

PACTS/UKHS Service Story: CW5 Charlie Parker

CW5 (Retired) Charlie Parker
Union Kempsville High School Class of 1966

Branch of Service: United States Army
Years of Service: 1967-2007



*Photo of CW5 (Retired) Charlie Parker
(courtesy of CW5 (Retired) Charlie Parker)*

Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) (Retired) Charlie R. Parker was born October 1947 in Perquimans County, North Carolina. He is a native of Virginia Beach, Virginia and a graduate of Union Kempsville High School Class of 1966. He currently resides in Woodbridge, Virginia and is married to Major Patricia I. Harvey (Reserve) of Hampton, Virginia. CW5 (Retired) Parker began his military career in March 1967 as an enlisted soldier. His military career spans over forty years, with thirty years as a warrant officer in the U.S. Army's Ordnance Corps. In October 1996, he was promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) while assigned to the Ordnance Team for Combined Arms Support Command, Fort Lee, Virginia from 1994 - 1998. Following that assignment, he took a special assignment at the Warrant Officer Career Center, Fort Rucker, Alabama, where he assumed the role as Branch Chief of the General Studies Branch. His mission was to train Warrant Officer Candidates to become future Warrant Officers, including Warrant Officer Aviation Pilots.

He was the first African American to hold that prestigious position from 1998-2001. While serving in this capacity, he was often referred to as an advocate for Black Candidates by the Assistant Commandant. However, his stance was that he was an advocate for fairness of all candidates. He initiated programs that would level the playing field for all candidates, so as a Warrant Officer Mentorship Program that was implemented Army wide for junior Warrant Officers. The mentor role was to help them plan and manage their careers for progression.

From 2001- 2007 he was assigned as Senior Evaluator for the Information Technology Directorate, United States Army Test and Evaluation Command. During his assignment there he was selected to develop a Test and Evaluation Strategy for SAP Enterprise Resource Planning to optimize enterprise elements such as Supply, Property, Finance, Maintenance and Human Resource Management for the Army. He held this prestigious position up until his retirement in 2007. Upon his retirement he was the senior ranking Ordnance Warrant Officer in the Army. His formula for success is simple, "work hard to accomplish your mission and take care of your soldiers."

CW5 Parker has received numerous awards and decorations during his forty-year career, including the United States of America Congressional Record from the 110th Congress, First Session House of Representatives. In Recognition for his 40 years of distinguished service to the United States Army and this great nation. In 2020 he was inducted into the Ordnance Hall Fame. His other awards include, The Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe Award, The Army Legion of Merit (2), Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf



Clusters, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Good Conduct Medal (2), National Defense Medal (4) and numerous other Army Medal and Ribbons. CW5 is the highest Warrant Officer rank in the United States Army today.

Q&A with CW5 (Retired) Parker

1. Give us a brief synopsis of what it was like growing up in Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach and attending Union Kempsville High School?

Growing up in Virginia Beach in the 60s was pure fun. While attending Union Kempsville I looked forward to going to school and socializing with my friends from other parts of Virginia Beach. We all came together to make our school and athletic program one of the best in Virginia Beach. I lived in Kempsville during the years I attended Union Kempsville High School, where we lived near a Golf Course. We all would go and caddy for the white golfers. Even though we were not allowed to play on the golf course we spent many hours having fun as a caddy. From that experience many of us took that as an opportunity to learn how to play golf. This is where I learned my skills as a mechanic by first learning to repair golf carts. After being a caddy for a few years the Pro of the Golf Course selected me to work inside the Pro Shop. This was a great privilege during those days. What was it like to grow up in Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach? A joy for me as a teenager. By Virginia Beach being a popular tourist's attraction, I got to meet many people, not really thinking about how it was being viewed by others. It was not until I travelled to Hawaii many years later that I realized just how popular Virginia Beach was to surfers. Once, I told them where I was from, they said they could not wait to come to Virginia Beach to surf our waves. It was then that I realized that I had grown up in a paradise and didn't realize it. How many people would leave the beaches of Hawaii to come and surf in Virginia Beach?

2. What's the one thing you remember most about attending the school?

The closeness of my classmates and how the teachers cared about each one of us and wanted us to strive to be the best. They wanted and encouraged us to excel in whatever we did. They always told us that we could do anything we set our minds to. Today, we continue to push ourselves, because we want to succeed and make them proud of us. Giving up wasn't an option because we knew the sacrifices they had made for us. Even today, we can all credit our teachers for seeing things in us that we didn't see in ourselves.

3. Why did you serve in the military?

I served because I wanted to give back to America! I had Uncles who served in World II and Pearl Harbor. I was so impressed by their War Stories, I wanted to follow in their footsteps. One of my Uncles was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, and that motivated me to follow in his footsteps. I too wanted to join the Army and become a Paratrooper and that I did. I had a chance to serve in the greatest Airborne Division in the World. Serving in the military was one of my greatest dreams. With the guidance of my parents, grandparents, uncles, and mentorship by great teachers, I developed into a



true soldier and leader.

4. What did you do post-military retirement?

- Mentor youths and talked to them about considering the Military as a career.
- Dedicated my free time volunteering in my church.
- Play golf and worked on my classic cars.
- Spent time with my family.
- Help mentor my daughter who is now a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army.

ABOUT THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH'S HISTORY MUSEUMS:

The City of Virginia Beach History Museums include the Thoroughgood House, the Francis Land House, the Lynnhaven House, and Princess Anne County Training School/Union Kempsville High School Museum. They are part of the City's Cultural Affairs Department. As part of the municipal government of the City of Virginia Beach, the Cultural Affairs Department engages residents and visitors through meaningful arts, heritage, and cultural experiences to connect and strengthen communities. Visit www.museumsvb.org for more information, and follow @VBHistoryMuseums on Facebook and Instagram, and @VBHistMuseums on Twitter, to stay up to date on all the events and news from Virginia Beach History Museums.

News Releases: VBgov.com/News

