Army Aviation Hall of Fame 2009 Induction

A decorated leader in war and peace, from enlisted Soldier to general officer, an expert logistician and acquisition manager, and a tireless advocate of the enlisted, warrant and company grade officers there is no doubt that BG James "Jim" M. Hesson has lived his entire life the AAAA mission statement of "Supporting the U.S. Army Aviation Soldier and Family."

In 1947, Hesson enlisted in the National Guard as a private at age 16. Thirty-six years later this quiet professional retired as a general officer, having earned his undergraduate degree at night and achieving a master's degree.

A veteran of three combat tours in Korea and Vietnam, he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross while serving as the commander of an aircraft maintenance and supply battalion. As a major, he was also awarded the Legion of Merit for his efforts to identify the source of CH-47 parts whose critical shortage was degrading combat capability resulting in improved methods of management and supply.

Hesson became the first project manager for the CH-47D helicopter, delivering this transformational research and development program on-time and under-budget in the late 1970s, in an era of double-digit inflation. Through his personal, direct and unorthodox efforts, he was pivotal in directing innovative procurement and coordinating modification of aircraft and equipment that eventually led to the formation of the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the famous "Night Stalkers," following the unsuccessful 1980 "Desert One" operation to free the Iranian held American hostages. Hesson was one of the key behind-the-scenes leaders providing support that gave special operations aviation a "kick start," leading to the 160th SOAR becoming the world's premier combat aviation unit.

Just as significant as his accomplishments in uniform were his contributions as the national president of both the AAAA and the association's Scholarship Foundation. As president from 1989 to 1991, Hesson expanded the National Executive Board to include representation by company grade, warrant officer, and enlisted members, and significantly improved membership retention. His AAAA and scholarship initiatives have improved the lives of hundreds of Soldiers and families and greatly improved both organizations.

There is no doubt Hesson has made the quiet, professional, and sustained impacts on our warfighters and their families, which will pay rich dividends for Army Aviation and the AAAA for decades to come.