

## Warrant: The Legacy of Leadership as a Warrant Officer

### 90 Years of Technical Expertise in the Army

By CW5 (Ret) David P. Welsh

#### An act of Congress in 1918 established the

Army Mine Planter Service as part of the Coast Artillery Corps. With that act's implementation, on July 22 a total of 40 warrant officers were authorized to serve as masters, mates, chief engineers, and assistant engineers on each mine-planting vessel. With that, a special cadre of officers was born.

Although Congress authorized only one rank of warrant officer, in effect three pay rates were created because of the varying levels of pay authorized for masters, first mates, second mates, and corresponding levels of marine engineer personnel. This is also when the official color of the Army Warrant Officer Corps came to be brown, emanating from the brown strands of burlap bags that the Mine Planter Service personnel wore as their insignia of rank. Over the years, Army Warrant Officers have served above and beyond the call of duty. During the Vietnam era, Michael J. Novosel, Lewis R. Rocco, and Frederick Edgar Ferguson were awarded the Medal of Honor.

#### Here is the timeline of the Army warrant officer cadre.

1920—The National Defense Act of 1920 provides for warrant officers to serve in clerical, administrative, and band leader positions. This act also authorizes 1,120 warrant officers to be on active duty.

May 12, 1921—A distinctive insignia is approved for warrant officers, comprising an eagle rising with wings displayed—adapted from the great seal of the United States—standing on two arrows symbolizing the military arts and sciences, all enclosed within a wreath. Warrant officers of the Tank Corps are the first to wear this new insignia.

January 1944— The appointment of women as warrant officers is authorized, and in March the first half dozen women join these ranks as band leaders and administrative specialists.

1946—Warrant officers fill some 40 different occupational specialties.

1949—The Career Compensation Act brings about two new pay rates for warrant officers. The designations

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"Let Go" by Don Stivers



1921 warrant officers,



1921 Eagle Rising



"The Quiet Professional" by Don Stivers

## Warrant Officer Legacy

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of warrant officer junior grade (WOJG) and chief warrant officer (CWO) are retained, and the grade of chief warrant officer is provided with pay rates of W2, W3, and W4.

1950s—Studies determine a vital need for warrant officers, and propose that appointment to warrant officer should be based on the needs of the Army and not simply a reward for long and faithful service.

1953—The inception of the Warrant Officer Flight Program leads to the training of thousands who later became helicopter pilots during the Vietnam War.

1954—The Warrant Officer Personnel Act of 1954 establishes warrant officer grades W1 through W4, and officially eliminated the Mine Planter Service.

1984—The Army chief of staff charts the Army Total Warrant Officer Study, the first Department of the Army-level comprehensive study of warrant officer management across the total Army.

1986—The Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 1986 amends Title 10 of the U.S. Code to provide that Army chief warrant officers be appointed by commission, equalizing appointment procedures among the services; chief warrant officers of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard had been commissioned for many years.

1991—Congress incorporates the Warrant Officer Management Act into the NDAA FY 92, enacting four key provisions: a single promotion system for warrant officers; tenure requirements based on years of warrant officer service; establishment of the grade of CWO5 with a 5 percent cap on the number of warrant officers on each service's active duty list at any one time; and selective mandatory retirement boards for retirement eligible warrant officers.

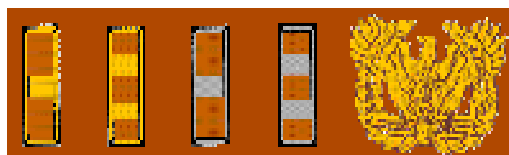
1991—CW3 Thomas J. Hennen makes history as the first and only warrant officer astronaut in 1991. He flies aboard the space shuttle *Atlantis* as a payload specialist, completing 109 orbits of the Earth and traveling 2.9 million miles.

July 9, 2004—Army warrant officers are integrated into the officer branch of their primary occupational specialty. The Eagle Rising insignia and warrant officer brown trim are replaced by the insignia and trim colors of their branch.

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**1st WO AV Class graduates—30 April 1955**



**CW3 and CW4 grades established in 1954**



**Congressman Bennet (FL) introduced WOMA in HR and later bill was incorporated into the 1992 NDAA**



**CW3 Tom Hennen is first WO astronaut in space .**



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Sept. 30, 2007—The Army Warrant Officer Cohort comprises about 22,000 men and women, making up 2 percent of the total Army, with 56 percent in the Active Army, 32 percent in the Army National Guard, and 12 percent in the Army Reserve (not counting members of the Individual Ready Reserve also available for mobilization). Warrant officers serve in 15 Army branches filling 67 military occupation specialties, with 34.6 percent serving as aviation warrant officers.

Today—Army Warrant Officers are Soldiers, technical experts, officers, and leaders who manage and maintain increasingly complex battlefield systems. Chief warrant officers are commissioned by the president and have the same legal status as their traditional commissioned officer counterparts. However, warrant officers remain single-specialty officers whose career track is oriented toward progressing within their career field rather than focusing on increased levels of command and staff duty positions. Warrant officers enhance the Army's ability to defend the nation's interests and to fight and win the nation's wars. They are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, around the world, and at home.



**CW5 Welsh (Ret), a USA-WOA Life Member, is president and chief operating officer of the Warrant Officers Heritage Foundation, which is dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of the Army warrant**

**officer. He served more than 21 years in the Army Reserve plus 20 years of active duty. He is a past national president of the U. S. Army Warrant Officers Association and author of WARRANT: The Legacy of Leadership**

**For more about the history of the Army Warrant Officer, visit the Warrant Officer Heritage Net at [www.usawoa.org/WOHERITAGE/Hist\\_of\\_Army\\_WO.htm](http://www.usawoa.org/WOHERITAGE/Hist_of_Army_WO.htm).**



**Warrant Officer Career College**



**Professional Development Seminar**



**Professional Development Seminar**



**CW5 Sharon Swartworth**