

Rigger school inducts 7 veterans; dedicates hall of fame exhibit area

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Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cortez Frazier, ADFSD senior airdrop advisor; Wayne Cross, son of retired Col. Thomas Cross; Brig. Gen. Douglas McBride Jr., QM General; Jason Hanifin, ADFSD director; and Master Sgt. Reuben Greene, ADFSD's senior enlisted leader, take part in a Feb. 25 ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially dedicate the Aerial Delivery and Field Services Department Parachute Rigger Hall of Fame room to Col. Cross, the creator of the Army rigger badge.

FORT LEE, Va. -- The Aerial Delivery and Field Services Department here inducted seven accomplished veterans of the 92-Romeo career field and dedicated its Parachute Rigger Hall of Fame room to the creator of the rigger badge in a ceremony Feb. 25.

The PRHF was established in 1976 to honor officers, warrant officers and enlisted whose contribution to the field had received little previous recognition.

"This ceremony and dedication honors a cause we share, and the nation we serve," said Jason Hanifin, ADFSD director. "Our motto – 'I'll be sure, always' – speaks to the trust between paratroopers and riggers.

"The rigger wings were designed in 1948 by now-retired Col. Thomas R. Cross who was a major at the time," he added. "We dedicate the hall of fame room to a pioneer and designer of our wings, and I'm proud to honor all our outstanding leaders."

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cortez Frazier, ADFSD senior airdrop advisor, said the inductees contributed more than 210 years of dedicated airborne experience.

“If you don’t know what the parachute rigger badge and red hat means to us,” said Frazier, “it means you pack your own chute and jump it. We are a special breed of paratroopers. We are one of two specialties in which individuals have to stay airborne qualified their whole career and the only quartermaster field that has its own badge.”

Cross, who retired from the Army in 1971 and turned 100 years old in February, started his airborne career in 1943. While he was with the 11th Airborne Division in Japan, he was assigned the principal duty of Division Parachute Maintenance Officer where he designed the rigger wings to promote esprit de corps and the red baseball caps to identify riggers at drop zones and other critical areas. The Army officially adopted the design in 1986.

“My dad is 100 years old and holding his own,” said Wayne Cross, the colonel’s son, who attended the event. “He understood in Japan that riggers are special and deserve more than airborne recognition.

“The (presentation of his PRHF certificate in December) at his nursing home (in Atlantic Beach, Fla.) was a surprise,” Cross also noted. “He hadn’t seen so many red hats in 68 years and was honored by the Vietnam veterans who attended and the induction.”

The following individuals also were inducted into the PRHF:

- Chief Warrant Officer 5 Leonas J. Venckus
- Chief Warrant Officer 5 Gabino Seda
- Command Sgt. Maj. Mary L. Brown
- Command Sgt. Maj. Tonika E. Scott-Morris
- Command Sgt. Maj. Danny Richards
- Sgt. Maj. Dale Marks

ADFSD is one of five major training departments at the Army Quartermaster School. It oversees initial entry training for two military occupational specialties, 92R Parachute Rigger and 92S Shower and Laundry Specialist. The ADFSD also is the proponent for the Sling Load Inspector Certification Course and numerous functional area courses.