

Sim.

THE ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR
THE MOH. Note who signed it.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARD OF THE

MEAL OF HONOR (POSTHUMOUS)

Airman First Class William H. Pitsenberger distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing force, near Cao My, Republic of Vietnam on 11 April 1966. On that date Airman Pitsenberger was a rescue specialist crew member aboard a Detachment 6, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron helicopter engaged in the evacuation of numerous American casualties from this dense jungle area 35 miles east of Saigon. With complete disregard for his personal safety, Airman Pitsenberger voluntarily rode a rescue hoist more than a hundred feet down through the trees to the ground to instruct ground personnel in stokes litter loading and to organize and coordinate rescue efforts at the scene. During the period of time that followed, Airman Pitsenberger cared for and prepared the casualties for evacuation, rigged the stokes litter for hoisting, and insured that the recovery operation continued in a smooth, orderly fashion. Through his personal efforts the evacuation of the critically wounded casualties was greatly expedited. Following the recovery of the ninth casualty the rescue aircraft hovering overhead was damaged and disabled by several rounds of automatic weapons fire. The helicopter was forced to abandon recovery efforts to make an emergency landing at a nearby air strip. This left Airman Pitsenberger stranded in a hostile jungle area which was literally swarming with enemy forces, a risk he knew he was taking when he volunteered to be lowered into the area. It should be clearly understood that normal procedure did not require that Airman Pitsenberger stay on the ground at the pick-up site. Paramedic personnel are lowered into such a situation to instruct the ground party in the proper loading of the stokes litter and/or forest penetration and are then generally expected to be themselves hoisted back into the helicopter at the earliest opportunity. Standing on the ground no longer than is absolutely necessary, however, Airman Pitsenberger voluntarily gave up repeated opportunities to be hoisted to the relative safety of the helicopter, in order to evacuate additional Army casualties and to administer medical treatment to the wounded. Shortly after rescue efforts were interrupted, the pick-up scene came under sniper and mortar fire. US Army personnel at the scene decided to evacuate the area, and began preparing the wounded for removal from the area. During this period of time, Airman Pitsenberger, with a minor wound, and two soldiers, one of whom was killed, remained on the ground. After the group had proceeded about 100 yards from the pick-up site, (Continued)

INITIATING RECOMMENDATION

ARMED V. HALL, Colonel, USAF
Commander

SIGNATURE
William H. Pitsenberger

27. ATTACHMENTS

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION (Citation and supporting statements or other official documents)
1	Declassified Citation - 1 Copy
2	Taped Interview of Surviving Witness - 1 Tape

Record Copy to be kept in Unstable Original
Property of the National Archives

The US Army Force's position was over-run and it was during this time that Airman Pitsenbarger was fatally wounded. One survivor of the battle later recounted Airman Pitsenbarger's heroic deeds; the surrounded group of Americans was running critically short of ammunition. At this point the conspicuous nature of Airman Pitsenbarger's bravery and self sacrifice is again clearly evident; he ignored opportunities to seek protective shelter. Fully aware of the risk he was taking, Airman Pitsenbarger time and again voluntarily exposed himself to intense automatic weapons fire while scrambling around to fallen comrades, gathering up rifles and ammunition which he passed among the defenders. He courageously resisted to the very end. His bravery and determination were exemplary of the highest professional standards and traditions to be found in the United States Air Force. By his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, Airman Pitsenbarger has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Arthur W. Beall
ARTHUR W. BEALL, Colonel, USAF
Commander