

# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**COLONEL  
JERRY M. SAGE**  
*U.S. Army, Retired*

Inducted November 3, 2022



Colonel Jerry M. Sage entered the Army in 1938 through the Reserve Officers Training Corps at the State College of Washington, where he had been a distinguished varsity football player and earned Phi Beta Kappa academic honors.

He came on active duty on December 9, 1941 as an infantry officer and was recruited into the Office of Strategic Services on July 1, 1942. During his training with the British Special Operations Executive he earned the nickname “Dagger”, due to his expertise in knife fighting, which became his code name. He subsequently trained colleagues at the Office of Strategic Services in Maryland until January 1943.

Major Sage deployed with his Experimental Detachment 3, a 20-person combined team that was the precursor of the later Office of Strategic Services Operational Group, to North Africa.

Conducting interdiction operations behind German lines, he was wounded and captured, while recovering a teammate. He spent the bulk of World War II in various prison camps where he became notable for his more than 15 escape attempts, earning the moniker “Cooler King”, for his recapture punishment. His escape exploits at Stalag Luft III became the basis for the Steve McQueen character in “The Great Escape”.

After he made his successful final escape in March 1945, he resumed his service with the Office of Strategic Services in Poland and other locations in the European Theater of Operations. Post-war he coordinated repatriation of displaced persons based upon his language skills developed during captivity.

At the height of the Cold War, his leadership and infantry command experience in Korea with the 5th Regimental Combat Team earned him selection to command the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Bad Tolz, Germany, from August 1963–September 1965.

In the later part of his career, Col. Sage served in the Pentagon in two Special Forces related assignments: first on the Army Staff developing the unconventional warfare training requirements for the U.S. Army Special Forces; and then within the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff developing strategic plans for employment of special operations. During that assignment, he was a member of the team that conducted a strategic assessment of the situation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam.

Col. Sage’s significant awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Prisoner of War Medal, Purple Heart, Bronze Star Medal, Order of the British Empire, Master Parachutist Badge, World War II Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, American and European-African-Middle East Campaign Medals and eight overseas bars.

Col. Sage’s service to the Regiment continued after his 1982 retirement, as an educator and mentor of youth at both the college and high school levels. While serving as Assistant to the President, he developed a course on civics for the University of South Carolina.

His outstanding instructor and leadership skills later earned him High School Teacher of the Year for the state of South Carolina in 1978. He served in numerous community activities, including the establishment of a Civitan Club in Enterprise, Alabama, to aid needy and handicapped persons, earning national recognition for his efforts.

Col. Sage passed away in 1993 and was interred in Enterprise. One of his sons was a graduate of West Point and was killed while serving in Vietnam.