

Air Force One: An Honor, Privilege, and Pleasure to Serve

John L. Haigh Sr.

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As a young person growing up in a small coal mining community in western Pennsylvania, I dreamed of traveling and seeing the world. Upon graduation from high school, I enlisted in the United States Air Force, not knowing where my travels would take me. I volunteered for flying duty and was sent to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey in 1963. From there, I traveled all over the world transporting troops.

In 1973, I volunteered and was accepted into the 89th military airlift wing, special air missions organization at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, which required a top secret clearance, and was the home of Air Force One.

After experiencing my first Air Force One backup trip with President Nixon to Europe and the Middle East, I set another goal to become a permanent member of the Air Force One flight crew; but it did not happen right away.

Meanwhile, I was privileged to fly missions that included a 33 day presidential goodwill trip with the Apollo 17 astronauts, (the last men to walk on the moon), around the world, the prime minister of India, premier of China, Chancellor of Germany, President of Turkey, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, President Carter's mother, Ms Lillian, cabinet level officers, members of congress, high ranking military officers, Vice President's Ford and Mondale.

On September 1, 1979, I was selected as a permanent member of the Air Force One flight crew, during the last 16 months of the Carter administration, 8 years with President Reagan (19 months of which were served as his Chief Steward), 3 1/2 years as chief steward for President Bush SR. To quote President Bush Sr., "It was great to travel with the First Team".

The Presidents I was privileged to serve were ordinary folks like you and I, who did extraordinary things to be elected. Personally, I had the time of my life, fulfilling my dreams of world travels, and it truly was a privilege and pleasure to serve the Presidents aboard Air Force One.

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