor recalled. “I expected a career field requiring technical expertise and with a bright future. But I learned a most valuable lesson that day that I never forgot in my thirty-one-year career: the needs of the Air Force always come first, and the sooner an Air Force member accepts that, the easier [his or her] career will be. The Air Force is now doing a much better job of blending Air Force needs with the individual’s aptitude and personal desires in arriving at career selections.” But that day, given his options, Gaylor became a military policeman.

The years 1948 and 1949 were transition years for the U.S. Air Force, which had just been designated an independent service. Gaylor has vivid memories of the ongoing adjustments being made. It took two to three years for the blue uniform to replace the olive drab; for the one-piece fatigues to be phased out; for black shoes to replace brown; for the new chevrons to replace the Army stripes; and for the new airman ranks to supplant private first class, corporal, and so forth. “It was in the early part of 1950 when we discarded the MP armband and proudly wore the blue and orange air police brassard,” Gaylor said. “I attended the military police school at Camp Gordon, Georgia, in 1949 because there was no air police [AP] school as yet. It was late 1949 that my 677 MOS [military occupational specialty] was replaced by my 96130 AFSC [Air Force specialty code], the air police designation.”

Gaylor had witnessed some of the last of the segregated military during his basic training. In 1949, he also witnessed the beginning of the integrated military, in which he would serve the majority of his career. During that summer, word came to his base that the Air Force would soon integrate. Gaylor recalled receiving the news with some measure of confusion. He did not understand why it had not happened earlier. He recalled that a rumor began to spread. It suggested that if you could not accept integration, all you had to do was let your commander know, and you would be discharged. Gaylor and his fellow airmen soon heard the truth. The commander addressed them, essentially telling them that they would accept integration or suffer the consequences of undue interference.

Soon, as Gaylor recalled, trucks began to back up to the barracks door. He and his barracks mates had to rearrange the facility to make room for the African American airmen. He remembered that about eight to ten African American military policemen moved into his barracks. He did not remember the change causing much trouble. There were arguments, he noted, but they were no different than the kind of barracks disagreements that existed before integration. Integration did bring change, though, especially in music, as Gaylor recalled. They went from listening to Glenn Miller to listening to Duke Ellington, for example. And Gaylor developed a number of friendships.

The fact of integration, however, did not end the injustices. Gaylor noted that achieving full equal opportunity for all airmen regardless of race took a long time, nearly a generation. He believed that one of the keys was education, and in that, he holds, the Air Force has come



AP Gaylor (far left) spent four years at Laredo Air Force Base, Texas, in the early 1950s.

a long way. And, he noted, the experiences and lessons learned from integration helped the service during the 1970s when it had to begin to accept and utilize far more women.³

When his three-year enlistment ended in September 1951, Gaylor again had only two choices. The Korean conflict had begun in June 1950 and leaving the service was curtailed. He could reenlist or accept a “Truman Year,” an automatic one-year extension. He had been promoted to staff sergeant and was earning a decent wage, so he reenlisted for another three years. “I used my \$150 bonus to buy my first car, a 1939 Chevrolet. I was happy,” he remembered.

Gaylor’s promotions always came as soon as he was eligible. He made corporal with eight months of service and buck sergeant (E-4) three months later. “I [knew] the secret of getting promoted,” he said. “Keep a positive attitude, stay out of trouble, do your job to the best of your ability, learn all you can, help others, and have fun!”

Gaylor recounted the advantages and difficulties of his early years in the service:

We had our share of problems and irritations, as we do now. There were few technical schools, no off-duty education, or PME programs. We lived in open-bay barracks, ate in mess halls, reported for pay, received our uniforms from squadron supply, shined our collar

brass, and had GI parties. Some airmen received an Article 104, the forerunner to today's Article 15. But my Air Force was growing, and with the autonomy came pride.

In many ways, the good old days *were* the good old days. Parking spaces were always available—only a few airmen had cars. The base movie cost a quarter. Payday was the big day of the month. There was no complaint on separate rations as no single airman was [permitted] to draw that allowance. For married airmen, the spouse received part of his pay plus the quarters allowance in a monthly allotment check, which only she could cash. We ate on six-compartment metal trays in the mess hall and then got to wash them on KP [kitchen patrol]. Gosh, I'd do it all over again!

And always the changes, mostly for the better. Dormitories replaced barracks, rooms replaced open bays. Dining halls and plates bumped mess halls and trays. Paychecks direct to the bank put pay lines in history. Pay increases enabled airmen to buy cars, stereos, homes, fine clothes. One could almost...afford to get married. And certain enlisted grades had to have the squadron commander's permission to do that.

We had some great leaders, back then, who practiced integrity and conviction. Some of today's leaders could use the stiff spine displayed by effective leaders I've worked for.

As the Korean War continued into 1952, the Air Force opened or reopened additional bases, primarily for flight training. Gaylor and six other air policemen from his unit were transferred to Laredo Air Force Base, Texas. He stayed at Laredo four and one-half years and matured as a professional policeman. He was promoted to technical sergeant in 1953 and to master sergeant in 1956, earning that grade with only seven years, seven months of service.

In April 1952, he met Selma, and they married in 1953. "She added class to my life, a sophistication of sorts," he said. And they welcomed children to the family in 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1959. "I think Selma was relieved when I got orders for Korea in September 1956," Gaylor added.

Gaylor wanted an assignment at Lackland Air Force Base when he left Korea, and the personnel clerk he spoke with told him he could guarantee that by putting a "T" on Gaylor's forecast sheet. But the clerk did not tell him what the T meant. Without knowing it, Gaylor had volunteered to be a basic training instructor (TI). He decided to make the best of it and found it to be extremely worthwhile. "My entire future was enhanced by that experience," he said. "If it was up to me, every NCO would have a tour as a TI."

In Gaylor's view, a number of assignments—including training instructor, recruiter, NCO Academy or Leadership School faculty member or first sergeant—will prepare non-commissioned officers for higher levels of leadership. All of these assignments allow non-commissioned officers to experience the Air Force outside of their primary career field and broaden their background. Serving as a training instructor gave Gaylor a new perspective on



In 1951, Gaylor was outfitted in full working equipment as a member of the air police.

the young airmen and a greater appreciation of what is done to turn young men and women into airmen at Lackland Air Force Base.⁴

After two years as a training instructor in a male basic training squadron, Gaylor became the senior training NCO in the Women in the Air Force basic training squadron. “How many male airmen worked for a woman in 1960?” Gaylor asked. “What a special experience.” His two-year assignment convinced him that women could perform in any job, and he remains convinced that, where the talent exists, opportunities should be afforded.

In 1962, Gaylor returned to an air police assignment at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan. He was promoted to senior master sergeant in 1963 and served as the provost sergeant. In 1964, Gaylor and his family moved to Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi for his tour with Strategic Air Command. While with SAC, he attended the NCO Academy at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana,

where he was selected as the honor graduate and was offered a faculty position. Impressed with the caliber of the faculty, Gaylor readily accepted the offer. Though he ended up not staying as long as he had hoped, he believes that his time at the NCO Academy in the mid-1960s relaunched his career. To some extent, he believed that he had peaked. The experience, first as a student and then as a faculty member, was like a “rocket lit under me.” He wanted to do more, learn more, and grow in his career. He believes that all noncommissioned officers should have the opportunity to attend an NCO Academy, and he does not understand those who do not want to go.⁵

The conflict in Vietnam, however, shortened his teaching career, and he received orders to return to the police field at Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. Air police were becoming security police. While at Korat in 1967, Gaylor was promoted to chief master sergeant. “April first is my lucky date,” he recalled. “I made technical sergeant, master sergeant, senior master sergeant, and chief master sergeant all [on] April first. There were no line numbers in those days; we all sewed it on the same day.” The chief left Thailand with orders for Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, but those orders were quickly changed. He, Selma, and their four children would remain at Barksdale Air Force Base, and he would help to reopen the Strategic Air Command NCO Academy. “My timing was perfect,” Gaylor said. “It was January 1968, and we started our first class in July 1968. We had six months to

When CMSAF Robert Gaylor retired, he and his wife, Selma, greeted well-wishers at the retirement ceremony. Air Force Chief of Staff Lew Allen, Jr., presented the Legion of Merit to Gaylor.



hire a faculty, prepare the building and dormitory, and develop lesson plans. It was exciting to be on the leading edge. Teaching PME [professional military education] has got to be the most rewarding, challenging task any NCO can have. I loved it!”

Gaylor developed a servicewide reputation as a teacher and advocate of NCO leadership. In February 1970, Second Air Force commander Lt. Gen. David C. Jones chose Gaylor as his first sergeant major. “He challenged me to spread leadership throughout the command,” Gaylor said. “It was slow at first, getting a foot in the door, but within months I was getting [invitations] to visit our command bases. There was a dire need for leadership training.”

Gaylor reflected on the turbulence of the early 1970s:

Hair was a major factor, drugs were prominent, the racial scene was stirring, the “dap” [a handshake greeting practiced primarily by black airmen] was gaining popularity, airmen were speaking out—at times demanding. The crisis in Southeast Asia was becoming increasingly unpopular, and a segment of our military society was restless. I [had] no problem with that, but I still believe we must work our problems through existing channels or build new channels.

And that’s where General Jones excelled. By 1971, he had received his fourth star and moved to USAFE, and I was fortunate to go with him. We didn’t just talk about the

problems; we acted on them. The general led the way, and many of us contributed. Leadership training, race relations training, drug and alcohol abuse clinics, improved facilities and recreation outlets were new command ventures. I remember a visiting congressman who said to us, . . . “I’m going back to Washington and spread the word that if you want to see things done right, visit USAFE!” That’s a great feeling—to be on a winning team. And all you need are realistic standards, avenues of communication, effective training, and concern. What an exciting three years!

When Jones was selected as the Air Force chief of staff in 1974, he moved Gaylor to the Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center, with a charter to travel throughout the Air Force and spread the word about effective leadership. With CMSAF Thomas Barnes working on many issues at the Pentagon, good things were beginning to happen for that branch of the service. “It was a slow process,” Gaylor said, “but there were lights at the end of the tunnel. The unpopularity of the Vietnam war had resulted in an image reduction in the military, and we all needed to work together to restore the hard-earned positive respect. For three years, I stayed on the road. I [gave] 275 leadership talks in 1976, as an example. I had blanket orders that authorized travel to any Air Force location. Can you imagine a more exciting opportunity?”

By Gaylor’s assessment, the years from 1970 to 1977 were times of innovation in leadership. He cited the following examples:

In 1969, General Jones, then commanding Second Air Force, became aware of an ex-convict, ex-drug addict named Cal Espinosa, who was gaining local fame at Castle Air Force Base, California, by talking to and counseling . . . the base airmen on the evils and hazards of drug use. [Jones] flew to Castle, met Cal, and was so impressed with his style and message that he hired him to spread the word on drug/alcohol abuse throughout his command. That is a courageous leader[ship] decision, [and] it worked. Cal also accompanied Jones to USAFE and later teamed with me at the military personnel center for three years of travel. We were the dynamic duo—Cal’s forceful message on the drug scene and my sessions on leadership.

The second example is my prime purpose for transferring to USAFE in the summer of 1971. The command did not have any formal PME for enlisted members at the time, and General Jones recognized the immediate need for that type of training, especially NCO leadership. Of course, 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.

There were four of us on the faculty and one support sergeant, and we smothered the command with training. At times, we became mobile by presenting our course at our bases in Spain, England, Greece, Turkey, [and] Italy. Our adrenaline was on constant flow because 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.

The highlight of Gaylor's came on August 1, 1977, when he was selected as the fifth chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

Those two years as chief master sergeant of the Air Force flew by. So much to do, so little time. Every time I wore the uniform with the unique chief master sergeant of the Air Force chevron, I knew how Clark Kent must have felt...[when] he ducked into a phone booth and emerged as Superman. My immediate staff and the entire Air Force staff helped me do my job. I always felt we were a team. When General Jones became chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Lew Allen became my new boss, and he was a superb leader, with the concerns of the enlisted men and women foremost on his agenda. I traveled, I spoke, I visited, I sat on boards, I toured work centers. I tried to feel the pulse of our great force and serve as a conduit of information.

Gaylor identified four major issues as the greatest challenges he faced as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. First, the image of the Air Force was quite poor. The Vietnam War had sullied the image of the military in general. He saw a need to help restore pride and confidence within the Air Force. He traveled extensively, talking to airmen about standing tall and taking pride in their military careers. Second, the racial turbulence that had rocked the Air Force in the late 1960s and early 1970s had not fully abated. Racial tension was still quite evident. Gaylor believed that much of it was due to the fact that the service had talked about equal opportunity but had not yet really delivered on it—it was not practicing what it was preaching. In the late 1970s, the Air Force received another “wake-up call.” Gaylor then worked to address issues, including even such mundane things as having African American cosmetics and music sold in base exchanges. A third major challenge involved the role of women. Gaylor recalled a great resistance to allowing women to enter certain career fields. Once again, he worked to try to educate the force in order to eliminate the stereotypes and prejudices that were working against equal opportunities for enlisted women. Fourth, drugs and alcohol remained problematic. As he had done earlier in his career, Gaylor addressed this issue head-on. He believed that much of the problem was due to the low morale of the late 1970s. He worked to talk to airmen and educate them to the hazards of drug and alcohol use.⁶

When asked about his major accomplishments, Gaylor was quick to point out that nothing is accomplished without help. The Air Force leadership and Gaylor's staff all contributed greatly to any victories during his time in office. When asked directly, though, Gaylor noted that the Air Force introduced a uniform change during his tenure that signaled an important shift in attitude. Until the late 1970s, when enlisted women reached a certain point in their pregnancy, they had to wear civilian clothes. Gaylor worked to introduce and get approved a new maternity uniform. He also helped push through a policy change that allowed E-4s undergoing a permanent change of station to transport their families at government expense. This change recognized that many more enlisted force members were married and had children and that they were marrying at a much earlier stage in their careers. He also considered it something of an achievement that he was permitted to have his wife, Selma, accompany him on much of his official business. She was very supportive of him, and she was also very active in measuring the pulse of the Air Force. She worked on these trips, meeting with enlisted wives and discovering what some of the family issues were. Finally, Gaylor believed that he left a legacy of promoting leadership.⁷

When his two years in office ended on July 31, 1979, Gaylor said, "I leave with my head held high because I can honestly say to you that the Air Force received the best effort I could give." And to his friend and successor, James McCoy, he said, "You had better continue to improve and try new things and make the Air Force better. My buddies and I made the Air Force what it is today. We made it a better place to live, work, play, and to do your thing. And I warn you...you had better not mess up my Air Force!"

Immediately after retirement, the Gaylors relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where Gaylor was hired as a management development specialist at a large insurance company—in many ways, continuing his efforts from the Air Force: teaching, counseling, motivating, and listening.

Robert Gaylor, a master of common sense with a positive attitude and a strong concern for others, continues to meet with Air Force members in more than forty USAF base visits each year. He believes that one of the most important roles that a former chief master sergeant of the Air Force can play is that of providing a link between the Air Force of the past and the one of today. He sees himself as having an important institutional memory. A gifted storyteller and a walking encyclopedia of USAF enlisted history, he loves talking to young airmen today, telling them of what life was like in the Air Force during its formative years.⁸

The chief does not force advice on airmen today, but he is glad to tell them about taking advantage of opportunities and about how he made it to the enlisted pinnacle:

Opportunity doesn't always come with flashing neon lights. Frequently, there is risk or sacrifice involved in grabbing what might appear to be your opportunity, but you've got to do it. And it rarely pays off immediately, but someday you'll look back and realize you

made the right move at the right time. Too many airmen want success without risk; success without investment of effort. It rarely happens that way.

I was never a complainer; I took whatever happened and made a plus out of it. I was never bored. I learned the enemy of boredom is activity, mental or physical. I never felt I was better than anyone else, but just as good. And most of all, I never took myself too seriously. Those habits worked for me.

[Finally,] when the personnel colonel at Waco Air Base tells you you're going to be an MP, you thank him and then go be the best MP you can possibly be. To make a plus out of a potential minus—the choice is yours.

NOTES

1. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on materials researched and compiled by the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

2. CMSAF Gaylor chose to respond to his questionnaire (hereinafter Gaylor Questionnaire) by producing a tape. A copy of the tape is available in the files of the Office of Air Force History at Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

3. Gaylor Questionnaire.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

James M. McCoy

August 1, 1979–July 31, 1981



James M. McCoy

August 1, 1979–July 31, 1981



James M. McCoy became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1979.¹ Jimmy Carter was President of the United States, Hans Mark was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Lew Allen, Jr., was the Air Force chief of staff. In September 1979, CMSgt. Dorothy Holmes became the first enlisted woman to retire from the Air Force with thirty years' total active federal military service. The number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 458,953 in 1979. That number dropped to 455,909 in 1980 before rising to 466,520 by 1981 as the country completed the drawdown following the Vietnam War and began a buildup of forces that would continue until 1987.²

James McCoy was born July 30, 1930, in Creston, Iowa. In 1948, he graduated from high school in Atchison, Kansas, and then attended St. Benedict's College in Atchison and St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa. Shortly before enlisting, he decided against a vocation in the priesthood. A lengthy period of soul-searching and the guidance of a priest helped him to decide against the ministry. Instead, he joined the Air Force in January 1951, at the height of the Korean War.

In February, he entered the radar operator's course at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. His schooling was followed by an assignment to the 662d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron at Apco, Ohio. In March 1952, McCoy moved to Detachment 6, 4071st Ground Observer Squadron, again as a radar operator—a “scope dope.” When the Air Force changed its ranks in April 1952, Corporal McCoy became Airman Second Class McCoy.

By 1956, McCoy was a technical sergeant. But the Korean War was over, and there were too many radar operators. The Air Force needed military training instructors, and McCoy re-trained into that career field. It was not an assignment he wanted, but he and his family moved to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

As a training instructor, McCoy considered himself firm but very fair. During his tour, which lasted from July 1956 to October 1957, the Air Force had a number of trainee abuse cases. “We were not exempt from them in our squadron,” McCoy recalled. He supervised fifteen to eighteen TIIs, and counseling them for wrongdoing was difficult for him. “I could have looked the other way—said no, it's not happening in my area,” he said. “But it did happen. I felt it was an integrity issue...a responsibility I had. I had to report it, so I did.” In ret-



In 1951, McCoy was assigned to the 662d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron at Apco, Ohio.

respect, he found that assignment very rewarding because it was his first opportunity to supervise people.

As he recalled, his tour as a training instructor presented a number of challenges. He had been in the Air Force only six years and now was in charge of five groups of training instructors. Many of these were senior to him in years of service and had more time in as TIs. He knew that to earn their respect he would first have to prove himself. To do that, he learned all he could about the role of a training instructor. He went through the same training, he worked with basic recruits, and he pulled every kind of shift. In the end, he believed that his fellow TIs appreciated his efforts and understood that he was not there to just sit in an office and tell them how to do their jobs. Further, he believed that this tour had long-term benefits. Having a tour of duty outside one's career field, he asserted, helps to prepare

an individual for service as a senior noncommissioned officer.³

During his first six years in the Air Force, McCoy pursued a commission but did not succeed. "I decided then that if I couldn't be an officer,...I was going to be the best noncommissioned officer the Air Force has ever had," he said. That positive and committed attitude propelled him through a series of assignments that would take him to the top.

In October 1957, McCoy went to Clark Air Base in the Philippines as the base training noncommissioned officer for the 405th Fighter Wing. That duty was followed by assignment in August 1959 to the University of Notre Dame as assistant commandant of cadets for Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps Detachment 225. In July 1960, Technical Sergeant McCoy was chosen as the commandant of the Strategic Air Command NCO Preparatory School at Bunker Hill Air Force Base, Indiana. He was promoted to master sergeant on December 1, 1961. From July 1962 to April 1966, he was an instructor and sergeant major for the Second Air Force NCO Academy at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. In the middle of his tenure there, McCoy was promoted to senior master sergeant.

While on the faculty at the Second Air Force NCO Academy, McCoy realized that that professional military education was becoming a prerequisite for promotion to the highest enlisted ranks. Many of the students coming to the academy were master sergeants seeking or just selected for promotion to the new super grades. As McCoy viewed it, there was a sense that these master sergeants had to come to the academy because it was becoming important. "If you were going to be a senior noncommissioned officer, you had to be an NCO Academy graduate."⁴

While on the faculty, McCoy also had an opportunity to work on the curriculum for the NCO preparatory schools. He and his colleagues spent almost a year thinking and talking about what changes should be made. They were just about to put a new program into place when Vietnam wreaked havoc with enlisted professional military education.⁵

In April 1966, the Second Air Force NCO Academy and the NCO academies at Westover and March Air Force Bases in Strategic Air Command were closed due to the Vietnam conflict. Upon this closure, McCoy returned to the training career field and became the chief of the training branch for headquarters, Second Air Force. In July 1967, he went to Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, as noncommissioned officer in charge of professional military education for SAC. During this assignment, he was responsible for the reestablishment of the Strategic Air Command NCO Academy at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, and was promoted to chief master sergeant in August 1968.⁶

McCoy described the period between January 1968 and the middle of 1969 as "full of exciting adventures." He opened the new academy, he helped to establish new leadership schools at Plattsburgh and March Air Force Bases, and he had the opportunity to brief the top leadership. As he remembered, "it really gave me the experience that would propel me on to bigger and better things later in my career."⁷

However, McCoy almost left the Air Force in July 1970, when he was assigned as the noncommissioned officer in charge of opera-



Kathy and Jim McCoy were married in Davenport, Iowa, in April 1952.

tions training with the 41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. “I had gone from a wing, to a numbered air force, to a major command. I was going back to a wing,” he said. He would be eligible for retirement within a year, and he thought about exercising his seven-day option. Instead, he made the major decision to stay in. “I’ve said this many, many times,” he recalled. “You look at every opportunity that comes along, and you don’t turn it down based just on what it looks like. I looked at it as another opportunity to further my professionalism.” While he was with the unit, he was given an additional duty as senior enlisted adviser—or senior airman adviser, as it was then known—in his unit’s parent command, Military Airlift Command.

McCoy returned to the personnel training field in April 1973, when he became chief of the military training branch for Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) headquarters at Hickam Air Force Base. In 1974, he was selected as one of the USAF’s twelve Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

He became SAC’s first senior enlisted adviser in March 1975, an assignment that prepared him for his eventual stint as the Air Force’s top enlisted member. It was a tough job during the Air Force’s “hollow force” days when retention plummeted and experienced personnel were hard to find. Strategic Air Command experienced its share of difficulties, specifically problems involving race relations. “It was a challenge,” he said, “making sure that our people were taken care of and that they were properly housed and properly fed. As I [made] my visits around the different bases, I could see that sometimes that wasn’t happening.” But he held to something he had learned years before: give back what you receive, treat people the way you want to be treated, and never forget where you came from. And with the help of SAC’s other senior enlisted advisers, he met the challenges.

While at Offutt, McCoy gained additional experience that helped to prepare him for the top job. CMSAF Robert Gaylor asked McCoy to chair two worldwide senior enlisted advisers’ conferences sponsored by the Air Force Association. Previously, in 1975, Chief of Staff Gen. David C. Jones established the Air Force Management Improvement Group (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. McCoy worked on enlisted professional military education issues. In 1975, Air Force enlisted professional military education had three phases: NCO preparatory schools, NCO academies, and the Senior NCO Academy. The problem was that most of the students at the NCO preparatory schools were already staff sergeants. McCoy and others believed that it was important that future noncommissioned officers begin their professional military education earlier in their careers. As a result, the Air Force reorganized enlisted PME to into five phases, including an NCO orientation course for senior airmen. Although the service once again reorganized enlisted PME in the 1990s, returning to a



CMSgt. James McCoy (left) and Gen. Russell P. Daugherty prepare to board a SAC aircraft in May 1975. McCoy had taken on the challenge of service as SAC's first senior enlisted adviser in March of that year.

three-phase structure, McCoy believes that the reorganization in the late 1970s represented an important change in Air Force thinking about enlisted PME. First, the current airmen leadership schools still offer instruction to young enlisted before they enter the NCO ranks. Second, he believed that the Air Force came to understand that enlisted education was just as important as that provided for officers.⁸

McCoy's interest in the Air Force's top enlisted job began to evolve as early as 1968 when he met and was favorably impressed by the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Paul Airey. Additionally, McCoy later recalled that

One of my mentors, the late CMSgt. John Bryant of Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, was vying to become the SAC nominee...for the second chief master sergeant of the Air Force position, which eventually went to...Don Harlow. As I escorted John and saw the things he was going through to become SAC's nominee for the position, I became more and more interested...

Two years later, in 1970, McCoy became eligible to compete for PACAF's nomination for the top spot. Gen. Lucius D. Clay, Jr., wanted a nominee with more than twenty-two years of service and so did not select him. McCoy believed, however, that he had qualifications—especially his positive attitude and his practice of approaching mundane taskings, volunteering, and work requirements as challenges worthy of his best efforts—that eventually could be useful as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

When CMSAF Robert Gaylor announced his retirement, McCoy was nominated as his successor. But a call from a friend at the Pentagon squelched his hopes. He considered the friend a solid source, and the message was that someone else had been chosen. "I thought I was never going to get it," McCoy said.

Shortly after the first call, Gen. Richard Ellis, commander in chief of Strategic Air Command, called McCoy up to his office. "I knew the selection had already been made..., so I thought this was my consolation call," McCoy said. He walked up the stairs to the command section—a trip he described as the longest twenty-one steps of his life—and entered Ellis's office. When the usually taciturn general gave him a big grin, McCoy knew that the earlier message had been wrong. He obviously had been selected. McCoy soon had a call from Gaylor:

He told me, "I'm not sure why you want to come up here. The Air Force is probably in the worst shape that it has ever been in. We've had our worst recruiting year ever, retention is down, morale isn't great, we've got an administration that doesn't really care for the military, and they're now going to charge you \$10 per month to park in the Pentagon parking lot. Welcome to Washington, D.C."

In August 1979, when McCoy took office as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, retention rates for first-term airmen were down to nearly 25 percent, career reenlistments hovered at the 80 percent mark, and Air Force personnel were generally treated with disdain by a U.S. public still skeptical of and questioning the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War. Gen. Lew Allen, the Air Force chief of staff, met with McCoy and told him plainly that he did not know a lot about enlisted matters and was looking to McCoy for serious help.

The two men traveled to Air Force bases together, answering questions there in what McCoy has described as a "Chet Huntley–David Brinkley" manner: if General Allen got a question that he could not answer confidently, he would look at McCoy, and McCoy would pick it up immediately. Allen said he and McCoy made "an excellent team." McCoy recalled that he and General Allen "had an excellent relationship." Before he became chief master sergeant of the Air Force, McCoy did not know Allen, but he noted that they "were able to develop a close working environment that paid off, not for us but for the Air Force."⁹

In late 1979, McCoy set to work to improve the Air Force enlisted retention rate. His principal allies were General Allen and retired CMSAF Richard Kisling, who was then working as a civilian in the Pentagon. Armed with statistics from McCoy, Allen testified before a

congressional subcommittee that people were not staying in the Air Force because they could not make ends meet on enlisted military pay.

At the time, Kisling was working at the Pentagon in human development and personnel. McCoy explained how he and Kisling labored to plug the Air Force's experience drain:

Dick and I worked close[ly] together to increase the retention rate. That meant bringing more discipline back to our force. That meant working with recruiters to get the right people in the Air Force. That meant working with the folks in the basic military training program. That meant improving the NCO professional military education program. That meant getting a Stripes to Exceptional Performers Program started to give folks some incentive on the job and an alternate way of getting promoted instead of just through WAPS [Weighted Airman Promotion System].

I never knew Dick when he was chief master sergeant of the Air Force, but during my four years as SAC senior enlisted adviser, we became very close. He gave me a lot of insight into the position.

I've always said the military is nothing more than a mirror of American society. And American society in the late 1970s was sick of Vietnam, sick of the money that went into the defense establishment. We had come out of that war with a very bad taste in everybody's mouth. It would've been very easy for me to be negative, but General Allen would not hear of it.

The programs that the two men started helped to improve Air Force enlisted personnel retention. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 added to the positive military push already being made by McCoy and General Allen. Unlike his predecessor, President Reagan had a strong promilitary orientation.

Working with two administrations meant working with two different secretaries of the Air Force—Hans Mark during the Carter administration and Verne Orr under Reagan. McCoy said his relationship with each of them was always professional but different.

There were some things the Mark secretariat wanted to do that I simply didn't agree with. For example, they wanted to discontinue the initial shaved haircuts given trainees in basic training. I worked hard to save that...I thought it was key to bringing greater discipline back into our force and to ensur[ing] everyone in basic military training got started on the same foot.

I just don't think the people in the Carter administration, with all due respect, had a lot of feeling for the military.

McCoy recalled Orr as a likable man who loved to travel to Air Force bases. Because they did not travel together, Orr made it a point to get in touch frequently and tell McCoy of his experiences with the enlisted troops.

McCoy has noted how successive chief master sergeants of the Air Force work together to see projects through. When McCoy had the honor of laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, he was the first enlisted USAF member to do so. He also presented to Arlington National Cemetery a plaque representing the Air Force's enlisted men and women, for placement in the cemetery's Hall of Plaques. That plaque had been Robert Gaylor's idea, but it took nearly eight months for its approval, so McCoy made the presentation.

When McCoy became chief master sergeant of the Air Force, he could draw on the experiences of his predecessors. He also believed that, over the years, Richard Kisling, Tom Barnes, and Robert Gaylor had helped to groom him for the position. Still, McCoy brought his own priorities and ideas on how to do the job. For example, while he saw that it was important for the chief master sergeant of the Air Force to travel, to get out into the field, he also wanted to get involved with staff work at the Pentagon. By the time he took office, and thanks to the efforts of his predecessors, the chief master sergeant of the Air Force automatically had permanent voting membership on eleven different boards, including the Air Force Welfare Board, the Air Force Commissary Board, the Air Force Uniform Board, and the Air Force Aid Society. McCoy also identified additional boards and conferences in which he believed he should have a role as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. For example, he made sure he was involved with annual professional military education conferences, and he pushed for involvement with the Air Force Enlisted Widows' Foundation. Yet, while participating in all these boards and conferences, he also, again, recognized the need to travel and be visible.¹⁰

I could have spent the entire 2 years sitting in the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and worked the issues right out of my office, but I couldn't have worked them because they would have been Jim McCoy's opinion versus the opinion of the enlisted men and women of the United States Air Force. So I really had to set my priorities down and, like I said earlier, it really wasn't any more than what I was already doing [as a senior enlisted adviser] except on a much more expanded scale. It started fast and furious, and it ended fast and furious. It was the fastest 2 years of my life. I still sometimes think, especially since coming back here to the Omaha area, that it really didn't happen. But it did happen because of some of the things I recall; hopefully, I had an influence on the Air Force.¹¹

McCoy believed that serving as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force was definitely the highlight of his career; and the highlight of his tenure, he declared, came with his retirement ceremony:

I guess the high point of being the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is 24 July 1981 when I became the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force to be officially retired with full honors at Bolling Air Force Base under the view of the Washington monuments and the Capitol Building and with the Air Force Honor Guard and the United States Air Force Band and with the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force officially retiring me.¹²

In the years since his retirement in 1981, McCoy has remained at the forefront of Air Force issues, through his work as national president and then chairman of the board for the Air Force Association and later as the first retired enlisted member to chair the Air Force Retiree Council. He believes that the country's leaders do a better job now in communicating the issues to Air Force personnel and in making better choices of where to cut and where to draw the line.

Reflecting on his tenure as the Air Force's top enlisted blue suiter, McCoy said, "We all built on each other's accomplishments." And he offered two words of advice to people who ascend to the position he occupied for two years: stay humble. "It's important that you be yourself and that you don't become all wrapped up with the position," he said. "If you become impressed with yourself, then you're not doing what the position is designed to do."

Overall, McCoy said, his fondest memories of his time in Washington could also be used to describe the Air Force uniform—plain, yet distinctive. And in retirement, he said, he still bleeds Air Force blue, because he and his beloved Air Force have been inseparable. With Kathy, his wife of fifty years, and their eight children and twenty grandchildren, the Air Force remains McCoy's true love.

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographic interview is based on material researched and compiled by TSgt. Dave Malakoff and MSgt. Louis A. Arana-Baradas.
2. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.
3. CMSAF McCoy chose to respond to his questionnaire (hereinafter McCoy Questionnaire) by e-mail. A printed copy of the e-mail response is available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
4. Oral History Interview of CMSAF James M. McCoy by Capt. Mark C. Cleary, February 25–26, 1982, typed transcript, p. 53, K239.0512–1303, IRIS No. 1052938, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.
6. McCoy Questionnaire.
7. McCoy Oral History Interview, p. 67.
8. Bednarek, p. 118; McCoy Questionnaire.
9. McCoy Questionnaire.
10. McCoy Oral History Interview, pp. 126–28.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Arthur L. “Bud” Andrews

August 1, 1981–July 31, 1983



Arthur L. Andrews

August 1, 1981–July 31, 1983



Arthur L. “Bud” Andrews became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1981.¹ Ronald Reagan was President of the United States, Verne Orr was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Lew Allen, Jr., was the Air Force chief of staff. In the year before Andrews took the top job, the number of enlisted personnel had begun to grow after more than a decade of decline, and that growth continued under his tenure. The number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 466,520 in 1981 and at 483,022 in 1983.² Shortly before Andrews retired, CMSgt. Bobby G. Renfro became the first enlisted commandant of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

Bud Andrews was born March 9, 1934, and grew up in Boston. He was a good-natured, spirited child with little interest in the classroom. Nonetheless, he attended Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Bancroft and Rice Public Schools, and the English High School. He claimed his share of mischief but also learned the importance of hard work and determination. As a youngster, he took many odd jobs and even shined shoes on Boston streets. In January 1953, he enlisted in the Air Force. He did so because of patriotism and because, with an unhappy home life, he wanted to break free from his father’s stern discipline.

With two dollars from his mother and some harsh advice from his father, Andrews went to basic training at Sampson Air Force Base, New York, in the middle of winter. “I should have picked a different season to [arrive]. It was the coldest place in the world,” Andrews recalled. “Mom gave me a heavy coat, but I didn’t want to take it. I expected to get a full complement of winter clothes at basic.” When the warm ensemble he had counted on did not materialize, Andrews silently praised his mother’s wisdom as he marched around in his long, blue civilian overcoat. Others in his flight were not as fortunate, especially those from southern states—they nearly froze in the New York winter.

Andrews vividly remembered basic training, especially his training instructor, A2C John Gavin. “I always wanted to be a cop—it was a very respected profession during my youth,” he recalled. When Gavin came into his barracks and asked who wanted to be an “AP,” Andrews thought his training instructor wanted volunteers for the air police career field. He raised his hand with such force that he nearly dislocated his shoulder. “Turns out he wanted

an *area* policeman,” Andrews said, “and I spent the next three months picking up cigarette butts outside the barracks area.”

He soon got the opportunity to enter the military police force, however, and served most of the next fourteen years as an Air Force policeman. He spent his initial months of active duty at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, and then moved to Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. He liked police work and recalled that no one really specialized when he began his career. Air policemen (APs) were responsible for a variety of tasks:

One day you’d be at the ammo dump, next day it was something else like base patrol or riding shotgun with one of the other cops. It was not uncommon for us to drive into town on payday to pick up payroll cash, deposit it at finance, then guard the facility until all the money was doled out to the troops.

Andrews pulled housing patrol, stockade duty, security police duties, town patrol, pass and identification duty, and prison escort to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The only task he missed was canine duty, and he regrets that.

About halfway through his first enlistment, Andrews was told to prepare for an overseas tour. He expected to be sent to France, but he was about to discover that the assignment system in the 1950s was unpredictable at best:

I remember being in this room at our embarkation point. A briefer gave me a book explaining how we should behave in France—how to be a good American ambassador. Another person entered the room and said, “When you all march out of this room, I will tap some of you on the shoulder. If you’re singled out, go to room 203.”

Andrews felt the tap of fate on his shoulder, and he was ordered to North Africa. After landing at Rabat, Morocco, Andrews reported to a mountainside aircraft control and warning site. Living conditions were more austere than those he would later encounter in Vietnam. He lived in a tent with a dozen other men, a potbellied stove strategically placed in the center. The higher a person’s rank, the closer his bunk was to the center. Andrews was nowhere near the heat.

“Africa can get pretty hot during the day and very cold at night,” Andrews recalled. “The monsoons were tough, too. Sometimes the rain would be so bad, we couldn’t go outside for meals. You’d just go to your footlocker and open up a can of peaches or something.” Rarely was there milk to drink, so the men substituted Kool-Aid. The shower facilities were rudimentary: “You pulled a cord and the water flowed,” he said. “This system was fine in the afternoon when the sun warmed the water. But it was terribly cold in the morning.”

Andrews wishes today's airmen could see what living conditions were like in his day. "I'm not saying we'd ever want to return to those same situations," he explained. "I'd just like them to see how far we've come since then."

Andrews worked hard during his tour in Morocco, and he returned to the United States after a year. His next duty station was the 3083d Security Squadron, Fairfield Air Force Station, a secret security police outfit adjacent to Travis Air Force Base, California. Initially, he helped to guard weapons, but a senior noncommissioned officer who liked Andrews's work ethic and attitude pulled him from the storage area to work on pass and identification. Andrews considered that master sergeant as his first mentor: "[Wagner] was the epitome of a noncom and knew more than most about the military. His uniform was impeccable—looking the same in the afternoon as it did in the morning." Andrews watched Wagner and imitated him.

Andrews's first enlistment ended in January 1957 with an honorable discharge. Wanting to once more experience life as a civilian, Andrews drove his 1941 Cadillac east until he ran out of gas and money in Wichita Falls, Texas. He took a job in a funeral home, saved some money, and, a year later, he moved back to Boston. There he found the same people he had known five years earlier still doing the same things that had bored him then. Three months later, a little over a year after he had left the service, he reenlisted.³

He set a goal for himself on the day he returned to the Air Force: "I vowed to be a master sergeant. Then it was the highest grade you could achieve. I also wanted to become a first sergeant, because I felt it was the most prestigious and important position I could attain."

He rejoined the air police, working first at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida. Three months later, he transferred to Okinawa and spent the next eighteen months at Naha Air Base in the Ryukyu Islands. Working six to eight hours each day with the Ryukyu guards, Andrews learned the local language and blended in well with the community.

In October 1959, he transferred to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, where he worked primarily as an investigator, performing surveillance, working undercover, and putting together the pieces of various crime puzzles. He worked on arsons and robberies and was credited with solving a murder committed by an airman second class.



In March 1959, Andrews was in the last several months of an assignment at Naha Air Base in the Ryukyu Islands, serving with the air police.

Andrews's break in service cost him a stripe when he returned to active duty, but at Shaw he quickly made airman first class a second time under the Exceptionally Well Qualified Program. Subsequent promotions came quickly. In April 1965, he returned to Okinawa as non-commissioned officer in charge of the law enforcement administration section at Kadena Air Base, and there he was promoted to staff sergeant. When he returned to the United States, he checked into his new orderly room at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, and learned he had been promoted again, this time to the rank of technical sergeant.

Initially, Andrews worked at Tyndall in the police administration section, handling investigation reports. Later, he volunteered to become a first sergeant and got his wish. "I was picked, but told I had to make master sergeant right away," he recalled. "I did, first time up." Consequently, he wore diamonds on his sleeves for the next decade. Andrews described the job of the first sergeant as "the closest thing to perpetual motion." He also believed that it provided a tremendous opportunity for "learning about people." In his assignments as a first sergeant, he followed a simple philosophy: "Take care of where people live, work and play and they will take care of the mission."⁴

At Tyndall, he crossed paths with someone who was to become an important influence in his life—a second mentor, CMSgt. Paul Airey. "He was the base sergeant major and all the shirts reported to him," Andrews said. "He's a good man. I watched him, read about him, and stayed in touch with him. He became a very important part of my career."

In 1967, Andrews received orders to the 497th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ubon Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand. Known as the "Night Owls," pilots of this unit flew F-4s, taking off in the early evening hours and not returning until morning. Andrews recalled that it was a great outfit but said that combat losses were quite high.

A year later, he was assigned as a first sergeant at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Two years later, he transferred to Cam Ranh Bay Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, where he served for a year with the 483d Organizational Maintenance Squadron. Following that assignment, he was promoted to E-8 and sent again to Keesler Air Force Base. After the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy began operations, Andrews was picked to join its third class.

After graduation, he went to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and spent two years at the 6594th Test Group. While there, he made chief master sergeant. His next assignment was at what is now Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts, where he served initially as the air base group first sergeant and, later, as the senior enlisted adviser for the Electronic Systems Division.

Andrews found the senior enlisted adviser position challenging and rewarding. Advisers worked with first sergeants and took a collective approach to dealing with issues and solving problems: "You work in partnership with the commander and let him or her know what's on

the minds of the enlisted force,” he explained. “In turn, you also keep first sergeants and other enlisted members aware of the commander’s views.”

In 1978, Andrews was tapped to become the Air Force Systems Command senior enlisted adviser at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. He remained there until the Air Force chief of staff, Gen. Lew Allen, chose him to succeed James McCoy as chief master sergeant of the Air Force. Andrews was tremendously honored that he was considered for the position, and he recalled getting the news of his appointment while he waited in a long line at the Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles.

Andrews’s term began shortly after the end of a bleak period for the armed forces. Recruiters had been coming up short; first-term reenlistments had been at record lows; and, most alarming, large numbers of noncommissioned officers in middle-management positions were leaving the Air Force. Some believed that years of legislative and executive branch neglect had caused pay and benefits to erode to the point where service members felt they could no longer afford to serve their country.

“We were hemorrhaging!” Andrews said. “Staffs, techs, and even masters fled the service. We were in the midst of a cold war and couldn’t afford to lose that cadre of people. Our politicians realized this and gave us substantial pay raises in the early ’80s. This helped slow down the exodus.”

As the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Andrews served some great leaders. Verne Orr was the secretary of the Air Force, and he worked hard for the troops. Caspar Weinberger, the secretary of defense, had an innate sense of what it took to make enlisted men and women work more effectively, and he fought for their well-being. Andrews had strong words of praise for the Air Force leaders with whom he worked while at the Pentagon:

I think they are above reproach. I was welcomed by the Air Staff with open arms, and they listened to what I had to say. They encouraged me to go before Congress and testify on such issues as commissaries, pay and entitlements. They provided me with all of the information I needed to do my job. The bottom line is, I don’t have enough words to express my sincere appreciation to the Air Staff. The job cannot be done without their assistance.⁵

The chief traveled extensively, in excess of twenty-three days each month. One of his responsibilities was to let the Air Force chief of staff and others know about what concerned the troops. “If you’ve got 400,000 enlisted people out in the system, that’s where you need to go,” he said. “They don’t all work in the Pentagon.”

He was also charged with guarding the troops’ health, morale, and welfare—ultimately, the Air Force mission. “The chief [master sergeant of the Air Force] needs to know what the



CMSAF Arthur Andrews
and his family

issues are. This sounds simple but, believe me, it's not," Andrews said. "If you take care of your people, they'll take care of the mission. I live by that!"

Andrews likened the role of chief master sergeant of the Air Force to that of a first sergeant or a senior enlisted adviser but on a much broader scale. It included appearing before Congress, tackling funding and budgeting issues, planning for dormitories and child care centers, and handling a range of other concerns. In his view,

Well, I think the Chief's [CMSAF's] first job is to find out quickly where the Air Force needs to be going and how it's going to get there, and then to advise the Chief of Staff accordingly. He must be visible, and, of course, to accomplish this he must spend countless hours away from his family and office. As much as it's humanly possible, he needs to be in the same trenches as the troops.⁶

His top priority as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, though, could be described by the phrase, “Get back to basics.” Andrews believed that by the time he took the top enlisted job, many of the most vexing problems in terms of pay, benefits, recruitment, and retention had been addressed. He believed that the time had come to focus on other issues, saying it was time for Air Force people to “think *we* instead of *me, me, me.*” For example, pay issues had been successfully addressed after Congress passed a law giving the military a substantial pay raise in the early 1980s. “Now,” Andrews asserted, “let’s talk about how we’re supposed to dress, how we’re supposed to act and react toward subordinates and superiors, and how we’re supposed to do our jobs.” For Andrews, “the Air Force is a calling.”⁷

In focusing on “the basics,” Andrews sometimes found himself having to take some unpopular positions. He challenged noncommissioned officers to “take care of their people and to accomplish the mission,” and he reminded them that the mission came first. “That is the price of commitment,” concluded Andrews. He also told noncommissioned officers to look to themselves if they were dissatisfied with their jobs. Was it a problem with the system or with them? Reiterating his stance on the special nature of military careers, Andrews stated that

Our military career is not just a job. It calls for self-discipline, not self-indulgence. In more concrete terms, it calls for alerts, deployments, world-wide airlift missions, and PCS [permanent change of station] moves. National defense is not a business that opens its doors at 8:00 a.m. and closes at 5:00 p.m.⁸

Andrews did believe that the Air Force made progress in terms of the basics. In the mid-1980s, he said that

We have come a long way over the past four or five years. At one time during my career, discipline and standards were just words without teeth to them. I used to think of them as a great white shark, but that shark had no teeth. It was big and awesome, but it couldn’t or wouldn’t do any damage. Well, today, those standards have teeth, and they are being met.⁹

Recalling Andrews’s tenure as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the retired Air Force chief of staff, Gen. Lew Allen, said, “Bud joined me in 1981—at the beginning of the Reagan buildup. He knew where quality-of-life improvements were most needed and greatly helped me make sure the needs of the enlisted force were met.”

Andrews said his Air Force duties as a policeman and as a “shirt” helped to prepare him for the CMSAF position: “Both career fields carry a great deal of responsibility, and you can cause a lot of damage if you’re not careful. Cops must be above reproach or an injustice takes

place—even if it’s as simple as giving someone a ticket.” First sergeants, he said, deal with morale and with social and medical issues: “If I had to put a civilian title to the duty, I’d call it a human resource manager. You sometimes wear the hat of a father, mother, pastor, negotiator, counselor, financial wizard, and more. It depends on what your troops need.”

Early in his career, Andrews learned how to watch, listen, and interact with others, and over the years he formulated a four-part recipe for success. “First of all, you must have integrity. If you’ve got it, you have the world by the tail. People will follow you.” Second, troops must learn how to be good followers—that is paramount to becoming a good leader. “Third, you must never forget where you came from, no matter what grade you attain. And last, but certainly not least, you’ve got to know your people and what they need.” Andrews insisted that these rules will work for anyone, inside or outside the military.

Andrews recalled that “leadership by stress” was the norm when he was a young airman. Superiors focused only on discipline. “We’re doing things differently now,” he said. “We’re a lot smarter.” He credits professional military education as the force behind the change to a smarter, more effective leadership model. People attending PME classes, he said, become not only better airmen and noncommissioned officers but also better people. They come out knowing a great deal more about themselves and the military.

Today’s noncommissioned officers are much better equipped than before. They are handed a great deal more of responsibility than in the early days of the Air Force; now noncommissioned officers are in charge of millions of dollars’ worth of property, and not just on a supply sheet. Their burden of responsibility has changed drastically. And it is all for the better. He went on to declare, “It would be a *cardinal sin* to close, even temporarily, one door of one leadership school.”¹⁰

“I left active duty in 1983 and I honestly believe I left it in good stead,” Andrews said. He had no patience for those who got out and then criticized the Air Force. In that case, they had only themselves to blame: “They didn’t groom anyone to take their place. If you can’t get out and look at your career field with pride, it’s your fault. You didn’t grab someone and show them the ropes—teach them the way and help them to pick up where you left off.”

Like most of his predecessors, Andrews never really left the Air Force. Before his death in October 1996, he served as the Air Force Sergeants Association deputy executive director for public relations, traveling all over the world to meet with airmen. He visited military installations for speaking engagements, spent holidays with airmen, and attended PME graduations. Of his frequent meetings with airmen, Andrews recalled that

We talk about the issues, history, you name it. I’ll go around and ask each and every individual for a question or a comment. I tell them, if they like what I’ve said, to put it into their pocket for safekeeping. If not, that’s fine, too. They may not agree with me, but I’ll always tell them the truth.

And he advised enlisted personnel to become active in their professional organizations. He said, “I think these organizations add quite a punch to what our senior leadership does when they testify before Congress and speak on behalf of the armed forces. It is very important to belong to at least one, if not all, of them.”¹¹

Andrews embraced his profession with fervor and reverence and could look back in awe on a career marked by dedication and service. It was not his job—it was his vocation, his family, his culture, his life. “The Air Force is a door of opportunity,” he said. “You’re shown the door, and told about the possibilities on the other side. It’s up to you to turn the handle and claim what’s there.”

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographic interview is based on material researched and compiled by MSgt. Mindy Poist.

2. Department of Defense, *Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

3. Enlisted Council, Air Force Association, *The Chiefs*, p. 43.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Sam E. Parish

August 1, 1983–June 30, 1986



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August 1, 1983–June 30, 1986



Sam E. Parish became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1983. Ronald Reagan was President of the United States, Russell A. Rourke was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Charles A. Gabriel was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ The growth in the number of USAF enlisted personnel that had begun in the early 1980s continued under Parish's watch. The number of enlisted stood at 483,022 in 1983 and increased to 494,666 by 1986.²

Born on October 2, 1937, in Marianna, Florida, Sam Parish grew up and went to school in the nearby towns of Malone and Bascom. When he was a teenager, he left the family farm and sought work in Fort Myers, Florida. At age seventeen, he joined the Air Force: "I just wanted a change," he said. "I worked as a florist and made good money—more in a week than an airman made in a month. But, I didn't see a future there."

The twelve-week basic training stint at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, was pretty simple for the young airman. He was inherently disciplined and, thanks to his southern upbringing, already said "yes, sir" and "no, sir" quite easily and often.

Following basic training, Parish opted to become a ground weather equipment operator, although he had no idea what that job entailed, and he spent twenty-six weeks in school at Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois. He was a bright student and was the class honor graduate in August 1955. At the time, follow-on assignment choices were based on a student's academic standing, and all of the assignments were overseas. They were written on a blackboard, and airmen chose their assignments in order of their class rank. Parish had "first dibs" so he picked France, as Paris intrigued him. The number-two student did the same. But, Parish recalled, the assignment took an unexpected turn:

There were only two France slots, so the next guy in line—a reenlistee—selected West Germany. Two days later, he took me over to the snack bar. I never drank in my entire life! He fed me three or four of those paper-cup beers from the exchange, and, the next thing I knew, he conned me into switching assignments with him!

The hoodwinked airman was headed for Wiesbaden Air Base, West Germany, whereas the reenlistee found his way to Chaumont Air Base, France. But things had a way of working

Parish distinguished himself as an honor graduate at the Air Force NCO Academy.



out for Parish, and his new duty location turned out to be a godsend in several ways. On the way to Germany, Parish reported to Manhattan Air Force Station, New York, as part of an experimental program to transport troops overseas by aircraft instead of ships. He boarded a C-54 bound for Europe, but the flight terminated in Paris. Day after day, Parish checked to see if follow-on travel was available, but it was not. He was “stranded” in Paris for weeks until he finally got a second flight to Frankfurt.

Parish finally reported to his first duty assignment, Headquarters 18th Weather Squadron. Initially, he was supposed to work at the upper air station, but again he took part in an experimental program. “Officials were combining Air Force specialty codes,” Parish said. “I was selected to...also train as a weather observer.” He spent the next four months reading manuals and taking specialty knowledge tests to upgrade his skills. “I was one of the first to receive the dual [specialty code], but, unfortunately, I did it through the books,” Parish said. “I never left the headquarters the whole time I was there.”

He spent three and one-half years in Germany, working for a supervisor who greatly impressed him and who significantly affected his career. “His name was Capt. Eugene T. Blanton, and he treated me as an adult,” Parish said. “He never oversupervised. He’d give me a job, then let me do it. The captain would let me sink or swim, but was always there if I got in too deep.”

Blanton, now a retired colonel living in California, was in charge of the unit’s plans and communications division at the time, and he recalled Parish’s hard-charging work habits:

“Sam was personable, aggressive, and incredibly smart. He was the only assistant I had, and I let him work to his fullest potential.”

The captain heaped great responsibility on Parish’s shoulders, and the young airman met the challenges time and again. Blanton’s trust unleashed Parish’s strong work ethic and desire to excel, and this first duty experience set the stage for a career marked by a constant resolve to reach for the top.

At Wiesbaden, Parish met another person who altered the course of his life. Ingeborg Eva-Marie Zimmerman was a young German woman who worked as a nanny and spoke little English. Fate smiled again on Parish, because he was already taking the mandatory German language classes two hours each evening. The language training paid off in romance, and the couple married in June 1957.

In 1959, Parish, a staff sergeant, was ready to rotate back to the United States. His career field was one of two Air Force fields with a mandatory seven-level requirement, a prerequisite for promotion to technical sergeant. The course was twenty-eight weeks long, entailing a permanent change of station. Parish scored only a B on the entrance examination and got temporary duty orders to Greenville Air Force Base, Mississippi, because the school was so backlogged that those with Bs would have to wait years for a slot.

Parish rolled up his sleeves and went to work in Mississippi, but he was more determined than ever to go to seven-level school. Several months after his arrival at Greenville, an inspector general team came to the base for a look at operations following an earlier unfavorable unit inspection report. To prepare for the visit, Parish’s unit worked hard and earned an excellent grade on the retest. With the inspector general on base, Parish spoke his mind: “When it was time for the conference period, I told my commander I wanted to see the IG. I thought the upgrade procedures were unfair, and I wanted to let him know how I felt.”

He met with the inspector general and explained how the vast majority of his training was accomplished through books and manuals with no hands-on experience. “I told him I wouldn’t sit around and wait for years and years to get my seven level so I could eventually make tech sergeant,” Parish recalled. “[I] [t]old him when my enlistment was up, I’d probably be forced to look for a new occupation.” The inspector general listened to the junior noncommissioned officer but offered no solutions. A few weeks later, however, a letter arrived to report that Sergeant Parish’s test scores were missing and to direct him to retake the seven-level entrance test.

“I took the exam and this time got an A,” Parish said, laughing. “Let me tell you, in no time at all I was heading to Chanute.” Again he graduated at the top of his class and became the youngest seven-level airman in his career field.

In August 1960, while in seven-level school, Parish was recruited by his former 18th Weather Squadron operations officer, Col. Donald F. Moore, to take a research and development job in Air Research and Development Command, which became Air Force Systems

Command the following year. Specifically, he became the noncommissioned officer in charge of the operational procedures branch of the 433L System Program Office at Laurence G. Hanscom Field,³ Massachusetts. The assignment lasted for nearly six years. Parish immersed himself in base activities, such as the NCO Academy Graduates Association and the softball team, which he coached. During his time at Hanscom, he and Inge and their sons, Sam and Steve, welcomed a third son, Scott. Parish also pinned on technical and master sergeant stripes during this tour.

In March 1966, he received orders to the position of chief observer for the 7th Weather Squadron in Heidelberg, West Germany. He was quickly promoted to senior master sergeant. At age thirty-one, after two and one-half years in Germany, Parish made chief and transferred to Headquarters Air Weather Service at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. Initially, he served as the command's chief observer and, later, as the division chief.

“About that time we heard the Air Force was establishing the Senior NCO Academy,” Parish said. “I called a chief at Military Airlift Command to see about the possibility of me attending. I was one of the people who said we needed this academy, and I wanted to see what they were going to accomplish there.”

When the Air Force opened the Senior NCO Academy, Parish sought and received a place in the first class at Gunter Annex, Alabama, in January 1973. Thomas Barnes and James McCoy, future chief master sergeants of the Air Force, were his classmates. After graduation, Parish became the weather service senior enlisted adviser. But he left after a couple of years because of a difference of opinion with the new commander and went across the street to “Mother MAC” to seek a new job. He found his niche in the personnel community and took over as the headquarters weather assignments adviser.

In August 1976, Parish and his family returned to Germany, where he served as sergeant major of the consolidated base personnel office at Bitburg Air Base. A year later, he was named senior enlisted adviser for the United States Air Forces in Europe at Ramstein Air Base, an assignment he found most enjoyable and productive. He established the initial First Sergeant of the Year program for USAFE. “USAFE was a great command—small enough [that] you could reach out and touch people and yet large enough to challenge any chief.”

In the fall of 1980, Parish was tapped to become the 40th Air Division senior enlisted adviser at Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan. He believed he was nearing retirement, and Michigan seemed an acceptable place to do that. He was in Washington, D.C., however, attending the retirement ceremony for CMSAF James McCoy, when he got a call to return directly to base. When he arrived at Wurtsmith, his boss, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Messerli, a tough taskmaster but a super commander, told Parish he was nominating him for the thirty-three-year program because it was the only way Parish could become the next Strategic Air Command senior enlisted adviser. Otherwise, Messerli could not sign the necessary paperwork.

“You’re assuming I want this position,” Parish said to the general.

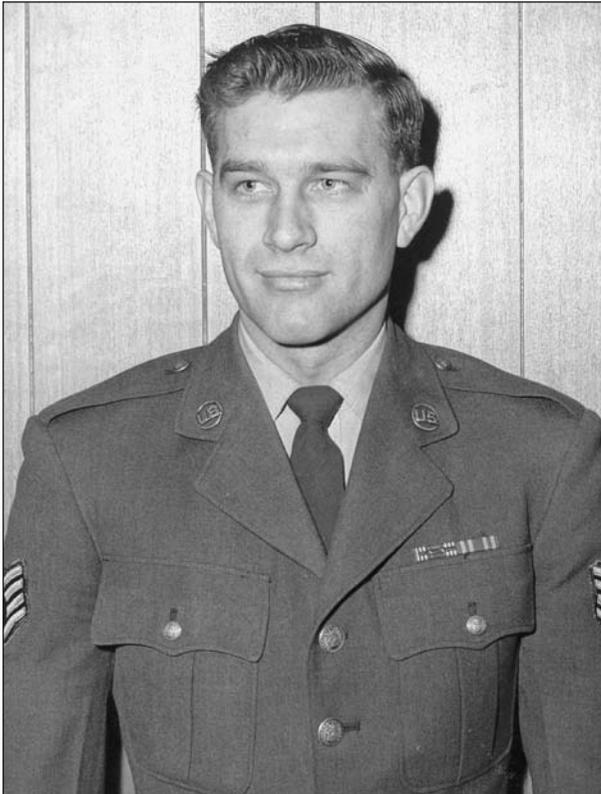
“You want it,” the general replied.

Parish was selected as a thirty-three-year chief in early 1981. Later that year, Gen. Bennie L. Davis asked him to join the SAC team in Omaha, Nebraska. “He was a super boss,” Parish said. “When I first got there, I asked for three things: an airman recognition program with some teeth in it (including a SAC First Sergeant of the Year program), a new office location, and an [administrative] assistant.” He got what he wanted, and he forged a great working relationship with Davis.

“His goals and mine coincided,” General Davis said. “Sam liked to spend time talking to the troops, and he always brought their views back to us so we could work issues at our level.” Davis believed that Parish’s greatest strength was his way of drawing out the troops and learning what was on their minds. “He did this to perfection,” Davis said, adding, “I think this is the most important role a senior enlisted adviser has.”

Parish served for almost two years in Strategic Air Command. In 1983, when CMSAF Arthur Andrews approached retirement, the call went out for a new top chief. The selection process was similar to that for the Airman of the Quarter program. Applicants were nominated, and their names were sent to SAC. Then a board, chaired by officers, picked two or three finalists and forwarded their names to the SAC commander.

Parish did not volunteer, and his name was not on the list until Davis named him. The final slate of candidates was narrowed to three primary and two alternate finalists. Parish and Inge went to Washington, D.C., for another series of interviews, as did the other two primary finalists and their wives. Interviews were conducted by Lt. Gen. Kenneth L. Peek, Jr., the Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower and personnel; Gen. Jerome F. O’Malley, the Air Force vice chief of staff; and Gen. Charles A. Gabriel, the Air Force chief of staff. Parish did



From 1960 to 1966, Parish served as the NCO in charge of the operational procedures branch of the 433L System Program Office at Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts.

not believe the interview with O'Malley had gone well. As Parish recalled, "I never agreed with a thing he said." But that was not O'Malley's impression, and, several weeks later, Parish got the call inviting him and Inge to relocate to Washington, D.C.

Parish served as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force for three years and tackled a range of enlisted personnel issues. One such issue was the fixed-phase point for promotion to senior airman. "In 1985, the wait was forty-two months," Parish said. "It floated and depended on vacancies and the amount of money available for promotions." He convinced General Gabriel that the Air Force needed 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. In addition, Parish advocated and Gabriel approved an initiative allowing flightline personnel to wear a functional badge on their uniform. Eventually this initiative was expanded, and now all Air Force personnel in all specialties have functional badges identifying their career fields.

Parish also oversaw realignment of the system of enlisted professional military education. A strong advocate of enlisted PME, Parish said of his experience at the Air Force Systems Command Academy, where he was the honor graduate, "The experience lit a fire in my belly that has not been extinguished to this day—[it] probably will never go out."⁴ He has also said that the establishment of enlisted PME was "one of the greatest steps taken for enlisted people in the history of the Air Force."⁵ At the time he became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, however, he believed that the program needed realignment. By the mid-1980s, the Air Force had five levels or phases of enlisted PME: the NCO Orientation Course, the USAF Supervisor's Course, the command Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School (NCOLS), the command Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA), and the USAF Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy (SNCOA).⁶ The first and third levels were conducted at base level. Parish noted that "much of the information taught in these levels were duplicated in technical schools or in other courses the airmen were expected to attend." The realignment in the mid-1980s eliminated the NCO Orientation Course and the USAF Supervisor's Course and created the NCO Preparatory Course (NCOPC). By moving from a five-level to a four-level system, Parish believed "[t]he goal was to teach individuals what we thought they needed to know before assuming the next grade/level of supervision."

In the early 1990s, the Air Force once again realigned enlisted professional military education, eliminating the NCO Preparatory Course and the command Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School and creating the Airman Leadership School (ALS). Although the realignments achieved their initial goals, Parish later wondered if perhaps there is now too great a time gap between attendance at the Airman Leadership School, the NCO Academy, and the Senior NCO Academy.⁷

Parish also worked to establish the John Levitow Award. Each level of professional military education included the designation of honor graduates. Parish believed that this award

ought to have a name beyond “honor graduate.” AIC John Levitow had earned the Medal of Honor in Vietnam. By naming the award after an enlisted Medal of Honor winner, Parish believed that “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.”

Additionally, a USAF-level First Sergeant of the Year program was developed during Parish’s tenure. In doing this, Parish continued a tradition he had established at United States Air Forces in Europe. There, while serving as the USAFE senior enlisted adviser, he had established a command-level First Sergeant of the Year program, despite a certain level of resistance. After moving to Strategic Air Command, again as the senior enlisted adviser, he established a similar program within that command. When he became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, he elevated the program to the USAF level. When asked of his goals in establishing these programs, Parish answered, “I was looking for ways to recognize this group of enlisted leaders who, in most cases, would refuse to allow themselves to be nominated for an award that other enlisted members in the unit were eligible for.”⁸

When Parish served as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the service faced two major challenges. First, in the tight budget environment of the mid-1980s, Congress first began talking about making major revisions to the military retirement system. The system had seen some revision in the early 1980s, but the proposals of the mid-1980s would bring far greater changes to the system. Parish called it “the number-one area of concern” for enlisted people. Though Parish and other military leaders fought to preserve the existing retirement system, Congress enacted legislation in 1986 that created a new, reduced retirement benefit for those entering the service after August 1, 1986, a month after Parish retired. The Redux retirement program, which remained in place until 2000, became an issue for future chief master sergeants of the Air Force.⁹

The second challenge involved married military couples and joint spouse assignments. Parish noted that the number of married military couples in the Air Force had grown considerably. In 1975, married military couples made up only 3 percent of the force. By 1984, they accounted for 9 percent of the force, a three-fold increase. Also, over the years, these military couples advanced in rank. Finding joint assignments for younger airmen may have been relatively easy, but it became more difficult as these couple achieved more senior NCO ranks. The Air Force managed to station almost 90 percent of military couples at the same locations, but missions and requirements made this increasingly difficult. Parish foresaw that as the number of military couples increased, the ability of the Air Force to find joint assignments would decrease.¹⁰

Like his predecessors, Parish spent much of his time on the road, visiting bases, fielding questions, and staying in touch with the enlisted force. “If a chief is to take care of his troops, he’s got to know how to listen,” Parish said. “And, he’s got to listen from both sides. You have to hear the command or officers’ side, too.” Any time a change or proposal was considered, it

had to face this litmus test: is the change good for the Air Force, is it good for the individual, and does it hurt anyone? If it did not pass that test, he backed off.

Parish said that the chief master sergeant of the Air Force position is vital in today's military environment because the CMSAF provides the staff—the policymakers—with an enlisted viewpoint they have never had before. He believed it is the most important job in the Air Force, from an enlisted program perspective.

Parish planned to retire in 1985, but General Gabriel asked him to extend for another year, and so he remained stayed on until July 1986. He looked back on his career with a great deal of satisfaction and pride:

There have been very few times in my life when I haven't given my all, and I honestly and truly believe I've been successful. Success is achieving your best, regardless of what you're doing. I served one day at a time without thinking a lot about the future—how far I'd go with the system.

[The Air Force has] been my whole life—my family's life. I came in at seventeen—a green, uneducated airman, who was allowed to grow. I was allowed to do anything I was capable of, with few roadblocks in my path.

Parish often has been characterized as a “straight shooter” who does not waste time figuring out what people want to hear; rather, he tells them what they need to know. He has a reputation of getting things done and communicating easily with superiors and subordinates alike. Parish would agree that he is outspoken and not smooth and polished. “There aren't too many political bones in my entire body,” he said. It is his long-standing style. He always had the courage to go his own way.

Following his retirement from the Air Force, Parish served as vice president and director of military services for GEICO Auto Insurance Company and continues to work as a consultant. He remains very involved in the Air Force, attends myriad service functions, and visits NCO academies and airmen leadership schools. In his spare time, he has become a master gardener for the state of Maryland. A master gardener is a volunteer who, after receiving training from the state, helps to provide public educational programs dealing with environmental horticulture. He and Inge like to garden and spoil their grandchildren. “For an old farm boy...it's not a bad life!” Parish said, with a smile.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographic interview is based on material researched and compiled by MSgt. Mindy Poist and some editorial changes made by CMSAF Parish.
2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.
3. Laurence G. Hanscom Field became Hanscom AFB in January 1977.
4. CMSAF Parish responded to his questionnaire (hereinafter Parish Questionnaire) by e-mail. A printed copy of the Parish Questionnaire is available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
5. CMSAF Sam E. Parish, "Building Quality," *Air Force Magazine* 67, no. 5 (May 1984): 87.
6. Wayne A. Valey, *The Airman's Guide*, 1st ed. (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1988), p.105.
7. Parish Questionnaire.
8. *Ibid.*
9. CMSAF Sam E. Parish, "Taking Care of the Troops," *Air Force Magazine* 68, no. 5 (May 1985): 74–75.
10. Parish, "Building Quality," p. 87; Parish, "Taking Care of the Troops," p. 75.

James C. Binnicker

July 1, 1986–July 31, 1990



James C. Binnicker

July 1, 1986–July 31, 1990



James C. Binnicker became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on July 1, 1986. Ronald Reagan was President of the United States; Edward C. Aldridge, Jr., was the secretary of the Air Force; and Gen. Larry D. Welch, a former Air Force enlisted member, was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ Although the USAF enlisted force initially continued to grow while Binnicker held the top spot, budget constraints and the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which signaled the end of the Cold War, began a sustained period of substantial downsizing. The number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 494,666 in 1986 and increased to 495,244 by 1987. By 1988, however, the number had dropped to 466,856 and stood at 430,818 by 1990.²

Born on July 23, 1938, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, James Binnicker was raised in Aiken, South Carolina, near the Georgia state line. Aspiring to become a pilot, he joined the Aiken Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) during his freshman year in high school. The CAP lured him with their recruiting tool—an orientation flight in a single-engine plane. That thirty-minute flight was all it took to put Binnicker on a course toward an Air Force career.

The Aiken Squadron conducted most of its two-week summer camps at nearby Shaw Air Force Base, where the cadets would live, eat, and march. “As I got into the Civil Air Patrol,” Binnicker said, “I found that I was very comfortable and enjoyed putting on the uniform and dressing up like an airman. 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.”

Being named Cadet of the Year in 1956, his senior year, was one of the high points of Binnicker’s time in the Civil Air Patrol because it earned him a scholarship to attend flight school. It also earned him the right to represent his state as a foreign exchange cadet in Great Britain. And it took him one step closer to his dream of being a pilot. But in 1957, after he signed up for the Air Force’s aviation cadet program, doctors detected a high-frequency hearing loss in his right ear, a dysfunction that removed him from the program. “I was disappointed and didn’t want to go back home and face the people that I had sort of thumbed my nose at—‘I’m gonna go off and be a jet pilot’—so I told the recruiter that I wanted to join the Air Force.”

Thinking he would not be very successful as an officer who was not a pilot, Binnicker enlisted in August 1957. He admits to entering the service with a chip on his shoulder because he was disappointed about not being able to fly. The hearing loss continued to disqualify him from several jobs, and he ended up in the personal equipment—later called life support—career field, installing parachutes and survival equipment in aircraft. Because it brought him close to the airplanes, it was the best alternative to flying.

It also put him on the flight line with B-52s and KC-135s and a maintenance chief named Roy Duhamel, who would become Binnicker's mentor and role model. "At the time I didn't care much for Chief Duhamel. He was always on my back about something." But, looking back several years later, Binnicker gave Duhamel credit for knocking the chip off his shoulder, "kicking his butt" when he needed it, and causing him to reenlist for the first time. The current Mentorship Program had not yet been established, but Binnicker's experience proved to him that mentoring works. He believes that had it not been for Chief Duhamel, he would not have reenlisted. For Binnicker, Duhamel was the perfect example of what a non-commissioned officer is all about.³

His Civil Air Patrol experience earned him one stripe after basic training, making him an airman third class when he arrived at the 96th Air Refueling Squadron at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. But none of his experiences had prepared him for what he would find there: "The barracks—we had two people per room and we shared a bath, which I thought was pretty bad at the time, but now, almost forty years later, we still have two people in a room sharing a bath." That, he said, planted a seed in his mind that there had to be a better way for enlisted people to live.

Despite what he calls the grimness of his first assignment, Binnicker was not scared away. He joined the Aero Club and lived the life of the typical airman, going to movies or hanging out in the dayroom of the barracks. He also took a job at the officers' club, first as a dishwasher and then as a waiter, to earn enough money to buy a 1949 Mercury for \$250—his "freedom ticket" to get off the base. He was also the typical airman at work, learning the duties associated with his job and applying his own ability to create a pleasant environment. His military bearing, dress, morale, and activities on and off base were attracting positive attention, and the officer in charge of his duty section was the first to document Binnicker's potential. On the very first performance report of a man who would become chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the lieutenant wrote, "This airman...could become an excellent supervisor and leader."

Binnicker stayed at Altus until 1964 when, as a married staff sergeant, he received orders to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. He had already cross-trained into the air operations career field, where promotions came very quickly. He was promoted to staff sergeant because his supervisor would not allow him to attend professional military education. "I kept wanting to go to what we called the preparatory school back in those days, a precursor for leadership

school today,” he remembered. “I would see [students] marching up and down the street, and they had little red epaulet[s] on their khaki shirt[s] that indicated that they were student[s]. And I really wanted to do that. That was a holdover from my Civil Air Patrol days of marching and drill team. Plus,...I knew that attendance at that school would speed up the promotion process.” His boss, a lieutenant colonel, said that he could not afford to let Binnicker go and that he thought the school was a waste of time. When Binnicker tried “the old promotion ploy—‘if you don’t send me, I won’t get promoted,’” his boss said if that was all Binnicker was worried about, he would just promote him.



When a high-frequency hearing loss denied him his dream of flight school, Jim Binnicker enlisted in the Air Force in August 1957.

Obviously, promotions were received differently in the days before the Weighted Airman Promotion System was established in 1970. When asked how promotions were earned before WAPS, Binnicker said no one really knew. “[The promotion] was recommended by your supervisor and your squadron commander [based on] job performance and that sort of thing. That was the driving force behind WAPS, because no one knew what it took to get promoted.”

In Hawaii, Binnicker was promoted to technical sergeant and worked in 1502d Air Transport Wing operations, planning flights for all of the missions going into Vietnam. While working on a degree at the University of Hawaii, he had studied Vietnamese to fulfill his foreign language requirement because he thought it might prove beneficial to know the language of a country with which the United States was at war. He volunteered for service in Vietnam, but the personnel system rejected his volunteer statement and sent him instead to Grand Forks, North Dakota.

That experience soured his opinion of the personnel system, and his opinion did not improve when he received orders to Vietnam eleven months later. “My experience was moving from Hawaii to Grand Forks...only to turn around eleven months later and go back through Hawaii on my way to Vietnam. So I was mad at the personnel system for doing that to me and my family.”

It was in Vietnam, while he was working in the 22d Tactical Air Support Squadron from 1968 to 1969, that Binnicker first heard of the position of chief master sergeant of the Air Force. His original goal had been to make chief master sergeant by age thirty-five, but when he heard that there was a higher-ranking position, the thirty-year-old master sergeant set his sights even higher. Binnicker's Airman Performance Reports (APRs) began suggesting him for the CMSAF position within three years. In fact, fourteen of his next fifteen APRs would make the same recommendation before he was first considered for the position in 1983.

After his tour in Vietnam, Binnicker completed assignments at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia; Ching Chuan Kang Air Base, Taiwan; and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. At Seymour Johnson in 1972, Binnicker undertook duties first as the base sergeant major in the 4th Combat Support Group and later as senior enlisted adviser for the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing. He left the base as a chief master sergeant and went to Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas, as the senior enlisted adviser for the Twelfth Air Force.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on Military Compensation and, on the recommendation of CMSAF Thomas Barnes, Binnicker became the military's sole enlisted member of the commission. However, on Binnicker's recommendation, representatives from the other services were later added.

Binnicker credits Barnes with a lot of his success because of the opportunities Barnes provided him, although Binnicker does not know why he was singled out. "He involved me in some things that gave me visibility that I might not have gotten otherwise," Binnicker said. "He's sort of my hero of all the former chiefs. I like them all, but I kind of point to him as the guy [who] had the most influence and impact on my career."

After serving one year with the compensation commission, Binnicker returned to his position as senior enlisted adviser at the Twelfth Air Force, before taking the same position for three years at Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base. But after more than seven years of senior enlisted adviser duties, he was ready for a change: "I called the Chiefs' Group at [the Military Personnel Center (MPC)] and told them that I was interested in finding a challenging job—I didn't care where they sent me; I just wanted a challenging job. They came back later and said that they had a position at MPC in the enlisted retention division." Soon, however, the Military Personnel Center commander asked Binnicker to head up the Chiefs' Group at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. Although Binnicker was interested in that job, he was not certain he was qualified.

I felt it was important to remind the commander that, [although] I was working at MPC, I was not a personnel chief, had never been in personnel, and had always thought that being chief of the Chiefs' Group was the premiere personnel chief's position. [The commander said] he didn't have any personnel experience when he got to MPC, and pointed to his pilot wings and said, "Those are not personnel wings." And he said, "I know what

your background is and I want you to do it.” It was an experiment to try and bring a person from the field, not a personnel person, to head up this Chiefs’ Group. I did that for three-and-one-half years.

Binnicker credits both jobs at the Military Personnel Center with giving him the background and experience he would need as chief master sergeant of the Air Force:

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.

In 1985, at about the same time that Binnicker’s assignment was ending at Randolph, the new commander of Tactical Air Command, Gen. Robert D. Russ, was looking for a senior enlisted adviser. Binnicker had worked for Russ at Seymour Johnson and jumped at the opportunity to work for him again.

When the announcement was made that CMSAF Sam Parish was going to retire, a message soliciting nominations for the position was sent to major commands, field operating agencies, and direct reporting units. The Chiefs’ Group compiled information packages on each nominee, and a panel of officers reviewed the candidates and narrowed the selection to three finalists. Each finalist was interviewed by Gen. Larry D. Welch, commander of Strategic Air Command, who was awaiting Senate confirmation of his own selection as Air Force chief of staff.

Binnicker and his wife, Jan, went to SAC headquarters to meet Welch. “It was a thirty-five-minute interview, very intense. The questions, I thought, were the kind of questions you might expect: ‘Do you have an agenda?’ ‘No, I don’t have an agenda, but I have a list of things that I would like to work on.’ ‘What’s on that list?’ The APR was number one, and he said, ‘I agree, but I think we need to fix the [Officer Effectiveness Report (OER)] because it’s more broke than the APR.’ Then we [worked] on that list of things that, if I were selected,...I would focus on.” Thirty-five minutes later, the interview was over, and Binnicker’s future was set.

Binnicker thought that the senior enlisted adviser from Strategic Air Command, who had already been working with Welch, was the likely choice. But Welch, now retired from the Air Force, remembers why he selected Binnicker: “At the time, my judgment was that he had a broader outlook on the Air Force and, maybe most important, he had a very clear view of the proper role of the most senior of the senior NCOs—that is, the chief master sergeants.” And at a time when the senior leadership was not totally satisfied with the role that chief master sergeants were playing, Welch wanted to make sure the man he selected would lead the enlisted force in the right direction. In Welch’s words,

We thought the role of chief master sergeants was to be absolutely in the lead of the NCO corps, and absolutely in the lead of the enlisted force, in terms of looking after interests and understanding what drives the enlisted force and being spokesmen for the needs of the enlisted force, and not...for the needs of chief master sergeants. That’s not a criticism of chief master sergeants as a whole because they’re very bright, dedicated people. Their role had just...evolved in a different way than we intended. So, in addition to having a very broad view of the Air Force as a whole, and having a very solid grasp of what drives interest the enlisted force—what we need to do to take care of and motivate the enlisted force [—Binnicker] also had, by far, the clearest view of the proper role of chief master sergeants. The chiefs had begun to evolve into this sort of separate class of people in the Air Force, and what we needed the chief master sergeants to do was to be very, very much in the lead in enlisted matters. And he was very interested in that.

One of the first orders of business for the new chief master sergeant of the Air Force was to familiarize himself with the Air Staff and let them get to know him. “If you’re working on an issue in the barracks, you don’t want to bog the Chief of Staff down with the inner workings of that process. You want to work with the staff over in the engineering world,” Binnicker pointed out. “Or if you’re working on a personnel issue, likewise you don’t want to bother the Chief of Staff or Vice Chief until you have come up with a final position, and then you go in and you say, ‘This is what we’ve done, and this is what we need to get done.’”

When he knew “who was who” and “what was where,” Binnicker was ready to tackle the Airman Performance Report, a system of ratings from one to nine:

It 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...[T]he old APR...was not a bad system. We had just abused it to the point [where] it was ineffective. If we had followed the regula-

tion 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.

Welch agreed that something was wrong with the system. “We have a problem in the Air Force,” he said, “and that problem is that we have so few mediocre people that it’s hard to differentiate [levels of] excellence.” Binnicker realized that commanders were giving everyone a nine because performance was rarely average.

Welch told Binnicker that what he wanted to measure was *performance*, both on the Officer Effectiveness Report and the Airman Performance Report. Other things were still important—the whole-person concept, for example, but performance ought to be the focus of the rating.

From that direction came the new Enlisted Performance Report (EPR). It was expected that most people would fall in the “consider for promotion” block, or a three on a scale ranging from one to five. “Even in that rare environment of excellent people, you have to have a system to evaluate them,” Binnicker explained. So, based on the new system, Binnicker said, there would be a handful of fives (“immediate” promotion) and fours (“ready” for promotion), and a lot of threes. According to Binnicker, such an outcome “tells the board to promote these fives first, these fours [next], and then a big chunk of the threes would get promoted, as well. But certainly a clear message would be sent to the promotion board that this is the person you [have to] promote first, and it would be done.”

As easy as that all sounded, there was a lot of resistance to the change because, Binnicker said, “we didn’t educate the Air Force.” No one understood that the majority of airmen and noncommissioned officers deserved a three, and ratings on the EPR, like its predecessor, have become inflated. “Somehow we had come to think that if you didn’t get a report card all the way to the right [top marks], there was something wrong,” he said. “And I was just hoping that, over time, we would accept a report card that might not be all the way to the right.”

A system of performance feedback was also instituted with the new Enlisted Performance Report. Raters were directed to meet with their subordinates during the first thirty days of supervision, midway through the reporting period, and again after completing an EPR. “Feedback was something I thought was absolutely essential—still do,” Binnicker said. “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.’”

In 1995, when Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman and CMSAF David J. Campanale formed a panel to review both the report and the feedback portions of the evaluation system, “[the panel] essentially verified what we had done,” Binnicker said. “They made some changes that I thought were appropriate. It needs to be looked at on a regular basis, tweaked

and modified based on the needs of the Air Force at the particular time. I don't think we should go for another twenty years without looking at [the EPR]. I think it should be as dynamic as our Air Force is—ever-changing, always looking at it from the standpoint of, does it fit what we're doing today?"

With the evaluation system taken care of, Binnicker set his sights on admitting master sergeants to the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, which only senior and chief master sergeants had attended.

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 new-found knowledge, and they would be better prepared, I think, to move into the senior and chief ranks, and take those positions of greater responsibility.

Binnicker favored giving people all the responsibility they could handle, and he noticed a lot of changes since the time he was an airman. Now, he said, "we give them more responsibility, we treat them more as...adult[s with] a lot more freedom to voice their opinion and to be involved in the decision process." As a result, he thinks the Air Force can attract and retain higher quality personnel.

Female and minority service members have also received greater responsibilities. Binnicker thinks their roles have changed "only about a thousand percent. We have, in fact, changed the way we treat both minorities and women. Not so much with affirmative action, but I think with the recognition that it's the right thing to do; the recognition that what we were doing in years gone by was, in fact, not the right thing to do, or at least not the right way to do it."

The most profound change may be noticed among women. Thomas Barnes was the first minority chief master sergeant of the Air Force, from 1973 to 1977, but there has never been a woman in that job. Binnicker thinks that things may be about to change. He said that, in the past, the Air Force had built what amounted to institutionalized sexual discrimination when it came to women chief master sergeants. "Female members," he said, "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 were not going to get the choice positions that other chiefs might get." But once that institutional discrimination was eliminated—at least in part—commanders started to select female chiefs for more prestigious jobs. When that happened, Binnicker said, "young women at the staff or tech sergeant level could see that, 'Hey, there is a reason for me to stay in the Air Force.' And they obviously are stay-



CMSAF Binnicker, along with other service senior enlisted representatives, testifies before Congress about quality of life issues.

ing longer, and doing quite well, I think, in being competitive for those jobs....[I]t'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.”

When it comes to serving the enlisted force, Binnicker thinks the chief master sergeant of the Air Force should be sincere, credible, and honest, and should follow up on what he or she says. The chief should give the chief of staff input on a variety of subjects—input that the chief of staff can combine with pertinent input from other sources to form a basis for wise decision making.

Looking back at his four years as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Binnicker believed that his two greatest accomplishments were the evaluation system improvements and the admission of master sergeants to the Senior NCO Academy. When asked how he would like to be remembered, he answered, “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.”

But General Welch, his former boss, remembered much more:

What I remember Chief Binnicker for is that I knew if there was a significant issue involving the enlisted force, a significant issue of the enlisted force that I needed to pay attention to,...Chief Binnicker would be in my office to tell me about it. And he would be the staunch advocate of the needs of the enlisted force, within the context of the greater needs of the Air Force. He was a marvelous spokesman for the needs of the enlisted

force, and a marvelous spokesman for the NCO corps. So I was never surprised. When I went to bases, talked to groups—NCOs, enlisted, et cetera—I almost never ran into any surprises. He also accepted the role of helping to lead the major air command senior enlisted advisers down that same very productive path. So, clearly, within the Air Force, he was the leader of the senior enlisted advisers.

Binnicker remains involved with today's enlisted force. Once a year, he joins the former chief master sergeants of the Air Force at the Pentagon for updates on current issues. He also visits professional military education classes and talks with students worldwide. Binnicker is currently the president and chief executive officer of the Air Force Enlisted Foundation, Inc., formerly the Air Force Enlisted Men's Widows and Dependents Home Foundation, Inc. The first thing Binnicker did when assuming his new position was change the organization's name. The foundation provides housing and services for widows of Air Force enlisted retirees. He also serves as a member of the Air University Board of Visitors and is a member of the Airmen Memorial Museum. He and his wife, Jan, live in Navarre, Florida. One son, Mike, is a junior at the University of Georgia. His other son, Carmen, is married and lives in Calhoun, Georgia, with his wife and daughter, Julia.⁴

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by SMSgt. Cathy Segal.

2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, pp. 65–66.

3. CMSAF Binnicker chose to submit a typewritten (or, more accurately, word-processed) response to his questionnaire (hereinafter Binnicker Questionnaire) as well as some editorial changes to the interview. A copy of the Binnicker Questionnaire and his editorial changes are available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

4. Binnicker Questionnaire.

Gary R. Pfingston

August 1, 1990–October 25, 1994



Gary R. Pfingston

August 1, 1990–October 25, 1994



Gary R. Pfingston became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 1, 1990. George H. W. Bush was President of the United States, Donald B. Rice was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Michael J. Dugan was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ As Pfingston described the time preceding his selection, “We woke up one morning to find the Soviet Union dissolved and the Cold War over. The Berlin Wall had crumbled. The changing international scene prompted us to do business differently. The armed forces got smaller and missions changed. During our downsizing, the United States Air Force experienced some dramatic changes.” In 1990, the number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 430,818. By 1994, the number had dropped to 341,317, the lowest level since 1947, when the number of enlisted members stood at 263,082.²

Gary Pfingston was born in Evansville, Indiana, on January 2, 1940, and lived there until the mid-1950s, when his family moved to California in search of employment opportunities. He graduated from Torrance High School in 1958, where, as an avid athlete, he participated in football, baseball, and wrestling. After high school, Pfingston attended El Camino College. He enrolled at Long Beach State University but never attended because he was drafted. During that time, he met his future wife, Marsha A. Hunt, of Torrance. He worked for the Redondo Beach Recreation Department and delivered newspapers for the *Los Angeles Times*.

On Christmas Eve 1961, a month after his marriage, he received a notice to report for a draft physical. “My appointment to take the physical was January 2, 1962—my birthday,” he recalled. “So I got a Christmas present and a birthday present from the Selective Service Board.”

Visits to recruiters followed his physical. Draft-age men could not receive college deferments unless they were full-time students carrying twelve to fifteen credit hours. Because Pfingston was married and working, he could not carry such a heavy academic load. And the rules for marriage deferments had changed when John F. Kennedy succeeded Dwight D. Eisenhower as President in 1960: a married candidate for deferment now had to have a child depending on him. The Pfingstons had no children, so he enlisted in the Air Force. He was

inducted in Los Angeles on February 23, 1962, and went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

Pfingston described basic training then as similar to basic training today, with one significant difference:

I guess the biggest thing is that there were two phases to basic. Everyone did the five weeks of phase one at Lackland. However, if you were selected to attend a tech [technical] school, you did phase two at the tech school. They had TIs [training instructors] at the tech school, just like they did at Lackland. But you'd go half a day to school and then [have] half a day of basic training—general military training is what they called it. Those who didn't attend a tech school completed phase two at Lackland and then went on to a permanent base as a direct duty assignment.

Recruiters did not guarantee jobs in those days. New enlistees took what was called the Airman Qualifying Examination (AQE), now the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). These tests were designed to measure administrative, electrical, general, and mechanical skills. Following those tests, inductees were matched with existing Air Force needs. Pfingston was chosen to attend the aircraft mechanics' technical school at Amarillo Air Force Base, Texas. "I went to B-47 school...[but] I never worked on one at any time during my career," he said.

In the middle of the summer of 1962, his wife, Marsha, moved from their home in Redondo Beach to Amarillo. She and the wife of one of Pfingston's airman buddies went together and found an apartment. "You've got to understand," Pfingston explained, "I only made \$79 a month as an E-1."

At Amarillo, Pfingston immediately engaged in baseball, one of his favorite pastimes. He was a skilled player, and he had played in some rookie leagues in Los Angeles before his enlistment. He played intramural softball at Amarillo, but he declined when he was asked to move up to the base fast-pitch team. He was entering the final few weeks of technical school, and he had orders to Schilling Air Force Base in Kansas. He and Marsha would at last be able to live as a family rather than make do with weekend visits.

"I got a message to report to the squadron commander," Pfingston said. "I was a dorm chief—a student leader—so I didn't know if I had screwed up or what...I marched into his office, saluted, reported, and he sat behind his desk with his big cigar, chomping on it. He said, 'Son, I understand you don't want to play for my softball team.'" Pfingston explained his situation—wife downtown, only three more weeks of school, orders to Kansas where they could live together, and so on. The commander asked Pfingston where he would like to be posted, and Pfingston told him California. "You play for my softball team," the commander promised, "and I'll guarantee you'll go to California." Pfingston's response: "Where do I sign up?"

When the softball season was over, the Pfingstons headed for Castle Air Force Base, California, where he served as a B-52 crew chief with the 93d Organizational Maintenance Squadron. While he was at Castle, the United States and the Soviet Union squared off in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. As Pfingston recalled,

I went to work one day with a pack of cigarettes and two dollars and didn't get to go home for thirty 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. It was much more structured than what we have today, but a little bit of that structure returned with the Year of Training initiatives of 1993.

At that time, E-4s were required to attend the Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory School. Each base had its own preparatory school, and Pfingston attended it while at Castle. The course lasted four weeks and was much more regimented than Airman Leadership School is today. "It was like basic training," he said. "You had to fold your underwear and put them in a drawer a special way, and your dorm room...[was] inspected every day. This was a mandatory school, and we're back to that today, primarily due to the Year of Training initiatives taken under Gen. [Merrill] McPeak and...[me]. Obviously, the dumb stuff we did—folding the socks, daily dorm inspections—we don't do anymore."

During his tour at Castle, Pfingston continued to play fast-pitch softball, and his team won the Strategic Air Command championship one year. At the same time, the situation in Vietnam was heating up. The United States had advisers there, and rumors flew around the barracks about what was going on.

Pfingston noted that many people regarded those as the Air Force's "good old days." "Well," he said, "I lived through the 'good old days,' and they weren't worth a damn. 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." He said most first-termers in the early 1960s got out after four years with two stripes. That was high as they could be promoted—airman second class.

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.

In February 1966, about a month before Pfingston was due to reenlist or start the extension, the Air Force began the variable reenlistment bonus program.

The first four years of my career were tremendous. I loved every minute of it because I worked on B-52s for half a year and played softball for half a year. I thought, hey, this is a pretty damn good deal. 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. After reenlisting, I stayed two more years at Castle. During this time, our first son, Mark, was born...at the Castle hospital.

In February 1968, then Staff Sergeant Pfingston was reassigned to Plattsburgh Air Force Base, New York. At Plattsburgh, he served as a B-52 and KC-135 crew chief and later became noncommissioned officer in charge of the aircraft records, documentation, and debriefing sections. During his stay at Plattsburgh, he was promoted to technical sergeant. "There was no WAPS system," he said. "It was still the promotion board system—behind-the-green-door, attaboy, good-old-boy, who-liked-you promotion system—where there was no visibility, no testing, or anything. They took all the staff sergeants' records into the deputy commander for maintenance [DCM] conference room and could promote whatever their authorization was." He sewed on his technical sergeant stripes in 1969. Two years later, the Pfingstons' second son, Brad, was born at the Plattsburgh Air Force Base hospital.

The next assignment took Technical Sergeant Pfingston to U-Tapao Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, for a year beginning in March 1972.

I started in aircraft maintenance again, B-52s and tankers, and then I moved into the DCM 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.



CMSAF P. Fingston in 1973, while serving as a Military Training Instructor at Lackland AFB, Texas.

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.

He returned to the United States in March 1973 to begin serving as a military training instructor at Lackland. This duty was something P. Fingston had never done, and he feared it would not be his type of work. He got through the schooling and began working with the

3711th Basic Military Training Squadron, and he found that he “just absolutely loved it. Ultimately, I ended up spending eight-and-a-half years there and had just about every job there is for an enlisted person at Lackland.” In December 1975, he was selected as chief of the Military Training Division, Headquarters Basic Military Training. Training instructor duty was a three-year controlled tour. At the end of the second year, an instructor asked for a one-year extension. Pfingston received five extensions.

During his years at Lackland, the Air Force experienced a number of cultural changes, as Pfingston later recalled:

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 draw-downs of the '90s.

Despite the challenges facing the military, Pfingston described the years at Lackland as professionally rewarding:

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 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 techni-

cal 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.

The Pflingstons moved to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in August 1981. Pflingston served with the 605th Military Airlift Support Squadron as the en route maintenance branch superintendent and, later, as the organization's first sergeant.

Shortly after his arrival at Andersen, Pflingston broke his back working on a C-141 Starlifter. He was flown to Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center at Lackland for treatment of a fractured vertebrae, herniated disks, and sciatic nerve damage. After 147 days in the hospital, he returned to the 605th and became the first sergeant for the 600-member squadron. “I loved it. That's when I really first got involved with families and people programs.” Pflingston believed that his time as a first sergeant was also important preparation for his later service as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. As a first sergeant, Pflingston “had his eyes opened” to the importance of families. He came to the conclusion that a supportive family, especially a supportive spouse, was crucial to career success.³ While serving as first sergeant, he was selected for promotion to chief master sergeant.

The next assignment took the Pflingstons to George Air Force Base, California, where he served as noncommissioned officer in charge of the 561st Aircraft Maintenance Unit. “We had the first evaluated ATSO [ability to survive and operate] exercise in a chemical environment,” Pflingston said. “So we had the first command inspector general evaluation...of working in chem [chemical] suits and gas masks in the desert, in 100-degree temperatures. It's ironic....Eight years later we would be in the desert in 100-degree temperatures, liberating Kuwait.” The inspector general with whom Pflingston worked with was the future Air Force chief of staff, Gen. Michael J. Dugan. This evaluation experience marked the beginning of Pflingston's long relationship with General Dugan.

Six months later, Pflingston was selected as the senior enlisted adviser for the 831st Air Division at George Air Force Base. He served in that role until July 1987, when he received a call from the Twelfth Air Force commander's secretary instructing him to come to Bergstrom and speak with the new commander, Lt. Gen. Merrill A. McPeak. He met with McPeak to interview for the Twelfth Air Force senior enlisted adviser position and was subsequently selected. Shortly after McPeak became commander in chief of the Pacific Air Forces, the PACAF senior enlisted adviser suffered a fatal heart attack, and McPeak tapped Pflingston to replace him. Pflingston has since described that adviser position as one of the best jobs in the Air Force, although the travel distances probably make it the most physically demanding role.



CMSAF Pfingston (left) and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Merrill A. McPeak worked closely together from 1987 until October 1994.

In the summer of 1990, Gen. Michael J. Dugan replaced Gen. Larry D. Welch as the Air Force chief of staff. One month later, nominations opened to replace CMSAF James Binnicker, and McPeak submitted Pfingston's name. The Pfingstons met with Dugan and, three days later, Pfingston received a call from Dugan, who said simply, "You're the guy." Pfingston described the challenges he would face as chief master sergeant of the Air Force:

When I came into the job, I honestly had no agenda. I was smart enough to realize that the next three or four years were not going to be very easy for the Air Force. We knew there was going to be a drawdown, [but] we didn't know how much. We knew there were going to be budget reductions, [but] we didn't know how much. So I knew there were going to be some tough things we were going to have to do.

Basically, my initial focus...was to...keep everything on track. To go on with what Jim [Binnicker] had done with the EPR [Enlisted Performance Report], and then tackle other stuff—the drawdown, the budget, and so forth.

In September 1990, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney relieved General Dugan because of comments he made to reporters during a flight from Saudi Arabia about the Kuwait situation and the conduct of a possible air war. McPeak replaced Dugan. Throughout the remainder of 1990 and into 1991, the United States built up forces in the Persian Gulf region. As Pfingston recalled the efforts of the enlisted Air Force personnel in the conflict that ensued,

When the first bombs were dropped, I was on my way to Offutt Air Force Base. I listened to CNN report the first attacks on Baghdad. I think it was incredible how the enlisted corps performed throughout the war. The enlisted people in the Air Force—the airmen and the NCOs—demonstrated their ability to be the professionals that they are. They showed the world how good they were, how dedicated they were, how smart they were.

I think a lot of enlisted people grew up, matured during that war. The first time I deployed to the desert with General Dugan, there were basically two issues. Everybody was upset [about losing] their BAS [basic allowance for subsistence] because they were in field conditions, and they wanted to know when they were coming home. We worked the BAS issue. We increased the SGLI [Servicemen's Group Life Insurance policy benefit]. We got hazardous duty pay increased. And Secretary Cheney came out and said there is no rotation—the people in the desert are there for the duration.

When we went back in January with General McPeak, it was a completely different mindset. We had taken care of the problems, and they all knew they were there for the duration. Their focus then got in the right area. The enlisted people really demonstrated how good they were. They were highly dedicated, professional airmen.

Pfingston said that the toughest thing he and McPeak had to deal with during his tenure was the Air Force downsizing.

[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.

Pfingston said that McPeak, Secretary of the Air Force Sheila E. Widnall, and he were the only ones in the armed forces who backed the voluntary separation incentive and the special separation bonus.

I lobbied real hard for these programs because I thought it was better to pay somebody to separate than to RIF [reduction in force] or SERB [Selective Early Retirement Board] them. We worked the two years of downsizing—it was very, very tough. But, knock on wood and thanks to God, it worked. We never involuntarily separated anybody.

Quality of life issues—housing, pay, and medical benefits—took precedence throughout Pfingston’s tenure. He believed that the Air Force always took good care of enlisted personnel on the job, but he did not think that was true when they were not at work. And he knew that quality of life issues were pivotal in retaining members, because, as he learned as a first sergeant, “we retain families, [not just] people.” Housing emerged as a particularly important issue during his tenure. While attention focused on all areas, housing was of special concern for single airmen. As Pfingston explained,

Airmen ought to have their own dorm room. Jim [Binnicker] started that. He used to say his eight-year-old son is authorized his own room in base housing, but when he is eighteen and enlists in the Air Force and becomes a stealth fighter crew chief, he has to have a roommate. That’s dumb as hell. A result of that is Vision 2020, and it looks like each airman will have his or her own living area. [Vision 2020 would later be changed to the DoD one-plus-one dormitory standard.]

Regarding the Year of Training that he helped to inaugurate, Pfingston feared that the Air Force was taking for granted the knowledge base of its enlisted personnel, expecting them to know more than the service provided them. He saw no consistency in training and education programs beyond basic training. He believed the enlisted force needed some career paths, some milestones in line with the officer career model. They needed to know how to build a career—what they would have to do and when they would have to do it. Pfingston’s ideas resulted in Career Field Education and Training Plans. Other highlights of the Year of Training included three-level and seven-level technical schools for all career fields and mandatory in-residence professional military education schools for everyone.

A major program tackled during the Year of Training initiative was the Federal Aviation Administration certification program for Air Force aircraft maintenance specialties. Personnel received recognition for their training and certification that they could use if they pursued civilian careers in aviation. Pfingston supported expanding such programs to other career fields.

There seemed to be no shortage of issues during Pfingston's long tenure. In addition to Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the drawdown, quality of life and training issues, the early 1990s also saw such challenging issues as gays in the military and women in combat. Pfingston recalled that he and other Air Force leaders spent "an entire year" attempting to come to grips with gays in the military. On a more successful note, the service opened all but a handful of Air Force specialty codes to women, both officers and enlisted personnel.⁴

And one of the most visible issues involved changes to the Air Force uniform. The original blue suit had changed little since its adaptation from the Army uniform in the 1940s, and a redesign of the service dress uniform was intended to create a uniform that would reaffirm the Air Force heritage and give members a more modern, professional appearance.

The dress uniform, for example, now features a single-breasted jacket with a three-button front and a single breast pocket to help align the ribbons. For enlisted members, chevrons all now have stars; the shirt stripes are larger and bolder; and standard four-inch chevrons are worn on all outer garments, with three-and-one-half-inch chevrons on shirts. Changing the stripes for senior noncommissioned officers to distinguish their rank had been proposed several times before Pfingston and McPeak began the uniform redesign. The timing was right to do it all at once.

"Some people don't like [the senior NCO stripes]," Pfingston said. "I do...I liked the old ones, too. That's what I first put on. However, I still think the new ones visibly distinguish our top three senior NCOs, and I think that's a good thing." And, he pointed out, everything that was done to alter the uniform was done to save airmen money.

Reflecting on his long and eventful tenure, Pfingston considers being able to negotiate the means to reduce the force voluntarily his most significant accomplishment as chief master sergeant of the Air Force. But he also believes the training and quality of life improvements were quite important:

Training makes individual airmen better, which makes the Air Force better. It's very important that future administration[s] not allow training money cuts. The Air Force will suffer in the long run. The quality of life things also make it better for our airmen and their families.

In Pfingston's view, his primary responsibility was to do "everything possible to make it better for the troops." His philosophy was simple:

You must make decisions that are in the best interests of the Air Force, not individuals. I used this guideline whenever I was thrown into a major issue of concern to our people—homosexuals in the military, assignment policies (EQUAL and EQUAL Plus), CONUS

COLAs [continental United States, cost of living adjustments], VHAs [variable housing allowances], early retirements, the Year of Training.

Looking back on his tenure as CMSAF and his more than thirty years of service, Pfingston said that his most memorable experience was receiving, from President George H. W. Bush, the official battle streamers for the Air Force for the liberation of Kuwait and the defense of Saudi Arabia. Today, Pfingston lives in San Antonio, Texas, where he works as the director of golf services at the Dominion Country Club. While he may jokingly respond that his primary role as a former chief master sergeant of the Air Force is “giving golf lessons,” he takes seriously what he sees as his continuing responsibility to the Air Force. He views himself and the other former chiefs as part of a “communication chain.” They can talk to people, answer questions, explain issues, and relay what is going on. He concluded that “the USAF is probably in good shape because the former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force have been active.”⁵

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by CMSgt. Ed A. Braese.
2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, pp. 64–66.
3. CMSAF Pfingston responded to his questionnaire (hereinafter Pfingston Questionnaire) in a telephone interview, notes from which are available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
4. Pfingston Questionnaire.
5. *Ibid.*

David J. Campanale

October 26, 1994–November 4, 1996



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David J. Campanale became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on October 26, 1994. William Jefferson Clinton was President of the United States, Sheila E. Widnall was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ The post–Cold War drawdown continued during Campanale’s watch with the number of enlisted members falling from 341,317 in 1994 to 308,608 in 1996.² At the same time, though, the operational tempo increased, placing great strain on the Air Force and its personnel.

The youngest of three children, David Campanale was born in 1952 and raised in the inner city of Worcester, Massachusetts. He graduated from Worcester’s North High School in 1970. As Campanale recalled, neither goals nor expectations took him to the Air Force:

I came in simply because, as I graduated from high school, I was one of those kids who thought they had the world by the throat. I was a good athlete, reasonably smart in school, had a girlfriend. Life was grand. But everything fell apart, and I quickly realized I hadn’t properly planned for the rest of my life. I liked playing sports and thought about pro baseball, but it didn’t work out. I went to a [baseball] training camp and worked out, but nothing happened. I had to find another profession.

I liked to work with my hands on machinery.... There weren’t opportunities for athletic scholarships in trade schools, and there were no funds for college. My mom encouraged me to join the United States Air Force after seeing what the other services offered. She thought it would be a good way for me to get some direction in my life. So I joined in September 1970.

In December 1970, following basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, Campanale went to technical training as an aircraft maintenance specialist at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. He was class leader, but he broke his collarbone playing football and ended up in a painful and confining figure-eight harness. After the injury, he could not take class notes, and he was not focused on studying, so he did poorly on the next test. His staff sergeant in-

structor belittled him before his classmates and replaced him as class leader. The humiliation was stinging, and he learned from that experience never to criticize people publicly.

As Christmas approached, Campanale was close to giving up, but hearing he could go home for the holidays lifted his spirits. He planned to surprise his mother and his girlfriend, so he told no one that he was coming home. As it turned out, all the surprises were on him: “My girlfriend had found romance with someone else, and my mom had gone to Chicago to visit friends.”

He followed his mother to Chicago and shared with her all the difficulties he was experiencing personally and in the Air Force. Tina Campanale’s instincts about her son’s needs were perfect. She told him that God would provide for him somehow and that she was going to help by introducing him to another young woman. She introduced him to Barbara, and a life-long match was made.

Airman Campanale’s next stop was Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, in February 1971. There he was assigned as a B-52 crew chief. Two excellent supervisors—Tony Saenz and Art Zelesnikar—taught him all about the technical aspects of aircraft maintenance. Saenz was an inner-city guy who became close friends with Campanale. Zelesnikar, who later would be known as Chief Z, taught Campanale how to be a more professional military person. “He would pull me aside and tell me we were doing all the technical things right, but there’s more to it than that,” Campanale remembered. “You’ve got to look the part, act the part, you’ve got to be a good citizen off duty, and you’ve got to learn more about the aircraft every day. You can’t just meet the minimum acceptable standard.”

Campanale did not accept those lessons at first. He struggled with his career development course, flunking the test twice. He got a break when Zelesnikar and others convinced the first sergeant to grant a waiver so he could get his five-level without taking the test.

“At that point, I started volunteering, helping people out, keeping my dorm room clean. I was getting better,” Campanale said. “And I started taking studying seriously.”

Barksdale was a tough assignment because of very frequent temporary duty trips. During Campanale’s assignment, the 2d Organizational Maintenance Squadron was involved in several tours to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in support of B-52 Arc Light missions in Southeast Asia. Campanale later recalled that

We were in constant deployments to Guam. We were gone for six months and back home for thirty days. We’d get back and check in our toolboxes, then take a few weeks off. It didn’t count as leave time; you just had to let people know where you’d be. We’d come back and go again for another six months. It was tough. Families fell apart for several reasons. Dear John letters were common, family members would get sick, but no one was let go to come back. You couldn’t leave unless it was a life-or-death situation.

Campanale began to look for challenges. He raised his hand when the call went out for a volunteer to leave the crew chief business and go to aerial repair to work as a heavy maintenance, flight controls, and landing gear specialist. He worked hard and always tried to help out, all the while learning everything he could about his aircraft, B-52Gs and B-52Ds. He enjoyed the assignment, although he missed working as a crew chief.

When the Vietnam War ended, the B-52s returned, and Sergeant Campanale went back to Barksdale. He soon heard about an assignment at Grissom Air Force Base, Indiana, and the time had come to decide if he would make the Air Force his career. "I asked myself, 'What am I going to do if I get out?'" he said. "I can go back to my summer job in Massachusetts, but it wouldn't pay as much as what I make in the Air

Force. That's when I figured out my philosophy on whether to stay in or get out. That is, there are only two reasons to get out of the Air Force. One, you hate the whole Air Force. Two, you've got something better to do."

Neither reason fit them completely, so the Campanales, now with one child, decided to stay four more years. They wanted to be closer to Barbara's family in Chicago, so Campanale applied for a base-of-preference assignment to Grissom and got it.

He was assigned to the 305th Maintenance Squadron in April 1974. The squadron's technical administration section had failed a quality-assurance inspection because of a subpar tech order area. They wanted a crew chief to straighten out the problem. Because Campanale was the next one to show up, he got the job and kept it for four years. "I found a lot of things wrong in tech orders, and, as I fixed them, a lot of people who were higher ranking than me were upset," Campanale said. "I worked for a senior master sergeant who believed in me, and he would tell them, 'I believe David.' I never wanted to disappoint him. I got my seven-level by scoring 85 on my end-of-course test. I was very proud of that since I'd failed my five-level test." He left Grissom as a staff sergeant in August 1978.

Campanale then volunteered for an assignment at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, working on C-130s. The family found a friendly welcome there, and they enjoyed the stay. While in Hawaii, Campanale went to the Pacific Air Forces NCO Leadership School at Wheeler Air Force Base, an experience that prompted a profound change in him:



TSgt. David Campanale found that his career became more rewarding after he attended NCO Leadership School at Wheeler Air Force Base.

I went up there with no desire but to just pass, but something triggered off in my life. I came home on a break the night Sugar Ray Leonard lost to Roberto Duran in their first fight. Barb was there like she's always been. I said to myself, "You know, my wife really loves me and she'll always be here for me." It was then that I realized how lucky I was, and, within the course of that four-and-a-half weeks, I matured from a technician who was just living life into someone who became very, very serious about the Air Force and the professional aspects of it. I finished as the distinguished graduate, speech award winner, and won the athletic achievement award for the school. My confidence was pretty high.

At graduation from the leadership course, Campanale was cited as a technical sergeant selectee. "All at once, things started happening right for me," Campanale said. "As I'd transformed from high school into the military, the things I'd wanted to do never seemed to work out right, and I never found the motivation to get things charged up again. I'd struggled until then, but now things were going well."

The Campanales relished their tour in Hawaii. Their daughters, Jennifer and Jessica, were growing up, and Campanale, who was recovering from an Achilles tendon injury suffered playing varsity basketball, was coaching youth soccer. The family helped to transform a fledgling soccer league with fewer than ten teams into an eight-league organization. Dave and Barbara shared a part-time job stocking shelves at the base commissary, and he was promoted to master sergeant under the Stripes to Exceptional Performers (STEP) program.

Campanale's rise from staff sergeant, to technical sergeant, to the 6594th Test Group Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, to being a master sergeant was rewarding, he has explained, because just prior to that he had realized why he was not being promoted:

I had reached a point in my life when things would go wrong, and I blamed other people. Not in a bitter fashion. I was just content with the idea that I was doing the right things and everything was the fault of others or of "the system." Then I started looking around me and saw other people getting promoted and winning awards; doing well. What I started doing was taking account [of] myself, and...if something didn't happen right in my life, I blamed myself.

It had been easy before because I could just legitimize any situation and say, well, it was a little bit of Joe's fault, a little bit of Sue's fault, and a little bit of mine. Then I'd...move on. But then I started blaming myself 100 percent, knowing full well that I wasn't going to be totally wrong all of the time.

I just did it because it motivated me to be right, to try to do the right thing. It worked. I started getting better scores on WAPS [Weighted Airman Promotion System] tests and I was getting good grades in my college courses. It also helped that my mom

lived with us from 1979 to 1982 in Hawaii. Her guidance and loving hand always kind of helped out and made life easy for me to understand.

In August 1983, Master Sergeant Campanale went to Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire, where he worked as a flight chief and line chief for the FB-111A and the KC-135. Pease was both a good and a bad experience. On the positive side, Campanale went to the Military Airlift Command NCO Academy at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, shortly after arriving. He won the commandant's award, was distinguished graduate, and was a finalist in the speech competition. During that time, however, the family suffered losses. Barbara became seriously ill, and her father and grandmother died. Campanale's mother, Tina, also died.

After the cancellation of an assignment to RAF Alconbury, England, Senior Master Sergeant Campanale received a by-name request to go to Strategic Air Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in August 1986. In his role as FB-111A and B-1B systems program manager, he advised others on some B-52 issues and did a number of briefings as a "fifteen-minute expert." The organization had a heavy temporary duty schedule, so people often had to brief someone else's issue to commanders. Campanale filled in for a variety of issues, including training, maintenance standardization, quality, and the B-1 Lead the Fleet program. When his Airman Performance Report was filed, Gen. Jack Chain, commander in chief of SAC, signed as the senior rater. Campanale made chief master sergeant the first time.

When Campanale became president of the Offutt Chiefs' Group, he set up informational briefings and morale-building events for military members and families. He helped to start a chiefs' induction ceremony. His hard work paid off when he was offered a senior enlisted adviser job at Castle Air Force Base, California. The offer, however, did not receive a strongly favorable response at home, so Campanale decided not to pursue it. He knew such offers were rare, but he did not feel he could devote his best efforts unless the situation was a happy one for his wife and daughters, too. No action was taken until Barbara, aware of how losing this opportunity would sadden her husband, visited the senior enlisted adviser at Strategic Air Command, CMSgt. Jan Boyd, and accepted the offer of an interview on Campanale's behalf. "We'll go wherever my husband wants," she said. "If he's happy, we're happy."

Col. Dick Martin hired Campanale as the 93d Bomb Wing senior enlisted adviser shortly after an interview in May 1989. The work was richly rewarding. As Campanale explained,

Now a lot of people tell me being chief master sergeant of the Air Force must be the pinnacle of my life. But I've got to tell you something. If I could go back and capture a moment in time that nobody could change, I would capture that moment at Castle as a wing adviser, and I would stay there the rest of my life.

It was during Desert Shield/Desert Storm and, God, our folks did just tremendous stuff. The community embraced us, and everybody worked long, hard hours together. Sometimes you thought it would never end, but everybody worked together, and we served a great purpose.

After Campanale had been at Castle for almost three years, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, was looking for a senior enlisted adviser. Gen. H. T. Johnson was the commander, and he was interviewing potential candidates. He had called the senior enlisted adviser at Strategic Air Command, CMSgt. Dan Cook, and asked for recommendations outside the command because he wanted a fresh face and fresh experience. Cook recommended Campanale. Johnson and the vice commander, Lt. Gen. Robert Rutherford, interviewed him and three other senior enlisted advisers. Two days later, Campanale received a congratulatory call from Johnson, and, within the month, most of his family had moved to Illinois. His daughter Jessica stayed behind in California to finish high school.

Military Airlift Command became Air Mobility Command (AMC) in June 1992. Gen. Ronald Fogleman replaced General Johnson, and Campanale offered his position to whomever the new commander might prefer. He said to Fogleman, “Sir, I’m here to serve and I’ll do whatever [you require], but if you have somebody that you want to do this job and I’m not part of those plans, hey, that’s okay. I’ll do anything in AMC, and if I have to move my family again, I will.” He added, “I want to know that you share a positive relationship with your senior enlisted adviser because it’s important to the people of this command, especially due to the command reorganization.”

Fogleman had no plans to make a change. “[Campanale] was selected before I arrived at AMC and I didn’t know him, so we talked about whether he would stay on or whether I would bring in somebody of my own,” Fogleman said. “I explained to him that I had no predilection to bring in anybody else. I decided we would walk a mile together, and see how we worked.”

Fogleman and Campanale worked together for almost two years, and then a call went out for nominations to replace retiring CMSAF Gary Pfingston. Fogleman nominated Campanale. With two other finalists—CMSgt. Tommy Roberts and CMSgt. Rich Griffis—Campanale and his wife went to Washington, D.C., for face-to-face interviews with Air Force senior leaders. Fogleman was now one of those senior leaders, having been named the Air Force chief of staff, and he recalled the interviews:

I interviewed all three of the candidates and their wives because I had a vision about how I wanted to use the chief master sergeant of the Air Force; how I saw his role...[vis-à-vis] my role. I was very interested in making sure that the wives understood that this was



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman (left) already had worked with David Campanale for two years before the day he swore Campanale in as the eleventh chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

going to be a high-energy job with a lot of time on the road. I wanted them to understand that the focus was not going to be in Washington; it was going to be on the troops in the field.

They were all excellent candidates with very supportive spouses. I also had an additional dimension to my selection process. I knew most of the former chief master sergeants of the Air Force, so I went out of my way to contact them. I wanted to talk to them about how they saw the job, and what kind of qualities and characteristics they would recommend... So I had lots of inputs to help make a rather deliberate decision.

...I ended up selecting Dave Campanale because, first of all, I knew him to be a self-starter. He had great energy and genuine care for our Air Force people. I knew that he had absolute integrity, that he understood and demonstrated excellence in all that he did. And I never saw him do anything for his benefit. He was what I think about when I think about a selfless individual who's there to serve the men and women of the United States Air Force. That's the way I saw him at AMC, and that's the way I've seen him [in Washington, D.C.].

As it's turned out, Chief Campanale is better than I even thought he was. He's outstanding. Here was somebody who could tell me the morale of the troops, and let me know what was on their mind and what we could fix. At the same time, I needed somebody who had the courage to stand up and tell people that you can't fix everything.

...He's not chief master sergeant of the enlisted force, he's chief master sergeant of the United States Air Force—the total force [active, Guard, Reserve, and civilians]. Dave Campanale has demonstrated that he understands that. I think the proof of the pudding is

that all those people find him approachable, and bring issues to him because they know that he'll work [on] their problem.

Campanale says it was a great honor to be chosen for the top position, but he had never aspired to it. He was proud to have achieved something because of what his mother had taught him: just be the best person you can be. He came to the job without specific goals, wanting instead to work on whatever issue was most critical at any moment.

Campanale believed that if you set goals, a specific course of action, it was easy to get too involved in those goals and to ignore other matters that arise collaterally. He intentionally set no conscious work agenda so that the people of the Air Force would feel confident that their individual problems, regardless of how small they really might be in the big picture, were just as important to him as were the larger issues. As he explained,

I was listening for big people issues: money, pay, compensation, housing, dormitory issues, uniform, evaluation systems, assignments, year of training. Those were all out there, based on the feedback I had as the AMC adviser, but I only knew about AMC. I was generally confident that most of those things were issues Air Force people wanted me to work [on], so I just tackled them one at time.

And, indeed, a number of people issues provided Campanale with challenges during his time as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. First, the same year he began his tour at the Pentagon, the military officially launched a new managed health care program, the Tri-Service Medical Care Program, or TRICARE, which replaced the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services, or CHAMPUS, created by Congress in 1966. The adoption of TRICARE came in response to rapidly rising health care costs in the 1980s and 1990s. As with any major change in benefits, TRICARE came with a great deal of questions and anxiety. As the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Campanale had to take the new TRICARE message to the troops.

Second, in late 1995, Congress threatened to change the retirement system. Congress had acted to change the military retirement system in 1980 and again in 1986. Both times, however, the changes applied only to people entering the service after the effective dates. In 1995, however, Congress considered a retroactive change. The proposed legislation would have based retired pay on the average of a person's final year of service rather than on his or her pay during the final month of active duty. This measure threatened a reduction in retirement pay of as much as 8.4 percent. Known as "High One," this program met strong resistance from the military leadership, including the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. Campanale predicted that it would hurt the morale not only of those directly affected but also of many others who would see this as Congress breaking faith with military members. As

Campanale put it, “people with four to eight years of service will look at this and say ‘Gee, do I stay twelve more years? What have I got to look forward to?’”³ In this case, the leadership successfully fought this proposed change.

Another victory of sorts came in the area of housing. For a number of years, the Air Force had been moving toward better housing for its young airmen. As many of the chief master sergeants of the Air Force would attest, housing for airmen had improved dramatically since the days of the open-bay barracks. The Air Force had already adopted a so-called two-plus-two dormitory standard, which meant that in each dorm unit, four airmen would share two rooms and one bath. In 1996, in response to the Quality of Life survey conducted in 1995, the service adopted the one-plus-one standard. Under one-plus-one, airmen would have rooms of their own but would still share a bath with one other. By the mid-1990s, the Air Force had moved about 80 percent of its dormitory residents to quarters that met the two-plus-two standard. It hoped to move 80 to 90 percent to the one-plus-one standard by 2010. Campanale viewed the one-plus-one standard as “very important” in terms of both recruiting and retention.^{iv}

When asked how he would like to be viewed by those in the Air Force, Campanale said, “I want to be seen as someone who is genuine and ready to go listen, to talk to the troops, and work any issue—regardless of what it may be, where it may be. Whether it’s day shift, swing shift, midshift, big issue, small issue, issue for one hundred, issue for just one.”

Campanale was not a proponent of long speeches. When he visited people at the bases, he encouraged their questions, because in those questions were the same areas of concern he would have covered in a speech. In the question-and-answer format, however, he and the others engaged in a dialogue. He found this to be a meaningful way to reveal his humanity and his sincere interest in his people.

Campanale is quick to point out that anyone can rise to be chief master sergeant of the Air Force. “I am the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force who was not on active duty when Paul Airey was named the first [chief],” Campanale said. “My math tells me that means there are ten future chief master sergeant[s] of the Air Force on active duty right now; some of them might be reading this. I’d also like to point out that they make the stripes in women’s sizes.”

In offering advice to those who would like to follow in his footsteps, Campanale returned to his core beliefs:

Be a good person; a person who understands discipline; a person who understands courage; a person who understands compassion for people; a person who has a balance in life and who doesn’t become one-dimensional. Do the job simply for the merits of trying to do the best you can do at the highest level possible. Have fun, be humble, and never, ever forget what it was like to be an airman, and how you felt about things. Then

you'll always remember what you felt in your heart and thought in your mind as a young airman, and you'll be better prepared to take care of our young people today, who will take care of our Air Force forever. Be honest and keep your promise.

All those things, the Air Force didn't teach me. My mom taught me [those]. The Air Force gave them different names and some situational approaches, but they're nothing more than the tools my mom gave me as she raised me.

Campanale retired on November 1, 1996, after twenty-six years on active duty. He currently resides in Tuscon, Arizona, where he works for an insurance company.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, the material in this biographical sketch was researched and compiled by CMSgt. Michael A. Brown, Sr.

2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 65.

3. John T. Correll, editor-in-chief, "High One is a Low Blow," *Air Force Magazine* 78, no. 10 (October 1995): 2.

4. Suzann Chapman, "The Top Chief," *Air Force Magazine* 77, no. 4 (April 1995): 39; Suzann Chapman, "The Housing Problem," *Air Force Magazine* 79, no. 6 (June 1996): 41.

Eric W. Benken

November 5, 1996–July 30, 1999



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Eric W. Benken became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on November 5, 1996. Bill Clinton was President of the United States, Sheila E. Widnall was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ In 1996, the number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 308,608. By 1999, the number had dropped to 286,169.²

Eric Benken was born on August 20, 1951, and grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. He thought his future was securely rooted in the Midwest until his parents moved to Houston, Texas, in 1967, during his junior year in high school. After spending three months in Houston, Benken told his parents that he did not like the school there and that he wanted to return to Cincinnati. He went back and lived with his grandmother and finished his senior year of high school there.

Following graduation in 1969, he rejoined his parents in Houston, but he could not find a job. The war in Vietnam made employers reluctant to hire young men who were likely to be drafted just about the time they finished job training. “So I wound up working in a car dealership,” Benken said, “where I was just washing cars and doing odd jobs...taking out the trash, and things like that. With overtime, I was making about \$60 a week.”

After much frustration trying to find a secure niche in society, Benken found an opening. “It was a hot summer day,” he recalled, “and my mother came to pick me up in my ’62 Chevy, [which] had no air conditioning. As we were driving home, we got stuck in a traffic jam in downtown Houston. We were stuck in front of the Federal Building, and there was a poster or sign that read, ‘Join the Air Force.’ I told my mother, ‘You know, I think I’m going to get out of Houston, Texas. I’ll take the bus home. See you later.’” He enlisted on the spot.

After basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, Benken was placed in casual status awaiting assignment to a technical training school. He was designated for training as an administrative specialist, Air Force specialty code 702, and ordered to Ellington Air Force Base, only twenty-five miles from his home in Houston. “I joined the Air Force to get out of Houston, and the Air Force was sending me right back,” he quipped.

At Ellington, Benken’s first supervisor was MSgt. Elizabeth Quatowski. She had a major influence on his life and subsequent career:

In September 1971, A1C Eric Benken was deployed to Detachment 1 of the 834th Air Division at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam—a brief but intense experience.



At that time, we had very few females on active duty. So it was unusual to have a female supervisor. But I say, to this day, that she was probably the best supervisor that I ever had. She did everything right. She gave me feedback, she told me when to get a haircut, told me when I was out of uniform and to get it right. She made sure that I was properly trained, had my quarters in good shape, and all the things we expect a supervisor to do. It put me on the right path.

She also convinced him that “women could succeed in the vast majority of career paths offered by the Air Force.”³

Nine months into his tour of duty at Ellington, Benken received orders to the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing, Ching Chuan Kang Air Base, Taiwan, where his perspective on the Air Force would change.

When I was stationed...in Taiwan, we lived in some very lousy...conditions. We lived in some open-bay dormitories. I never saw my first sergeant. I didn't know who my first sergeant was. I didn't know who my commander was. We lived in some horrid conditions, and nobody ever came and looked at it. We lived in open bay hooches with no air conditioning or heating. We slept in our fatigues in winter because we were issued only one blanket and because the doors were broken, the wind whistled through the barracks. There were lots of fights and drug use was rampant. Nobody ever came and made it better.

I always said that if I became a chief master sergeant or if I became a senior enlisted adviser, my boss had to be somebody that I could freely talk to, and someone...[to whom] I could show the bad as well as the good.

While assigned to the 314th, Benken was deployed for a few months to Detachment 1 of the 834th Air Division at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. There he provided administrative support for the base maintenance unit. The experience was brief but intense, with a rocket attack, attempted sapper infiltration of the base, and a shooting just outside the main gate. He also celebrated his twentieth birthday there, with a C-ration pineapple upside-down cake and a can of Schlitz beer. Recalling his time in Vietnam, Benken said,

Many of the folks who served during that era were part of our nonvolunteer force. We had tremendous problems with drugs and alcohol. I also learned that anyone, regardless of [specialty code], can be called upon to carry a weapon. Even as an admin specialist, I was placed on a detail to guard weapons and ammunition on a flatbed truck while we moved them from one location to another. I wasn't trained and had no idea what I was doing. It could have turned out to be a bad day. The lesson for today's Air Force is that we must all be trained in force protection.

From Taiwan, Benken was assigned to the 67th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron at Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas, where he spent six years. He next served as the executive noncommissioned officer to the commander of the 314th Air Division at Osan Air Base, South Korea. "That tour," he remembered, "and a visit to the 38th parallel, where you stare communism in the face, deepened my appreciation for the Air Force mission and our way of life in America."

In November 1979, Benken was reassigned to Bergstrom Air Force Base as the noncommissioned officer in charge for the deputy commander for resources administration, and as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Twelfth Air Force Command Section. In 1983, he was assigned to the Tactical Air Warfare Center at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, as the noncommissioned officer in charge and deputy chief of staff, aircrew training devices administration.

"It was a great assignment," said Benken, who by then was a master sergeant. But he had seen Asia and several places in the United States, so he volunteered to go to Europe. He received a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) assignment at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) in Belgium. He worked in the directorate of operations as the administrative officer, with seventy-three administrators working under him. There were members of sixteen nations working together at SHAPE—Greeks, Turks, Italians, Ger-

mans, Dutch, Norwegians, Britons, and others—plus the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army. The opportunity to work with people from such a range of cultures taught Benken a great deal.

While at SHAPE, Benken met and worked for Maj. Gen. James L. Jamerson, the assistant chief of staff for operations. Jamerson would soon earn his third star, move on to United States Air Forces in Europe headquarters as the vice commander, and would then become the Twelfth Air Force commander at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base near Tucson, Arizona. While in that last assignment, Jamerson asked Benken to be his senior enlisted adviser. As Benken recalled that assignment,

I had hoped that I would start at the wing level and be a wing senior enlisted adviser. That was a goal that I had in the back of my mind. Unfortunately, I never got the opportunity to be a wing senior enlisted adviser. I went straight to a numbered Air Force. And the numbered Air Force had changed dramatically... We were doing all kinds of missions, [including] counterdrug operations and things in South America. Visiting these remote counterdrug sites in South America gives you an appreciation for...[our] war on drugs. Our troops were living in remote jungle locations with sand bags and concertina wire. They could have been attacked by members of a drug cartel at any moment. I was very proud of what our troops were doing in the fight against drugs—as Americans we should all be proud of what our troops are doing.

Benken noted that at that time the Twelfth Air Force had ten wings. The initial challenge, he said, was pulling the wings together into a cohesive entity through the wing senior enlisted advisers. Benken made sure those advisers understood that he was available to them when they needed three-star intervention. He believes that higher headquarters people exist to support the wings, because those are the warfighting entities.

Benken had been at the Twelfth Air Force for about a year when Jamerson was promoted to general and given the command of U.S. Air Forces in Europe. Again he wanted Benken to accompany him to the new post. Benken and his wife, Johnne, had not fully unpacked their household goods from the last transfer, and they found themselves having to sell a house they had just bought. It was challenging, but the senior enlisted adviser assignment at Ramstein, Germany, was worth it. Benken remembered that tour this way:

Ramstein was probably my favorite tour...we were extremely busy. We were at the tip of the spear—operations like Joint Endeavor, Provide Promise, Provide Comfort, and Deliberate Force kept us hopping. The tremendous people of U.S. Air Forces Europe—augmented by tremendous people from the Air National Guard and Reserve forces and folks from bases around the world—made it all happen. There were very proud moments for the command and the Air Force. It was a great command. We had gotten down to about



CMSAF Eric Benken and his wife, Johnne, met President Bill Clinton at the Pentagon.

six main operating bases from the height of the Cold War and had downsized tremendously. At the same time we were doing all kinds of peacekeeping missions over there. So we had people who were very heavily tasked and working extremely hard.

While at USAFE, Benken crafted the NCO Professional Development Seminar, which was an effort to fill the career education void for staff sergeants between Airman Leadership School and the Senior NCO Academy. At his urging, especially after he became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the concept has caught on, and seminars now exist at nearly every base in the Air Force. Benken is a proponent of professional military education, which he lauds for its structure and for the sound leadership tools it provides. But he believes that the Air Force has a responsibility to develop its younger noncommissioned officers professionally. In fact, he believed that his fellow chief master sergeants of the Air Force “would agree that professional military education is the key to our success as professional noncommissioned officers.” Not only did Benken recognize the value of professional military education for the USAF enlisted force as a whole, he also saw its value clearly in his own career development.

For me, NCO Leadership School, the NCO Academy and Senior NCO Academy were superb experiences. They offered the opportunity to “get away” from the day-to-day grind. They were a re-bluing experience—a chance to re-dedicate yourself to your service and to your nation. I learned a lot—and took what I learned back to my workcenter and became a better leader because of the experience.⁴

During Benken's time in Europe, the Air Staff developed a quality of life strategy by asking first sergeants and commanders what things were important to them. Among the responses received were such issues as pay and compensation, health care, and operations tempo.

Also during that period, Benken was fortunate to witness many changes in geopolitical and sociological status across Europe. He recalls the experience of being in Europe when the Berlin Wall was pulled down and considers the 1989 end of the Cold War to be the most significant event of the twentieth century, beyond the two world wars. "It caused all of the nations to begin to reassess their commitments to NATO—from a military and monetary standpoint," he said. Benken described how situations changed dramatically:

I will tell you that being at SHAPE headquarters, which was the military arm of NATO,...we were knee-deep in war plans. We were ready to fight the Russians in the Fulda Gap. We were ready to launch [intercontinental ballistic missiles] at each other; prepared for, potentially, the third world war; all that kind of thing. All of a sudden, when the Wall came down, things came to a...halt. We were looking around saying, "Geez, what do we do now? The big crisis of the world is over."

That was the beginning of downsizing, obviously. We probably would have ended up about right in terms of size and everything except that we started additional rotations. We started the peacekeeping operations and the disaster relief, while the force was getting smaller.

During his time at USAFE, Benken worked for three formidable commanders—Gens. Jim Jamerson, Richard E. Hawley, and Michael E. Ryan. Benken remembers all three men as great listeners. He said that hours were spent discussing enlisted issues—the bad news as well as the good—and that every time one of those men was going to make any decision, he asked first, "How is it going to affect the troops? What's going to be the impact on our enlisted corps?"

Shortly after General Ryan took the reins of United States Air Forces in Europe, CMSAF David Campanale announced his plans to retire, and Benken found himself in line for the most prestigious job open to an enlisted member of the U.S. Air Force. He had never aspired to the position and was apprehensive. He had always avoided jobs at the Pentagon and never really wanted to work there. But Ryan insisted on submitting the recommendation.

Benken and his wife, Johnne, traveled to Washington, D.C., for an interview with Gen. Ronald Fogleman, and Benken often jokes that the only reason he got the job was that Johnne did so well answering Fogleman's questions. "She's a trooper," he said. "She had to take care of outprocessing in Germany because I had to come [to] Washington directly upon selection. She's the one...[who] shipped all the household goods. She did all of that herself—with a lot of help from a lot of people in USAFE. She's been the anchor at home."

It took Benken several months to grow accustomed to the workings of the Pentagon and to looking at the Air Force from a macro level. And he no longer was acting on policy handed down from above: as the enlisted corps' representative to the secretary of the Air Force and the chief of staff, he was developing policy that would be implemented servicewide.

One such policy, and one he ranks among the most significant accomplishments during his tenure, was changing the title of senior enlisted adviser to command chief master sergeant, or CCM. With that change came a new, distinctive insignia that

identifies the command chief master sergeant to the troops. As Benken explained, the change grew out of misuse and confusion:



Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Benken and his daughter Erika

It was a concept that had been discussed on numerous occasions over the years. The term senior enlisted adviser was merely a description and had little military significance. It became overused, and we had a lot of people who had the title but weren't assigned to the 9E000 position. Today, there is nothing ambiguous about command chief master sergeant. The troops know who the CCMs are and what they represent[—that is,] the commanders' policies at the wing, numbered Air Force, and major command levels.

Benken readily admits that developing policy is not done alone behind a desk in a corner of the Pentagon. Rather, it is a team effort that has to involve the major command (MAJ-COM) CCMs. They represent the force, and, to be able to work collectively, they have to have a say in the process. He also believed that he had great support from the two chiefs of staff under whom he served. He described General Fogleman as a man of great integrity and said that the enlisted force admired him “for taking a tough stance on issues.” Benken had worked with General Ryan at USAFE as his senior enlisted adviser. Benken credited Ryan with taking a number of important initiatives, including working to improve attitudes toward and access to mental health facilities. Ryan also told Benken that he was deeply committed to enlisted professional military education, telling him that he “would sacrifice F-22s to retain 100% in residence training for enlisted PME at the ALS and NCOA levels—and that

technical training would continue to be in residence.” Benken concluded, “Both of these men cared deeply for our enlisted force—and did everything within their power to improve quality of life and support technical training and professional military education.”⁵

During Benken’s tenure as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the service faced a number of significant challenges, including the evolving Air Force missions, health care, and modernizing the force in a limited-budget context. The chief has described the challenges this way:

The fact that we have five-level shortages and are seeing some retention problems doesn’t surprise me. We have an economy that’s very robust. The desert rotations have kind of become a millstone around our necks in that we’re doing those all the time. We’re still kind of fighting Cold War scenarios and we are transitioning to an expeditionary Air Force. We no longer have that forward presence anymore.

Health care had to change because of the downsizing. TRICARE had to come on board, which really kind of began in 1995. We’ve tremendously reduced our infrastructure. Military treatment facilities can no longer take care of the nearly nine million or so people...[who] are eligible for health care. TRICARE was the answer.

We worked to bring on the F-22. It’s time to do that, because our weapon systems are aging. We have spare parts issues. Our crew chiefs are forced to deal with that. We’re cannibalizing more aircraft than normal.

Further, Benken believed that the last half of the last half of the 1990s was a “very volatile time for our Air Force and the Armed Forces as a whole.” In addition to the issues of retention, medical care, and lack of spare parts mentioned above, according to Benken, the Air Force faced a number of other issues. For example, due to Congressional action in 1986, the retirement system had changed: now depending on when you came on active duty, you received either 50 percent of base pay at twenty years under the old system or 40 percent under the new system. Benken believed that the Air Force lost personnel at the ten-year mark because of that. It was no longer worth staying to twenty years for the retirement. And the service was unable to act quickly to provide incentives to keep people in critical career fields.⁶

The way the Air Force trained its new recruits also became an issue during Benken’s tenure. Some in Congress began to advocate separating men and women during basic training, a notion Benken found “ridiculous.” The Air Force had been training men and women together since 1973. Despite a record of success, two separate and hostile commissions investigated gender-integrated training. Benken and his counterparts in the other services testified before the commissions. They all argued that the services had to make their own decisions about training. Further, Benken believed that separate training would be unequal

training and that it would be “wrong.” As a result of the strong arguments provided, the commissions were unable to force this change on the services. Though Benken believed that the service’s success in fighting off separate training represented another of the significant accomplishments of his time in office, he also realized that the issue might arise again. He stated,

I honestly believe that there are some in Congress that would have us return to the days when men went to the firing range and women would go to a cosmetics class. The reality is, women serve in 99.4% of Air Force career fields and make up roughly 25% of our new recruits. To this day, I believe that those opposed to gender-integrated training have hidden agendas—especially when they turned down the offer to visit our training locations and speak to trainers and trainees. I hope this issue is forever put to rest, but to believe it won’t return as an issue would be naïve.⁷

The most difficult challenge facing Benken was the fact that the USAF culture had to change in the late 1990s. Since gaining its independence as a service in 1947, the U.S. Air Force had been a cold war, garrison force. The service now had to become an expeditionary force. This was, as Benken put it, “a radical departure from the way we were doing business.” As chief master sergeant of the Air Force, he said, “I knew my role would be to help change the culture of the enlisted force to meet his [General Ryan’s] vision.” Benken realized that the late 1990s proved a difficult time to try to bring about a significant culture change. He noted that many of the issues listed above—including a lack of spare parts, changes in the retirement system, and the strong economy—were making a military career less appealing. Also, the media seemed filled with negative images. As he recalled, “During visits to bases our troops would express lots of dissatisfaction with what was going on in Washington with politicians. They couldn’t understand a declining defense budget while our missions and deployment taskings were on the rise.” However, he believed that a number of important steps were taken. First, the Air Force implemented Warrior Week⁸ at basic training. Further, the curriculum at the First Sergeants Academy was changed to focus on deployments and the issues created by deployments. He believed that “we now view ourselves as mobile warriors—much more so than we have in the past.”⁹

Despite the challenges, Benken does not predict “gloom and doom” for the Air Force. “Today, we have the best Air Force we’ve ever had,” he said. “The troops today, when they come out of basic training, are just phenomenal. I’m very, very proud of them. I’m very proud of those training processes—both basic military training and technical school.” He warns, however, that people need to keep an eye on the future: “We need to make sure that our professional military education is geared properly for going into the next century and the changes that we’re going to have to make. We need to take our force to a higher level. The

concept of airmanship and professionalism, and treating each other with dignity and respect, should be foremost.”

Benken tries to impress this on others who are influencing the next generation of Air Force leaders: “That’s what I tell brand-new chiefs, and in particular, brand-new senior NCOs. When you do something, it has an impact. People are watching you all the time. They’re watching your deeds, and they’re listening to what you say, and it’s very important that you do the right thing.”

He sees the efforts of the succession of chief master sergeants of the Air Force in terms of football. “You pick up the ball and you run with it for awhile, and then it’s no longer your turn. Then somebody else runs it. We keep taking it a little bit further down the field. Eventually, maybe we’ll get it over the goal line. But I think that’s what this position is all about. It’s building on the past and trying to take it into the future.”

Benken is currently the Air Force programs manager for USAA, a financial services organization that serves military members and their families. He continues to travel for the Air Force, typically as a guest speaker for a variety of functions. He also served as the cochairman of the Air Force Retiree Council for three years after his retirement and continues to serve on the board of directors for the Airmen Memorial Foundation. He resides in San Antonio, Texas, with his wife Johnne, daughter Erica, and Dusty the Wonderdog.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on material researched and compiled by SMSgt. Dave Diehl, SMSgt. Dale Warman, and MSgt. Jack Harrison, plus some editorial revisions suggested by CMSAF Benken.

2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 66.

3. CMSAF Benken chose to submit typewritten answers to his questionnaire (hereinafter the Benken Questionnaire). A copy of his questionnaire is available at the offices of the Office of Air Force History Support Office, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

4. Benken Questionnaire.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. See CMSAF Finch’s biography below.

9. Benken Questionnaire.

Frederick J. Finch

August 2, 1999–June 28, 2002



Frederick J. Finch

August 2, 1999–June 28, 2002



Frederick “Jim” Finch became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on August 2, 1999. Bill Clinton was President of the United States, F. Whitten Peters was confirmed that same day as the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. Michael E. Ryan was the Air Force chief of staff.¹ During Finch’s tenure, the United States faced one of the most traumatic days in its history—September 11, 2001, when terrorists flew hijacked commercial aircraft into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania, killing more than three thousand people. In 1999, the number of USAF enlisted personnel stood at 286,169.² By the end of 2001, that number had fallen to 280,410; but, during Finch’s last months in office, the number began to rise for the first time since 1987.

Born on July 29, 1956, Jim Finch was raised primarily in East Hampton, New York. During his high school years, he attended a two-year vocational school, studying auto mechanics. He followed a tough work ethic during his teenage years, handling studies and two part-time jobs. As remained true, his work hours started early and ended late. Halfway through vocational school, Finch decided that there were better career opportunities in the U.S. Air Force.

Finch enlisted in the Air Force under the delayed enlistment program during his senior year in high school, coming on active duty after his graduation. When he entered the service in July 1974, he expected to do a four-year hitch and then move on. “I was from a small town and knew I had limited career options if I stayed there,” he said. “The Air Force seemed like a great opportunity to move out on my own, learn a trade, and see the world. But I didn’t have any long-term plans to make it a career.”

After he completed basic training and missile maintenance technical school at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, Finch was assigned to Homestead Air Force Base, Florida, and, subsequently, to RAF Welford, United Kingdom. His return from overseas put him back at Homestead, where he served as a missile maintenance crew chief and shift supervisor. After a couple of years working back in the “bomb dump,” Finch was offered a job as a noncommissioned officer professional military education instructor. He had no idea how significantly his decision to become part of the NCO professional military education team would alter his career and his future.

“I am proud my roots are in ‘ammo,’ and I really enjoyed my missile maintenance time,” he explained. “However, when I attended NCO Leadership School (NCOLS) at Homestead, I was very impressed with the faculty and found that many of their values and beliefs mirrored my own.”

One of the NCOLS instructors would make such a huge impression that Finch would later list him as one of three people from his Air Force career who were instrumental in building his confidence, setting high expectations, and giving him the tools and opportunities he needed to succeed. In describing that instructor, Finch said,

Rich Roller retired as a master sergeant. He should have made chief master sergeant and probably could have had he not been so concerned with providing opportunities for others. He was one of the most selfless people I’ve known. I worked very well with him, not only at the NCOLS but also later at Air University. He went from being my instructor to my boss to my peer to my neighbor, and now I count him as one of my lifelong friends.

After teaching at Homestead for four years, Finch was reassigned to the Leadership and Management Development Center (LMDC) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. His first major task there was to develop a correspondence version of the newly created NCO Preparatory Course. “When the NCOPC first came out, there was no correspondence version for those who could not attend in residence,” he explained. “I was hired with the intent of overseeing the development of that correspondence course, and that’s how I spent my first year at Air University.”

While at the Leadership and Management Development Center, Finch worked for CMSgt. Jimmy Lavender, man he described as “a chief’s chief.” “He personified the word ‘chief,’ ” Finch said. “He was a great leader who cared for people, inspired both excellence and involvement, and set very high expectations. He was also a colorful speaker and is the source of some of the sayings I use today.”

After a year at LMDC and promotion to master sergeant, Finch transferred to other positions and served both as the director of the NCOPC instructor course and later as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the professional military education Evaluation and Analysis Branch. With eight years of PME experience and background, he was selected to be the Air Force NCO professional military education functional manager at the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC), commonly referred to as “MPC.” That was an assignment with an ironic beginning and ending.

“My first major task at MPC was to find a way to put master sergeants into the Senior NCO Academy,” Finch explained. “We developed and implemented new rules to do this, but the school wasn’t even large enough to accommodate all of the senior master sergeants at the time.” As Finch explained it:

...there were only 1250 seats available annually at the SNCOA (with 1175 for active duty Air Force senior master sergeants and the remaining for Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and sister service attendees). And, the Air Force was promoting far more senior master sergeants each year than the SNCOA could accommodate. Therefore, not all senior master sergeants had an opportunity to attend and selection was a “one-time” shot made in conjunction with selection for promotion to senior master sergeant. Those not selected for the SNCOA could later compete for one of a very limited number of seats at our sister service schools.³

The good news was that the Air Force approved a major expansion to the Senior NCO Academy, and, when construction was completed a few years later, the Air Force also approved a policy change requiring attendance before promotion to chief master sergeant. The bad news was that that change required temporarily suspending master sergeant attendance until the backlog of senior master sergeants could go to school. “My last task before I left MPC,” Finch said “was to rewrite the rules to discontinue allowing master sergeants to attend the Senior NCO Academy.” He added that both decisions were right, given the information and policies at the time. He also stated that

For the record, I believed then (and now) that the SNCOA should be available to all senior master sergeants and selected master sergeants (ideally those most likely to later become senior master sergeants). The policies of the time reflected our attempt to fairly distribute limited seats at the SNCOA.⁴

During that assignment, Finch was also involved with restructuring the PME program from four levels to three and with implementing procedures to create the Airman Leadership School. The restructuring aimed at matching professional military education with the three tiers of the enlisted grades—airmen, noncommissioned officers, senior noncommissioned officers. Finch helped to structure the new ALS curriculum so that it was written and managed by Air University but could be taught at the base level. With some hindsight Finch has concluded that

While some people believe “more” is always better, I think we have the formal PME structure about right. We have three formal schools taught at the airmen, noncommissioned officer, and senior noncommissioned officer levels at roughly the 6, 12, and 18 year point in someone’s career. And, Air University manages much of the operation of these schools. In recent years, however, other forms of enlisted professional development have evolved at both the MAJCOM and at base level. These programs enhance the three formal schools and leverage the capabilities and responsibilities of senior NCOs to

help become part of the development process for those who will follow them. Therefore, I endorse the current structure that mixes both formal and informal professional development for the enlisted corps.⁵

At the Air Force Military Personnel Center, Finch worked for CMSgt. Chuck Hasty, who would also become a lifelong friend and mentor. “Chuck was a respected leader and personnel expert who spent many hours explaining to me how the Air Force personnel system worked and why many of the rules existed,” Finch said. “He taught me many valuable lessons that continue to help me operate today as CMSAF.”

In September 1992, Finch was selected to be the commandant of the Pacific Air Forces NCO Academy at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. The academy had a superb faculty and a sound educational program, but it lacked an adequate facility within which to work. “This was a facility that housed both an ALS and the NCO Academy, but didn’t even have an auditorium,” Finch explained. “The staff had to march the students to the NCO Club to conduct certain classes.”

Soon after his arrival, working numerous weekends and late nights, he and the staff constructed a state-of-the-art auditorium, including a rear-screen projection system. “You couldn’t have contracted this project out and gotten better results than what we did,” he said. “We had so much civil engineering talent on staff, coupled with a group of perfectionists, that they just made it happen!”

After less than a year of service as the commandant, Finch received a telephone call that would take him along another career path. He was called in to see Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, the commander of Eleventh Air Force.

The general said he was looking for a replacement for his departing senior enlisted adviser (SEA) and was curious as to the kind of chief master sergeant I thought he should hire. So I outlined the attributes of what I thought an SEA should be and gave him a list of those local chiefs who I thought would do a great job. Then he asked whether I might be interested in assuming the position, and I explained how I was the junior chief on base and already held a great job I enjoyed. I also added that I thought some of the other chiefs might have a problem with him making a young chief his SEA. He chuckled and said it wouldn’t be a problem for me or for him. That ended the conversation, and I went back to work.

A couple of months later, Finch had another call from the general, who replayed their previous conversation and said he had made his selection. “He simply stated I was his new SEA, unless I really didn’t want the job,” Finch explained. “I replied I would work wherever he wanted me...[I was] told I would start as the SEA the following week.”

This would be the first of two assignments Finch would share with General Ralston. The second assignment came in July 1995, when Ralston took command of Air Combat Command and again requested that Finch be his senior enlisted adviser or, as it would later be called, the command chief master sergeant.

During Finch's four years at ACC, the Air Force went through a trying period. Operational tempo, increased deployments, continued downsizing of the force, TRICARE implementation, retention, and frustration over a lack of money and spare parts topped the list of concerns on the minds of the enlisted corps. "There was never a lack of issues to address, although most...[focused on our] asking our folks to do more work without giving them the people, tools, and support to make it happen. Fortunately, many senior leaders took notice of the direction we were headed and began a campaign to turn the tables," Finch said.

Though, as noted below, nothing could completely prepare someone for the top enlisted job in the Air Force, Finch believed that his experience as a senior enlisted adviser provided him with some very valuable experiences.

Working as a senior enlisted advisor [now known as command chief master sergeant (CCM)] at both a NAF (numbered air force) and MAJCOM (major command) for six years was extremely beneficial. It provided an opportunity to become educated on the top issues affecting Air Force people. It also gave me insight into how HQ staffs operate and allowed me to understand concerns affecting various functional groups. It would be difficult to step into the role of CMSAF without having had some CCM experience. Since the CMSAF spends considerable time working issues with the MAJCOM CCMs (as a team), serving on the CCM team before coming CMSAF provided invaluable insights and perspective.⁶

From his position at Air Combat Command, Finch was nominated to be the thirteenth chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

I basically knew how the CMSAF selection process worked, and wasn't too surprised when I was nominated from ACC, since I had been the command chief master sergeant for a very large MAJCOM. However, I was pretty convinced I wouldn't make the cut since there were other chief master sergeants who were just as qualified and had proven relationships with the Air Force chief of staff.

Finch's prediction proved wrong when he was among the three finalists selected to undergo a personal interview. "The list...comprised...several impressive people, and I was quite honored to have been selected from among that group," he said. The three finalists went to the Pentagon for their interviews and then to dinner, and they were told to be near a tele-

phone for news of the decision. On June 4, 1999, Finch got the congratulatory call from Gen. Michael Ryan. “My first reaction was, great, I’m still employed,” Finch said, knowing that his replacement would arrive at Air Combat Command within a week, when he would literally be out of a job.

The chief had some idea of what to expect in his new position, but, he said, “nothing can ever prepare you completely for this job. You can’t really begin to understand the expectations until you sit in the chair. Then it’s like drinking from a fire hose, spending most of the time in ‘react mode.’ It takes a while just to figure out what responsibilities are in your lane to handle.”

Fortunately, Finch had his own experience to draw on, as well as some help from the previous chief master sergeant of the Air Force and from a great staff:

I’ve had a very close professional relationship with CMSAF [Eric] Benken for quite some time—before either of us were major command SEAs. It gave me great solace to know Eric wanted me to do well in this position, and I am grateful [that] he and his staff went out of their way to set the office up for success. It made the transition much easier than I have experienced in some of my previous assignments.

I have also been blessed to have a fantastic team in the CMSAF office, led by CMSgt. Dawn Rich. Everyone on the staff, including Tony Patterson, Mark Smith, Mike Gilbert, Rhonda Pelkey, Jack Harrison, and Beth Alber, brought a positive attitude and great expertise. They were the folks who actually worked all the issues from behind the scenes. I am especially indebted to Dawn Rich, who worked with me both at ACC and here in Washington.

During his first year in office, Finch traveled on more than two hundred days, visiting people in the field to learn about their issues and concerns. Finch recommends such an intense travel schedule for successive chief master sergeants of the Air Force. “I had to realize there is a delicate balance between spending enough time with the troops and staying in Washington, D.C., long enough to work [on] their issues.” Finch said. “It probably works out best to spend more time in the field during the first year so that you learn the issues you’re supposed to work on.”

Throughout much of his Air Force career, Finch has shared the experiences with his wife, Pat, a retired master sergeant and the first wife of a chief master sergeant of the Air Force to be a military retiree. “She...[fills] many important roles—wife, mother, friend, confidant,” Finch said, noting that Pat’s military experience was a significant asset during base visits. “Pat has a broad perspective and a solid understanding of what can and can’t be done, and why. Her military experience gave her greater credibility because people knew she had walked the walk.”

Finch's career path has taken several turns, from missile maintenance to PME instructor, to career field functional manager, to NCO academy commandant, to senior enlisted adviser, and then to chief master sergeant of the Air Force. He believes these varied experiences have made him a more valuable asset to the Air Force:

The more you experience, the better able you are to deal with others around you and in other career fields. You gain an appreciation of how everyone fits in the big scheme of things; you better understand the frustrations associated with their jobs and the difficulties they face on a daily basis. As you broaden your experience base, I believe you become a better educated airman and a more valuable asset to the military.

During his twenty-eight years of service, Finch has seen the Air Force make several changes in how it operates and how it accomplishes the mission:

The Air Force is constantly changing, which makes this a great career for someone who easily becomes bored with routine. However, restructuring our Air Force, as well as moving to an expeditionary mindset...[have] been the most significant change[s] during my...career. This change is huge because it will shape how we will conduct missions well into the twenty-first century.

Other highlights of Finch's time as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force include implementing Warrior Week, streamlining the selection process for command chief master sergeants, and creating a program designed to develop enlisted leaders for the future.

"I'm very proud of Warrior Week⁷ for the expeditionary mindset it instills in our basic trainees," Finch explained, "but all the credit for the program goes to the men and women at Lackland [Air Force Base] for seeing the idea through to fruition."

By streamlining the command chief master sergeant selection process, the changes "created a manageable pool of candidates,...[thereby] removing the need for a formal application each time a vacancy was announced," Finch said. "It eliminated the short-notice suspense that chiefs often faced in the past, and it...better prepared the candidates for their new duties by having them attend an orientation on CCM roles and responsibilities. It was a win situation for the commanders as well,...[because] they had greater flexibility in selecting a CCM."

In describing the Developing Aerospace Leaders (DAL) program for enlisted personnel, Finch explained that

DAL is a framework with which to take a conceptual look at the future and decide how we need to structure ourselves so that we're a viable force in the year 2020 or beyond. I

subscribe to the theory that if you want to improve the Air Force, then you must ensure the people who replace you have the ability to be successful. That's why I'm so pleased with the DAL concept and [with] how many of our key enlisted leaders have embraced it. It indicates we're becoming more proactive in how we work the future development of the Air Force enlisted corps.

Along with the highlights, Finch also noted a number of challenges he faced as the Air Force's top enlisted person. First was "moving the mindset within the force from a 'cold war' mentality to becoming 'expeditionary.'" One of the chief obstacles in changing the mentality was the sheer volume of change the Air Force and its people experienced in the last decade of the twentieth century, including new uniforms, new organizations, and new management styles. Finch had to convince them that the new Expeditionary Aerospace Force was not a "temporary concept." He believed that creating Warrior Week—which focuses on the deployment process and the EAF and takes place during basic training—was a good step in the right direction.⁸

A second challenge, also noted above, was more personal—balancing the time spent out in the field with working issues in the Pentagon and Capitol Hill. "It was a delicate balance...too much time in Washington risked losing credibility with the force...but too little time in Washington translated to limited input on pending decisions or limited advocacy of important initiatives."⁹ Not surprisingly, all of the chief master sergeants of the Air Force have faced this challenge and have struggled with it.

Finally, Finch found that "focusing enough attention on important projects and long-term initiatives was a significant challenge." As he explained it,

It was relatively easy to become consumed with the day-to-day problems and concerns affecting Air Force people. And, responding to e-mail inquiries routinely took more than 3 hours a day, every day. I found the best approach to this dilemma was to surround myself with dedicated professionals and give them the trust and support to handle the daily issues. I am thankful to have had a CMSAF office team who shared the same vision and worked together to set some significant changes into motion.¹⁰

In addition to his close ties with his staff, Finch also developed strong working relationships with the two chiefs of staff under whom he served. He described his relationship with General Ryan as "outstanding." He remembers him as "a great boss who immediately embraced me as part of the Air Force senior leadership team." He recalled that he and Ryan "had very similar views on issues so it was easy to stay in step with him." Finch had planned to retire shortly after Ryan did, but the new chief of staff, Gen. John Jumper, asked Finch to stay on for an additional year. Finch was honored by the request, and he described his rela-



CMSAF Finch discusses issues with CMSgt Teddy Wilson while visiting deployed airmen in Southwest Asia in early 2002.

tionship with his new boss as “professional and mutually supportive.” Jumper took office less than a week after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; circumstances, thus, demanded that he focus on the issues surrounding Operation Enduring Freedom. As Finch noted, “Although I didn’t spend as much time with him as I had with General Ryan, our sessions together were always positive and he continued to support the initiatives I had been working.”¹¹

CMSAF Jim Finch spent his three years in the top enlisted office focusing on the current concerns of the enlisted members of the Air Force and putting programs into place that will improve their future preparedness. As threats to our national security and to world peace change, and as the military responses demanded of our armed forces change with those threats, leaders who develop a future-focused perspective will be some of our most valuable resources. Finch made a significant contribution to ensuring that such leadership develops in the Air Force.

Finch currently resides in San Antonio, Texas, “simply enjoying time with my family and catching up on projects and activities I’ve put off for years.” He is not completely retired, however, as he is currently the co-chairman of the Air Force Retiree Council. He also remains involved on the boards of a few organizations associated with Air Force life. As a retired Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, he travels periodically to speak with Air Force men and women. He views “the primary role of a former CMSAF as helping the enlisted force gain perspective on events affecting them and supporting the current CMSAF as he/she tackles current challenges.”¹²

1. Unless otherwise noted, this biographical interview is based on materials researched and compiled by the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.
2. Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2000*, p. 66.
3. CMSAF Finch responded to his questionnaire (hereinafter Finch Questionnaire) via e-mail. A printed copy of his questionnaire is available in the files of the Office of Air Force History, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
4. Finch Questionnaire.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Warrior Week comes toward the end of basic training and affords the recruits a realistic exposure to the rigors of deployment as part of an expeditionary force.
8. Finch Questionnaire.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*

Gerald R. Murray

July 1, 2002–Present



Gerald R. Murray

July 1, 2002–Present



Gerald R. Murray became the chief master sergeant of the Air Force on July 1, 2002. George W. Bush was President of the United States, James G. Roche was the secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. John P. Jumper was the Air Force chief of staff. The U.S. Air Force was actively engaged in the global war on terrorism, which began following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and would soon begin gathering forces for the war with Iraq. The USAF enlisted force numbered 292,500 men and women, 40,000 of whom were deployed during the Iraq war.

Gerald Murray was born in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, on January 18, 1956, and was raised in the small town by parents with strong Christian faith and conservative values. “My parents provided the love, morals, and upbringing that laid the foundation for my life,” said Murray. “They taught me the value of honest living and hard work.”

Following high school, Murray married his high school sweetheart, Sherry, and worked in construction for a few years. With the economy in a downturn, work was sporadic, and Murray was looking for other employment. He joined the Air Force in October 1977, thinking he’d “do four years and get out.”

“When I entered the Air Force in the late ’70s, the service was struggling with a myriad of problems—poor retention, inconsistencies in standards and discipline, and working hard to maintain combat readiness with an aging aircraft fleet,” he said. “It was a challenging time in our history, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to make the Air Force a career. Thankfully, I had some good supervisors who helped keep me on track.”

The chief enjoyed his field of aircraft maintenance and excelled at it. His first assignment was to MacDill Air Force Base, near Tampa, Florida. “Definitely not a bad first assignment for an airman,” he said. It was there that he met a senior airman below-the-zone board, and when asked what his goal in the Air Force was, said, “I want to be the chief master sergeant of the Air Force.”

“I really had put no thought into that at all,” Murray said. “I was trying to think of something that would show them I was motivated.” It must have worked, because Murray was promoted below the zone.



CMSgt Murray discusses policy with his staff.

After he spent three years on the flight line at MacDill, Murray's maintenance capabilities were recognized, and he was selected to be maintenance aircraft instructor. Murray describes his speaking abilities at the time as less than desirable. "I was a pretty good crew chief, but I couldn't stand in front of a group of students and speak at all," he said. Fortunately, an "old master sergeant" saw him in action, and recommended he sign up for a speech class. Murray did just that, but he "did terribly." The class instructor even recommended he give up his instructor duty and go back to the flight line. "Fortunately, public speaking is a

learned skill, and I've gotten much better over the years," said Murray, who, in the first year of his job as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, averaged approximately three formal speaking engagements a month and at least a dozen informal presentations to airmen around the Air Force.

Shortly afterwards, he and Sherry moved to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, where he continued as a maintenance instructor. Their first son, Robert, was born there in 1982, and they enjoyed a tour close to their home state of North Carolina and the new baby's grandparents. In 1984, they were on the move again.

Murray continued in the maintenance field, and his next assignment was to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, where he spent two years as a senior crew chief on "Victor (nuclear) Alert" on the F-16 aircraft. "Sherry and I did not have any desire to leave Shaw Air Force Base or to go to such a foreign place as Turkey," Murray said. "But that assignment turned out to be one of our best, and we made friends there that we continue to stay in touch with today."

Murray's next—and longest—assignment brought him much more responsibility. Over a six-year period, he managed and led an aircraft maintenance unit support section, a squadron mobility unit, and ultimately, became the production superintendent of a fighter squadron at Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, South Carolina. The Murrays's second son, Stephen, was born there in 1989.

In 1990, the United States started building up forces in the Middle East for the Gulf War. Murray deployed to King Faud International Airport and King Khalid Military City, Saudi Arabia. The production superintendent for over two years, Murray believes he was fortunate to be in the middle of the mission during Desert Storm. "It was extremely rewarding to be a part of history like that," he said. "I worked with some great leaders and learned a lot about how to lead, not just manage, people by watching how they motivated and led airmen into combat."

In 1992, Murray transferred to McChord Air Force Base, in Washington State, as the superintendent of a maintenance flight, but a base realignment closed the unit, leaving him with the next big challenge—setting up a new squadron in record time.

"In 1994, we set up a new A-10 squadron at Moody Air Force Base [in Georgia] in operational commission faster than any squadron since World War II, deployed it, and then proceeded to set records for some of the highest sortie production rates in the Air Force," Murray said. "Morale soared. We included our families and concentrated on teamwork while building the new squadron. The cooperation between maintenance and operations was outstanding. It was a great effort and example of what people can do together," he said.

After a three-month deployment to Kuwait with the A-10 squadron, Murray returned home to Moody two days early in 1996 to see his youngest of three children, Elizabeth, born. Murray was now a chief master sergeant. Yet another challenge awaited him back at home base, one that he was not thrilled about accepting at the time.

“Brig. Gen. L. D. Johnston asked me to be the wing’s senior enlisted adviser [later redesignated as command chief master sergeant],” said Murray. “First of all, I didn’t want to leave the flight line I loved; secondly, I wasn’t sure I was prepared for that responsibility.”

But saying no to General Johnston was not an option, and, given Murray’s desire to do a good job at whatever the service asked of him, he took the job. Murray began what he calls an “incredibly vertical learning curve.”

“No longer was I responsible for just two hundred-plus maintainers; I was responsible for, and to, every airmen in that wing,” said Murray. In 1997, Murray left for his third extended deployment, this time as command chief master sergeant at Sheikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain. After the seven-month deployment, Murray returned home. At that time, he questioned whether the sacrifices his family were making were worth the compensation he received. “I came home to Sherry and that little one-year-old girl . . . , plus my two older children, and had to evaluate whether I really wanted to continue this after twenty years in the service.” Gen. Mike Ryan, then the chief of staff, had just introduced the expeditionary aerospace force concept, and senior leaders and Congress were beginning to work to adjust the pay tables and compensation packages. “I saw what I believed to be good things happening, and Sherry and I decided we wanted to be a part of that,” he said. “We’ve never regretted that decision.”

Murray’s success as a command chief master sergeant at the wing level took him to the next level, and he was selected as the command chief for U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force at Yokota Air Base, Japan. From there, he was selected to be the Pacific Air Forces command chief in 2001.

After only ten months at Headquarters Pacific Air Force at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, Murray was nominated by the PACAF commander, Gen. William Begert, to be the fourteenth chief master sergeant of the Air Force. “I was honored that General Begert nominated me, but I really was not packing my bags,” said Murray. He began to realize that it might actually happen only when he found out that he was on the short list of four people to be interviewed by Gen. John Jumper, the chief of staff.

“When the call came from General Jumper, I was both excited and a little bit daunted by the tremendous amount of responsibility I was about to take on,” Murray said.

In his first year as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Murray focused on issues that involved balancing the force. “Balancing the force is a necessity driven by demands that the global war on terrorism and Operation Iraqi Freedom placed on us,” said Murray. “All our people work extremely hard, but there are certain career fields and airmen who are more stressed than others,” he said.

The evolution of the expeditionary air force and a changed world following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were catalysts for change during Murray’s first year as chief master sergeant of the Air Force. “Much of our manning priorities and authorizations were set for a cold-war, stay-at-home force,” he said. “We are now an expeditionary air force whose normal



CMSgt Murray is greeted by his daughter, Elizabeth, and wife, Sherry, upon his return from a deployment to Sheikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain, in 1997.

operations are away from home. We needed to evaluate our force and make changes where necessary to ensure our manning is consistent with the mission we perform today.”

In 2003, Murray pushed for and reenergized the NCO Retraining Program, which would move authorizations and people from less-stressed career fields into stressed career fields. Other tools Murray advocated to balance the force included applying critical career field status to E-8 and E-9 promotions and the return of Career Job Reservations for first-term airmen seeking to reenlist.

In Murray’s view, change and transformation have been a reality since the establishment of the U.S. Air Force as a separate service in 1947. Throughout his own career, Murray witnessed a shift in the posture of the force from an in-garrison to an expeditionary force.

“Early in my career, our mission was focused on the Cold War and readiness to fight another major conflict or world war. We prepared for this with a heavy exercise and inspection schedule,” he said. “In the ’80s, our force structure stabilized. In Europe and the Pacific, our bases were postured for major theater operations, with our CONUS [continental United States] bases ready to deploy forces forward. However, we were by no means an expeditionary force.”

Murray believes Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm changed that, as it was the beginning for our military to evolve and become more mobile. From that conflict, the foundations of the expeditionary aerospace force concept were laid. But it would take the service several more years and other combat operations to fully implement the concept, to provide

more stability for and ease the strain on USAF personnel in this new era of high operations tempo.

“We still have a ways to go to fully embrace the expeditionary mindset, Murray said after one year as chief master sergeant of the Air Force. “It usually takes an organization seven to ten years for a cultural change to really take effect,” he added.

A focused effort on force development by the chief of staff and secretary of the Air Force included the enlisted force, along with the officer and civilian corps. This gave Murray an opportunity to evaluate the way enlisted airmen are prepared for future leadership positions.

“Enlisted-force development will allow us to tailor the professional development of our airmen to best meet the expeditionary needs of the Air Force today and in the future,” Murray said. “Our enlisted force is the finest in the world,” he stated, “bar none. There is nothing we’re trying to fix with enlisted force development efforts. But at the same time,” he added, “just as the landscape of the world and our missions are ever evolving, it’s extremely important that we look at the way we train and educate our people to better prepare them to lead the force in the future.”

As part of the early stages of enlisted force development, management of chief master sergeants was moved from the Air Force Personnel Center to the Air Force Senior Leader Management Office, aligning the management and use of the highest enlisted members with the Air Force’s senior officers and civilians. “This move recognizes the important role our senior enlisted leaders play in our force today,” said Murray. “We want to make sure that we are using them in a way that capitalizes on their experience and education and gives them opportunities to grow in their leadership roles in our Air Force,” said Murray.

As Murray moved into his second year in the highest enlisted position, he set his sights on continuing to improve what generations of chevrons began and carried on before him. “Each chief master sergeant of the Air Force helped our force work through considerable issues and challenges,” said Murray. “Each of them are heroes in their own right in what they were able to accomplish for our enlisted force. I will continue, with the help of my family and my staff, to try to make a small difference, and to leave our Air Force a little better than when I arrived.”

APPENDIXES



APPENDIX I

The Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force

CMSAF Paul W. Airey

April 3, 1967–July 31, 1969

CMSAF Donald L. Harlow

August 1, 1969–September 30, 1971

CMSAF Richard D. Kisling

October 1, 1971–September 30, 1973

CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes

October 1, 1973–July 31, 1977

CMSAF Robert D. Gaylor

August 1, 1977–July 31, 1979

CMSAF James M. McCoy

August 1, 1979–July 31, 1981

CMSAF Arthur L. Andrews

August 1, 1981–July 31, 1983

CMSAF Sam E. Parish

August 1, 1983–June 30, 1986

CMSAF James C. Binnicker

July 1, 1986–July 31, 1990

CMSAF Gary R. Pfingston

August 1, 1990–October 25, 1994

CMSAF David J. Campanale

October 26, 1994–November 4, 1996

CMSAF Eric W. Benken

November 5, 1996 –July 30, 1999

CMSAF Frederick J. Finch

August 2, 1999–June 28, 2002

CMSAF Gerald R. Murray

July 1, 2002–Present

APPENDIX II

Presidents, Secretaries of the Air Force, Chiefs of Staff and Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force

PRESIDENT	SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE	AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF	CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE
Harry S Truman, 12 Apr 45–20 Jan 53	W. Stuart Symington 18 Sep 47–24 Apr 50	Gen. Carl A. Spaatz 26 Sep 47–29 Apr 48	
	Thomas K. Finletter 24 Apr 50–20 Jan 53	Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg 30 Apr 48–	
	Harold E. Talbott 4 Feb 53–		
Dwight D. Eisenhower 20 Jan 53–20 Jan 61	Harold E. Talbott –13 Aug 55	Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg –29 Jun 53	
	Donald A. Quarles 15 Aug 55–30 Apr 57	Gen. Nathan F. Twining 30 Jun 53–30 Jun 57	
	James H. Douglas, Jr. 1 May 57–10 Dec 59	Gen. Thomas D. White 1 Jul 57–	
	Dudley C. Sharp 11 Dec 59–20 Jan 61		
John F. Kennedy 20 Jan 61–22 Nov 63	Eugene M. Zuckert 24 Jan 61–	Gen. Thomas D. White –30 Jun 61	
		Gen. Curtis E. LeMay 30 Jun 61–	
Lyndon B. Johnson 22 Nov 63–20 Jan 69	Eugene M. Zuckert –30 Sep 65	Gen. Curtis E. LeMay –31 Jan 65	CMSgt. Paul W. Airey 3 Apr 67–
	Harold Brown 1 Oct 65–	Gen. John P. McConnell 1 Feb 65–	

Richard M. Nixon 20 Jan 69–9 Aug 74	Harold Brown –14 Feb 69	Gen. John P. McConnell –31 Jul 69	CMSgt. Paul W. Airey –31 Jul 69
	Robert C. Seamans, Jr. 15 Feb 69–14 May 73	Gen. John D. Ryan 1 Aug 69–31 Jul 73	CMSgt. Donald L. Harlow 1 Aug 69–30 Sep 71
	John L. McLucas (Acting) 15 May 73–18 Jul 73	Gen. George S. Brown 1 Aug 73–30 Jun 74	CMSgt. Richard D. Kisling 1 Oct 71–30 Sep 73
	John L. McLucas 18 Jul 73–	Gen. David C. Jones 1 Jul 74–	CMSgt. Thomas N. Barnes 1 Oct 73–
Gerald R. Ford 9 Aug 74–20 Jan 77	John L. McLucas –23 Nov 75	Gen. David C. Jones	CMSgt. Thomas N. Barnes
	James W. Plummer (Acting) 24 Nov 75–1 Jan 76		
	Thomas C. Reed 2 Jan 76–		
Jimmy Carter 20 Jan 77–20 Jan 81	Thomas C. Reed –6 Apr 77	Gen. David C. Jones –20 Jun 78	CMSgt. Thomas N. Barnes –1 Jul 77
	John C. Stetson 6 Apr 77–18 May 79	Gen. Lew Allen, Jr. 1 Jul 78–	CMSgt. Robert D. Gaylor 1 Aug 77–31 Jul 79
	Hans M. Mark (Acting) 18 May 79–26 Jul 79		CMSgt. James M. McCoy 1 Aug 79–
	Hans M. Mark 26 Jul 79–		
Ronald W. Reagan 20 Jan 81–20 Jan 89	Hans M. Mark –9 Feb 81	Gen. Lew Allen, Jr. –30 Jun 82	CMSgt. James M. McCoy –31 Jul 81
	Verne Orr 9 Feb 81–30 Nov 85	Gen. Charles A. Gabriel 1 Jul 82–30 Jun 86	CMSgt. Arthur L. Andrews 1 Aug 81–31 Jul 83
	Russell A. Rourke 8 Dec 85–7 Apr 86	Gen. Larry D. Welch 1 Jul 86–	CMSgt. Sam E. Parish 1 Aug 83–30 Jun 86
	Edward C. Aldridge, Jr. (Acting) 8 Apr 86–8 Jun 86		CMSgt. James C. Binnicker 1 Jul 86–
	Edward C. Aldridge, Jr. 9 Jun 86–16 Dec 88		

James F. McGovern
(Acting)
16 Dec 88–29 Apr 89

John J. Welch, Jr.
(Acting)
29 Apr 89–21 May 89

George H. W. Bush 20 Jan 89–20 Jan 93	Donald B. Rice 22 May 89–	Gen. Larry D. Welch –30 Jun 90	CMSgt. James C. Binnicker –31 Jul 90
		Gen. Michael J. Dugan 1 Jul 90–17 Sep 90	CMSgt. Gary R. Pfingston 1 Aug 90–
		Gen. John M. Loh (Acting) 18 Sep 90–29 Oct 90	
		Gen. Merrill A. McPeak 30 Oct 90–	

William J. Clinton 20 Jan 93–20 Jan 2001	Donald B. Rice –20 Jan 93	Gen. Merrill A. McPeak –25 Oct 94	CMSgt. Gary R. Pfingston –25 Oct 94
	Michael B. Donley (Acting) 20 Jan 93–13 Jul 93	Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman 26 Oct 94–1 Sep 97	CMSgt. David J. Campanale 26 Oct 94–4 Nov 96
	Gen. Merrill A. McPeak (Acting) 14 Jul 93–5 Aug 93	Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart (Acting) 2 Sep 97–5 Oct 97	CMSgt. Eric W. Benken 5 Nov 96–30 Jul 99
	Sheila E. Widnall 6 Aug 93–31 Oct 97	Gen. Michael E. Ryan 6 Oct 97–	CMSgt. Frederick Finch 2 Aug 99–
	F. Whitten Peters (Acting) 13 Nov 97–3 Aug 99		
	F. Whitten Peters 3 Aug 99–20 Jan 01		

George W. Bush 20 Jan 2001–present	James G. Roche 1 Jun 01–present	Gen. Michael E. Ryan –6 Sep 01	CMSgt. Frederick Finch –28 Jun 02
		Gen. John P. Jumper 6 Sep 01–present	CMSgt. Gerald R. Murray 1 Jul 02–present

SOURCE: George M. Watson, Jr., *Secretaries and Chiefs of Staff of the United States Air Force* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001), pp. 197-202.

APPENDIX III
Department of Defense Enlisted Personnel

Active Duty Enlisted Personnel, 1947 through 2003

Year	Total	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
1947	1,385,436	594,078	442,729	85,547	263,082
1948	1,270,051	484,061	369,136	78,081	338,773
1949	1,418,528	581,422	396,895	78,715	361,496
1950	1,273,122	518,921	332,905	67,025	354,271
1951	2,921,440	1,399,362	663,326	177,470	681,282
1952	3,254,790	1,446,266	738,451	215,554	854,519
1953	3,173,066	1,386,500	709,254	230,488	846,824
1954	2,943,209	1,274,803	644,965	205,275	818,166
1955	2,577,884	985,659	582,675	186,753	822,797
1956	2,450,793	905,711	594,509	182,971	767,602
1957	2,446,984	885,056	599,733	183,427	778,768
1958	2,267,209	792,508	564,899	172,754	737,048
1959	2,178,515	758,458	553,332	159,506	707,219
1960	2,152,414	770,112	544,770	154,418	683,114
1961	2,160,062	756,932	552,262	160,777	690,091
1962	2,454,068	948,597	584,773	174,101	746,597
1963	2,355,957	865,768	584,235	172,946	733,008
1964	2,339,438	860,514	585,419	172,934	720,571
1965	2,306,001	854,929	587,940	172,955	690,177
1966	2,733,549	1,079,682	659,186	241,204	753,477
1967	2,980,851	1,296,603	663,923	261,677	758,648
1968	3,119,541	1,401,727	673,610	282,697	761,507
1969	3,028,201	1,337,047	684,145	284,073	722,936
1970	2,651,110	1,153,013	605,899	234,796	657,402
1971	2,329,754	971,872	542,298	190,604	624,980
1972	1,975,533	686,695	510,669	178,395	599,774

1973	1,920,587	681,972	490,009	176,816	571,790
1974	1,849,074	674,466	475,479	170,062	529,067
1975	1,824,981	678,324	466,121	177,360	503,176
1976	1,790,148	677,725	457,692	173,517	481,214
1977	1,785,173	680,062	462,176	173,057	469,878
1978	1,775,021	669,515	463,217	172,427	469,862
1979	1,740,260	657,184	457,102	167,021	458,953
1980	1,759,693	673,944	459,569	170,271	455,909
1981	1,784,048	675,087	470,184	172,257	466,520
1982	1,803,762	672,699	481,186	173,405	476,472
1983	1,811,060	669,364	484,568	174,106	483,022
1984	1,821,257	667,711	491,288	175,848	486,410
1985	1,828,454	666,557	495,444	177,850	488,603
1986	1,844,338	666,668	504,389	178,615	494,666
1987	1,853,340	668,410	510,208	179,478	495,244
1988	1,820,120	660,445	515,548	177,271	466,856
1989	1,813,907	658,321	515,898	176,857	462,831
1990	1,733,835	623,519	502,804	176,694	430,818
1991	1,681,592	602,777	495,103	174,287	409,425
1992	1,520,828	511,335	468,412	165,397	375,684
1993	1,435,915	480,379	439,461	159,949	356,126
1994	1,352,800	452,513	402,635	156,335	341,317
1995	1,268,489	422,073	371,670	156,808	317,938
1996	1,227,110	406,502	355,048	156,952	308,608
1997	1,199,058	408,337	335,267	156,081	299,373
1998	1,171,148	401,188	323,120	155,250	291,590
1999	1,154,231	398,138	315,180	154,744	286,169
2000	1,154,624	401,414	315,471	155,383	282,356
2001	1,155,344	400,461	319,601	154,872	280,410
2002	1,177,806	404,304	325,996	155,445	292,061
2003	1,434,377	499,301	382,235	177,779	375,062

SOURCE: See Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics, 2001*, pp. 64–66. The most recent available total for enlisted can be found online on the Department of Defense, Directorate for Operations and Reports, Statistical Information Analysis Division web site at <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/military/miltop.htm>.

APPENDIX IV

The Order of the Sword

No.	Member Name	Unit	Date
1	Brig. Gen. Roland J. Barnick	MAC	26 May 67
2	Gen. Howell M. Estes, Jr.	MAC	20 Dec 67
3	Brig. Gen. Gilbert L. Curtis	MAC	18 Jun 68
4	Brig. Gen. William V. McBride	MAC	26 Feb 69
5	Col. Reid J. Anderson	MAC	26 Jul 69
6	Col. Gilbert G. Smith, Jr.	MAC	29 Jul 69
7	Col. Thomas J. Arbogast	MAC	12 May 70
8	Brig. Gen. Clare T. Ireland, Jr.	MAC	23 Jul 70
9	Brig. Gen. John H. Germeraad	MAC	2 Oct 70
10	Brig. Gen. John F. Gonge	MAC	24 Feb 71
11	Gen. Jack J. Catton	MAC	30 Apr 71
12	Col. Leonard V. Gillespie	MAC	29 Sep 71
13	Honorable F. Edward Hebert	ATC	28 Oct 71
14	Maj. Gen. Archie M. Burke	NORAD	11 Feb 72
15	Brig. Gen. Richard M. Baughn	USAFE	20 Mar 72
16	Maj. Gen. William G. Moore, Jr.	MAC	6 May 72
17	Col. Tedd L. Bishop	MAC	14 Jul 72
18	Maj. Gen. Jerry D. Page	ATC	25 Jul 72
19	Gen. George B. Simler	ATC	25 Aug 72
20	Brig. Gen. Van N. Blackman	MAC	8 Sep 72
21	Col. Robert H. Campbell	MAC	11 Jun 73
22	Maj. Gen. Frank M. Madsen, Jr.	ATC	24 Jan 74
23	Maj. Gen. Frank W. Elliott, Jr.	ATC	26 Jul 74
24	Col. James I. Baginski	PACAF	29 Jul 74
25	Brig. Gen. Irbey B. Jarvis, Jr.	AFLC	31 Oct 74
26	Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Sadler	MAC	12 Mar 75
27	Maj. Gen. Lester T. Kearney	MAC	21 May 75
28	Col. Donald A. Michela	PACAF	11 Aug 75
29	Brig. Gen. Harry A. Morris	MAC	19 Sep 75
30	Maj. Gen. Leroy J. Manor	PACAF	19 Apr 76
31	Brig. Gen. Emil N. Block	MAC	9 Jun 76
32	Brig. Gen. James E. McAdoo	AFRES	11 Oct 76
33	Lt. Gen. John W. Roberts	ATC	12 Nov 76

34	Gen. Paul K. Carlton	MAC	11 Feb 77
35	Gen. Louis L. Wilson	PACAF	18 Mar 77
36	Gen. Russell E. Dougherty	SAC	5 Apr 77
37	Maj. Gen. Ralph S. Saunders	MAC	6 May 77
38	Col. James T. Albritton	USAFE	6 May 77
39	Maj. Gen. Alden G. Glauch	MAC	19 Jul 77
40	Brig. Gen. Kenneth D. Burns	AFSS	20 Oct 77
41	Maj. Gen. Andrew P. Iosue	ATC	3 Mar 78
42	Gen. Robert J. Dixon	TAC	10 Mar 78
43	Brig. Gen. James L. Wade	AFRES	11 Mar 78
44	Maj. Gen. Thomas A. Aldrich	MAC	30 Mar 78
45	Lt. Gen. Thomas W. Morgan	AFSC	22 Apr 78
46	Col. Sharman R. Stevenson	PACAF	31 May 78
47	Gen. David C. Jones	SAC	31 May 78
48	Col. Dale L. Oderman	MAC	1 Jun 78
49	Lt. Gen. James D. Hughes	TAC	8 Jun 78
50	Maj. Gen. Rupert H. Burris	AFCS	19 Jul 78
51	Maj. Gen. Paul M. Myers	AFSC	14 Sep 78
52	Lt. Gen. Bryon M. Shotts	SAC	10 Oct 78
53	Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis (Ret.)	TAC	10 Nov 78
54	Maj. Gen. William Lyons	AFRES	3 Mar 79
55	Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Starr, Jr.	MAC	10 Apr 79
56	Col. Anthony J. Dibaggio	USAFSS	19 Apr 79
57	Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Stafford	AFSC	5 May 79
58	Brig. Gen. Attilio Pedroli	ATC	6 Dec 79
59	Maj. Gen. William C. Norris	USAFE	9 Apr 80
60	Maj. Gen. LeRoy W. Svendsen, Jr.	AFMPC	10 Apr 80
61	Maj. Gen. Robert E. Sadler	AFCS	12 Apr 80
62	Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, Jr.	AAC	16 May 80
63	CMSAF Donald L. Harlow (Ret.)	TAC	20 May 80
64	Mr. Robert (Bob) Hope	MAC	10 Jun 80
65	Col. Thomas G. McInerney	PACAF	22 Jul 80
66	Gen. Curtis E. LeMay	SAC	18 Sep 80
67	Gen. Alton D. Slay	AFSC	18 Oct 80
68	Brig. Gen. Sidney S. Novaresi	AFRES	14 Mar 81
69	Brig. Gen. Alan G. Sharp	AFRES	4 Apr 81
70	Gen. Richard H. Ellis	SAC	8 May 81
71	Maj. Gen. John T. Guice	ANG	13 May 81
72	Lt. Gen. Walter D. Druen, Jr.	USAFE	16 May 81
73	Gen. Kenneth L. Tallman	USAF	21 May 81
74	Gen. Robert G. Huyser	MAC	19 Jun 81
75	Brig. Gen. Staryl C. Austin (Ret.)	ANG	30 Oct 81
76	Maj. Gen. Doyle E. Larson	ESC	27 Mar 82
77	Col. Bruce M. Purvine	MAC	3 Jun 82
78	Brig. Gen. Norma Brown	ATC	11 Jun 82
79	Brig. Gen. Albert J. Kaehn, Jr.	MAC	27 Jul 82
80	Maj. Gen. Kenneth L. Peek	AFMPC	5 Nov 82

81	Col. Lester R. Mellott, Jr.	ESC	13 Feb 83
82	Lt. Gen. Richard C. Henry	AFSC	16 Apr 83
83	Lt. Gen. Robert W. Bazley	USAFE	5 May 83
84	Gen. James R. Allen	MAC	18 May 83
85	Lt. Gen. Charles L. Donnelly, Jr.	PACAF	28 May 83
	Gen. Charles L. Donnelly, Jr.	USAFE	21 Feb 87
86	Lt. Gen. Robert T. Herres	AFCC	27 Aug 83
87	Gen. Thomas M. Ryan, Jr.	ATC	3 Sep 83
88	Gen. W. L. Creech	TAC	4 Feb 84
89	Gen. Robert T. Marsh	AFSC	16 Jun 84
90	Gen. James V. Hartinger	NORAD/ SPACECOM	29 Jun 84
91	Lt. Gen. James W. Stansberry	AFSC	2 Sep 84
92	Maj. Gen. Donald W. Bennett	MAC	12 Oct 84
93	Gen. Bennie L. Davis	SAC	18 Oct 84
94	Maj. Gen. John E. Taylor, Jr.	USAFR	27 Oct 84
95	Maj. Gen. John B. Conaway	ANG	10 Apr 85
96	Brig. Gen. Regis F. Urschler	ESC	1 May 85
97	Maj. Gen. Cornelius Nugteren	AFLC	31 May 85
98	Col. Paul E. Landers, Jr.	MAC	17 Jun 85
99	Maj. Gen. Sloan R. Gill	AFRES	27 Oct 85
100	Col. Robert D. Acres	AFLC	2 Nov 85
101	Gen. John L. Piotrowski	TAC	24 Jan 86
102	Col. James D. Elmer	MAC	8 Feb 86
103	Gen. Charles A. Gabriel	USAF	22 Mar 86
104	Maj. Gen. Raymond A. Matera	ANG	18 Apr 86
105	Brig. Gen. George E. Chapman	MAC	26 Apr 86
106	Brig. Gen. Vernon J. Kondra	MAC	14 Jun 86
107	Col. Louis V. Pelini	MAC	25 Jul 86
108	Maj. Gen. William J. Breckner, Jr.	USAFE	30 Aug 86
109	Gen. Earl T. O'Loughlin	AFLC	19 Sep 86
110	Brig. Gen. Floyd A. Hargrove	MAC	11 Oct 86
111	Maj. Gen. Gerald L. Prather	AFCC	17 Oct 86
112	Lt. Gen. Thomas C. Richards	AU	1 Nov 86
113	Maj. Gen. Chris O. Divich	ATC	15 Jan 87
114	Maj. Gen. Donald D. Brown	MAC	31 Mar 87
115	Maj. Gen. Donald Snyder	PACAF	8 Apr 87
116	Gen. Lawrence A. Skantze	AFSC	25 Apr 87
117	Brig. Gen. Richard S. Beyea, Jr.	AFOSI	25 Sep 87
118	Col. Richard C. Youngs	AFRES	26 Sep 87
119	Maj. Gen. Jack W. Sheppard	MAC	2 Oct 87
120	Lt. Gen. Edward L. Tixier	PACAF	11 Jan 88
121	Lt. Gen. David L. Nichols	AAC	7 May 88
122	Congressman Sonny Montgomery	AFRES	12 May 88
123	Gen. Jack I. Gregory	PACAF	21 Jun 88
124	Maj. Gen. Ralph E. Spraker	AFSPACECOM	1 Jul 88
125	Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger	USAF	19 Nov 88

126	Maj. Gen. Melvin G. Alkire	AFCOMS	14 Jan 89
127	Gen. William L. Kirk	USAFE	18 Mar 89
128	Brig. Gen. Alfred P. Bunting	ANG	28 Mar 89
129	Gen. Alfred G. Hansen	AFLC	28 Apr 89
130	Maj. Gen. Paul H. Martin	ESC	14 Jul 89
131	Gen. Duane H. Cassidy	MAC	18 Aug 89
132	Maj. Gen. Fredric F. Doppelt	AFSC	7 Oct 89
133	Maj. Gen. James C. Wahleithner	AFRES	14 Oct 89
134	Maj. Gen. Vernon Chong	ATC	2 Dec 89
135	Gen. Larry D. Welch	USAF	3 Mar 90
136	Gen. Bernard P. Randolph	AFSC	17 Mar 90
137	Col. Edmund C. Morrissey, Jr. (Ret.)	ANG	20 Mar 90
138	Gen. Robert D. Russ	TAC	20 Apr 90
139	Maj. Gen. Robert B. Patterson (Ret.)	MAC	20 Apr 90
140	Lt. Gen. Robert C. Oaks	ATC	9 Jun 90
141	Maj. Gen. Larry N. Tibbetts	ATC	20 Jun 90
142	Maj. Gen. Roger P. Scheer	AFRES	25 Aug 90
143	Maj. Gen. Paul R. Stoney (Ret.)	AFCC	25 Sep 90
144	Gen. Michael J. Dugan	USAFE	10 Nov 90
145	Lt. Gen. James B. Davis	PACAF	24 Nov 90
146	Maj. Gen. Paul A. Harvey	ATC	2 Feb 91
147	Lt. Gen. Charles R. Hamm	USAFA	26 Apr 91
148	Lt. Gen. Gordon E. Fornell	AFSC	11 May 91
149	Gen. John T. Chain, Jr.	SAC	13 Jun 91
150	Lt. Gen. Donald L. Cromer	AFSC	17 May 91
151	Col. Richard F. Law	AFOSI	20 Jun 91
152	Maj. Gen. Richard M. Pascoe	TAC	16 Jul 91
153	Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Ahearn	USAF	21 Aug 91
154	Lt. Gen. Richard J. Trzaskoma	MAC	27 Sep 91
155	Lt. Gen. Robert H. Ludwig	AFCC	28 Sep 91
156	Gen. Charles C. McDonald	AFLC	29 Feb 92
157	Lt. Gen. Charles A. Horner	TAC	14 Mar 92
158	Lt. Gen. Clifford H. Rees, Jr.	USAFE	25 Jul 92
159	Col. Charles L. Fox	PACAF	20 Oct 92
160	Gen. Hansford T. Johnson	AMC	6 Feb 93
161	Gen. Charles G. Boyd	AU	25 Feb 93
162	Maj. Gen. John S. Fairfield	AFCC	11 May 93
163	Maj. Gen. Philip G. Killey	ANG	9 Nov 93
164	Gen. Ronald Fogleman	AMC	14 May 94
165	Maj. Gen. Robert S. Deligatti	USAFE	29 Apr 94
166	Lt. Gen. Bradley C. Hosmer	USAFA	29 Apr 94
167	Gen. Ronald W. Yates	AFMC	5 Mar 94
168	Maj. Gen. Robert A. McIntosh	AFRES	29 Jul 94
169	Gen. Merrill A. McPeak	HQ USAF	20 Aug 94
170	Gen. Robert L. Rutherford	PACAF	23 Aug 94
171	Lt. Gen. Henry Viccellio (Ret.)	AETC	1 Oct 94
172	Maj. Gen. Kenneth A. Minihan	AIA	24 Oct 94

173	Lt. Gen. Edward P. Barry	AFMC	14 Nov 94
174	Gen. Thomas Moorman	AFSPC	28 Nov 94
175	Gen. John Michael Loh	ACC	25 Feb 95
176	Lt. Gen. Malcolm B. Armstrong	AMC	23 Sep 95
177	Gen. James L. Jamerson	USAFE	18 Nov 95
178	Gen. Joseph W. Ashy	AFSPC	17 Aug 96
179	Col. John E. Killeen	AFSPA	14 Sep 96
180	Dr. William J. Perry	HQ USAF	19 Oct 96
181	Gen. James E. Sherrard	AFRES	2 Nov 96
182	Maj. Gen. James L. Hobson, Jr.	AFSOC	24 Jan 97
183	Gen. John G. Lorber	PACAF	30 Jun 97
184	Lt. Gen. Paul E. Stein	USAFA	12 Jul 97
185	Maj. Gen. Donald W. Shepperd	NGB	4 Nov 97
186	Col. John L. Hayes	AFWA	4 Apr 98
187	Gen. Michael E. Ryan	USAFE	17 Apr 98
188	Gen. Walter Kross	AMC	18 Jul 98
189	Gen. Howell M. Estes III	AFSPC	7 Aug 98
190	Lt. Gen. Kenneth E. Eickmann	AFMC	15 Aug 98
191	Gen. Richard E. Hawley	ACC	17 Apr 99
192	Gen. Lloyd W. Newton	AETC	18 Jun 99
193	Col. Raymond W. Owens III	AFOSI	21 Oct 99
194	Maj. Gen. Paul A. Weaver, Jr.	ANG	22 Nov 99
195	Lt. Gen. Charles R. Holland	AFSOC	22 Jan 00
196	Gen. George T. Babbitt	AFMC	27 Mar 00
197	Gen. John P. Jumper	USAFE	8 Apr 00
198	Brig. Gen. Steven A. Roser (Ret.)	AMC	14 Apr 00
199	Lt. Gen. Tad J. Oelstrom	USAFA	7 Jun 00
200	Brig. Gen. Richard A. Coleman	AFSFC	24 Aug 00
201	Honorable F. Whitten Peters	HQ USAF	16 Dec 00
202	Brig. Gen. Hinnie Aderholt (Ret.)	AFSOC	18 Jan 01
203	Gen. Patrick K. Gamble	PACAF	6 Apr 01
204	Maj. Gen. David E. Tanzi	AFRES	2 Jun 01
205	Gen. Charles T. Robertson	AMC	3 Nov 01
206	Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart	AFSC	25 Jan 02
207	Lt. Gen. Maxwell C. Bailey	AFSOC	15 Mar 02
208	Gen. Lester L. Lyles	AFMC	7 Nov 02
209	Gen. Gregory S. Martin	USAFE	30 May 03
210	Dr. James G. Roche	HQ USAF	13 Sep 03

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A1C	Airman first class
A2C	Airman second class
A3C	Airman third class
AACS	Airways and Air Communications Service
AAF	Army Air Forces
ACC	Air Combat Command
AFB	Air Force Base
AFMPC	Air Force Military Personnel Center
AFROTC	Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps
AFSA	Air Force Sergeants Association
AFSC	Air Force specialty code
ALS	Airmen Leadership School
AP	Air Force police
AQE	Airman Qualifying Examination
ARRS	Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service
ARS	Air Rescue Service
ASC	Air Service Command
ASVAB	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
ATC	Air Training Command
ATSO	Ability to survive and operate
AWOL	Absent without leave
AWS	Air Weather Service
BAS	Basic allowance for subsistence
CAP	Civil Air Patrol
CCAF	Community College of the Air Force
CCM	Command chief master sergeant
CCT	Combat Control Team
CEPME	College for Enlisted Professional Military Education
CHAMPUS	Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services
CMSAF	Chief master sergeant of the Air Force
CMSgt.	Chief master sergeant
Cpl.	Corporal
DAL	Developing Aerospace Leaders
DCM	Deputy commander for maintenance

EPR	Enlisted Performance Report
FAI	Federation Aeronautique Internationale
IG	Inspector general
KIA	Killed in action
LMDC	Leadership and Management Development Center
MAC	Military Airlift Command
MAJCOM	Major command
MARS	Military affiliate radio system
MATS	Military Air Transport Service
MOS	Military occupational specialty
MSgt.	Master sergeant
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Noncommissioned officer
NCOA	Noncommissioned Officer Academy
NCOIC	Noncommissioned officer in charge
NCOLS	Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School
NCOPC	Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory Course
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PME	Professional military education
POW	Prisoner of war
RIF	Reduction in force
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SEA	Senior enlisted adviser
SERB	Selective Early Retirement Board
SGLI	Servicemen's Group Life Insurance
Sgt.	Sergeant
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe
SMSgt.	Senior master sergeant
SrA.	Senior airman
SSB	Special separation bonus
SSgt.	Staff sergeant
TACP	Tactical Air Control Party
TDY	Temporary duty
TI	Training instructor
TOPCAP	Total Objective Plan for Career Airmen Personnel
TSgt.	Technical sergeant
USAF	United States Air Force
USAFE	United States Air Forces in Europe
USAFSS	United States Air Force Security Service
USEUCOM	United States European Command
VSI	Voluntary separation incentive
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WAF	Women in the Air Force
WAPS	Weighted Airman Promotion System
WASP	Women's Air Service Pilots

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