

## **WARRANT *The Legacy of Leadership as a Warrant Officer*** **90 Years of Technical Expertise in the Army**

by David P. Welsh, Chief Warrant Officer Five, U. S. Army Retired

An act of congress in 1918 established the Army Mine Planter Service as part of the Coast Artillery Corps. Implementation of the Act by the Army was published in War Department Bulletin 43, dated 22 July 1918. A total of 40 Warrant Officers were authorized to serve as masters, mates, chief engineers, and assistant engineers on each mine planting vessel.

Although only one rank of Warrant Officer was authorized by Congress, in effect, three pay rates were created because of the varying levels of pay authorized for masters, 1st mates, 2nd 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. The color emanated from the brown strands from burlap bags that the Mine Planter Service personnel wore as their insignia of rank

The National Defense Act of 1920 provided for Warrant Officers to serve in clerical, administrative, and band leader positions. This act also authorized 1,120 Warrant Officers to be on active duty. During this time Warrant Officers were excluded from performing duties from which enlisted personnel were also excluded.

On May 12, 1921, a distinctive insignia was approved for Warrant Officers. It consisted of an eagle rising with wings displayed, adapted from the great seal of the United States. The eagle is standing on two arrows, which symbolize the military arts and sciences. The eagle rising is enclosed within a wreath. Warrant Officers of the Tank Corps were the first to wear this new insignia.

In January 1944, the appointment of women as Warrant Officers was first authorized. In March 1944, the first six (or seven) female WOs appointed. Several were band leaders, but others were administrative specialists.

Over the years additional specialties in which Warrant Officers were appointed increased. By Early 1946, Warrant Officers were filling some 40 different occupational specialties.

In 1949, the Career Compensation Act brought about two new pay rates for Warrant Officers. The designations of Warrant Officer Junior Grade (WOJG) and Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) were retained, the grade of Chief Warrant Officer was provided with pay rates of W2, W3 and W4.

During the 1950s, studies determined there was a vital need for Warrant Officers, and proposed that appointment to Warrant Officer should be based on the needs of the Army and not simply a reward for long and faithful service. During 1950, approximately 900 Warrant Officer appointments were made using the 1948 and 1949 lists from competitive examinations.

In 1953, the inception of the Warrant Officer Flight Program lead to the training of thousands who later became helicopter pilots during the Vietnam War.

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

Over the years Army Warrant Officers have served gallantly above and beyond the call of duty. During the Vietnam era, Michael J. Novosel, Lewis R. Rocco, and Frederick Edgar Ferguson were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In 1984, an entire new era for Warrant Officers began when the Army Chief of Staff chartered The Army Total Warrant Officer Study (TWOS). This was the first Department of the Army level comprehensive study of Warrant Officer management across the total Army.

The Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1986 amended Title 10 of the U.S.C. to provide that Army Chief Warrant Officers be appointed by Commission. The primary purpose of the legislation was to equalize appointment procedures among the services. Chief Warrant Officers of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard had been commissioned for many years.

In 1991 the Warrant Officer Management Act (WOMA) proposal was considered by the Congress and it was incorporated into the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1992. Six key provisions were enacted as signed by the President in December of 1991, these were as follows: A single promotion system for Warrant Officers; Tenure requirements based on years of Warrant Officer service; Establishment of the grade of Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) with a 5% 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 WO.

From November 24 to December 1, 1991, then CW3 Thomas J. Hennen made history as the first and only Warrant Officer Astronaut. He flew aboard NASA's Orbiter Atlantis as a Payload Specialist, completing 109 orbits of the Earth and traveling 2.9 million miles.

On 9 July 2004, Army Warrant Officer were integrated into the Officer Branch of their primary occupational specialty. They were transferred from management by the separate Warrant Officer Division of the Army Personnel Command to management by the respective Army Branch of their Warrant Officer Occupational Specialty. The Eagle Rising insignia and Warrant Officer Brown trim on their dress uniforms were replaced by the Branch Insignia and trim colors of their new branch.

As of 30 September 2007, the Army Warrant Officer Cohort was comprised of about 22,000 men and women broken down as follows: Active Army - 56%; Army National Guard - 32%; Army Reserve - 12% (not counting members of the Individual Ready Reserve also available for mobilization); Technical Branch Warrant Officers - 65.4%; Aviation Warrant Officers - 34.6%; Percentage of the total Army - 2%; Percent of the Officer Corps - 14%; Branches with Warrant Officers assigned - 15; and Warrant Officer Military Occupation Specialties - 67  
(Source: Warrant Officer Career Center, October 2007)

Army Warrant Officers of today are soldiers, technical experts, officers, and leaders that 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 towards progressing within their career field rather than focusing on increased levels of command and staff duty positions.

There are five grades within the Army Warrant Officer Corps. A person is initially appointed as a Warrant Officer (WO1), and progress to Chief Warrant Officer Two (CW2) after 2 years. Competitive promotion to Chief Warrant Officer Three (CW3), Chief Warrant Officer Four (CW4), and Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) occur at approximately six year intervals for Aviation Warrant Officers and five year intervals for those in technical specialties.

Warrant Officers enhance the Army's ability to defend our national interests, and to fight and win our nation's wars. They are serving in the active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve in Iraq, Afghanistan, around the world, and at home in support of our Army and defense of our National Values.

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

**CW5 Welsh served more than 21 years in the Army Reserve plus 20 years of active duty. His final assignment prior to retirement in 1998 was as Warrant Officer Policy Integrator and Mobilization Analyst in the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve in the Pentagon. He is a Past National President of the U. S. Army Warrant Officers Association, author of *WARRANT The Legacy of Leadership as a Warrant Officer*. CW5 Welsh is currently the 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.**

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