

**Interviewee:** Airey, Paul W.  
**Interviewer:** Tom McGuire  
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The following document contains the complete text of a tape recorded interview conducted with Paul W. Airey, who served as the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) from April 3, 1967 to July 31, 1969. Tom McGuire interviewed Chief Airey on June 21, 1991 at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.

The interview focuses on Airey's long, illustrious career in the United States Air Force. Airey's discussion of his career commences with the Chief's World War II recollections. He concludes with reminiscences of experiences he had while serving as the highest ranking enlisted member of the United State Air Force, CMSAF. Particularly interesting are Airey's comparisons of today's modern Air Force with the Army Air Corps of yesteryear. Airey also provides a few interesting insights into the programs and personalities he encountered in the Pentagon during the height of the Vietnam War.

Time constraints constituted the primary obstacles faced in acquiring this interview. Airey maintains an extremely busy work and lecture schedule. The interviewer contacted Airey and requested an interview appointment three weeks prior to the actual interview. Due to conflicting travel schedules, on the part of Airey and the interviewer, only one date was agreeable to both parties, June 21. This eliminated the possibility of a follow-on session. The interview date agreed upon resulted in additional time constraints.

Attempting to accommodate Airey's busy schedule, the interviewer requested only one and one-half hours for the interview. In order to cover Airey's entire career, the interviewer felt it necessary to ask very direct, succinct questions. In some respects, this may have discouraged Airey from elaborating on some of his comments. The short interview period also interfered with the interviewer's ability to establish rapport with Airey. For this reason, interviews restricted by such time constraints should be avoided if possible. In the case of this particular session, however, the interviewer felt Airey's remarks were valuable enough to settle for the short interview period.

Airey appeared extremely enthusiastic and willing to assist the interviewer in compiling this oral history. Airey's remarks, however, are occasionally elusive. The discussion of his experiences as a prisoner of war in World War II illustrates this point. Interestingly enough, prior to the taped interview Airey said he did not mind discussing his experiences as a prisoner of war. Nonetheless, the text dealing with this subject reveals an apparent reluctance on Airey's part to discuss the matter. In general, however, Airey speaks candidly and at great length on a number of topics.

**McGuire:** Today I'll be interviewing Chief Paul Airey, the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. Chief, I'd like to start off by discussing your initial experiences in the Air Force. I understand that in the early days, you came to Tyndall and went to the gunnery school here. Can you tell me something about the training you underwent?

**Airey:** Alright, Lieutenant. As you're well aware, the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and I enlisted in November of '42. I went through basic training in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Then I went through Radio Operators School at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, and passed the physicals for flying and so forth... was sent to Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, to go through Aerial Gunnery School, which trained gunners to go on bombers: B-17s, B-24s, B-25s. I ended up going to a B-24. Do you want to talk more about...

**McGuire:** Was the training extensive at Tyndall? Was it thrown together in a sort of hurried, hasty way?

**Airey:** No, it was a very, very extensive, meticulous type of training. We started right off with basic rifles, learning how to track ducks, just like you would at a carnival. From there you went to shotguns, skeet shooting, to learning how to track the missiles in the sky, so to speak. And from there, you went on to turrets, and you actually fired from turrets. Then you flew. You fired the .30 caliber machine gun. Then you fired the .50 caliber machine gun at tow targets. The tow target was a long white sleeve being towed by a fighter. Each gunner had the tips of his bullets' ammo dipped in different colors so they could score the number of hits that he made while going through that particular mission.

**McGuire:** I see, and I understand one of the famous graduates of the gunnery school was Clark Gable. Was there any talk about the fact that he had been through the school?

**Airey:** Oh yeah. we were all aware of the fact that Clark Gable had gone through two or three classes ahead of us.

**McGuire:** Let's skip ahead to your actual involvement in the European theater. I understand that you flew missions over Germany and Austria? What type of missions did you fly and what was the significance of the targets you were targeting?

**Airey:** Right. I was assigned to the 485th Bomb Group, and we finished our training here in the states. We then went overseas, by way of ... in those days, you had to go down by either the northern or southern route, down South America to Brazil, across to Africa, and then on up. Then my group became a member of the Fifteenth Air Force, and we were flying out of Italy. The prime targets, in those days, were such things as the oil refineries. That was probably the number one target. Then we went after aircraft plants and "marshalling yards". "Marshalling yard" is a British term for freight yard. But the prime targets were the oil refineries. I'd flown to Ploesti a couple of times. That, of course, was one of the main sources of oil for the German armed forces.

**McGuire:** A very famous oil field..

**Airey:** Don't get me wrong. I did not fly that famous low level, fifty airplanes ... where we lost fifty bombers on that first low level raid to Ploesti.

**McGuire:** Speaking of losing bombers... you were shot down in 1944, I believe.

**Airey:** Yeah, in July of '44; the target was the Flöstadt oil refineries, which were on the outskirts of Vienna. Vienna was a very heavily defended target, and it was on my twenty-eighth mission. We were hit by flak. We all had to bail out.

**McGuire:** And what was the result of your downing? You were taken prisoner?

**Airey:** I was taken prisoner, immediately. As you know, the Americans were flying daylight missions. The British were flying the night missions. And when you bailed out in broad daylight, you could be seen for many, many, many miles. I bailed out over some farming country, and the farmers captured me before I got out of my chute.

**McGuire:** What was their reaction to you? And then can you go into your experiences as a prisoner of war?

**Airey:** Well, I was pretty roughly handled when I first landed. I took a rather severe beating and finally the soldiers showed up, of course, and made me prisoner. I was taken to an interrogation center. At that time, it was in Budapest. From there, I was sent up to Northern Germany.

**McGuire:** Now, the trip from Budapest to Northern Germany, was that by train?

**Airey:** It was by freight car..

**Q** In your biography, I read that you were part of a forced march. Was it an extensive march?

**Airey:** It was in February of 1945. If you recall history, the Russians were making a big push, coming from the East Hitler had ordered the German general staff not to surrender any prisoners, and his grand scheme was that he was going to use them for hostages. He even gave an order towards the end to, you know, execute all prisoners, which the German general staff did not carry out. In any event, we were up there in the Baltic, not too far from Schwenemonde and we marched out of there- forced marched- going toward the West. I think the end result was about a nine hundred mile journey. The Americans and British started coming from that direction. We turned around and started back the other way. Not a very pleasant time.

**McGuire:** Your end destination was a stalag outside Berlin? Is that correct?

**Airey:** Right

**McGuire:** Stalag 257. Was there any special significance to that camp?

**Airey:** I don't think so. I was liberated on the road someplace. We were on at Stalag 257 for a short period of time.

**McGuire:** You were released in May '45? Is that correct?

**Airey:** Yeah, May 7th. The war was over May 7th. I liberated by the British Second Army.

**McGuire:** After that your weight was quite diminished and you were sent home for recuperation.

**Airey:** Yes, I had dysentery, and I weighed about 100 pounds when I was liberated. Of course, we went on the march with little or no food at all. You lose weight fast.

**McGuire:** What were your impressions of your homecoming? Was there very little fanfare or was it... ?

**Airey:** No, there was a lot of fanfare. It was a pretty patriotic time. The Americans were very exuberant about the war in Europe being over, and as it turned out, the war in Japan ... the Far East... didn't last much longer. In fact, we were to be retrained. The scheme was that we were to be retrained and go over to be in the Twentieth Air Force to start flying missions to Japan. Of course, it never came to that.

**McGuire:** If it had come to that, what would have been the time frame between your liberation and recuperation and being sent back...?

**Airey:** Oh, it would have been several months. Recuperation, leave and going to school- I imagine it would have taken at least six to eight months before that would have happened.

**McGuire:** Let's talk for a moment about the intervening years between the war and your later assignment as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. After the war, you were sent to Japan, Post-war Japan. What were some of your impressions of Japan and Japan's role in the world at that time?

**Airey:** Well, actually, I did about five years instructor duty at Scott Air Force Base. In those days, Scott was the "electronics capital" of the Air Force. When war broke out, I was sent to Okinawa, which was a combat support area for the Korean War. It was several years later before I did a tour in Japan. But I was up to Japan in those days on several TDYs.

**McGuire:** Do you have anything else you want to add with regard to your war experiences, World War II experiences, in terms of impressions you had?

**Airey:** I think this might be an interesting note, as long as we're talking history. I'm asked this

question frequently. You know next year, it'll be fifty years since I enlisted, and that's a long time. And active or retired I've been very close to the Air Force. I'm frequently asked a question about the Air Force of today and the Air Force of yesterday. Let me... the best way I can sum it up is ... in 1939, three years or so before we got involved in the war, the entire U.S. Army/Air Force consisted of about 40,000 officers. Alright, Hitler started rumblings in Europe, the Japanese had marched into Manchuria, and many people knew that we would be involved in World War II. President Roosevelt signed the "draft", and we started some mobilization. Anyway, when the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor, we were still in bad shape. By the end of World War II, now, we had over two million people in the U.S. Air Force. Now, the war was won by citizen soldiers. It was won by people who enlisted, who were drafted, led by a nucleus, or a handful of regulars. We only had 40,000 people. In the organization that I finally went into combat with, there were probably only three or four officers who had been in the pre-World War II Air Force (Army--Air Force) and a handful of non-commissioned officers. In other words, the rest- I'm talking about officers and enlisted- were all World War II types- enlistees, draftees and so forth. And of course, we ended up winning the war. Now you compare that with the Air Force which just had the tremendous victory over in the Persian Gulf. We take young men and women out of basic training, send 'em to tech school, and award them direct duty assignments. We put them through PME- Professional Military Education. Now, by the time they have three years service, or so, you've got a pretty professional type, and the same with officers. Now, we can be so very proud, considering the several thousand miles of supply lines, the sand storms and everything else [faced in the Persian Gulf]. We flew over 100,000 sorties, and we did it with a ninety percent in-commission rate. Now this would have been thought impossible. This could only be done by professional people. So this is basically the difference between the Air Force of today and the Air Force I knew fifty years ago. It's pretty much all professional people.

**McGuire:** You spoke about professional military education. As Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force [CMSAF], you played a large role in bringing about many of the programs that are now in place. There are career progression programs, etc. If you don't mind, I'd like to skip ahead now to your experiences as CMSAF.

**Airey:** Yeah, I spent many years as a first sergeant, of course. This kept me in the people business, and I ended up being selected as the CMSAF. Well, one of the things I felt so proudly about and was a great booster of was our Senior Non-Commissioned Officer [NCO] Academy. Now, it did not come about during my tenure, but it did come about during the next CMSAF's tenure. When we take our senior NCOs and intensive course, that's probably one of the finest there is. This is real professional military education. So, I'm very proud of that. I like to think I've had a hand in our professional military education for the lower ranks- the leadership schools and the NCO academies. And to me, it's one of the most important factors we have in the enlisted force today- the professional military education. I think that's what made the professional force that allowed the major victory in the Persian Gulf. And without bragging Air Force, or taking away anything from everybody else, the Air force made that victory easy. The Air Force!

**McGuire:** In getting PME through, in terms of getting the people who control the purse strings,

did you have to pull any teeth to convince people that this (PME) was the way to go for the Air Force?

**Airey:** Well, you don't pull teeth when you're talking to just state your case, study and know your homework, and you say what you think is right. But everything is a matter of money. We were up to our necks, when I was CMSAF, in the Vietnam War and monies had to go toward that. That was the priority. And many things that we should have done, or would have liked to do, were put aside. But 'lo and behold, a few years later, we did get the Senior NCO Academy.

**McGuire:** It's interesting that the position of CMSAF was created in the midst of Vietnam, and I'm curious if the creation of the position had anything to do with the escalation of our involvement. In '65 we had about 185,000 ground troops. This is just an example of the escalation, and by '67 we had almost 500,000, or 485,000- more precisely- ground troops. I guess what I'm getting at is... that correlates to a swelling of the enlisted ranks, and with such a swelling of the enlisted ranks, did that play into the creation of the position?

**Airey:** If it did, I'm not aware of it. The position of CMSAF- the Sergeant Major of the Army, the Sergeant Major of the Marines and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy- was being discussed and kicked about some time before this. And I don't believe the Vietnam conflict... it had very little to do with it. And as you're probably aware of Air Force history, we were the last ones to select someone for that position. It was another form of communications- the fact there was an increase in troop strength could have had a bearing on it.

**McGuire:** How were you selected, exactly, for your position? Could you go into that a bit...?

**Airey:** Well, as you're probably aware, I was first sergeant of the Civil Engineering Squadron right here at Tyndall. And when this was announced that there would be a selection criteria, it was basically quite simple. They said any chief master sergeant E9-who had two years time in-grade and at least twenty-two years of service could apply. Nowadays, you have a lot more... they're not going to pick anyone with twenty-two years of service. I had twenty-four. And it started right off at base level, world wide. They identified 2200 chiefs to be eligible. It started out at base level board action, all the way up through... and finally we had the final eliminations, culminating with the final selection by the Chief of Staff at the Pentagon.

**McGuire:** I see. Once you were in the job... I take it your primary responsibility was to look out for the listed ranks?

**Airey:** The job description remains the same and that basically is : "The CMSAF will aid and advise the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff on all matters pertaining to enlisted people."

**McGuire:** To what extent did you go outside the bounds of that job description in terms of being an advisor the Chief of Staff of the Air Force? Did you serve in an advisory capacity at all? Did

you work hand-in-hand with the Chief of Staff?

**Airey:** Well, the last thing in the world I would want to be classified as is as a member of the Inspector General's office. I didn't go out, come back, and say "this would need to be done" at some base. I would talk to people on the bases where I noted problems. As CMSAF, just like the job description says, you advise the commander on personnel changes, regulations, what's needed for the enlisted. Yes, you often have to talk about things some people don't want to hear. Yes, it's an advisorial position.

**McGuire:** In terms of bringing things up that may not have been well received, can you think of any particular examples where you ran up against a brick wall?

**Airey:** Well, there are several. In many ways, our assignment system certainly needed to be overhauled. The enlisted promotion system was in a terrible mess. And one of the things I'm most proud of is that we... and I don't want to take credit for this because I was strictly an advisor... but our enlisted promotion system was so bad even Congress got involved and told the Air Force to get something going to replace it. We ended up coming up with the Weighted Airman's Promotion System [WAPS], which was an advisor-for-probably one of the things which I feel the proudest of. And so far as I'm concerned... I've looked at all the promotion systems of the armed forces, and by far, the WAPS of the United States Air Force is the best promotion system possible. I know, you study, you work hard, you get good reports, you pass your tests- you're going to get promoted. And if you don't pass your tests you're going to get a report card that tells you exactly why you're not getting promoted. And all the gripes, and so forth, you used to hear about, are all gone because people know where they stand. And if people know where they stand, they don't have any gripes. If they didn't study, pass their tests and so forth, that's their fault.

**McGuire:** You mentioned that when you returned from Europe after World War II, you and the majority of returning troops were greeted with some fanfare. We're all familiar with the tragic way in which the troops returning from Vietnam were greeted. In terms of adjustment programs for the Gulf War returnees, programs supported by Family Services/Family Support, we learned a lesson, in a sense, from Vietnam. I'm curious about what was going on in the upper-echelons of the military during Vietnam in terms of looking at how we were going to help troops returning from Vietnam. Was it considered or was the major concern simply to turn things around in Vietnam and to actually pull out a victory?

**Airey:** Well, I'm going to try to answer your question, Lieutenant. First of all, Vietnam was a tragedy. God forbid we ever get into a war again- a war of containment- or if we go to, let's go to win. Now, we could have won the Vietnam War time and time again. But they did not let the armed forces fight that war. Politics and politicians lost the war in Vietnam. I get very upset when I hear a news commentator or I read something about Vietnam. The armed forces of our country did not lose any war in Vietnam. The war was lost by politics and politicians. We could have won that war at any time. And I think these veterans that are going through all this trauma

and traumatic experiences.... I spoke to a psychologist not too long ago. He works with veterans and he said one of the things they find difficult to understand is that the World War II and Korean veterans didn't face that... the mixed up emotions and minds that resulted from Vietnam. And, of course, I was in Vietnam I went to Vietnam four times. They blame it on the fact that lots of these people felt unloved . They also cite the type of war we were fighting... What did the military do for them [the returnees]? We didn't have family services like we know it today, and some of these other things. But they did their best to treat them and so forth. I wore my uniform all the through it, and I never had any problems... minor problems with some people. But others certainly got some terrible treatment.

**McGuire:** Do you think it was a matter of the top brass assuming the returnees would adjust in the same way World War II and Korean vets did? After all, the majority of military leaders at the time had served in World War II or Korea. Do you think they assumed it would follow the same progression? That Vietnam vets would be able to adjust in the same way they had?

**Airey:** I think the assumption you mention is probably correct. Geezs they didn't know it was going to cause all this... even today when I see some of these Vietnam vets, it's disturbing for me to see their reaction to life and so forth. Some of them have never really found themselves... and psychologically they claim it's the type of war we fought. But the Korean War was the same type of war. We weren't allowed to win that one either. We were only allowed to fight to keep a certain parallel. And once again, I hope to God we never go into anything like that again.

**McGuire:** Did you have any first-hand experiences with Secretary McNamara? Did you have any dealings with him?

**Airey:** Secretary McNamara was a very private person. I saw him once in the hallway as I was at the Pentagon. Upon the election of President Nixon, the new Secretary of Defense was Congressman Mel Laird. Now, he was an entirely different person. Within a matter of a very short time, we were in his office talking about the enlisted forces in the various armed forces. But McNamara, to answer your question, no we had no intercourse or conversations with him at any time.

**McGuire:** It's interesting, you compare the two- McNamara and Laird.

**Airey:** Mel Laird, he was a very excellent Secretary of Defense.

**McGuire:** And he had you in his office and he was interested in the welfare of the enlisted ranks?

**Airey:** He wanted to know all about enlisted problems and so forth, and what our recommendations were. That's correct.

**McGuire:** Is that a reflection of a general, overall change that came about in with the Nixon administration.



**Airey:** No, I just think it's a difference in people. I think it's a difference between McNamara and Congressman Laird.

**McGuire:** Was there any change in mood in the Pentagon when the change- over took place between LBJ's administration and Nixon's?

**Airey:** I think there was. Of course, the new president gets elected and at that time, you don't know what his policies are going to be. To his credit, President Nixon, at the end finally unleashed SAC [Strategic Air Command] and so forth and brought the Vietnamese to the truce table, to talks and so forth. And there were other things... Let me back up a little... have you ever heard of Project 100,000? Project 100,000 was instigated by McNamara and what it amounted to was this: 100,000 people would be brought into the armed forces every year, people who normally could not pass the mental or even physical conditions. Now the idea was maybe good in some ways, but it proved this: the armed forces of our country is no place for social experiments. You fight in a war or you're training people. Of the 100,000, 12,000 were in the Air Force. Now with rare exceptions, these people did not fit into the Air Force way of life, which proves that in the armed forces of today, we need the brightest people we can get. Well, we opposed things like this and the General Staff said this is not the... and here we were in the midst of the Vietnam War, too, and we had things like this to contend with. So it was wrong, and there were other things..

**McGuire:** Can you think of other examples?

**Airey:** Well, just the way we were allowed to fight the war... One time I was in Vietnam and there was a wing commander of a fighter outfit. I can still see him now. He was so frustrated. Up the road, there were some soldiers really being mauled by the Vietcong, and he had to wait for an order before he could scramble the airplanes to go up and do something about it.

**McGuire:** Just had his hands tied?

**Airey:** Had his hands tied. And our generals and our commanders had their hands tied. This was a very frustrating period.

**McGuire:** I don't want to dwell on it too long, but the type of social experimentation you mentioned, were there any other similar examples of that you confronted? Can you think of anything else?

**Airey:** Nothing that upscale. No. I don't know if you want to make some comparisons now. You know I go back to World War II, and I can distinctly remember "pay call". I have a vivid... and of course you went by rank and alphabetically. The first sergeant had the payroll and you signed exactly beside your name. And he would sound off, "Airey, Paul W., Private First Class- 20 bucks..." or whatever I was getting, and the adjutant would count it out. Then the commander counted it out, and you'd salute the commander and pick up the money. Well, what I'm getting

at, I can still see people in a payline picking up the pen from the first sergeant and very laborlously making an "X" on the payroll. Then the first sergeant would write in his mark. He was witnessing that that person could not read or write and that "X" was the man's signature. And some of these were... don't get me wrong, they were good people... they kept the fires going in the barracks They did K.P They did a thousand other things that freed people to go on to the war. But this would be an example of the unthinkable: that we would have people in the Air Force, or any of the armed forces, today, who couldn't read or write. You couldn't do it. There's no place. So today's Air Force has to be an educated Air Force. And tomorrow's Air Force is going to be the same or even more so.

**McGuire:** As a student of history, especially in my studies of American history, the year 1968 has always fascinated me. Everything from Martin Luther King to Robert Kennedy's assassination, the Columbia riots, everything that was going on overseas as well, in France and Germany with the students, and Czechoslovakia. It was a very tumultuous year And you were in a top level position in D.C. at the time. Did you know what you were getting into?

**Airey:** Oh yeah, and there were such things as... I remember all of a sudden one day near the Pentagon. All the hallways- the Pentagon in that day was a public building, except for classified areas, of course. But you could walk in and out of the Pentagon, anybody could. In fact, they had a mall; the mall is still there. People go in and shop, and so forth, but anyway, I went to work one day and you couldn't get through the corridors or the stairways. All these hippie-type people sitting there, and peaceniks and, of course, this is democracy. We fight to let people have their freedom of expression, but this was absolutely ridiculous. This was going on for about two and a half days. And McNamara finally gave an order to clear them out, and of course they hung outside the Pentagon doing the same thing. And you had your Quakers and other religious groups, and I'm not knocking their right to think what they want, but there's also such a thing as going too far. But this had an effect on some of the military people. It bothered them greatly that the American people...(pause) At least we know the overwhelming majority, the silent majority were behind you. But you don't see them. It's these people with placards and raising hell, and so forth; and asking you, "Do you enjoy killing babies?" and so forth, that can get to some people. To me, I just let it roll off my back. Because I knew that this was a job. That what I was doing was morally and legally right.

**McGuire:** After King was assassinated there was a string of riots throughout the country, and especially in D.C. There were fires all over the city, and they called out over 55,000 troops, something like that. What was it like to be in D.C. at the time? And what was it like to be in the Pentagon at the time?

**Airey:** Well, I had been (if I recall right) down to Houston to an Air Force Association convention. And Martin Luther King was assassinated. And as I flew back, coming into Andrews Air Force Base, we kind of circled over Washington D.C. And I could see the fires, and so forth; it gave you a very, very, funny feeling. But I didn't see any of the actual rioting. But it was, as you put it, a... '68 and '69, in many ways in our history, are what we call bad years.

**McGuire:** The string of events I mentioned before- Robert Kennedy, the riots, the Chicago convention... you had fought in World War II, and it was viewed as a war, that in many ways, was preserving democracy, but also was establishing America as a great nation...

**Airey:** Popular war...

**McGuire:** We went into the '50's and America for a long time possessed a great spirit and feeling of achievement and was a world leader. Then we get into the '60's and culminating with those two years, '68 and '69, it was cataclysmic in many ways. Did you feel like the nation was falling apart at the seams?

**Airey:** No, I never felt that.

**McGuire:** No?

**Airey:** No. I never felt that way. I feel we go through periods. And I think democracy is a strong enough... well, let's look at it this way Lieutenant, a president of the United States was forced to resign, if you recall. Just prior to that, the vice-president had to resign. There are very few countries in this world that they would not have called out the troops. They would've had martial law in effect. But we went through this traumatic... we didn't have martial law... the troops weren't even put on alert if I recall. I know we weren't put on alert when all this happened, which means this country is very, very strong. If you can go through things like the Vietnam War with hundreds of thousands of people opposing it, and you go through presidents of the United States being forced to resign, it means you're strong. I've always had faith. You know we go through various periods, things happen, but we seem to weather them and come out even stronger

**McGuire:** Looking back over your life, can you, in a nutshell, talk about your association with the Air Force and what you think the Air Force means to this nation as a whole? And also, what it means to the military establishment in this country?

**Airey:** Well, I think the Air Force of tomorrow is going to be the dominant force. We used to say the navy was the first line of defense, and that's no longer true. The United States Air Force is your first line of defense. God knows what the Air Force is going to do in space. We have the Space Command. The Air Force of tomorrow is going to be a very dynamic one; it's going to be a lot smaller Air Force than what we see, but it's going to be, from what I foresee, a quick-strike type Air Force, with the ability to strike anywhere in the world in a matter of hours or at least a day. And I look for people like you who are on active duty- most of you are going to be carrying mobility bags packed at your quarters, ready to go. And once again, we're going to- the Air Force is, and will, be as far as I'm concerned, the major force keeping this country out of war. And if we have to go to war, it's going to be the major force to win it.

**McGuire:** Chief, is there anything else you'd like to add, in terms of your career or what you've experienced.

**Airey:** Well. looking back at 49 years, you know, this is a way of life. The people who think otherwise are making a mistake. You're never going to get rich. You're never going to make a lot of money. But knowing what I know now, and I've been in the civilian industry now for the last twenty years, I'd certainly do it all over again. But it's the type of life that you've gotta want. And it's not for everybody. I think the last figures I read, every twelve enlisted people coming in, only one in twelve will re-enlist. And those who will go on to stay a full career and then retire are even fewer. Because this can be a very frustrating, very demanding way of life. But to me, it's a great way of life, and I'd do it all over again.

**McGuire:** Thank you.

**Airey:** O K