

Donald B. Rice

May 22, 1989–January 20, 1993



Portrait by George Pollard



DONALD B. RICE was born on June 4, 1939, in Frederick, Maryland. He earned a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering from the University of Notre Dame in 1961, and a master's degree in industrial management in 1962 and a Ph.D. in economics in 1965 from Purdue University. He received three honorary degrees: a doctor of engineering granted by Notre Dame in 1975, a doctor of management granted by Purdue in 1985, and a doctor of laws granted by Pepperdine University in 1989. Rice married the former Susan Fitzgerald of Evanston, Illinois. They had three children.

Commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps upon graduation from Notre Dame, Rice served on active duty from June 1965 to June 1967 as a captain in the U.S. Army. During that time, he was assistant professor of management and acting deputy director for academics at the Navy Management Systems Center, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

From February 1969 to September 1970 he served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for resource analysis. His responsibilities included analysis of cost, manpower, and logistics' requirements; preparation of fiscal guidance issued by the secretary to the military services; and coordination of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) program and budget planning with the National Security Council. Previous to his DOD service, he had been director of cost analysis in the Office of the Secretary of Defense from June 1967.

After leaving DOD he served as assistant director in the Office of Management and Budget until April 1972. In that capacity, Rice was responsible for budgeting, program analysis, and management improvement activities in the areas of agriculture, atomic energy, commerce, energy, the environment, natural resources, public works, science and technology, space, and transportation.

In April 1972 Rice became president and chief executive officer of the Rand Corporation, an independent, nonprofit, public service institution responsible for research and analysis on problems of national security and domestic affairs and for doctoral degree programs in several fields of public policy. He served in that capacity until May 1989, when he accepted President George Bush's appointment as air force secretary.

In addition, from 1975 to 1977 he was appointed by President Gerald Ford to serve as chairman of the National Commission on Supplies and Shortages. He was asked by President Jimmy Carter to direct a resources management review for the secretary of defense, which he conducted from 1977 to 1979. From 1974 to 1986 he served two terms on the National Science Board.

As secretary of the Air Force, Rice became the focal point for, and dominant figure in, setting Air Force policy. He concentrated on developing a strategic framework for the Air Force as a whole. He sought an environment that would cut across and unite individual packets of excellence by focusing the institution on air power's inherent strengths—speed, range, flexibility, precision, and lethality—and on what the Air Force needed to do collectively to create and nurture those strengths. He published this philosophy in a 1990 white paper titled *Global Reach, Global Power*. Both he and Chief of Staff Gen. Merrill A. McPeak used this vision statement to “kill off” some of the old organizational barons and redistribute their estates. In June 1992 Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Military Airlift Command passed into history and were replaced by Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. Air Combat Command blended the winged firepower in the Air Force into one organization—Global Power. Air Mobility Command lined up most of the mobility and refueling assets on a single team—Global Reach.

Rice envisioned an Air Force that could span the globe rapidly on short notice to extend U.S. influence or achieve political objectives. Operation Desert Shield was one example of global reach: within a few days airlifters vastly exceeded the tonnage and miles of the 450-day Berlin Airlift of 1948. During the Gulf War, Rice established the precedent that the air secretary would become heavily involved in the policy and methods by which the Air Force would fight a war.

In addition, responding to administration policy, Secretary Rice became the focal point for a more efficient, leaner, “meaner” Air Force. He oversaw the cutting of overhead, the streamlining of logistics and finance, and the scrubbing of the acquisition system. But he consistently warned that a catastrophic drawdown would create a “hollow force,” and he supported the retention of several key modernization programs, such as the B-2 and the C-17.

After leaving office in January 1993, Rice became president and chief operating officer of Teledyne Corporation, Inc., of Los Angeles, California. Since that time he has served on the boards of such firms as Vulcan Materials Company and Wells Fargo and Company. Rice also served as a member of the National Committee on U.S.–China Relations. He has authored many articles, reports, and papers dealing with economic policy, government organization and budgeting, defense resources management, energy systems, strategic capabilities and arms control, regulatory problems, and analytical techniques.