



Generations of Chevrons: A History of the Enlisted Force

Office of Air Force History, U.S. Air Force

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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.

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