

FEATURED

Army QM Museum unveils statue paying tribute to parachute riggers

Patrick Buffett, Managing Editor Jun 29, 2017



Representatives of the Quartermaster School and Army QM Museum unveil a statue paying tribute to parachute riggers during a ceremony June 26 at the museum. The lifelike bronze casting depicts a rigger standing at a long table arranging suspension lines. An actual rigger, Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Prager, modeled for the likeness in February 2016. The ceremony participants pictured are: Maj. C. J. Hart, deputy director of the Aerial Delivery and Field Services Department; 1st Sgt. Scott Mitsuno, a 262nd QM Battalion company leader who worked with Prager; Paul Morando, director the Quartermaster Museum; and Col. Kelly J. Lawler, Quartermaster School assistant commandant.

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FORT LEE, Va. (June 29, 2017) -- A lifelike bronze statue paying tribute to the 92-Romeo parachute rigger profession was unveiled Monday in the Aerial Delivery and Field Services Gallery of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum, Fort Lee.

Ceremony attendees included Col. Kelly J. Lawler, Quartermaster School assistant commandant; Marshall J. Jones, deputy to the QM School commandant; Command Sgt. Maj. Sean J. Rice, QM Regimental CSM; Maj. C. J. Hart, deputy director, Aerial Delivery and Field Services Department; Paul Morando, museum director; and several dozen ADFSD staff and faculty members.

In opening remarks, Lawler described the statue unveiling as "another milestone" in the museum's ambitious effort to expand and update exhibits over the past few years. He noted how the ADFSD community has supported the effort, including one project requiring the movement of an actual helicopter into the building.

"The reward of not only your support, but what you do every day as rigger trainers and technical experts, is right here in front of you (referring to the ADFSD display)," Lawler said. "This is the legacy of your profession. Supporting the warrior and giving him or her the confidence to place their life in your hands. That is the message of this exhibit."

The unveiled statue depicts a rigger Soldier standing at a long table arranging the suspension lines of a parachute. Flanking him to the right are five large signs that collectively read "I will be sure always."

Sgt. 1st Class Matthew J. Prager, a former rigger school instructor, served as the model for the statue. He and four other Quartermaster Soldiers – also representing automated logistics, petroleum and water, culinary specialists and mortuary affairs – traveled to New York City in February 2016 to have various parts of their body encased in plaster to create the bronze molding casts that later produced the precise parts needed for

the life-sized pieces. The replicas were made even more lifelike by artists at Atta Studios who added intricate details like uniform patches and, in the latest-revealed figure, the distinctive ballcap and parachute insignia worn by 92-Romeo Soldiers.

The rigger statue is the third to be unveiled. The logistical supply effigy was revealed at a Quartermaster School 75th anniversary celebration in December, and the petroleum and water statue was introduced as the centerpiece of a redesigned exhibit at the museum in September 2016.

Prager's former supervisor, 1st Sgt. Scott Mitsuno who is now a company leader in the 262nd QM Battalion, noted how honored and humbled his fellow Soldier would be if he was able to attend the ceremony. Prager is now assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

"He is the epitome of a parachute rigger," Mitsuno told the ceremony attendees. "He is very active, quick, clean and an excellent instructor. In fact, he was my right-hand man in regard to developing teaching strategies that would get initial entry students through phase 2 and 3 of pack (in order to receive parachute rigger certification). Out of the many candidates eligible for this project, I'm convinced without a doubt he was the right choice for this opportunity to be frozen in time for all to see."

Community members can check out the completed ADFSD Gallery and other exhibits during regular museum hours, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Saturday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. The grand opening for a new World War I display is set for July 11 at 9 a.m. The next statue unveiling (mortuary affairs) is projected to take place in August.