Air Force Communications Agency Biographical Information for CMSgt. William L. Bethea

CHIEF MASTER SGT. WILLIAM L. BETHEA is the second enlisted person to be inducted. He entered the Air Force in 1951 and after basic training, attended Teletype and Crypto Maintenance School at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo. His first assignment was at the 1932nd Communications Squadron in Labrador, where he worked for fellow Hall of Fame member, Maj. Gen. Paul Stoney.After a tour in Europe from 1954 through 1955, he was assigned to the 2049th Communications Group, McClellan AFB, Calif., and worked on the first online link encryption device. In 1958 he became one of the first secure voice technicians assigned to the Pentagon and was selected to establish the first Air Force Communications/Information Maintenance work center supporting the National Military Command Center. He moved to Germany four years later to the 1946th Communications Squadron, then back to the Pentagon for almost another four years as a special projects NCO. In 1968, he was sent to Korea to install a secure voice network at all bases there after the USS Pueblo was attacked by North Korean forces. He and his team had the net up and running in 60 days. Master Sgt. Bethea then spent a year at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, serving as superintendent of maintenance (chief master sergeant position), disaster preparedness NCO, and crypto maintenance supervisor in a combat environment. After a final Pentagon tour, his last assignment brought him to the Headquarters Defense Communications Agency as superintendent of the facilities control branch. He managed the performance of around the clock technical control, crypto, radio, wire, and audio/video support for the DCA. Following retirement in 1978, he helped the Department of Energy implement national policy for communications security related programs at nuclear weapons complex production plants and laboratories. He was later named the project manager for the operation and maintenance of the Headquarters, Department of State diplomatic telecommunications network.