

To: (unknown), INTERNET:staff@afsahq.com  
CC: (unknown), INTERNET:wphayes@olg.com  
CC: (unknown), INTERNET:WilliamsonR@ang.af.mil  
CC: (unknown), rlapointe  
From: INTERNET:Hobeirne@aol.com, INTERNET:Hobeirne@aol.com  
Date: 1/18/99, 3:08 PM  
Re: Pitsenbarger Medal of Honor

Sender: Hobeirne@aol.com  
Received: from imol7.mx.aol.com (imol7.mx.aol.com [198.81.17.7])  
by arl-img-8.compuserve.com (8.8.6/8.8.6/2.17) with ESMTP id TAA16448  
for <rlapointe@compuserve.com>; Mon, 18 Jan 1999 19:08:44 -0500 (EST)  
From: Hobeirne@aol.com  
Received: from Hobeirne@aol.com  
by imol7.mx.aol.com (IMOV18.1) id URW1a03210;  
Mon, 18 Jan 1999 19:07:31 +1900 (EST)  
Message-ID: <e5e74cec.36a3ccc3@aol.com>  
Date: Mon, 18 Jan 1999 19:07:31 EST  
To: staff@afsahq.com  
Cc: rlapointe@compuserve.com, WilliamsonR@ang.af.mil, wphayes@olg.com  
Mime-Version: 1.0  
Subject: Pitsenbarger Medal of Honor  
Content-type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII  
Content-transfer-encoding: 7bit  
X-Mailer: AOL 4.0 for Windows 95 sub 236

From: Henry J. O'Beirne 14th. January 1999  
13005 Percivale Drive, S.E.,  
Huntsville, Al. 35803.

My name is Henry J. O'Beirne. In the year of 1965 and through 1966 I was an AlC in the United States Air Force, stationed at Bien Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam. I was a member of the pararescue team, Detachment 6, 38th. Aerospace & Recovery squadron, APO U.S. Forces 96227. I was a team mate of William H. Pitsenbarger. He and I, together with two other airmen, shared a small cubicle in a "hooch" that housed thirty two men, for a period of just over eight months. I slept in the bunk over Pitsenbarger, and when one of us got out of bed the other would have to wait till he moved before the second fellow could get out of bed. In short, we got to know each other very well.

The following is a condensed version of a letter that I sent to Pitsenbarger's Father a month or so after Bill was killed:

Some army wounded were out in the jungle and needed to be rescued. Our detachment was called and two helicopters were sent out. The helicopter on first alert was sent in first and they made a pick-up of some wounded. Next in went the second helicopter with Bill aboard. They made a pick-up also and then went to Binh Ba, (Binh Ba was the landing field being used by the Americans, it was about eight miles away.) When Bill's helicopter reached Binh Ba, the first helicopter was refueling. The second helicopter had enough fuel for another run so they took off to pick up some more people. Men were wounded and somebody had to go out and get them. When Bill's helicopter got there and lowered the stokes litter (wire basket stretcher) to the ground, it became obvious that the army men on the ground needed help in loading the litter - or so it was reported by Bill to the pilot. Bill recommend that he be lowered in to help them, and the pilot made the decision to lower him in. The pararescueman can volunteer to go in but the burden of the decision is on the shoulders of the pilot. However, the pararescueman's opinion is highly regarded and usually acted upon. On the ground Bill did get things organized and the loading was going better for a time. Bill loaded up his helicopter and it went out to make room for the other chopper to come in. He loaded that one up too and it left for Binh Ba. When I say "he loaded them up," I mean

he sent up patients from the ground to the chopper some 150 feet or so in the air. While this rescue effort was going on so the battle. I don't know how many each helicopter took on each ride but I believe they carried out a total of nine men. On the next helicopter to go in was Capt. Salem, Major Kessler, and Alc Jerry Hammond (Bill's crew that day). Capt. Salem was the pilot. They lowered the stokes litter till it was almost to the ground, about ten feet off or so. Just then an automatic weapon opened up on the helicopter and put eight bullets in the engine. One of the bullets smashed up the fuel control system and forced the chopper to literally fly itself out of the area. The fuel control system was jammed wide open pouring fuel to the engine. The chopper was dragging the stokes litter through the trees and Jerry Hammond, the mechanic, called for the cable to be cut, but this was on the mind of everybody aboard. Who did it I don't know, but it was done and the stokes litter fell into the jungle. By flying the chopper nose tilted to the ground, Capt. Salem managed to keep it somewhat stable and get it back to Binh Ba. In order to shut the engine off, Jerry Hammond had to smash the engine with a hammer, and that was they got the blades to stoop turning. Back at the pick-up area the other chopper wanted to go in, but the army ordered them out of the area because of the heavy ground fire. Any helicopter that would have gone in at that moment would have been shot down. From then on we didn't know what was happening to Bill, but we figured he'd be okay because he was out there in the jungle with 182 army infantrymen. Anyway, darkness had settled in and between it and the heavy ground fire they called off the mission. Later we got a message that all was alright with the troops and that they were moving out to another area.

The next morning we got an urgent message to get back out to Binh Ba. I was the pararescueman on the first chopper. When I was put down in the jungle I was told that there were 81 dead and that the rest were wounded. I set about helping the wounded and evacuating them on the chopper. After the chopper took off, I headed back the jungle to help some more wounded. An army captain passing, stopped me and told me that he was sorry but my buddy had been killed. He pointed in the direction of Bill's body. I searched, and found it covered with a poncho. Bill had been shot four times. I removed Bill's gear and took the body back to the evacuating area.

While on the ground attending to the remaining wounded I spoke with a Sergeant Navarro who told me about Bill's actions that night. After the chopper had been forced to fly out, Bill continued to attend the wounded. Then a decision was made to move out and Bill started to cut down saplings to make stretchers for the wounded. However, the enemy fire intensified and that decision was aborted. Young army men couldn't see much of the well hidden enemy and started to fire on automatic. This burned up ammo fast and soon there were calls of "I'm out of ammo" or "I'm hit, medic." Bill crawled and ran around tending to the wounded and picking up ammo for distribution to other soldiers. I understand the enemy fire to be very heavy at this time. Bill was shot four times, in the leg, the lower back, the shoulder, and lastly central forehead. Bill was close to Sergeant Navarro when it was noticed that he slumped to the ground. Since two of his wounds were in his back (leg and back) and two in the front (shoulder and forehead) he had to be wounded prior to being killed. Even though wounded he continued to help other wounded - this to me is the highest form of valor.

Bill Pitsenbarger was a very patriotic person. He felt very strongly about his country and staunchly defended his country's position in Vietnam. He volunteered to go there, and he never hesitated to go on any mission assigned to him. He was full of life and not what I would call a reckless person. He and I had plans for after Vietnam, and I know he was looking forward to coming back to the United States. When he got up and ran crouching around that battlefield, I know he was apprehensive, but he did it. When wounded, he continued to do it. He was a medic and there were wounded to be taken care of. In my opinion, William H. Pitsenbarger put aside his fears, his wounds, and eventually his life to that he could help his fellow soldiers. I can

think of no higher form of valor. I truly believe that he deserves the Medal  
of Honor for his actions that day.

Respectf

ully

J. O'Beirne

Henry

USAR Retired

LTC,

**Robert LaPointe**

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**From:** <Hobeirne@aol.com>  
**To:** <jcassidy@alaska.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 09, 2000 6:22 PM  
**Subject:** Pits M.O.H

John,

It is quite a coincidence that we should talk about Pits M.O.H. and the story about Bernie Fischer before I left for Fort Walton. While I was there I received a phone call that clarified the situation, and when I returned home I found all the official memos in the mail. What I am refering to is this:

Bill Pitsenbarger was submitted for the M.O.H. on April 16th, 1966, by Capt. Harold Salem, the chopper pilot. Col. Beall, C.O. Rescue in SEA, heartily endorsed it and has Col. Brooke, C.O. Rescue World-wide, endorsed it. It was forwarded to PACAF, but an ARMY Lt. Gen. John A Heintges, Commander of MACV, asked for it to be returned, and then HE recommended that it be downgraded to the Air Force Cross. He also added a sentence that clinched it- "I request that this headquarters (ATTN: MACAG-PA0 be advised when final action has been taken on this recommendation." By doing that, he assured that he would have to be kept informed until final disposition. I have the official memos in my possession, and I will be sending copies to you and Jim Watson - so that anyone can verify that they exist. I hope that this will put to rest the rumor-story about Bernie Fischer and Pits. An added note, Joe Vigare pointed out to me that the most recent recipient of the M.O.H., Capt. Rascon, was awarded the M.O.H. for actions around Bien Hoa with the 173 Airborne Brg.. His paperwork was "lost" and not found until recently. It is interesting to note that the same Lt. Gen. Heintges was in charge at that time too. This is my GUESS - a Maj. Gen DePuy, with Lt. Gen., Heintges as his boss, was in charge of the fiasco involving Pits. The Army was really embarassed by the defeat, and the numbers of dead and wounded that I have read have always been lower than the numbers quoted to me that day by C Company. I believe that the army didn't want the U.S. to know what a bad job that it was doing and so tried to put a damper on it. The same thing goes for Rascon and Pits, both denied M.O.H.'s, both in the vicinity of Bien Hoa, and both involving the army - I could be wrong.

Obee

**Robert LaPointe**

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**From:** <Hobeirne@aol.com>  
**To:** <wpreble@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 17, 2000 5:29 PM  
**Subject:** 11 April 1966

Bill,

Since you and the troops will be meeting with Mr. Pits in the near future, I thought I might send a statement from one of the ground forces that night and you could share it with the PJs. It might give them a feeling for that night.

On April 11, 1966, I, Martin L. Kroah, then a 1st. Lt. was serving as 3rd Platoon leader of C Company 2d Battalion, 16th. Infantry, 1st. Infantry Division in the Republic of South Vietnam. At about noon on that day our company made contact with an enemy force of approx. 500 Viet Cong. A firefight started and lasted into the early hours of the following morning. When the battle was over the company had received 80% casualties. I'm not certain of the number of dead or wounded exactly but I'm certain that the death count would have been much higher had it not been for the heroic efforts of Airman William H. Pitsenbarger.

I first saw Airman Pitsenbarger when he was being lowered from an Air Force helicopter sent to medevac our wounded. I observed him several more times during the course of the day. To put down on paper what that battle was like is an impossible task. At times the small arms fire would be so intense that it was deafening and all a person could do was get as close to the ground as possible and pray. It was on these occasions that I saw Airman Pitsenbarger moving around and pulling wounded men out of the line of fire and then bandaging their wounds. My own platoon medic, who was later killed, was totally ineffective. He was frozen with fear, unable to move. The firing was so intense that a fire team leader in my platoon curled up in a fetal position and sobbed uncontrollably. He had been in both WWII and Korea. The psychological pressure was beyond comprehension.

For Airman Pitsenbarger to expose himself, on 3 separate occasions to this enemy fire was certainly above and beyond the call of duty of any man. It took tremendous courage to expose himself to the possibility of an almost certain death in order to save the life of someone he didn't even know.

I believe that Airman Pitsenbarger's actions that day are deserving of the highest possible honor that his country can give, The Medal of Honor.

Martin L. Kroah,  
Captain, Inf.  
Retired.

From: Junkman [mailto:Pedro71@pedroairrescuechopper.net]  
 Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2000 07:21  
 To: paul schildgen; Al DeViney; Arlie Mustoe; Baylor Haynes; Bert King;  
 Bill Cline; Bill Emrie; Bill Johnson; Bill Junkins; Bill Junkins -  
 Webmaster; Bill Waters; BillCline; Bob Hawes; Bob Schannep; Bob Schuppe;  
 Bolger Todd A Lt Col 56 RQS/DO; Bruce Purvine; Bruce Ware; Byron Fox;  
 Clyde W Lemke; Cy Asta; Dave Wege; David J Given; Dick Batchelor; Dick  
 Monroe; Dick Van Allen; Don & Phidy Rensch; Don Waterman; Donald Aamodt;  
 Donald Berger,; Doug Armstrong; Doyle & Donna Krauss; Dr. John Casbergue;  
 DroopstopInn@pedroairrescuechopper.net; Dunn  
 Subject: Re: [Fwd: Medal of Honor upgrade for A1C William H.  
 Pitsenbarger]

At 06:53 AM 5/24/00 -0700, paul schildgen wrote:

>Ok, folks. I can only endorse Hal's comments and the efforts he has  
 >devoted to this cause over the many years since the event.

-----Snip-----

>Hi,

>

>It has been a while since I talked with you regarding the Medal of Honor  
 >upgrade for A1C William H. Pitsenbarger (Pitts) with you.

-----Snip-----

>When it was rerouted back to MACV, an Army Lt/Gen in MACV recommended  
 >it be downgraded to the Air Force Cross. The Charley Company slaughter was  
 a  
 >real embarrassment to MACV and I don't think they wanted any spotlight on  
 >their errors that the Medal of Honor might bring.

-----Snip-----

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thought some might find this interesting.

Reference

<http://pedroairrescuechopper.net/Crash/Pedro%20Memorial/pitsenbarger2.htm>

GO 17 1968

6. The Valorous Unit Award is awarded by direction of the Secretary of the  
 Army

COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY, 1ST INFANTRY for extraordinary  
 heroism:

While participating in military operations against a hostile force in the  
 Republic of Vietnam, COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY distinguished  
 itself by extraordinary heroism on 11 and 12 April 1966 while engaged in  
 search and destroy operation against an armed hostile force near the  
 Courtenay Rubber Plantation, Phuoc Tuy Province, Republic of Vietnam. After  
 sustaining light casualties in several brief encounters with small Viet  
 Cong elements, the company halted to secure a landing zone for the aerial

extraction of its wounded. During the evacuation, a numerically overwhelming insurgent force surrounded the company and attempted to attack and overrun the perimeter defenses. Through sound tactical planning and bold leadership, COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY fought back with undaunted courage, maintaining fire superiority and repelling numerous enemy assaults. even under a devastation bombardment of Viet Cong mortars and rifle grenades, the besieged unit fiercely resisted with an indomitable fighting spirit while inflicting heavy casualties on the fanatical insurgents. The gallant defenders continued to tighten the perimeter, recovering there wounded as they closed the gaps in the line. When the Viet Cong made repeated assaults to breach the friendly positions, numerous brave individuals contemptuously charged into the onrushing enemy and broke the attack with savage hand-to-hand combat. As darkness descended on the ravaged battlefield, COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY was virtually cut off from reinforcements and critical supplies. Demonstrating relentless courage, the unit secured the casualties in the center of the shrinking perimeters the few remaining survivors fearlessly denied the field to the enemy. Aided only by flareships and close artillery fire, the company held it perilous position throughout the night. When the beleaguered was finally relieved at dawn on 12 April, it had suffered seventy percent casualties, leaving only fifty-one determined men holding their ground. The intrepid stand of this brave United States Army unit uncovered two Viet Cong base camps and drove the enemy from the field, leaving behind numerous weapons, weapons, documents and many of their dead . The extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty displayed by the members of COMPANY C, 2D BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY were in keeping with the highest tradition of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

Take care,

Bill Junkins

**Robert LaPointe**

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**From:** "Boudreaux, Roy" <rboudreaux@ci.montgomery.al.us>  
**To:** <JCORRELL@AFA.ORG>  
**Cc:** "Harold Salem (E-mail)" <HALSAL10@aol.com>; "Dkpotter (E-mail)" <dkpotter@oregontrail.net>;  
 "Harry Obeirne (E-mail)" <Hjobeirne@aol.com>; "Ray Murden (E-mail)"  
 <raymurden4608@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 27, 2000 1:08 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Pits Questions  
 JOHN...RESPONSES ARE BENEATH EACH QUESTION...

Hal, Ray, Dale, Obey...so much looking forward to seeing you at the ceremony on Dec 8th. Please take a couple of minutes and review this. John Correll, Editor of Air Force magazine, is a very responsible, conscientious individual who has no self-serving interest. He just wants to tell the "real", complete story of Pits and Det 6. I've responded to the best of my recollection. Thanks for taking the time...

Regards,  
 Roy

-----Original Message-----

From: Boudreaux, Roy  
 Sent: Monday, November 27, 2000 2:25 PM  
 To: 'JCorrell@afa.org'  
 Subject: RE: Pits Questions

-----Original Message-----

From: John Correll [mailto:jcorrell@afa.org]  
 Sent: Monday, November 27, 2000 12:01 PM  
 To: rboudreaux@ci.montgomery.al.us  
 Subject: Pits Questions

Series of small points that will show up in detailed setting for story.

1. What was Pits's duty status on April 11? Lapointe says he was "off the flying schedule" but "hanging around Det. 6 anyway." Chivalette and Hayes say he was on "second alert status." Can you clear this up for me?

PITS WAS ON WHAT WAS KNOWN AS "SECOND ALERT" STATUS ON MONDAY, 11 APRIL, 1966. EVEN THO HE WAS NOT ON FIRST ALERT (SEE EXPLANATION AT QUESTION #4), HE WAS AT THE ALERT TRAILER, BUSY, PROBABLY CHECKING HIS EQUIPMENT. BUT YOU CAN BE SURE HE WAS DOING SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE. HE WASN'T ONE TO SIT IDLE.

2. Bachman says that Det. 6 was notified by 3rd JSARC that the Army

needed help. What/where was 3rd JSARC? What does JSARC stand for?

3rd JSARC (JOINT SEARCH AIR RESCUE CENTER) WAS IN SAIGON/TAN SON NHUT. IT WAS THE CENTRAL POINT INTO WHICH ALL CALLS FOR SEARCH/RESCUE CAME.

3. Was Maj Maurice Kessler the detachment commander? I understand that he was filling in for Capt. Dale Potter, but what was Kessler's job?

KESSLER WAS OUR DETACHMENT COMMANDER. AS WITH MOST COMMANDERS, HE WAS NOT ASSIGNED TO A REGULAR CREW AND AS A RESULT, DID NOT PULL A REGULAR ROTATION. IN ORDER TO MEET HIS FLYING TIME REQUIREMENTS, HE WOULD "SUB" FOR ONE OF THE OTHER PILOTS AS NECESSARY. HE WAS "FILLING IN" FOR POTTER ON 11 APRIL.

4. What was the size of Det. 6? I know you had three helicopters, but about how many crews? How many PJs?

WE HAD A MANNING STRENGTH OF APPROX 39 +/-, TOTAL. THE COMMANDER, PILOTS, CO-PILOTS, PJs, HMs, MAINTENANCE TROOPS, A COUPLE OF ADMIN GUYS AND ME. THAT WAS THE FULL COMPLIMENT. THERE WERE THREE CREWS ON ALERT AT ALL TIMES...FIRST ALERT (PRIMARY), SECOND ALERT (SECONDARY) AND THIRD ALERT (THIRD ALERT CREW HAD TO BE "IN THE AREA" AND ABLE TO RESPOND WITHIN SO MANY MINUTES OF A CALL...15-30 MINS AS I RECALL, BUT NOT PHYSICALLY AT THE ALERT TRAILER).

PERSONNEL STRENGTHS WOULD FLUCTUATE, BUT AT ANY GIVEN TIME WE WOULD HAVE, ON AVERAGE, 5-6 PJs ASSIGNED. WITH THREE CREWS, YOU HAD A SITUATION WHERE YOU HAD TO MAKE SURE YOU COULD KEEP THOSE GUYS GAINFULLY EMPLOYED, CAUSE THEY WERE LIKE CAGED ANIMALS, THEY HAD TO BE DOING WHAT THEY WERE TRAINED TO DO. OTHERWISE THEY'D GO STIR-CRAZY.

5. How often did a PJ like Pits fly? Every day? More than once a day? Must have been often, since he had, by various counts, flown between 250 and 350 combat missions.

CREWS PULLED FIRST (PRIMARY), SECOND (SECONDARY) AND THIRD ALERT ON REGULAR ROTATION, AND WHEN WE WERE FULLY MANNED, MAYBE A DAY OFF IN BETWEEN. FIRST ALERT FLEW SEVERAL TIMES EVERY DAY...MOSTLY LBRs (LOCAL BASE RESCUES, OR FIRE SUPPRESSION MISSIONS. THESE WERE LOCAL, OVER THE RUNWAY MISSIONS WHEN AN AIRCRAFT, F-100, A-7, OR SKYRAIDERS, ETC., WOULD COME IN WITH HOT BRAKES, HUNG ORDINANCE, BAD HYDRAULICS, VARIOUS WARNING LIGHTS, ETC., OUR

## CHOPPERS

DOUBLED AS AIRBORN FIRE TRUCKS. A LARGE FIRE SUPPRESSION BOTTLE WAS SLUNG UNDER THE CHOPPER AND, IF REQUESTED, THE CHOPPER WOULD GO AIRBORN AND FALL

IN DIRECTLY BEHIND THE INCOMING AIRCRAFT IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY). IF FIRST ALERT CREW WAS ON AN LBR AND ANOTHER CALL CAME IN, SECOND ALERT WOULD TAKE

IT, AND SO ON. OTHER THAN LBRS, OUR CREWS WOULD RESPOND TO AN ACTUAL RESCUE

MISSION ON AVERAGE OF EVERY 7-10 DAYS. (MORE IN A LATTER RESPONSE).

6. How often did the detachment fly a rescue/extraction mission?

ON AVERAGE, ABOUT EVERY 7-10 DAYS.

7. Who were your "customers" for extraction, and about how much of the effort went to each? I would guess that it was mostly wounded soldiers, after a firefight, with a downed pilot every now and then but would prefer to have you tell me rather than me guessing. What kinds of missions accounted for most of the flying?

EARLY ON, OUR PRIMARY MISSION WAS DOWNED PILOTS/CREWS, OR ANYONE WHO FOUND THEMSELVES IN TROUBLE. DOWN SOUTH, WE WERE RESPONDING TO DOWNED PILOTS NO MORE THAN ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS OR SO, SO THE JSARC DECIDED WE SHOULD START PULLING DEAD/INJURED ARMY GUYS OUT OF THE JUNGLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN/WHERE "DUST-OFFs" COULDN'T GET IN AND LAND. WITH THAT CHANGE IN OUR MISSIONS WE WERE OUT, ON AVERAGE, EVERY 7-10 DAYS...SOMETIMES MORE, SELDOM LESS.

8. Since you talked to Pits, you must have seen him suit up. The "Mud Soldiers" book says he came down the hoist "dressed in freshly pressed fatigues and a flak jacket carrying two .38-caliber pistols." Photos show you guys wearing a single sidearm. Was he carrying two pistols that day? Assume he put on the flak jacket and sidearm(s) after the call came in? What kind of helmet, if you recall? One report has him picking up an Army helmet on the ground. Would he not have been wearing his own when he went down?

IRONICALLY I WAS SITTING ON MY BUNK WHEN PITS CAME STORMING IN TO THE HOOCH TO SUIT UP FOR THE MISSION. I COULD TELL HE WAS A BIT MORE 'HYPER' THAN USUAL. (I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE HE HAD JUST RUN FROM THE ALERT TRAILER TO THE HOOCH TO GET READY FOR THE MISSION). THAT MAY HAVE BEEN PART OF HIS EXCITEMENT, BUT WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT WAS WRONG, HE SAID, "A CALL JUST CAME IN FOR US TO GO HELP CHARLIE COMPANY OF THE BIG RED ONE"...THAT THEY WERE "GETTING THEIR ASSES KICKED". I SAID SOMETHING LIKE, "BUT WHAT SO UNUSUAL ABOUT THIS ONE". PITS SAID, AND I'LL NEVER FORGET IT..."YEAH, BUT THERE'S

ABOUT A MILLION F\_\_\_\_\_ VC IN THE AREA". AND THEN HE SAID, "I DON'T HAVE A GOOD FEELING ABOUT THIS ONE"...

SORRY, I GOT SIDE-TRACKED. CREW MEMBERS, HAD THE OPTION OF WEARING EITHER FLIGHT SUITS OR AN EARLY VERSION OF JUNGLE FATIGUES. PITS (AND OTHER PJs AND HMs) WORE FATIGUES MOSTLY...AND YES, ON THAT DAY HE WAS WEARING HIS TYPICAL

STARCHED AND IRONED FATIGUES. PITS HAD ONLY ONE .38 CAL COMBAT MASTERPIECE

ISSUED TO HIM (I KNOW CAUSE I WAS THE SUPPLY GUY, REMEMBER). THAT'S ALL ANYONE HAD. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT GERALD HAMMOND (THE HM) COULD HAVE HANDED HIM

HIS AS HE WENT DOWN THE HOIST, BUT IT'S HIGHLY UNLIKELY. HE VERY LIKELY WASN'T EVEN CARRYING HIS M-16. HIS THOUGHTS WERE MOST LIKELY TO GET ON THE GROUND AND LOAD THE WOUNDED/DEAD ON THAT CHOPPER.

FLAK JACKETS/HELMETS WERE PART OF REGULAR CREW GEAR. THEY WERE PUT/REMAINED

ON THE CHOPPER WHEN YOU PULLED ALERT. OTHERWISE, THEY WERE KEPT WITH YOU.

PITS WAS WEARING A FLIGHT HELMET (WHICH IS EQUIPPED WITH A COMM HOOKUP AND

VISOR, BUT WOULD DO LITTLE TO DISCOURAGE AN AK-47 ROUND...), WHEN HE WENT DOWN THE HOIST. WHEN HE OPTED TO STAY ON THE GROUND HE WAS GIVEN A GRUNT HELMET IN PLACE OF HIS FLIGHT HELMET.

9. Describe for me, if you can, the crew stations in the helicopter.  
Where did the litter(s) go when you brought a casualty up? Where were the litters stowed beforehand?

AN HH-43 "HUSKEY" WAS NOT A CHOPPER BUILT FOR COMFORT. IT WAS SMALL AND BASICALLY DESIGNED FOR LBRs. WITH TWO GUYS IN THE BACK (A PJ AND AN HM), A FOREST PENETRATOR, A "STOKES" LITER (THE WIRE BASKET), PLUS A STANDARD CANVAS LITER, MEDICAL BAGS, ETC., THAT DIDN'T LEAVE A LOT OF EXTRA ROOM. THE

LITERS AND THE PENETRATOR WERE SECURED TO THE INSIDE SIDE WALLS OF THE CHOPPER. WE WERE LIMITED TO TWO NON-AMBULATORY AND MAYBE FOUR AMBULATORY, IN

ADDITION TO THE CREW. WHEN AN INJURED WAS BROUGHT UP, EITHER ON THE PENETRATOR OR THE STOKES, THE HM OPERATED THE HOIST. WHEN THE LITER APPROACHED THE SIDE DOORWAY, UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS, IT REQUIRED BOTH THE

HM AND THE PJ TO MANEUVER THE INJURED INTO THE CHOPPER. IF THE INJURED WAS AMBULATORY AND TIME PERMITTED, THE LITER WAS RE-SECURED TO THE SIDE WALL. IF

NOT, THE INJURED WOULD REMAIN IN THE LITER, TREATMENT WAS ADMINISTERED AND

CONTINUED 'TIL THEY REACHED A MEDICAL FACILITY, OR GROUND AMBULANCE.

Hope this helps. Let me know if you need more details...

Regards,  
Roy

**Robert LaPointe**

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**From:** <Hjobeirne@aol.com>  
**To:** <rboudreaux@ci.montgomery.al.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 27, 2000 4:04 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Pits Questions  
Roy,

You gave a fairly accurate account, except you seem to be following an article that I have been fighting since 1969. In that year some AF writer wrote that Pits had on clean starched fatigues - pure bullshit. From the day we entered Vietnam we didn't have clean fatigues, never mind starch. Our hut mama-san took our body-salted fatigues and rinsed them in a barrel. The dirt and salt was rinsed out of them, and they dried in an hour on some clothesline. The next day we put them on, and two hours later the armpits and back were wet with sweat again. The salt pills that we took daily to replace the body salt came pouring out again. After a couple of months the fatigues were rotten. That's when we went to the army compound and traded for jungle fatigues, which we alternated wearing with our old AF fatigues. We wanted tiger striped fatigues, but they were not in stock (they were in the stores downtown Bien Hoa were the Vietnamese black marketeers had stolen them from the US).

You were right about our rotation: First call, second call, third call, and a day off if there was enough PJs to go around. Pits was on second call that day. That AF writer also wrote that crap about Pits being off that day. Hell, no PJ gave up his call and his chance for missions. As for Pits wearing two guns, more bull. He only had his .38 with him. Hal Salem tells me he went down with his flight helmet on, why I don't know. You couldn't see crap with that thing on, you could only see straight ahead, and the communications cord was only a couple of feet long - and he was going down about 150 feet. When he got to the ground he was probably given a helmet at a later stage in the fight. When I found him he wasn't wearing a flak jacket (useless crap) or the old leopard survival vest. He was filthy dirty, wearing a helmet, a gas mask, and covered with a poncho surrounded by other bodies covered with ponchos. He didn't have a gun in his hand nor a medical kit, just dirt all over him.

I recognised him by his black stripes (the army were still wearing the gold stripes by order of some fool who wasn't out in the jungle.) What Pits did was by itself outstanding, it doesn't need to be embellished on by any writer, and I wish I could tell it to that fool who wrote that article back in 1969.

Harry

O'Beirne

Dear Mr LaPointe

I am one of the Charlie Company survivors of the battle in which William "Pits" Pitsenbarger was killed. Recently, Pits was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (posthumously) at Wright/Patterson Airfield in Dayton, Ohio. I attended that long overdue ceremony, along with 9 other Charlie Company survivors that I haven't seen in 34 years, and about 1000 other people.

Minutes after I got word that this award was to be given, I felt driven to write my son a letter \*\*. This letter was from .. somewhere deep inside my soul .. from a long forgotten place filled with the smells, the sounds, the taste .. the crystal clear memories of that Easter Sunday, April 11, 1966. What is strange is that on the day after that battle, I was unable to remember many details of it or really feel any emotion related to it. I remembered the battle not as I had fought it, but more as though I had just seen a movie of it. Throughout the years since then I have had either vague, fleeting memories of that day, or stark, intense flashbacks of some particular moment of it, a moment out of time .. a moment when I am there again! Vague recollections of the overall battle, or intense flashbacks lasting but an instant were all I had, the details were lost to me .. until now. It's like a portal through time has opened to me, and through it comes fresh memories of that day. Along with the memories and the emotions I felt in my heart while I wrote that letter, there also came a kind of .. passion .. an inner force that gave me the words that I wrote to my son.

I don't really know why I am writing to you like this Mr LaPointe. I read your story about Pits at:  
<http://home.gci.net/~rlapointe/Pitsenbarger.htm> and just felt like making contact with you. Of all the different pieces written about that day, yours rings truest to what I remember.

\*\* On Friday, December 8, 2000 at the Wright/Patterson Air Base in Dayton, Ohio, the Congressional Medal of Honor will be presented (posthumously) to William Hart "Pits" Pitsenbarger, USAF for his bravery in action on 11 April, 1966. My outfit, Charlie Company, 2/16th "Rangers", 1st Infantry Division, was engaged in a desperate battle that day in dense jungle not too far from the Courteney rubber plantation in the Mekong Delta. Pits was an Air Force pararescue-man. Just as the Run For The Wall 2000 uplifted my soul and spread it's warmth and healing light into the cold dark corners of my heart, this presentation, too, will give me peace. I leave tonight (December 7) for Ohio. Please read a letter that I sent to my son, Cole, the night (October 29) I first received the news that this presentation was to be made: Cole recently joined the USAF and is stationed at Hill AFB in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Cole

Son, I'd like to introduce you to the bravest man I have ever known, William "Pits" Pitsenbarger, USAF. Navigate to: <http://www.angelfire.com/mo2/Mudsoldiers/Pitsenbarger.html> This story is true, I was there. I didn't know Pits personally, he wasn't in Charlie Company. He was in the Air Force, like you are. We didn't know each other, he and I, all he knew of any of us was that we were but a few, fighting against many, that we were losing, and that we needed help. We had too many dead and wounded to even try to break out. He didn't have to come down through that jungle canopy to help us, but he did. What kind of courage was it that made him enter such a one sided fight as we were in? I have seen the youthful, ignorant, "I'm too tough to die" kind of courage, and that wasn't it. When one has seen good friends die in bad ways, there is a vengeance seeking insanity that turns normal men into mad dog killers eager to join such a fight. But that isn't courage, that is hate. Pits wasn't a mad dog killer, nor was he driven by hate. There is another kind of warrior that, in the face of danger, when most would be frozen in panic, they become calm, focused, and clear thinking enough to see what they must do to survive. But Pits didn't come to fight (though he did fight), and he wasn't motivated by fear or driven by the intent to get "pay back." If it was his own survival he sought, he wouldn't have even left his helicopter. Once on the battlefield, once he saw the situation, saw the carnage all around him, he could have just turned around and went right back up to his chopper .. but he didn't. His courage wasn't born of self-preservation, fear, hate, or meanness. Nor was he ignorant, vengeful or crazy. He was a young man who wanted to save the lives of other men. He was moved by what is .. "best" in men. The unselfish love of his fellow man.

Son, I'd like to introduce you to the bravest man I have ever known, but I can't, just yet. He died that day, April 11, 1966, on the field of battle. I know where he is now, and I hope you and I will be able to join him there one day. I'd like to thank him for doing what he did, and to introduce him to you, my son. I'm sure we will become friends.

Your loving dad

Ron "Trash" Haley  
C 2/16 "Rangers" 65-66

After I sent this letter to my son, Major Cotts from the Pentagon called asking my permission to use parts of it in the presentation ceremony. I am proud that my words were used in this presentation. The Air Force showed me a great honor by sending my son out to Ohio on a TDY assignment as my personal escort. He was by my side throughout this very emotional time. During the ceremony, the Secretary of the Air Force asked the 10 of us from Charlie Company to stand up. I didn't

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hear what he first said, but then he saluted us and said "Gentlemen, I salute your courage, one and all." There were 10 of us crying as the entire room stood and started applauding us, but very soon, there were 1000 people with tear filled eyes. It was a moment I will never forget. At the reception that followed the presentation, I introduced my son to Mr. Pitsenbarger Sr. I said "Sir, the sons of many owe their lives to your son. What can any of us say to you Mr. Pitsenbarger, but Thank You." Then I gave him a hug, he hugged me back, and we three talked quietly for a few minutes. Mr. Pitsenbarger wants to keep in touch with my son and I now that we have met. I think we will become friends.

Thank you for reading my letter

Ron "Trash" Haley  
C 2/16 Rangers 65-66

Bob,

Wish as you see Fit.

I don't need your Book

Harry



New Painted By TONY DICE - PRESENTED TO THE AIR FORCE



| MEMO ROUTING SLIP                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | Never Use for Approvals, Disapprovals, Concurrences, or Similar Actions |        | ACTION |                    |
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| REMARKS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                                                                         |        |        |                    |
| <p>This is where Pitsenbarger was last seen alive. The area was not cleared to the extent shown in this photo when the first rescue attempts by HH-3 were made. It was cleared the following day to make room for the Chinooks.</p> <p>I shot these with my new Nikkormat and a 135mm lens from the rear of a FAC bird. Had a little camera shake. Sorry 'bout that.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Shad</p> |     |                                                                         |        |        |                    |
| FROM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |                                                                         |        | DATE   |                    |
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Shad was:  
 Major Stuart W.  
 Shadobert -  
 USAF INFORMATION  
 OFFICE - 3RD  
 TAC FIGHT  
 Wing  
 BZN HOA, AS  
 VIETNAM

(By Dale -  
 POTTER  
 1/2/79)

1 JAC SALON  
 8/8/00

