



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: Your Supervisor

SUBJECT: Career Decision

TO: A New Lieutenant

To stay or not to stay; what a question! The decision between staying in the Air Force for a full career or leaving after completing your initial service commitment is a difficult one for many people.

I suggest that you make the decision which can be most easily changed; that is, decide now to stay in. If you decide to stay in early in your career, you will do all the things necessary to improve your professional skills and keep yourself competitive for advancement. That means you will pursue your Professional Military Education program, develop positive work habits, establish goals of excellence for yourself, continue your academic education, volunteer for and excel in your primary and additional duties and do everything else that you can think of, within the bounds of your integrity, to make you a front runner in the race.

If, after pursuing your career in this manner, you decide to leave the Air Force short of a full career, you have lost nothing. You will have developed positive work habits, exercised your mind to its fullest capacity, and prepared yourself to take on whatever job you aspire to in the civilian sector. Of equal importance, the time you spend in the Air Force will be of the greatest possible value to our nation and to you.

It is important to remember that military service is not for everyone. If you find that it is not for you, you will have nothing to be ashamed of at your departure if you have extended yourself to the fullest. For certainly you recognize that we must have "good," hard working people in the civilian sector just as we must have "good," hard working people in the military.

If, after the completion of your initial service commitment, you find that your decision to stay was the right one, then once again you have lost nothing. Because now you will not have to scramble to catch-up with your contemporaries who pursued their PME, academic education, and primary and additional duties with the objective of enjoying a full career. As a minimum, you will have kept pace with those who, after four or five years of planning to get out, suddenly decide they want to stay in.

In summary, it is human nature to seek an easier method of doing things. It is from this desire that man developed the wheel, machinery, the computer, and other innovations. Therefore, I suggest that you take the easy way out by deciding now to stay in.


Paul G. Patton, Colonel, USAF
AN OLD LIEUTENANT