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Sergeant Larry Wiehe
Trombone Soloist
THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BAND
WASHINGTON, D.C.

BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
CMSGT LAWRENCE WIEHE, JR.

1. The United States Air Force is a diverse organization with a history rich in the tradition of outstanding enlisted members proudly serving their country. While many of these members served their country heroically in combat-related duties, others served in support capacities, maintaining the same standard of excellence and receiving worldwide respect. One such individual was Chief Master Sergeant Lawrence (Larry) Wiehe, Jr. CMSgt Wiehe served as the solo trombonist with the United States Air Force Band, Washington, DC, from 1963 to 1978. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief overview of his life and career to display another facet of the enlisted heritage of the United States Air Force. First, I will present background information on CMSgt Wiehe's life prior to enlisting in the Air Force. Then I will outline the heritage and mission of The U.S. Air Force Band at the time of his arrival, 1963. Next I will detail some of the highlights of his career with The U.S. Air Force Band and finally, I will discuss his legacy to the Air Force and the world. I will begin with CMSgt Wiehe's life and development as a trombonist before he entered the U.S. Air Force.

2. Larry Wiehe began playing the trombone at an early age and his talent eventually led him to the U.S. Navy Band. According to his 1963 U.S. Air Force Band biography, Lawrence Wiehe, Jr. was born in Centralia, Illinois in 1929. He began playing trombone at the age of four.(5:App 11) In his autobiography, published in the International Trombone Association Journal,

Summer 1993, Larry discussed the problems of a four year old trying to play the trombone:

When Dad decided to start me on trombone, he ran in to some seemingly impossible problems. How in the world is a four-year-old going to be able to carry the weight of a trombone and how is he going to reach the longer positions? After thinking about it, he came up with an idea whereby it would be possible ... He took the base of an old music stand with an upright steel, adjustable rod, made a U-cup out of metal, welded it to the top of the rod and then covered the cup with leather so the trombone would not be scratched. For my short arms, he made a stiff leather strap about eight inches long and riveted a detachable loop on the end. This strap would be attached to the slide brace, which would enable me to get to about sixth position; seventh would have to wait.(40:18)

With this early start, Larry developed quickly. In 1935, his father arranged for music lessons with Joseph L. Huber, a renowned cornetist and teacher. Mr. Huber lived in St. Louis and each week Larry, his parents and his brother, would travel for five hours, by train and street car, to St. Louis to take music lessons. These lessons continued throughout his youth until he began performing with two radio station orchestras, KWK and KMOX, in St. Louis. His parents made special arrangements for him to attend Roosevelt High School in St. Louis. Upon graduation from high school, he joined the U.S. Navy and served as a machinist's mate with a fighter squadron, VF-21, in the Pacific. Upon his discharge from the Navy in 1948, he studied music at the North Texas

State Teachers College (University of North Texas) in Denton, Texas. After two and a half years of study, he was recalled to the Navy during the Korean War. After serving for six months at Sangley Point Naval Station in the Philippines, he was ordered back to the San Diego Naval Training Center and following an audition, was reassigned as the assistant trombone instructor at the U.S. Navy School of Music in Washington, DC. He arrived in February of 1951 and within a few months, his reputation attracted the attention of the U.S. Navy Band and its commander, Lieutenant Commander Charles Brendler. After a strenuous audition, he was accepted into the band in June of 1951.(40:20-25) For the next twelve years, Larry performed as a soloist with the band on a regular basis during its two annual tours and the concert series in Washington, DC. As Larry performed throughout the United States, he made numerous friends in the music community, and his reputation as a trombone soloist grew. During its 1960 tour of South America, tragedy struck the U.S. Navy Band as one of the aircraft carrying band members was involved in a mid-air collision with a civilian airliner. The loss of the nineteen band members had a tremendous impact on Larry and the band. This event, along with the retirement of Commander Brendler and his failure to make Chief Petty Officer, eventually led to his decision to leave the U.S. Navy Band. At the end of his enlistment with the Navy and after a meeting with Colonel Howard, commander of The U.S. Air Force Band, Larry enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. His career with The U.S. Air Force Band had begun.(41:42-46) Now that we have discussed his background prior to joining the U.S. Air Force, let's look at the heritage and mission of The U.S. Air Force Band at the time of his arrival in the unit, 1963.

3. The heritage and mission of The U.S. Air Force Band in 1963 consisted of outstanding service to the U.S. Air Force. According to Press Releases included in the unit history, History of the United States Air Force Band For 1 July 1963 to 31 December 1964, the heritage of The U.S. Air Force Band began with its organization in June, 1942, quickly establishing itself as the counterpart to the other military service bands. In 1944 the band was reorganized under the command of Colonel George S. Howard and before the war's end the band performed concerts in Washington, DC and traveled to Canada, Great Britain and France. From 1950 to 1960, the band made nine international Goodwill Tours, under the sponsorship of the Department of State. The unit visited 47 countries on 5 continents during these tours with several notable feats. In 1951 the band performed for an estimated 130,000 people at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. During the 1953 and 1954 tours of Europe, North Africa, and the Near East, the band performed for almost two million people. (4:App 4-5) The mission of The United States Air Force Band, Washington, DC, in 1963 is stated at the beginning of the unit history for this period. It reads as follows:

The mission of the United States Air Force Band is to:

1. Participate in and provide music for military functions and other appropriate ceremonies.
2. Help further the recreation and entertainment program at Air Force installations by providing concert music, dance orchestras, glee clubs, instrumental combinations, and individual musicians to the fullest extent practicable.

3. Assist, within its capabilities, in promoting Air Force objectives and enhancing the prestige of the Air Force and of the United States.(4:3)

It was into this organization, with its demonstrated excellence and world-wide reputation, that Larry Wiehe arrived in 1963.

4. CMSgt Wiehe had an illustrious career with The U.S. Air Force Band. His arrival in 1963 was noted in the unit history. "On 24 April Larry Wiehe, trombone soloist with the United States Navy Band, enlisted in the Air Force and was assigned to The Air Force Band. He brought with him an established reputation as one of the world's leading trombone virtuosos."(1:7) Larry Wiehe enlisted in the Air Force as a Technical Sergeant due to a special promotion authority that existed in The U.S. Air Force Band at that time. According to CMSgt (Ret.) Harry Gleeson, who served as band narrator throughout Larry's career and is currently writing a history of the U.S. Air Force Band, his first solo performance with The U.S. Air Force Band took place on June 14, 1963 at the Watergate, one of two sites utilized for the annual summer concert series. Capt Harry H. Meuser, Associate Conductor, conducted him in the solo [Believe Me If] All Those Endearing Young Charms, by Simone Mantia. He repeated this work with Col. Howard conducting on July 23, 1963 during a summer concert at the U.S. Capitol, the second site of the summer concert series. Six days later he performed the work again, with Col Howard conducting, at the Texas Bandmasters Convention in San Antonio, Texas.(3:2) These performances began his solo career with the Air Force Band. One of the other unique aspects of The U.S. Air Force Band during this period was that the commander had promotion authority for unit members. Following the concert

in San Antonio, Col Howards informed Larry that he was promoted to Master Sergeant.(41:46) This is confirmed in the unit history for the period which reports that he was promoted to Master Sergeant on 01 August 1963.(4:7) Shortly after this concert, on 31 August 1963, Col Howard retired from the Air Force.(4:6) For the next year, the band was conducted by Capt Meuser. MSgt Wiehe was featured on every concert of two national tours taken under the direction of Capt Meuser, performing [Believe Me If] All Those Endearing Young Charms. During the fall tour of 1963 the band performed in 22 cities in Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas and during the spring tour of 1964 the band performed in 22 cities in Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.(5:8-9) The band received a new commander and conductor in 1964 who left a lasting impression on Larry. "In 1964 came the man who would put the U.S.A.F. Band on the highest pedestal of its existence. He would become the predominant figure in concert band music and performance. He, like Brendler, would become the president of the American Bandmasters Association and the most respected conductor of his organization. I'm talking about Col. Arnald D. Gabriel, of course."(41:46) The association between Colonel (then Major) Gabriel and MSgt Wiehe began on Colonel Gabriel's first concert with the U.S. Air Force on 18 August 1964 with a performance of The Blue Bells of Scotland, by Arthur Pryor, at the U.S. Capitol. Col Gabriel was immediately impressed with MSgt Wiehe's ability and asked CMSgt Floyd Werle, the U.S. Air Force Band's chief composer and arranger, to write a feature piece for Larry. The work was entitled Trombone Chronology and was a medley of arrangements and original music, including a Bach two-part invention, a theme and variations on "Just Before The Battle Mother," a Dixieland solo, Tommy Dorsey's signature number: I'm

Gettin' Sentimental Over You, and even a Beatles tune. The work was a technical showcase and extremely demanding for the performer. It was premiered on 22 March 1965 in a concert at the Departmental Auditorium in Washington, DC.(3:2) Upon Colonel Gabriel's arrival, he changed the programming philosophy for the band's tours by scheduling two matinee programs and two evening programs for each tour. The two matinee programs were alternated each day and the two evening programs were alternated each night. Previously, the band had taken a single program on tour for every concert, but performing the same program two times a day, every day, for three or more weeks was mentally tiring to the band musicians. Despite these changes, Larry was scheduled to solo on both evening programs. From the fall of 1965 to the fall of 1967, MSgt Wiehe performed Trombone Chronology on every evening tour program.(3:3) As the current principal trombonist of The U.S. Air Force Band I am truly awed by his ability to perform this extremely difficult work every night for three weeks. It is a tribute to his performance skill and endurance. The contribution of this solo to the band's concert programs is noted in the unit history, History of the United States Air Force Band For 1 January 1967 to 30 June 1967: "A Trombone Chronology ... has proven to be an enormous favorite with audiences and displays trombone technique to the utmost."(9:28) Another opportunity arose to display MSgt Wiehe's considerable talent in combination with two other great performing artist: Internationally renowned tubist Harvey Phillips and world famous trumpeter Doc Severinsen. The band was scheduled to perform at the 1966 Mid-East Instrumental Music Conference in Pittsburgh on 3 April and at the American School Band Directors Convention in Milwaukee on 6 August. According to CMSgt Gleeson, Col Gabriel "realized that Harvey would be in Pittsburgh in April and Doc in Milwaukee in

August, so he wanted "a brief encore number" for all three from Floyd [Werle], not only for use in both locations, but in the hope that, the three for whom it was written (Doc, Larry and Harvey) would eventually perform it together."(3:4) The work was written by CMSgt Werle in a few short days and completed on 22 March 1966, only 12 days prior to the convention. The "brief encore number" had become a three-movement concertino. Entitled Concertino for Three Brass, it was premiered with MSgt John Maiocco, trumpet, CMSgt Larry Wiehe, trombone, and Harvey Phillips, tuba. In August, the work was performed in Milwaukee, with Doc Severinson, trumpet, CMSgt Larry Wiehe, trombone, and SMSgt Glenn Orton, tuba. This work would become a staple in the band's repertoire and was performed throughout CMSgt Wiehe's career. In the History of The United States Air Force Band from 01 January 1966 to 30 Jun 1966 it is reported that Lawrence Wiehe, Jr. was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant.(7:6) No record of his promotion to Senior Master Sergeant exists, but following this statement, he is referred to as Chief Master Sergeant in the unit personnel records, although the policy of the Public Relations office of the band at that time was to refer to every member of the band as a "Sergeant" in press releases and programs. Another significant event took place during the summer of 1967. CMSgt Gleeson records that on "June 22, 1967 - The USAF Band became the first band in the history of Tanglewood to perform in it's music shed. CMSgt Wiehe was featured on 'Chronology.'"(3:5) Tanglewood is a summer music festival featuring the Boston Symphony Orchestra and its music shed has been the performance site for numerous world famous musicians. During the 1967 Fall Tour, CMSgt Wiehe received numerous laudatory statements in the concert reviews. These are found in a press release included in the unit history:

Thunderous applause followed the performance by soloist Sergeant (Larry) Wiehe, whose execution of Sergeant Floyd E. Werle's trombone composition was nothing short of outstanding.

Tempe, Arizona - The Phoenix, Arizona 'Republic'

Sergeant Larry Wiehe, the band's virtuoso trombonist, proved his claim to being one of the finest in the world with his intricate, demanding and often amusing 'Trombone Chronology' by Sergeant Floyd E. Werle of the band. Wiehe is a wonder and the audience loved every minute.

Lubbock, Texas - Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

Sergeant Larry Wiehe, called one of the top trombone players in the world, brought the audience to a standing ovation with his 'Chronology,' a history of trombone sounds through the years.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - The Oklahoma Journal(10:App 13)

On 17 February 1968, CMSgt Wiehe reached the pinnacle of success in the music business. He was "featured on [Trombone] 'Chronology' during The Band's Carnegie Hall concert."(3:5) During the 1968 Spring Tour, the band travelled to South and Central America, performing 26 concerts in 12 countries.(11:28) CMSgt Wiehe was featured on all of the outdoor concerts, performing Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms. During the 1968 Fall Tour, CMSgt Wiehe again performed Trombone Chronology and on the 1969 Spring Tour, he performed the Concertino for Three Brass with SMSgt Maiocco and SMSgt Orton. His last tour as a soloist was performing Trombone Chronology on the 1969 Fall Tour to

Europe. He performed the work in the Azores, Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.(3:App 1) After 1970, Chief Wiehe did not appear as a soloist on a national tour with The U.S. Air Force Band. After twenty years of soloing with The U.S. Navy Band and the U.S. Air Force Band he felt it was time to let some of the newer members of the band build their careers. While his role as tour soloist came to an end in 1970, he continued soloing in the Washington, DC area with the band until his retirement in 1978. In the summer of 1970 he was the soloist on at least four concerts.(3:4) On 04 July 1974 he was featured, performing Bluebells of Scotland, at the Filene Center at Wolf Trap Farm Park in Vienna, Virginia,(34:55) and on 09 March 1975 he performed Trombone Chronology during a Guest Artist Series Concert at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC.(36:App II) During his tenure as the principal soloist with The U.S. Air Force Band, Chief Wiehe was recorded for three records produced the band. According to CMSgt (Ret.) Gleeson, he recorded Moon River (by Henry Mancini, arranged by Paul Kelley) on the 1965 recording The United States Air Force Band: A Symphony In The Sky; Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms on the 1966 recording On Tour; and Trombone Chronology on the 1967 recording In Washington. He was included on a fourth recording prepared for the South American tour in 1967, which was a re-release of his 1966 recording of Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms.(2:--) According to his official Air Force biography, dated June 1970, "his recorded solos with The Air Force Band have been hailed by professional musicians throughout the world.... Sergeant Wiehe has appeared as either a guest soloist or clinician at the Mid-West National Band Clinic, the Mid-East Instrumental Clinic, several national conventions of the American School Band Directors Association, and at the Texas Bandmasters Association Convention....

Additionally, he has appeared at the universities of North Dakota and Oklahoma, at North Texas State University, and at the University of Michigan's Conductor's Conference.(3:App 2) According to the archivist of the International Trombone Association, Dr. Randy Koehlenberg, CMSgt Lawrence Wiehe, Jr. retired from the United States Air Force on 24 July 1978.(39:--)

During his distinguished career with The U.S. Air Force Band he performed as a soloist in 45 states and performed as a band member in every state, except Hawaii, and more than 21 countries.(4-39:--)

During his retirement he remained active in the professional trombone community until he stopped playing in 1986. His sudden death on 07 August 1992 shocked his family, friends and colleagues. CMSgt Wiehe was laid to rest with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. He was buried in section 48 with his 19 colleagues from the U.S. Navy Band who perished in the 1960 crash.(39:--)

5. CMSgt Larry Wiehe's legacy to The U.S. Air Force Band and the trombone community is still continuing. His standard of professional skill and attitude are remembered today by members who served with him and this heritage is still being passed on to new members. His standard of excellence has served as a benchmark for performance quality from his arrival in 1963 to the present. His influence on the trombone community was demonstrated in 1993 by the posthumous presentation of the International Trombone Association Award for Distinguished Service. This award is given to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service to the International Trombone Association, an international professional organization for trombone performers, educators and students. This organization has also established the Larry Wiehe Memorial Scholarship with the help of his widow, Wanda Wiehe. This award is a scholarship to the International Trombone Workshop, held each year at

different locations around the world. The applicants, age 17 to 22, must perform one of the compositions Larry performed during his career and they are adjudicated by a five member panel, including the current principal trombonists of The U.S. Navy Band and The U.S. Air Force Band and several of Chief Wiehe's former colleagues. 1996 is the inaugural year for this award and it is my distinct honor to serve as the chairman of the committee for the first year of the award. The purpose of this award is to keep alive the tradition and heritage of traditional band trombone solos, something Chief Wiehe advocated throughout his life. Now, let me summarize what I have written.

6. First, I reviewed CMSgt Wiehe's beginnings as a trombonist and his development into a professional trombonist with the U.S. Navy Band. Then I discussed the heritage of The U.S. Air Force Band and its tradition of excellence demonstrated world-wide in accordance with its mission statement. Next I discussed his move to The U.S. Air Force Band in 1963. His career demonstrated sustained excellence as the principal soloist of the unit for more than seven years. Finally, I discussed his legacy to the band and to the professional trombone community. CMSgt Larry Wiehe was considered by many to be the finest trombonist who has ever lived. His demonstrated professional excellence is a standard that we should all strive to meet as enlisted members of the U.S. Air Force.

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**THE
UNITED
STATES
AIR
FORCE
BAND**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20332

SERGEANT LARRY WIEHE
Tombone
Featured Instrumental Soloist

Sergeant Larry Wiehe, featured Instrumental soloist with The United States Air Force Band, has been acclaimed throughout the world as one of today's leading trombone virtuosos.

His fantastic technique and Impeccable artistry keep him in constant demand throughout America as a music clinician serving not only as an outstanding teacher of greatly gifted students but, through his performances, as an inspiration to those students as well.

Sergeant Wiehe's duties in military music have seen him featured in concerts in 48 of the 50 states. Additionally, his recorded solos with The Air Force Band have been hailed by professional musicians throughout the world.

So great is his artistry that Lt. Colonel Arnald D. Gabriel, Commander and Conductor of The U. S. Air Force Band, felt that no single composition could properly display Sergeants Wiehe's amazing abilities. Col Gabriel had Sergeant Floyd Werle, Chief Arranger of The Air Force Band, compose "A Trombone Chronology" for Sergeant Wiehe. This taxing composition briefly explores



America's International Musical Ambassadors

practically every phrase and style of trombone performance. This single selection, brought to vivid and exciting life by Sergeant Wiehe, has become one of the main highlights of every United States Air Force Band tour program since 1965

Sergeant Wiehe has appeared as either guest soloist or clinician at the Mid-West National Band Clinic, the Mid-East Instrumental Clinic several national conventions of the American School Band Directors Association, and at the Texas Bandmasters Association Convention. For five successive years he was a member of the select faculty at the internationally acclaimed summer music camp in Gunnison, Colorado. Additionally, he has appeared at the universities of North Dakota and Oklahoma, at North Texas State University, and at the University of Michigan's Conductor's Conference.

A native of Centralia, Illinois, Sergeant Wiehe began studying trombone when he was only four years old. His first and only teacher was Joseph Huber of St. Louis, Missouri, with whom Sergeant Wiehe studied until he was 14.

Sergeant Wiehe gives his father, Lawrence, Sr., great credit for his success in music, for the elder Wiehe willingly drove his young son for his lessons on the 150 mile round trip between Centralia and St. Louis every Saturday for 10 years. The Wiehe's were a musical family, and Sergeant Wiehe's older brother, Douglas, is presently Assistant Director of Bands at North Texas State University in Denton.

Sergeant Wiehe began winning high school Instrumental contests when he was only in the 4th grade. When he was but 11 years old he won the Tri-State

(Michigan-Indiana-Illinois) National Contest, winning that same prize again for the next two succeeding years. Sergeant Wiehe entered over 40 district, state and national contests between the 4th and 12th grades -- and carried off top honors in each one!

Even as a teenager, his talent was in such demand that Sergeant Wiehe's parents allowed him to move to St. Louis to work as studio musician while completing high school. He had to obtain special permission because of his age to receive a musician's union card, and during this time he performed with Seth Griener's band on KMOX Radio, and with Carl Hoengarten's group on KWK.

Following his graduation from Roosevelt High School in St. Louis, Sergeant Wiehe entered the Navy. He served in the Pacific with a VF21 Fighter Squadron after having taught himself the skills necessary to become an Aviation Machinists Mate.

Discharged from the Navy in 1948, Sergeant Wiehe enrolled in the Music Department at North Texas State University. His first appearance with the college band received such outstanding critical acclaim that he was soon in demand as a concert artist throughout the Southwest.

Two and one half years after entering the university, he was recalled to active duty with the Navy. He was assigned to Sangley Point Naval Station in the Philippines with a sea plane squadron.

Soon after receiving that assignment, Sergeant Wiehe applied for a change of rating to become a Navy musician. In February of 1951 he was assigned as an instructor to the U. S. Navy School of Music which was then located in Washington, D. C.

Commander Charles Brendler, then Conductor of the official U. S. Navy Band in Washington, recognized the talent of this excellent young musician, and in July, 1951, Sergeant Wiehe was assigned to that organization. For the next 12 years Sergeant Wiehe was featured soloist with the Navy Band in its concerts throughout the United States.

In April, 1963, Sergeant Wiehe terminated his enlistment in the Navy and enlisted in the U. S. Air Force to become the featured instrumental soloist with The United States Air Force Band

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