

Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman

October 26, 1994–September 1, 1997



Portrait by George Pollard



RONALD R. FOGLEMAN was born on January 27, 1942, in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Juniata Joint High School, Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, in 1959. Four years later he graduated with a bachelor of science degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy and a commission as a second lieutenant. He completed pilot training in September 1964 at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, and stayed on for three more years as a flight training instructor and examiner. After a six-month stint in combat crew training in F-100s at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, he joined the 510th Tactical Fighter Squadron in June 1968 as a fighter pilot stationed at Bien Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam. On September 12, Captain Fogleman was shot down by multiple hits from small arms fire. He ejected over hostile territory and hid on the ground from an enemy that was as close as twenty yards. He was picked up by a Cobra helicopter and rode on the outside until reaching the safety of a Special Forces camp. The next day he went out again on one of the 240 combat missions he flew while stationed in Vietnam.

He returned stateside in March 1969 to attend Duke University, where he earned a master of arts degree in military and political science in 1970. He next went to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, as an associate professor of history. He then shipped to Thailand, where he served as an F-4 pilot, instructor pilot, and commander of the Laredo forward air controller flight, completing an additional seventy-five combat missions. In August 1974 he was reassigned to the Air Reserve Personnel Center in Colorado as chief of rated assignments.

After completing Army War College in 1976, Lieutenant Colonel Fogleman was assigned to the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing at Bitburg Air Base, West Germany, as assistant deputy commander for operations. During that stint, his unit became the first operational F-15 aircraft wing stationed outside the continental United States. In February 1978 he took on the duties of deputy commander for operations for the 32d Tactical Fighter Squadron at Camp New Amsterdam, Holland. While at those European posts, Fogleman maintained mission-ready status with an additional duty as the United States Air Forces in Europe F-15 aircraft demonstration pilot, performing at many international air shows.

His next assignment was as chief, tactical forces division, directorate of programs, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C., where he remained until he was transferred to Hill

Air Force Base, Utah, as vice commander, 388th Tactical Fighter Wing. Then Colonel Fogleman served as director of fighter operations at Headquarters Tactical Air Command, Langley Air Force Base. In March 1983 he took command of the 56th Tactical Training Wing at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. In August 1984 he became commander of the 836th Air Division at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

Fogleman was promoted to brigadier general in October 1985, and five months later he went to the Pentagon as deputy director of programs and evaluation, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Programs and Resources. Two years later he became director of that same organization, as well as chairman of the Air Staff Board, Headquarters at the Pentagon. As a lieutenant general in July 1990, he headed to the Pacific region as commander of the Seventh Air Force, deputy commander in chief, United Nations Command; deputy commander, U.S. Forces Korea; and commander, Republic of Korea, U.S. Air Component Command, Combined Forces Command, Osan Air Base, Korea. In August 1992 he became commander in chief of U.S. Transportation Command and commander of Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, where he was promoted to four-star status. Finally, he returned to the Pentagon in October 1994 as chief of staff of the United States Air Force.

During his tenure as chief of staff, General Fogleman was considered by many to be a nonsense consensus builder who would have the Air Force work more cooperatively with the other military branches. Indeed, during his first days as chief of staff, Fogleman made known his belief that “Goldwater-Nichols had fundamentally changed the American way of war.” He urged Air Force personnel to be proud of their “heritage” and “core competencies,” but to remember that they served as “a team within a team.” He demanded that the very best people in the Air Force serve on joint staffs so unified commands would “have people there who do understand air power.” During his tenure as chief, Fogleman added to the definition of global presence “to include not only . . . air, land, and sea forces, but . . . space forces and information-based capabilities.”

One of his first initiatives as chief was to restore the traditional rank insignia to the new Air Force uniform, which had been changed by his predecessor, Gen. Merrill A. McPeak. Throughout his tenure, Fogleman supported a global engagement long-range plan, and he announced and upheld a core-values campaign. He also launched an accountability campaign when writing career-ending disciplinary letters for seven officers who escaped prosecution in the April 1994 shooting down of two Army Black Hawk helicopters in Iraq. Subsequently, he fired three wing leaders after the April 1996 CT-43 crash in Croatia that killed thirty-five people, including U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown. In September of that year he opposed a Pentagon-commissioned report that blamed the Air Force commander in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Brig. Gen. Terryl Schwalier, for the vulnerability of Khobar Towers to terrorist bombing.

It was the Schwalier case that some believe induced Fogleman to leave office before completing his tenure. In a closing message to his troops he acknowledged that he might be out of

“step with the times and some of the thinking of the establishment.” He added, “if I were to continue to serve as chief of staff of the Air Force and speak out, I could be seen as a divisive force and not a team player. I do not want the Air Force to suffer for my judgment and convictions. In my view this would happen if I continue as your chief.” He also had been losing key resources and the budget battle. General Fogleman apparently did not view those losses as political, but instead as losses for the Air Force he was charged with shepherding. Thus, on July 28, 1997, Fogleman announced his official retirement effective September 1.