

The First and the First



Capt. Charles Chandler (left) and Lt. Roy Kirtland, in 1912, after the first firing of a machine gun from an airplane.



Chandler in 1912.



Cpl. Edward Ward, seated center, at military balloon training.

With a memo dated Aug. 1, 1907, the Army created "an Aeronautical Division," progenitor of the Air Force. The memo detailed to this unit Capt. Charles deForest Chandler and Cpl. Edward Ward—thus making Chandler USAF's first officer and Ward its first enlisted man. Chandler, a 28-year-old Ohioan, had time in balloons. Ward, a former railroad signalman from Pine Knot, Ky., was 25. Both men were at Fort Myer, Va., in 1908 when the Wright brothers took their Flyer

through military trials (Ward uncrated the Flyer). Both Chandler and Ward served in World War I. In 1920, Chandler retired at the grade of colonel. Ward became a licensed balloon pilot, learning how to fly and maintain the Aeronautical Division's dirigible. He supervised the laying of cables across Tampa Bay and oversaw the aerial mapping of the Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Park. Ward retired as a master sergeant.