

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. Renfroe 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 non-commissioned 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.