

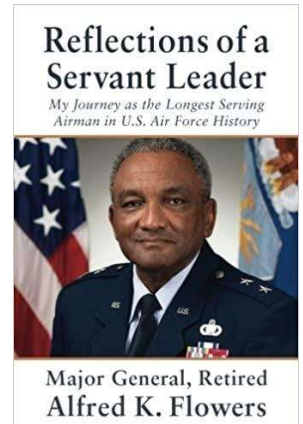


Reflections of a Servant Leader: My Journey as the Longest Serving Airman in U.S. Air Force History

Major General, Retired Alfred K. Flowers

Maj Gen Flowers spoke at a recent Bush Institute Stand-To Veteran Leadership Program seminar I was attending. On the flight back from Dallas, TX to Washington, D.C. I couldn't put down his book, it is that inspiring.

Executive Summary: Maj Gen Flowers reflects on his life by anchoring his story on the fact that he is the longest serving Airman in Air Force history and longest serving African American in the Department of Defense—46 years, rising to both Master Sergeant and Major General. He vividly describes his early life growing up in his grandparents' home, working as young sharecropper, and spending countless hours in both church and school. He then walks the reader through his Air Force career and his active retirement where he continues to serve to this day. Finally, he finishes the book with two chapters that describe his Flowerisms—common sense ideas, and how best to navigate a military career.



This book is for those struggling to break free of a bad situation, seeking inspiration, interested in elevating their already successful life, or for those that are considering entering the military and require additional information, perspective, and guidance.

Enlisted in the Air Force at the age of seventeen and retired on January 1, 2012 after forty-six years, five months, and twenty-four days of active service.

- Born premature on December 29, 1947, the same year the Air Force was formed.
- Grew up in a small, 700 square foot home that lacked modern amenities.
- Worked on the farm starting at age ten. Described the process of growing tobacco in great detail.
- After a hard work or school week, the family spent the majority of Sunday at Church. Church is what kept the village together by providing community, hope, and purpose; faith continues to sustain him.

Modern Day Slavery—he describes similarities between his sharecropping experience and slavery.

- Pay and financial information were kept secret.
- Limited choice on where they lived and who they worked for; slaves obviously had no choice.
- Felt owned by the sharecropping family because they owned everything—home, land, and store.

Determined to make a better life through education, service, and attitude.

- Learned a great deal about responsibility by working on the farm and driving a bus as a high school student. Took advantage of education he was offered, even though it was suboptimal. Viewed military service as a ticket out of poverty. Success will always depend on your attitude.

Flowerism example. There are many, many more in Chapter 10.

Having the right APPROACH to life is critical: Attitude, Perform, Passion, Respect, Ownership, Actions, Commitment, Humility

Navigating a military career:

- Really think through and seek counsel on the benefits and disadvantages of a military career. It is serious business.

- Need to understand you are making a firm commitment; you will be rewarded, though, by taking advantage of education, training, and new skill development.
- Consistently perform well, demonstrate unwavering integrity, maintain a humble spirit, and be an excellent guide and mentor to others.

Legacy is what you leave behind, not what is put in the ground, but those that attend the funeral. Continue to give back and tell your own story. Maybe it will inspire others to reach more and continue to propel Maj Gen Flowers' legacy forward.

Thanks to [Christopher Mulder](#) for contributing their notes. Help other military leaders & contribute on [DODReads](#).