

NEIL SHEEHAN: General Schwartz, General Manner, ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here today. I think I might begin by saying that, were it not for General Bernard Schriever and those who labored with him, we might not be meeting here today. We might, instead, be irradiated, dust.

In retrospect, we like to think of the Cold War as a long ice age. But, it wasn't a long ice age. In the 1950s, it was a very warm and unstable confrontation between two super powers armed with thermonuclear weapons. We got the bomb in '45. The Russians got it in '49. We got the hydrogen bomb in '52. The Russians got theirs in '55.

It was a period of great instability and, had there been adventurism or a mistake on either side, the entire Northern Hemisphere could have been destroyed. What Bernard Schriever and those who labored with him achieved was a nuclear stalemate.

They created a condition in which, through the building of the ICBM, as I recount in my book, *A Fiery Piece in a Cold War*, neither side could launch a successful surprise attack, what Eisenhower spoke of as a nuclear Pearl Harbor. Neither side could attempt a nuclear Pearl Harbor without being certain that it would also be destroyed in the holocaust that followed.

So, Schriever and those who worked with him created stability. And, out of that stability, they bought time as well. They bought time for the Soviet Union to self-destruct from its own internal contradictions. They didn't foresee this, of course. No one could. And, they bought the solutions to many of the major problems of the Cold War, for instance, the reunification of Germany, which could not occur until the Soviet Union was in the process of disintegration. It could never have occurred while the Soviet Union was at its strength.

The purpose of the ICBM, as General Schriever emphasized over and over again, was not to be used in war. He repeated time and again that, in the history of humankind, it

was the first weapon to be built not to be fired in anger, but rather to deter war. And, that objective he kept in mind at all times.

It was the objective that drove him and that drove the people who worked with him, such as Simon Ramo, who became the “R” in “TRW,” who was the senior engineer-scientist on the program. John von Neumann, the famous mathematician and mathematical physicist, who supported them and headed the Scientific Advisory Committee for the missile, and there was Trevor Gardner, a figure that no one remembers anymore, who was the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development and who also helped Schriever get the program going.

Well, how did General Schriever achieve what he achieved? First of all, he was a technological visionary. He was a man who could see how to relate technology to a strategic purpose. It was something that was natural to him, but it was something that he also inherited from his mentor, Hap Arnold, his first commanding officer at March Field in 1933. In 1938, Arnold organized a foursome of golf with the president of Boeing in Seattle in order to get Bennie Schriever to take the exam for a regular commission. Schriever had left the Army Air Corps to marry the daughter of a General he had worked for down in the Panama Canal Zone, General George Brett. Attempting to support a family on the uncertainty of a Reserve commission was foolhardy and so Schriever had taken a job as a pilot for Northwest Airlines.

And, Arnold wanted to bring him back as a regular officer. The Air Corps had finally got some money to create more regular commissions, and in the locker room afterwards Arnold said, “Bennie, I hope will you apply for a regular commission, because we need to bring airline pilots into the Air Corps. The airlines are doing instrument flying, and we’ve got to build an all-weather Air Corps.”

And Schriever said to me one day when I was interviewing him, “Here was Hap Arnold, in 1938, talking about an all-weather Air Force. And, in 1948, we finally had it. When the Soviets blockaded Berlin, that all-weather Air Force broke the Berlin blockade.” An all-

weather Air Force obviously had this vast strategic implication. Schriever could see this kind of relationship between technology and strategy over and over again. He was not a technical person who sought technology for its own sake. He sought it for its uses.

He also had an extraordinary talent for management. It was a rather simple system of management. You found people who could get the job done, and then you turned them loose and backed them. He told me he learned this as a young lieutenant in the Army Air Corps Reserve while he was running a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in Texas, trying to keep himself employed in those years when fliers got only four hours a month in the air. There was no money for more training. Officers only worked half a day, again because there was no money to fund training activities for the full day.

CCC camps were formed, of course, by Franklin Roosevelt. They were camps of young men who were doing development projects to give them a job in the midst of the Depression. Theoretically, they were run by military officers. But, these kids were civilians. You couldn't give them orders. They did not fall under the UCMJ, Uniform Code of Military Justice. You couldn't court-martial them. You had to be very careful that the camp didn't rebel on you and yet you still had to lead.

So Schriever got these young men to run the camp for him. He picked out leaders, formed them into a committee, and they who sorted out the bad guys and, in effect, held kangaroo courts and pushed the troublemakers out of the camp. He thus made the camp a success and survived to go onto a career.

He said it taught him something. You find the right people, and you get them to do the job. He repeatedly mentioned to me that you had to be careful not to turn off talented people. Talented people, he said, could be difficult. You had to learn to live with them because of what they could produce for you.

An outstanding example of this was Colonel Edward Hall, who was the guru of rocketry within the U.S. Air Force. Hall was a guy with a chip on his shoulder, who gave

everybody he worked for a lot of trouble. Schriever put up with it because Hall built *Minuteman*, the ultimate in ICBMs.

After Hall had developed it, Schriever then relieved him because he knew Hall couldn't carry the program through to production; he would alienate too many people in the process. But he did keep him going on the program until the missile had actually been designed and was ready to turn over to someone who could carry it through to production. As he said to me, "You've got to let these people do things their own way."

He had extraordinary self control. He could lose his temper and throw golf clubs. But, when things went bad, when rockets blew up on the pad down at Canaveral, when they were really under pressure, he never lost his nerve. In one meeting, he was called out by his secretary. He came back and said, "That was Eisenhower on the phone. And, I don't know whether I'm going to be here on Monday."

He survived, and he succeeded, because he was determined to face reality. He would say to his people, "Look. Give me the bad news. I can stand the bad news. I will not fire you for giving me the bad news. I will fire you if you don't give me the bad news." They held a briefing, an all-group briefing, once a month. And the staff called it "Black Saturday."

Now, this may make sense in terms of what's happened to us over the last few decades since Vietnam, but at the time, this was very unusual in a senior officer. This was a period in the late '50s, which carried into the '60s, of what I call professional corruption in the senior levels of the armed forces. These men had become arrogant. They had preconceived notions of what they wanted to do. And, they were not interested in bad news. They were only interested in progress reports.

Schriever was quite the opposite. He was interested in finding out what was going on, because he believed, very firmly, that if you solved the problems, progress would take

care of itself. The point was to find out what was going on and get your people to tell you the truth.

He had also, I think, an extraordinary determination to let nothing whatsoever stand in his way. He would break a regulation any time it was going to interfere with his objective, because he had a fierce will to win, to succeed. He said to me once, "I hate to lose."

They had to get to President Eisenhower to get this job done because the bureaucracy was stymieing them. They had 42 different agencies they had to get permission from to get anything accomplished, and they found they weren't getting anywhere.

And so, they launched an intrigue, which I detail in the book. Schriever passed classified information to a Senator named Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who was a liberal at home and a hawk abroad, on all the problems they were having out in California to get the program going.

This Senator held hearings on the basis of these reports. And, Trevor Gardner, who was working with Schriever, and John von Neumann the scientist, testified at these hearings. And then, Scoop Jackson and another Senator wrote a letter to President Eisenhower, saying, "This is a terribly important thing on which the survival of the nation depends. You don't seem to know anything about it. You ought to get briefed on it."

Well, Eisenhower immediately told the head of the National Security Council to schedule a briefing. He didn't know, and neither did the head of the Security Council when he scheduled the briefing, that the first people who had drafted the letter that Scoop Jackson had signed and sent to the President were Schriever, von Neumann, and Trevor Gardner.

The briefing for Eisenhower was absolutely critical. They got what they needed, swift and streamlined decision-making and swift and streamlined funding, such as the

Manhattan Project had had during World War Two. Only the President could give you that kind of thing.

The briefing occurred in July of 1955. Eisenhower signed off on it just in time. He bought the idea right away. He saw the importance of it. He signed off on what they wanted on September 13th. And, ten days later, he had his first heart attack and couldn't hold a meeting for two months and that was a sheltered meeting up at Camp David. So the entire thing, and all that's emerged from it, could have been thrown way off the beam had they not pushed through, broken the rules, done what they needed to do to get the job done.

He was also an absolutely fearless man. I asked him to get me his service record, his entire service record. He said, "What do you need it for?" I said, "Well, I can't write a book like this, General, without knowing everything about you." He said, "Fine, I'll get it." So, he applied for the record. One of his superiors, when he was a Colonel, wrote in his efficiency report, "This officer isn't afraid of anyone." And he wasn't. He wasn't even afraid of Curtis LeMay, who scared the living beJesus out of everybody else in the Air Force, or I should say most people in the Air Force at the time.

And so, he won the respect of a number of his seniors, particularly Nathan Twining, who was then Chief of Staff, because of this fearlessness. Twining backed him in getting the job done and getting these missiles built in very, very difficult circumstances.

Schriever was also a man of profound patriotism.

When the Air Force renamed Falcon Air Force Base Schriever Air Force Base in his honor, I called him and said, "General, what a wonderful thing. It's totally unprecedented. What a great, great honor to you." His response over the phone was, "Only in America."

He was always that six-year-old boy who had been standing in Ellis Island with his mother when they came over in 1917, two months before we declared war on Germany, who had gone down to Texas as a youth and joined the Army Air Corps. This country had done so much for this boy, and he was profoundly grateful for it. As a result, he was always conscious that he needed to pay back what this country had done for him.

I'll wrap up by saying that among the many other accomplishments of Schriever and associates was the creation of an aerospace industry in this country. When they began in 1954, in a vacant Roman Catholic schoolhouse in Inglewood, California, we had an aircraft industry, but we didn't have an aerospace industry. The ICBM program was the catalyst to create that aerospace industry.

It was also the catalyst for the use of space by the U.S. Air Force. I know you still call yourselves the U.S. Air Force. But, to outsiders like myself, you are the U.S. Aerospace Force. And, I think that's a result of General Schriever's work and those who labored with him.

He opened space to its use for national security purposes in launching the first photo reconnaissance satellite in 1960, *Discoverer 14*, the first of the whole panoply of satellites we have today,.

I'll wrap up very quickly, because we're at a premium for time here and I don't want to try General Manner's patience. But, I'm told that what General Schriever did, and what those who worked with him did, couldn't be done today, that the bureaucracy is just much too big and powerful, that it would stymie you and destroy you if you tried to do what he did.

Well, I don't believe that. This country will always face challenges. And, if we remember who we are – only in America – the men and women who can meet those challenges will rise. Thank you very much.

