

Chief Warrant Officer 4 John A. Ward



Inducted December 5, 2001

September 1910 - January 1998

Member, Original Parachute Test Platoon
Army's first Parachute Rigger Warrant
Officer, 1943

Airborne Service Test Section, Army
Ground Forces Board #1, 1947-1952

Quartermaster Research & Development
Command, Natick, MA, 1955-1960

Parachute Branch Equipment Lab, Wright
Patterson, OH

Civil Service Engineer Technician, Natick
Research Lab, 1960-1972

Mr. John A. Ward was born in Watsonsville, Georgia. He enlisted in the Army as an infantry private on November 19, 1932. He served in the 15th Infantry Regiment in China from 1935 through 1939.

On July 1, 1940, Mr. Ward volunteered to join and was one of 48 soldiers selected to form the Original Parachute Test Platoon at Fort Benning, Georgia. The test platoon tested and validated equipment and established doctrine concerning organization, equipment, and tactical employment of airborne infantry units. Three months shy of his 30th birthday, he was the oldest paratrooper who made the first military parachute jump on August 16, 1940. By the time he retired from active duty he had logged 858 jumps.

Mr. Ward was also in the first class of Army personnel to attend a special parachute packing and rigger course and later helped establish standards for maintenance and repair for airborne equipment.

On February 4, 1943, Mr. Ward was selected as the Army's first Parachute Rigger Warrant Officer. Mr. Ward served in World War II as a parachute packing officer with the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He then served with the 82nd Airborne Division in Sicily,

mainland Italy, Nijmegen, the Netherlands and served on occupation duty in Berlin. During this time, he developed the A-7 and A-7A aerial delivery systems, which were critical for re-supplying allied forces during the Sicily and Normandy invasions.

In 1947, Mr. Ward was assigned to the Airborne Service Test Section, Army Ground Forces Board Number 1, which today is called the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate. During this assignment he was responsible for the development of heavy drop techniques for delivery of supplies and equipment. Mr. Ward was instrumental in the fabrication, design, and testing of the General Purpose Container and the Individual Weapons Container. He played a major role in the development of the T-10 parachute assembly. He also served as the operations officer for the board and was charged with the responsibility for scheduling aircraft for tests.

In 1953, Mr. Ward organized the first Airborne Field Maintenance Shop. Several years later, he came up with an idea for a canopy release assembly that allowed parachutists to detach their canopy from the harness, making recovery from wind drag easier.

From 1955 to 1960, Mr. Ward was assigned to the Quartermaster Research and Development Command, Natick, Massachusetts and the Parachute Branch Equipment Lab, Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. He monitored airborne test programs conducted jointly by the Army, the Air Force, and a contractor. It was during this period that Mr. Ward developed the A-22 aerial delivery system for Container Delivery System drops or for external helicopter slingloads.

Following his military retirement in April 1960, Mr. Ward worked as Civil Service Engineer Technician at Natick Research Laboratory, where he logged more than 300 jumps performing his job of developing and testing personnel airdrop equipment, until he retired in 1972 with more than 40 years of dedicated military and civilian service.

In addition to the accomplishments mentioned, Mr. Ward made several other significant contributions to the U.S. Army, which included development of the anti-inversion net, development of the STABO extraction system for the Special Forces and development of the family of steerable parachutes, the forerunners of today's parachutes.