

C O P Y

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55TH AIR RESCUE SQUADRON
6TH AIR RESCUE GROUP (ARS-MATS)
APO 23, c/o Postmaster, New York, New York

201-Holder, Elliott L.
AF 6277970

12 May 1954

SUBJECT: Recommendations for Award of Soldier's Medal

THRU: Commander
6612th Air Base Group
APO 23, c/o Postmaster
New York, New York

TO: Commander
6th Air Rescue Group
APO 862, c/o Postmaster
New York, New York

1. It is recommended that the following individual be awarded the Soldier's Medal:

Holder, Elliott L.
Technical Sergeant, AF 6277970
55th Air Rescue Squadron, Para-rescue Technician, 92170
1302 South Main Street, Henderson, Texas

2. On 28 April 1954, the wreckage of a United States Navy P4Y2B #9925 had been located on the eastern coast of Ellesmere Island, Northwest Territories, Canada, at 7802N-7605W. Since there was a possibility that there were survivors of the crash, the area was carefully examined for a possible landing site. The scene of the crash was bordered on three sides by a glacier and ice cap with extremely steep slopes, and on a fourth side by sheer 1900 foot cliff, dropping to the sea. The impossibility of landing an aircraft anywhere in the vicinity of the crash site was immediately obvious. T/Sgt Holder, a Para-rescue Technician with the 55th Air Rescue Squadron, volunteered to perform a parachute jump close to the crash site, and to proceed to the wreckage on foot, in order to ascertain whether there were any survivors. Sgt. Holder was fully aware at the time that the surface winds in the area were greatly in excess of the twenty miles per hour normally considered to be maximum for a safe jump. He was also aware that the area forecast, which had just been received from the Base Weather Office indicated rapidly deteriorating conditions and several days of cold weather and high winds. The actual jump was preceded by several runs over the area, during which smoke bombs and spotter chutes were dropped in an effort to appraise the wind conditions. Sgt. Holder was given every opportunity to refuse the jump but he decided that he could make it. T/Sgt Holder jumped from SA-16 #51-7178 at 1130, 28 Apr 54, onto the ice cap, about one and one half miles from the crash site. On landing, he was dragged almost a quarter of a mile over rough ice before he was able

to collapse his parachute. Using a URC-4 Radio, Sgt Holder advised the pilot of the SA-16, "Don't drop any more people. The wind is too strong, about forty knots." Just as this message was received another Para-rescue Specialist also jumped. Supplies were dropped to Sgt Holder and he immediately set up his camp. The terrain was solid, clear ice, so hard that steel tent pegs bent when driven into it. It was not possible to build an ice house because the ice saw would not cut the ice. After much difficulty, the barren land tent was finally erected. The next morning the winds had subsided and Sgt Holder proceeded to the wreckage. Travel on the steep, icy slopes required tremendous effort. At one point Sgt Holder spent three hours in traveling a quarter of a mile. At the crash site, Sgt Holder found no survivors and proceeded with the task of recovering the remains. After a day and a half, the weather suddenly became very bad with high winds, low temperatures, and very restricted visibility. Sgt Holder was forced to stay in his shelter almost continuously for eight days. At one time he was unable to go outside the tent for a period of sixty-seven hours. Wind velocities during this period were frequently in excess of one hundred miles per hour and the temperature remained at zero or below. Supplies ran dangerously low, since the weather prevented the planned re-supply of the campsite by aerial drop. Sgt Holder was forced to ration his food and his "canned heat", his only source of warmth. Supplies finally were dropped on the eighth day, during a break in the weather, and on the eleventh day, 8 May 1954, the weather improved and Sergeant Holder was evacuated by helicopter.

3. a. Technical Sergeant, Para-rescue Technician - 92170, 55th Air Rescue Squadron.
b. Staff Sergeant Robert H. Christensen, AF 17295219
4. The service of Technical Sergeant Elliott Holder, subsequent to the act for which this award is recommended, has been honorable.
5. a. No supporting official records inclosed.
b. One (1) eyewitness statement inclosed.
6. Three (3) copies of a proposed citation are inclosed.
7. No other recommendations for awards to Technical Sergeant Holder are pending.
8. a. No previous award of decoration for the act described in par 2 above has been made.
b. No previous decorations awarded.
9. Award is not posthumous and the recipient is not missing in action or a prisoner of war.

Incls:

1. Proposed citation
2. Eyewitness statement

MICHAEL V. PEDULLA
Major, USAF
Commander