

USAWOA – “The First 25 Years”

By CW4 (Ret) Don Hess, USAWOA President Emeritus

The USAWOA President has asked me to write an article outlining the accomplishments of the USAWOA during the first 25 years. If I could list our accomplishments in one short article, you might reach the conclusion that we haven't accomplished much!

Therefore, I will begin a series of articles beginning with certain information that may be obvious to some, but not to all. Before listing the association accomplishments it is necessary to set the stage by briefly describing where we came from and what we do.

What is the USAWOA and its purpose? USAWOA, like other associations, exists to serve its members in the purpose for which it was established. USAWOA is a not for profit association dedicated to improving the professionalism of the Warrant Officer Corps.

Why did the association come into being when numerous other military associations already exist? The simplest answer to that complex question is that warrant officers historically have not joined or participated in these other associations in sufficient numbers to raise warrant officer concerns within the larger officer community. Numerous local warrant officers associations cropped up at various locations, the most prominent being the warrant officers in Europe beginning in the 1950's. These local associations addressed warrant officer concerns at the local level. A national association existed in the late 1950's but was disbanded for lack of support.

In the early 1970's, the Warrant Officer Corps remained a fragmented group of warrant officers managed by their respective career branches resulting in inequitable policies within the Warrant Officer Corps. In this environment, appointment, assignment, utilization and education policies were the purview of the respective branches. As warrant officers banded together to share their concerns, it was obvious that except for promotion and retirement policies, there was a vast discrepancy in the management and utilization of warrant officers, not only at the Branch level, but at the command and post level as well.

It was in this warrant officer environment in the early 1970's that the USAWOA was formed as a separate association. How do associations operate? Basically, all associations attempt to influence those in positions of authority to make decisions affecting their membership. In Washington, associations generally attempt to influence favorable decisions in three ways: Money, Numbers, and Networking. USAWOA has been limited in two of these areas as shown below:

Money: Anyone who has reviewed our financial status can attest to the fact that we cannot afford to influence many leaders with financial contributions or hosting of social events for VIPs.

Numbers: Although the association membership of 5000 warrant officers is significant for the Warrant Officer Corps, it pales in significance when it comes to influencing decisions.

That leaves the USAWOA with Networking as the only logical method available to a small association. Lacking financial or numerical influence, the association networks with officials in position of authority at all levels. Warrant officers have networked for years at the local level to get their job done. At the national level, we network with other associations, DOD, the Army staff, and others to bring to their attention issues that affect the Warrant Officer Corps.

Since networking was my primary task as Executive Vice President for 25 years, I need to clarify the philosophy under which I, and other national officers, “networked” for the association. First, the association identified warrant officer issues that were approved as association positions. These association positions were normally presented as proposals by individuals, chapters, regions, or national officials. Once the association positions were developed and approved by the members at the Annual Meetings or by the BOD, the EXCOM determined the level of approving authority and “lobbied” these offices with professional information in support of our position. This lobbying is done with official letters, visits, calls, e-mail, etc., in a courteous professional manner. The objective was, and still is, to work within the system to build a reputation as a professional association dedicated to recommending improvements in the Army and the Corps. The USAWOA is committed to addressing professional, not personal, concerns.

The Association addresses warrant officer legislation, regulations and policies that affect procurement, utilization, education, promotion, separation, and retirement.

Since networking is the primary means of accomplishing the USAWOA mission, it means much time is spent coordinating with others who share similar goals and objectives for the Warrant Officer Corps. In many cases, the association was the catalyst for these objectives. In other cases, the association supported the initiatives of individuals in the chain of command, or other associations when the objective benefits warrant officers. Often the USAWOA position was sought when the Army staff was developing warrant officer policies, before a final decision is made. (In future articles, I will cite specific examples of association involvement encompassing all the above situations). The point I want to get across in this initial article is that by “networking” we involve many people who support a common goal. I cannot, with integrity, claim that USAWOA alone was responsible for the actions that have improved the Warrant Officer Corps. I can, with integrity, claim that many of the actions USAWOA initiated and supported were approved because the Association, representing the warrant officers in the field, presented factual information to the leadership in a professional manner. I must also, with integrity, acknowledge the support of many organizations and persons who shared USAWOA concerns and deserve credit for their efforts on behalf of the Warrant Officer Corps. In addition, I am convinced that the professional foundation of the USAWOA built over a 25-year period, is a tremendous accomplishment in itself. Your association is recognized by sister associations and the military community as the voice of the warrant officer. Not because of what the national officials have done, but because of the quality of the men and women who make up the Warrant Officer Corps.

Having laid the groundwork for explaining what USAWOA does, and how the association does it, I will attempt to describe our significant contributions to the Corps in future issues. I hope that it will help answer that old question: What has USAWOA done for me?

Until next month...

USAWOA - “The First 25 Years” (1970s)

Last month I described why the Association was formed and how it operates. This article will address the USAWOA involvement in the formation of the Warrant Officer Division (WOD) and other early 1970s issues.

An initial hurdle to an improved Warrant Officer Corps was the fragmented warrant officer management at DA level. A Warrant Officer Aviation Branch was formed in 1965 to manage all aviation warrant officers because of the increased aviation requirements during the Vietnam conflict. Their respective career branches managed all other warrant officers.

The USAWOA learned of an ongoing 1972 study pertaining to the reorganization of the Officer Personnel Office (OPO), the forerunner of The Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN). This study focused on reorganizing the management of commissioned officers personnel from management by branch, e.g. infantry, engineer, ordnance, etc., to that of management by grade, e.g. colonel, lt. colonel, major and company grade officers.

Recognizing that a window of opportunity was open for a consolidation of warrant officers under one umbrella rather than consolidation with company grade officers, the early Association national officers geared their efforts to identifying and lobbying those Army leaders who could influence the decision to establish a separate warrant officer division. Our guest speaker at the first Annual Meeting in 1973 was MG Sidney Berry, Commander, and MILPERCEN. General Berry spent three hours at our business meeting prior to being our guest speaker. He stated that he learned more about warrant officers in his three-hour visit at the warrant officer meeting than in his three years as Commander, MILPERCEN. Other key members that we lobbied in support of the WOD were the ODCSPER commissioned officers responsible for the warrant officer program at the Army level. No warrant officers were assigned to the Army staff at the ODCSPER level. COL Ted Crozier, Chief, Aviation Warrant Officer Branch was also our guest speaker in 1973. Our guest speaker for the 1974 Annual Meeting was Secretary of the Army “Bo” Calloway, who became a strong warrant officer advocate because of his first time exposure at our Annual Meeting.

We were also fortunate in that the Chief of the AG Branch, COL Robert Joyce, was a strong supporter of consolidated warrant officer management. He provided valuable support and guidance to the USAWOA in identifying professional benefits to the Army and the Corps in a centralized warrant officer management. One of the major benefits of a consolidated warrant officer management was the opportunity to establish a Professional Development program for all warrant officers that would be consistent among the various specialties. Because of the efforts of USAWOA and many other supporters of consolidated warrant officer management The WOD was approved and organized in May 1975 as part of the overall OPO reorganization of management philosophy as mentioned above.

The Army leadership recognized the USAWOA's role in the establishment of the WOD. COL Robert Joyce, who became the first WOD Chief, immediately began a series of monthly articles in the NEWSLINER and succeeding Division Chiefs continued that practice. OPO and MILPERCEN commanders also provided articles for the NEWSLINER. Every Army DCSPER during our 25-year history has supported the USAWOA by addressing our Annual Meetings. Other speakers have included the Secretaries of the Army, the Chiefs of Staff and other key Army leaders. In addition, the WOD Chief and career management officers have provided career guidance at every Annual Meeting and at European Region conventions. In addition to our Annual Meetings, WOD assignment and professional development officers from our inception have attended chapter meetings throughout the country and in Europe and Korea in support of the USAWOA. That support continues today because the USAWOA addresses professional concerns and strives to present recommendations that benefit the Corps, regardless of MOS, grade, or specialty. The relationship with WOD, ODCSPER, and the Army leadership was, and remains, critical in establishing and maintaining the USAWOA as a professional Association.

As we gained the respect of the Army leadership in those early years, the Association turned its attention to internal matters. To insure we maintained a professional image for our membership and to establish standards of excellence within our Association, the following internal actions were implemented by the USAWOA beginning in the early 1970s:

- + USAWOA merged with the European Warrant Officers Association in 1973 to insure that the Warrant Officer Corps would be represented with one voice.
- + USAWOA became incorporated in the state of Virginia in 1974.
- + USAWOA was accepted as a full member of the Council of Military Organizations (COMO) in 1976. COMO was the forerunner of The Military Coalition (TMC). This ongoing relationship provided a relatively new USAWOA with the expertise of other association representatives, not only in legislative, but in administrative matters as well.
- + USAWOA bylaws and administrative manuals were institutionalized to standardize chapter, region and national policies within the Association.
- + USAWOA initiated a program to recognize the distinguished and honor graduates at warrant officer military schools.
- + USAWOA initiated a Warrant Officer of the Year and Spouse of the Year and other recognition programs.
- + USAWOA initiated a program with the American Council of Education (ACE) to award civilian education credit for warrant officer service.
- + USAWOA initiated action with the "Officers Guide" to include warrant officer related information in their publication which previously excluded warrant officers.

At the national level USAWOA initiated recommendations submitted by members, chapters, regions or national officers. These recommendations were voted on by the membership at the USAWOA Annual Meetings, or approved by the Board of Directors, for submission to the appropriate authorities. The following are representative actions recommended and implemented by the Department of the Army during the 1970s:

- + The disparity in aviation flight pay was narrowed and then equalized.
- + Concurrent travel for CW4s and promotable CW3s was authorized.
- + Appropriate field grade quarters for CW4s and promotable CW3s were authorized.
- + Warrant Officer career management programs were implemented for all warrant officer career fields.
- + The Warrant Officer Senior Course was established and USAWOA national officers addressed the first class.
- + Warrant officers were appointed to serve on warrant officer promotion boards.
- + Civilian education opportunities were expanded for warrant officers in all specialties.

- + A warrant officer position was established in the Office Chief of Army Reserve for warrant officer policy issues.
- + Warrant officers were included in DA teams visiting installations in CONUS and overseas.
- + Additional duties performed by warrant officers were clarified.

These advances, on a piecemeal basis were the forerunners of major advances in the warrant officer program. The USAWOA's role in the above actions and many more, was to identify those issues which would improve the Corps, provide the rationale for the recommended changes, forward the recommendations to the Army leadership for a decision and then use every available means to keep those issues on the front burner with all those who were involved in the decision making process.

Next month's article will cover the USAWOA in the 1980s. A major overhaul of the warrant officer program would begin in the 1980s which would lead to redefining the role of the warrant officer, beginning with the definition, recruiting, military and civilian education, promotion, utilization, commissioning and much more. The role of the USAWOA in the warrant officer program of 1980's will again focus on my continuing effort to answer that old question: What has USAWOA done for me?

Until next month...

USAWOA – “The First 25 Years” (1980s)

Last month I described the involvement of the Association from its inception and early formation. This article will address the USAWOA involvement in the warrant officer activities of the 1980s.

The 1980s opened with a spirit of optimism within the Association because we had won the respect of the Army leadership. Our 1980 Annual Meeting featured the Army Chief of Staff, General Myer, the Army DCSPER, LTG Yerkes, the Chief, Army Reserve, MG Berkman, and other key leaders. We were extending our areas of influence to include issues within the Reserve Components (USAR and ARNG) and the retired community. Our interests gradually expanded from fragmented issues to specific proposals on accessions, promotions, education, utilization and retirement policies. This was a conscious effort to branch out and address issues of concern to the officer community at large. These specific issues were addressed in the NEWSLINER by Association officers, Warrant Officer Division Chiefs, and Army Reserve and National Guard representatives in their respective areas of concern. The Association's involvement with the Council of Military Organizations (COMO) and later, The Military Coalition (TMC) gave us greater visibility and recognition as a professional association. It also enlarged our area of expertise in the legislative arena, and provided our members with accurate and timely legislative information that affects all military families.

A gradual change was taking place at the DA level. As the Warrant Officer Division (WOD) began to assert itself, the WO Division Chief was seen as the spokesperson for the Warrant Officer Corps. The Association worked closely with the WOD, and especially its Chief, to identify issues and assist when necessary. In my trips to chapters and commanders in the U.S. and Europe, I provided the Division Chief with the comments of warrant officers in the field. In reviewing the chapter minutes sent to us from the field, we often identified areas of concern and alerted the Division Chief. He often responded in a NEWSLINER article addressing these specific issues. We served as a conduit on policy issues without getting involved in personal situations. The Association also coordinated visits between chapters and WOD personnel to arrange for chapter meetings to be held when WOD assignment personnel were in their area. We publicized the activities of the WOD usually with monthly articles by the Chief and periodic articles by other members of WOD. Our relationship with the WOD was extremely critical and we were fortunate that every WOD Chief enthusiastically supported and endorsed our efforts. In many instances, the Association overcame resistance by a commissioned staff officer at the DA level by writing or contacting the Army DCSPER or Chief of Staff to bring to their personal attention areas of concern to the warrant officer community. Every Army DCSPER has addressed our Association and publicly welcomed our input.

Another area that was a top priority in the early 80s was the identification of key warrant officer positions on manning documents at the DA staff level. This issue was considered critical because input was needed at the level where the decisions were being made.

Prior to the assignment of warrant officers on the DA staff, the Association dealt with commissioned action officers on warrant officer issues. This often meant educating these field grade officers on such warrant officer issues as the impact of targeted pay raises on procurement and retention; unique Regular Army and USAR promotion policies; unequal quarters assignment policies; and additional duties. The Association's objective in the early years before the Total Warrant Officer Study (TWOS) was to bring warrant officer professional differences to the attention of the leadership before the decisions were made. Once these decisions were made it was extremely difficult to change them.

The most significant impact on the Warrant Officer Corps began in September 1984 when the Army Chief of Staff chartered the Total Warrant Officer Study (TWOS). It was the first warrant officer study done by warrant officers for warrant officers. The Association immediately volunteered the wealth of documentation and background information that we had accumulated since our inception in 1972. In addition I had personal contact with the TWOS personnel almost on a daily basis as they reviewed the current systems, analyzed the programs, surveyed warrant and commissioned officers, and conducted workshops. TWOS personnel held their first formal briefing at the 1984 USAWOA Annual Meeting and association leaders were provided opportunities to comment in writing on all aspects of the Study. USAWOA National President Carl Burnett, and future National President Dennis Jinks were members of the TWOS as well as other knowledgeable warrant officers such as Lloyd Washer, Chuck Hawk, (expand names from TWOS Pam) With the approval of TWOS by the Army Chief of Staff, a new era was born in the Warrant Officer Corps which led to the Warrant Officer Management Act (WOMA) and the Warrant Officer Leader Development Action Plan (WOLDAP) in the early 90's. (I will cover the Association involvement in these important developments in the next installment.)

With the approval of TWOS in 1985, a new definition, coding of positions, management by warrant officer service, a legislative package including W-5 and other important issues, the Warrant Officer Corps had received its first comprehensive study of warrant officer management across the board. It was a good start, but it was only the beginning. Now the hard work of implementation would begin. If you have been around the Army for a few years, you soon realize that the bureaucracy moves slowly. For instance, it wasn't until December 1991 that the legislative package, The Warrant Officer Management Act (WOMA) was approved by Congress even though the Chief of Staff approved the concept in 1985. While the TWOS was in progress another significant legislative event occurred in 1986. The commissioning of Army warrant officers recognized the warrant officer as a full-fledged officer with all the rights and authority of a commissioned officer. The Association fully supported and lobbied for this commissioning legislation as another step toward our goal of integrating the warrant officer fully into the officer corps.

Internally, the USAWOA continued to grow as a professional Association. In 1988, the USAWOA held its Annual Meeting in Heidelberg Germany in which over 800 warrant officers gathered to hear the latest professional information from the Army leadership and the Association. In 1989, the USAWOA national office was dedicated at the Board of Directors meeting in April. One short year later, the Association celebrated the burning of the mortgage as the membership donations completely paid off our \$150,000 investment. During this time the Association continued to refine its internal actions by updating our administrative publications to streamline our operations; upgrading our membership and financial operations; changing the elected term of national officers from one to two years; enhancing our Memorabilia Program; and establishing a national awards program.

As the 1980s came to a close, the Association's role would again change. Prior to TWOS, USAWOA identified areas of concern. These areas had been identified by TWOS with input from the Association as well as many others. The Association now focused on how they would they be implemented. USAWOA addressed this area by initiating professional development seminars in which knowledgeable staff officers would present their positions and warrant officers in the field could respond. Additionally, NEWSLINER articles would address coding of positions, single promotion system, recruiting, revised education system, and other issues of concern. Chapters also conducted their own professional development, often using local warrant officers in key positions on the post staff. That was the warrant officer climate as we entered the 1990s - much emphasis on TWOS recommendations, but some apprehension about how they would be implemented.

Next month's article will cover the warrant officer program in the 1990s. The emergence of WOMA, WOLDAP, warrant officers assigned to the DA staff, Warrant Officer Career Center (WOCC) and the role of the USAWOA in an attempt to clarify, What has USAWOA done for me?

USAWOA – “The First 25 Years (1990s)”

Last month I described the involvement of the Association during the 1980s. This final article will address the role of the USAWOA from the early 1990s to the present.

The 1990s were a turning point for our Association in many ways as we stepped up our activities within the Corps. We entered the decade with the confidence that USAWOA made a difference in the 1980s and will continue to address the professional concerns of the future. I will divide this article into two parts. First, our support for the professional development of the Corps, and then our “in house” activities.

Externally

One of our most daunting tasks faced by the Association was to mount a marketing strategy to support the passage of the Warrant Officer Management Act (WOMA). It is worth noting that the passage of WOMA did not occur until five years after the Total Warrant Officer System (TWOS) was approved by the Army Chief of Staff.

In the meantime, USAWOA was busy. A letter writing campaign was undertaken and each representative and Senator was contacted by mail. Personal visits were made to key congressional members and staff. The Warrant Officer Management Act had been drafted by the Army and had the support of the other Services but was bottlenecked in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). USAWOA persuaded Congressman Bennett from Florida to introduce a separate bill in the House of Representatives, to eliminate the OMB roadblock.

The Military Coalition (TMC) was marshaled in support of this landmark legislation for warrant officers and they willingly placed it on their list of priority legislative issues to pursue with the Congress. The bill was subsequently included in the Defense Authorization Act and passed into law on 5 December 1991. Many of the major elements of TWOS had been initiated by the Army staff but the passage of WOMA gave the Army the legislative tools needed to institutionalize a warrant officer program. USAWOA was, and continues to be, a strong supporter of the provisions of WOMA which included the creation of a CW5 grade; a single promotion system; selective early retirement; regular promotion below the zone for CW4 and CW5; selected continuation in grade; and RA warrant officers authorized as members on RA promotion boards. WOMA became the foundation for the current Warrant Officer Management System which included position coding; management by warrant officer service; and a revised education system. The USAWOA participated in the dialogue and our input was solicited by the Army leadership in all phases of these major personnel management improvements to the Corps.

The management policies for the Corps took another giant step forward when the Warrant Officer Leader Development Decision Network (LDDN) was activated on 2 May 1992. The LDDN formulated a Warrant Officer Leader Development Plan (WOLDP) applicable to both Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) personnel. . The WOLDP consisted of representatives from the Army staff, major commands, warrant officer branch proponents and selected other agencies, including the USAWOA. The WOLDAP recommendations, approved by the Army Chief of Staff on 18 February 1992, included establishing warrant officer life cycle models for each MOS; standardizing the Warrant Officer Training System; standardizing selection criteria and accession goals; establishing a Warrant Officer Career Center; improving RC warrant officer recruiting; institutionalizing warrant officer roles, duties and responsibilities; raising civilian educational goals; retaining warrant officer insignia and centralized management.

I cite these management improvements to point out that these same issues had been raised through USAWOA channels by warrant officers in the field many years previously.

Why weren't they implemented earlier? In the past, these issues were often raised as isolated issues and impacted on other initiatives which the Army leadership did not have the time, resources, nor inclination to look at the big picture. For the first time, the WOLDP had the resources, the warrant officer expertise and the support of the Army leadership to look at the total package (the Corps) through the vehicle of the WOLDAP.

As these important warrant officer actions evolved, the Warrant Officer Career Center (WOCC), dedicated on 1 October 1992, began to assert itself as the focal point for warrant officer professional and leader development issues and initiatives. The WOCC was charged with training and educating all Army warrant officer candidates and selected senior warrant officers, overseeing and assessing all warrant officer common-core training, and maintaining liaison and coordination with the Army agencies and warrant officer proponents for the Branch Service Schools. Prior to the inception of the WOCC the Warrant Officer Division, PERSCOM was the primary point of contact for warrant officer actions that were not proponent related. The WOCC hosted the Leader Development Conferences and acted as the coordinating agency for these conferences. It would appear that the WOCC is the logical agency for warrant officer proponentcy based on the mission, assets available with the outstanding warrant officer permanent party staff and the infusion of warrant officers of all ranks on a periodic basis.

In my opinion, the laws, policies, procedures and structure are in place for the Warrant Officer Corps of the next century. Warrant officers are assigned in key positions on the Army staff, major commands and the WOCC staff. The drawdown of the Army dictates that warrant officers will be tested in responsible positions at every level of the Army. Again, in my opinion, the future of the Warrant Officer Corps hinges on the WOCC's ability to train and motivate warrant officers to meet that challenge. USAWOA has pushed for improved warrant officer military and civilian education from our inception. USAWOA leaders have been invited to the WOCC to address the warrant officer candidates as well as senior warrant officers on many occasions. I was honored to have a WOCC classroom named after me primarily because of the efforts of the Association to keep the need of formal training before the Army leadership for many years. I am a firm believer that if warrant officers are to continue to be the technical experts within today's Army, the education and training bar must continue to be raised.

Internally

Now to a few issues that are not as exciting, but just as important if the Association is to continue to represent all warrant officers. In April 1990 the Board of Directors celebrated the burning of the mortgage of our newly acquired national office building. With our relocation to a permanent site the Association leaders turned their attention to upgrading the services to our members. The board began a long-range plan to network the office computer system and upgrade our computer hardware. The NEWSLINER was converted from a newspaper to a magazine format; a toll free 800 number was installed to improve member services; an awards program was developed to recognize a Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Spouse of the Year, and numerous other chapter and individual awards in keeping with our goal of recognition.

The Association also opened the new decade with the establishment of a USAWOA College Scholarship Program for dependents of our members. The most recent improvements include a USAWOA Home Page on the World Wide Web and e-mail capabilities which enhance our ability to get the word out with less expense and in a more timely manner. Much credit for these internal improvements in office administration and computer expertise is due to CW4 (Ret) Bob Scott, for his continuous work on implementing and updating our Association administrative manuals and to CW5 (Ret) Dave Welsh for his implementing and maintaining our home page and other computer resources. These past presidents of our Association have volunteered thousands of hours to ensure that we stay abreast in these critical areas.

Our Annual Meetings in the 90's continue to improve with the hosting done by chapters in various locations. The European Region hosted the 1992 Meeting and conducts their own Region Convention annually. The Army leadership has provided key speakers and the Warrant Officer Division Chief has been a major speaker at every Annual Meeting to date. Future meetings will also include the Commandant of the WOCC and other leaders in Professional Development Seminars as well as key members of the Army staff. as a major activity at all our Annual Meetings. The Association added Reserve Component professional development in recent years as well as retiree information to be inclusive of all our members. The Annual Meetings continue to be the focal point where individual members vote and set the policy for our Association. They elect our national officers and chart the course for the coming year.

Chapter president's also meet at the Annual Meeting and share their accomplishments and concerns with fellow chapter officers. The chapters provide professional opportunities for its members to address local concerns, provide mentorship to younger officers and submit proposals to the Annual Meeting. Chapters also provide social outlets to their members and spouses and participate in various community activities.

As we near the end of the 90's we can be proud that USAWOA is recognized by our military and civilian leaders and our sister associations as the advocate for Army warrant officers. I am confident, that USAWOA will continue to speak out on issues of importance in the Army, the Corps and its members to better utilize the tremendous potential of talent consolidated with the Warrant Officer Corps. As the Corps and the Army changes in the years ahead, USAWOA will find new ways to serve its members and the Corps. We always have!

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