



FIVE = NEWMAN ESTES. BMP

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO
THOMAS A. NEWMAN

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Sergeant Thomas A. Newman for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as an HH-3E Helicopter Pararescue Specialist in Southeast Asia, on 30 May 1968. On that date, Sergeant Newman voluntarily descended into a hostile jungle environment to rescue a downed Air Force pilot. With complete disregard for his own life, and hampered by darkness and concentrated automatic weapons fire, he requested the rescue helicopter above him to enter a nearby orbit, both for the safety of the crewmembers, and to prevent the hovering aircraft from establishing the survivor's location for the unfriendly ground forces. When the rescue helicopter returned, he secured the injured aviator to the forest penetrator and protected him with his own body as they ascended to the helicopter. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness, Sergeant Newman reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

SPECIAL ORDER
GB- 111

5 March 1969

The Cheney Award for 1968 is awarded to SERGEANT THOMAS A NEWMAN, AF16817854, who distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism and valor in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an HH-3E Pararescue Specialist in Southeast Asia on 30 May 1968. On that date, SERGEANT NEWMAN voluntarily descended into a hostile jungle environment to rescue a downed Air Force pilot. With complete disregard for his own life, and hampered by darkness and concentrated automatic weapons fire, he requested the rescue helicopter above him to enter a nearby orbit, both for the safety of the crewmembers and to prevent the hovering aircraft from revealing the survivor's position to the unfriendly ground forces. When the rescue helicopter returned for the pickup, SERGEANT NEWMAN was severely injured in the first hoist attempt. Nevertheless, he succeeded in securing the injured pilot to the forest penetrator and protected him with his own body from hostile fire as they ascended to the helicopter. SERGEANT NEWMAN'S courageous act reflects the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

J. P. McCONNELL, General, USAF
Chief of Staff

JOHN F RASH, Colonel, USAF
Director of Administration

DISTRIBUTION
GO

15 Jun 68

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION

DATE 15 JUN 1968

TO: (Organization and address)	FROM: Organization and address)
3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group APO 96307	Det 1, 40th ARRS (MAC) PAS HKQPTO APO 96310

RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMEND INDIVIDUAL INDICATED BE AWARDED

1. NAME OF DECORATION (Indicate number of clusters, if appropriate)

AIR FORCE CROSS

APP 68-85

2. RECOMMENDATION IS BASED ON:

- ☒ HEROISM
☐ MERITORIOUS SERVICE
 (Based on completed period of service)
☐ OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

3. INCLUSIVE DATE(S) OF ACT, ACHIEVEMENT OR SERVICE

FROM ON

TO

30 May 1968

PERSONAL DATA ON INDIVIDUAL BEING RECOMMENDED

4. LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE INITIAL

NEWMAN, THOMAS A

5. ARSN

AF16817854

6. GRADE

Sergeant E-4

7. PRESENT ORGANIZATION AND STATION

Det 1, 40th ARRS (MAC) PAS HKQPTO
APO S.F. 96310

8. PRESENT DUTY ASSIGNMENT

Pararescue Specialist

9. PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS

2709 N. 36th St
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210

10. ORGANIZATION OF NEXT DUTY ASSIGNMENT (if applicable)

N/A

11. ORGANIZATION, DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND GRADE AT TIME OF ACT OR SERVICE

Det 1, 40th ARRS, APO 96310, PAS HKQPTO
Pararescue Specialist, III-3E, A92350
Sergeant E-4

12. DATE OF PROMOTION TO GRADE IN WHICH SERVING

1 October 1967

13. INDIVIDUAL'S SERVICE IN AIR FORCE SINCE ACT OR SERVICE HAS BEEN HONORABLE

☒ YES

☐ NO

14. DATE OF REASSIGNMENT, RETIREMENT OR DEPARTURE, AS APPLICABLE

RETIREMENT OR DEPARTURE IS ☐ VOLUNTARY ☐ INVOLUNTARY, AND THE FOLLOWING SERVICE DATES APPLY

CDUS

TAFCSB

TAFMSD

PLBO

TFCSB

TMSD

DEATH: 25 February 1969

15. PREVIOUS UNITED STATES DECORATIONS, COMPLETE AUTHORITY THEREFOR, AND INCLUSIVE DATES OF SERVICE RECOGNIZED

(Do not include service medals, battle credits, unit citations or foreign decorations)

NONE.

16. ARE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARDS TO THIS INDIVIDUAL PENDING? (If yes, state recommendation)

AIRMAN'S MEDAL

☒ YES

☐ NO

AIRMAN'S MEDAL (1st OLC)

17. ARE OTHER INDIVIDUALS BEING RECOMMENDED FOR THE SAME ACT OR SERVICE?

☐ YES

☒ NO

18a. IF ANSWER TO ITEM 17 IS YES, ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OTHER INDIVIDUALS FORWARDED AS A PART OF THIS RECOMMENDATION?

☐ YES

☐ NO

18b. IF ANSWER TO ITEM 18a IS NO, EXPLAIN REASON FOR DELAY, INCLUDING DATE RECOMMENDATION(S) WILL BE FORWARDED, AND IDENTIFY THE INDIVIDUAL(S) BY GRADE, NAME, SERVICE NUMBER, PRESENT ORGANIZATION AND STATION.

N/A

19. HAS PREVIOUS AWARD BEEN MADE TO THIS INDIVIDUAL FOR THIS ACT OR SERVICE?

☐ YES

☒ NO

20. HAVE ALL AVAILABLE RECORDS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION THAT WOULD HAVE A BEARING ON THIS RECOMMENDATION BEEN CONSIDERED AND NO CONDITION EXISTS WHICH WOULD MAKE APPROVAL OF THIS AWARD INAPPROPRIATE?

☒ YES

☐ NO

IF AWARD IS POSTHUMOUS, OR INDIVIDUAL RECOMMENDED IS MISSING IN ACTION OR A PRISONER OF WAR, LIST NAME, ADDRESS AND RELATIONSHIP OF NEXT OF KIN.

N/A

22. DATE WHICH PRESENTATION OF AWARD IS DESIRED, IF APPROVED.

21. IF APPROVED, FORWARD FOR PRESENTATION TO (Organization and address)

As Soon As Possible

3ARR6D, APO 96307

14 AUG 1968

On 30 May 1968 Sergeant Newman was scrambled to recover an F-105 pilot shot down by 37mm anti-aircraft fire west of Khe Shan. While enroute to the survivor's position, he was advised the pilot had broken an arm following bail out and would require assistance getting on the forest penetrator. Sergeant Newman immediately volunteered to descend on the hoist to assist the injured airman. Major Reagan, the pilot, then briefed Sergeant Newman that the area into which he would be placed is within range of several anti-aircraft weapons, and contained concentrated unfriendly ground forces with hand-held automatic weapons. Sergeant Newman checked and prepared his gear for hoist descent. The poor visibility caused by approaching darkness hampered the pararescue specialist's chances of evaluating the area, and orienting himself towards the best escape route should he be required to evade ground forces until the following day. When the rescue helicopter was called in following the sterilization of the area by the fighter escort aircraft, Sergeant Newman heard the downed pilot state that his injuries prevented him from igniting a smoke flare to pinpoint his position beneath the jungle canopy. Once the rescue helicopter came to hover over the downed airman's suspected position, it was evident he could not be seen beneath the dark jungle unless the pararescue specialist was put down to direct the rescue helicopter over the survivor. Sergeant Newman then secured himself to the forest penetrator and was lowered to the ground. He established radio contact immediately with the hovering helicopter; however, he was unable to talk to the downed airman. Beneath the dense foliage the pararescue specialist found it too dark to see more than a few feet. He immediately began an expanding circle search for the survivor and completed one circuit without success when he saw the hovering helicopter subjected to automatic weapons fire from the ridge above him. Because of the distance from the helicopter he was unable to hear the unfriendly forces surrounding him and, fearing for the safety of the crewmembers above him and realizing the aircraft above him would draw the enemy to his position, he requested the rescue helicopter depart until he could locate the downed pilot. As the helicopter departed the area, he observed it was subjected to heavy automatic weapons fire. After the departure of the helicopter the pararescue specialist heard a shot and caught a glimpse of a muzzle flash in his peripheral vision. Unable to pinpoint the source, and unwilling to give away his position or risk a shot that could hit the survivor, Sergeant Newman dropped to the ground and began crawling towards the shot. Within seconds another shot allowed him to pinpoint the source, and for a fraction of a second illuminated the person firing; believing this to be the downed pilot, Sergeant Newman, with complete disregard for his own life should the survivor mistake him for hostiles and fire at him, and risking that his voice might give away his position to the hostile forces surrounding him, called to the survivor and began inching his way to the barely visible injured man. Once assured he had found the survivor, he quickly cut him free of his life preserver, G-suit, and survival gear. As he worked he could see muzzle flashes and hear weapons firing, both towards his position and at the aircraft orbiting above. The pararescue specialist and the pilot could hear people moving

23. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATING RECOMMENDATION.

JOSEPH L. WELLS, Lt Col, USAF
Commander

24. SIGNATURE

Joseph L. Wells

27. ATTACHMENTS

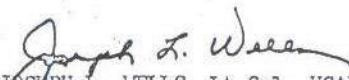
NUMBER

DESCRIPTION (Citation and supporting statements or other official documents)

Citation

it'd item 24, AF Form 642, Air Force Cross recommendation for Sergeant Thomas A. Newman, AFI6817854)

through the brush as they closed in on their position. Sergeant Newman advised the crew of the orbiting rescue helicopter that he would be shutting off his radio for a few minutes to evaluate the situation before calling them in and subjecting them to close and accurate fire. For the next 10-20 minutes he and the pilot remained motionless as they kept watch around them for signs of unfriendly forces. This apparently prevented the hostile troops from pinpointing their position, and when the noise of movement in the undergrowth appeared to be dying away, Sergeant Newman called in the rescue helicopter for a pickup. Once again ground fire was received as the helicopter came into a hover and lowered the penetrator. As Sergeant Newman turned to assist the injured crewman in getting on the hoist, he lost sight of the penetrator in the darkness; after confusing the cable for one of the many vines in the area he finally located the hoist line and realized there was considerable excess cable on the ground; unable to follow it to the forest penetrator, he requested the hovering helicopter take up the slack. Apparently this statement was misinterpreted, and before he became aware that he was standing in the midst of tangled hoist line, the cable was reeled in catching him around the ankle and jerking him inverted. With the violence of the jolt, he lost his weapon; his radio, though secured to his vest, fell from his grasp. Before he could react the cable had become taut and locked to his ankle pulling him feet first up through the jungle. From his inverted position he could see muzzle flashes within 50-75 yards of himself and the rescue helicopter. His body became entangled in a tree, and his leg and ankle were violently wrenched as he was pulled through the branches by sheer force. He went through the second tree canopy; dangling inverted above the trees, he retrieved his radio with the strap securing it to his vest, and notified the helicopter crew he was tangled in the cable and requested to be put back on the ground. At this point he was 70-80 feet above the ground, and within 20 feet of the helicopter; he could dimly see the penetrator hanging some 30 feet below him. As he was lowered head-first to the ground through the foliage he was able to use his hands to avoid becoming entangled in the trees. Dropping through the second canopy, his downward motion was momentarily arrested loosening the cable around his ankle, and he fell the last 20 feet to the jungle floor, breaking the impact with his hands and spraining his left wrist. By then the survivor had reached the penetrator, and Sergeant Newman quickly secured the injured pilot, strapped himself on, and then advised the rescue helicopter they were ready. The unfriendly forces were firing with increasing accuracy as the survivor, protected by the para-rescue specialist's body, was lifted out of the jungle and safely secured on the helicopter. During the return flight to home base Sergeant Newman made a thorough inspection of the survivor's wounds, applied splints to his broken left arm, checked his dislocated right shoulder, cleaned a wound on his head, and treated him for shock. He then made the pilot as comfortable as possible until he was turned over to the flight surgeon upon landing at home station.


JOSEPH L. WELLS, Lt Col, USAF
Commander

14 AUG 1968

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

SPECIAL ORDER
GB- 521

3 October 1968

1. By direction of the President, OGT THOMAS A. NEWMAN, AF16817854, is awarded the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism while participating in military operations against an opposing armed force on 30 May 68.
2. By direction of the President, MAJ J LYNN McBRIDE, PR65427, is awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service from 1 Sep 64 to 1 Aug 68.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE



JOHN F. TASH, Colonel, USAF
Director of Administrative Services

J. P. McCONNELL, General, USAF
Chief of Staff

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On 30 May 68, we were scrambled to aid an F-105 pilot who had ejected over hostile territory. We took off immediately, and during the flight to his position, were notified that he had sustained a broken arm and would require assistance in getting on the forest penetrator. In checking my equipment, I discovered that the helmet connection to one of my radios was inoperative, and decided that although there would be an element of danger, it would be to my advantage to leave my helmet behind and maintain two-way communications.

Upon arriving in the area, a brief search was made and the survivor was located. I relieved myself of my safety harness, parachute, and helmet and was lowered to the ground by the flight engineer. (I also left my medical kit, as I expected to just grab the survivor, get him on the hoist, and get out of there.) I immediately established radio contact with the aircraft and looked around for the survivor. When I couldn't see him, I began an expanding circle search pattern trying to locate him. After one circuit without success, I decided to have the aircraft depart the area, as they had been picking up ground fire from the ridge above me. I told them three times to raise the cable and depart the area before my message was intercepted. As the helicopter pulled out, it became entangled in the dense brush, but was pulled free before I could reach it to free it. (I didn't know it at the time, but when the penetrator tore free of the trees, it snapped up and half-hitched around the landing gear taking my aircraft out of commission.) As they flew over the ridge I was on, they were subjected to very heavy automatic weapons fire.

Suddenly there was a blast and I saw a muzzle flash in my right peripheral vision. I hit the ground and almost opened fire in the direction of the shot. But as I did not have a specific target, I decided that it would be better not to chance a miss and give away my position. I crawled a few feet toward the shot to get a better look, and the person fired again. This time I could make out a person, and was aiming to fire (had him in my sight picture and was squeezing the trigger) when it occurred to me that his shot hadn't been fired in my direction. I then thought it might be the survivor and held my fire. Not wanting to give away my position in case it was an enemy, I yelled, "Hey!" Keeping him in my sights. Had he made the slightest move in my direction I would have fired, as I could still not make out who it was. He sat perfectly still and yelled back, "Up here!" As I was still not sure whether or not he was friend or foe, I let him see a little movement from where I was (wiggled the bushes with my foot), and when he still didn't fire at me, I moved around to come at him from behind. (It turned out that he thought the helo was leaving him, and had tried to signal them with his .38cal tracer rounds.)

As I came up to him, the first thing I did was to take away his weapon (due to his previous shots it was imprinted in my mind that he was an enemy, even after I could see him, and I kept my weapon trained on him until I had disarmed him), and cut him out of his flight and survival gear. Throughout this time, there were occasional bursts of small and automatic weapons fire from the hill and ridge above us. After each burst the pilot would tell me, "that's only the fighters, that's only the fighters!" I knew that it was enemy forces, but let the pilot believe what he would (He told me later that he knew it was enemy fire too, but was afraid I would leave if I knew it). None of their shots came within several yards of us so it was obvious that they were only trying to flush us out, and shooting at the aircraft.

It was now getting darker and we could hear people moving through the brush searching for us and firing sporadically through the brush. Rather than call the aircraft in and subject them to close-range ground fire, as well as giving away our own position I called the helicopter and told them that I was closing communications so as not to be given away by my radio static. I told them I would be off the radio for 10-20 minutes. I then shut off my radio, got the pilot closer to the ground and a little more comfortable, and watched the shadows for movement. (The end man in the enemy sweep came closer than 50 ft of where we were hiding behind a fallen tree)

After a period of time, the noises in the brush had ceased, I called the chopper and told them we were ready for pick-up. As they came in, they received very little small arms fire. I

Robert LaPointe

From: Tom Newman [tnewman@wans.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2002 12:58 PM
To: Robert LaPointe
Subject: AFC Mission

Bob --

Good to hear from you. I received your email with interest. I've always hated the dramatic license Airman Magazine took with their version of my mission. I can assure you I never crawled around the jungle floor on my knees muttering to myself (bar rooms are another matter entirely!). But I enjoyed how you put the letter and article together anyway. I also found myself trying to remember whether I had shared Col. Phillips' letter to my Mom with you after Pits' MOH ceremony (I'm probably having a senior moment) or if you got it somewhere else.

At risk of adding to your work or overloading you with more info than you want, I scanned my original mission report into a MSWord doc, and have attached it here as well. I added some after-thoughts and filled in a few facts where I thought it would be helpful (parentheses, blue, smaller font). It surprises me how little detail I wrote at the time, but it's still the most -- I should say only -- accurate account of what happened. I know you understand how media stories take on lives of their own, and I would very much appreciate you sharing the story as it really happened, without the dramatic crap Airman added to "spice it up". I always thought it was pretty exciting as is.

I also have a couple of pictures you may find useful, but I will send them separately to keep the file size manageable. Two are of Col. Norman P. Phillips and I in the NKP dispensary the following day, and the other one is me receiving the AFC from Gen. Howell M. Estes Jr. at NKP in about Aug 68.

Best of luck with your ongoing endeavor. Please let me know if I can be of any further help.

Warm regards,

Tom

Colonel Norman P. Phillips
12 Thistle Lane
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

24 June 1968

Dear Mrs. Newman,

I had the good fortune of meeting your son, Thomas, recently in Southeast Asia. Our meeting was unexpected, but needless to say, very fortunate for me. I am the Vice Commander of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing based in Korat, Thailand. We fly the F-105, a single seated fighter used to bomb and strafe enemy forces and their positions in North Vietnam. On the 30th of May I was hit by enemy fire during a strafing attack. Shortly after being hit my aircraft burst into flames and went out of control. I was required to bail out of the aircraft over enemy held territory. I ejected at about 500 MPH and as a result the windblast broke my right arm and dislocated my left arm at the elbow. While descending in my parachute I crashed through tall trees, which injured my left leg and made it extremely difficult to stand. Upon reaching the ground I used my emergency radio and learned that the air rescue helicopter was enroute to my position. Since there were enemy troops in the near vicinity, I left the area where I had landed and hid myself in the dense jungle. Your son, Thomas, arrived overhead in a helicopter about an hour and a half later. Because I was unable to ride the lifting cable unassisted, I requested help. Your son Tom volunteered to be lowered on a cable through the dense tree coverage beneath him into unfriendly territory with no idea of what he could expect underneath. After he was on the ground, the helicopter which lowered him encountered mechanical difficulties with its cable lowering device and was forced to withdraw, leaving Tom and I alone on the ground with enemy troops drawing closer and closer. Tom calmly directed a second helicopter to our position and meanwhile made me comfortable and maintained an alert eye out for enemy troops. When the second helicopter arrived it lowered an excessive amount of cable and as Tom tried to prepare me to ride the lifting device, a loop of the cable ensnared his ankle and lifted him into the air feet first. Tom remained calm in this very awkward and dangerous position and was fortunate to be lowered fairly close to the ground before the loop slipped and he fell head first to the forest floor sustaining a sprain to one wrist. Tom took the entire incident in stride and acted as though nothing had happened. He calmly secured me to the lifting device and straddling my legs, wrapped his arms around me so that I could not fall off as we were pulled up through the tree-tops into the hovering helicopter.

From that point on the story is no longer exciting. I have taken this opportunity to write to you so that you would know of and appreciate your son's courageous and selfless actions. His kind of heroism in our rescue forces is what keeps our fighter pilots going. We have full confidence that the young men like Tom who serve in the air rescue units will spare no effort and will do everything possible to help us when we are downed by enemy action. I have recommended Tom for a fairly

high award for his gallantry and professional skill as a para-medical. Being a father of four children, three of them teenaged daughters, and one ten year old boy, I can only say I hope my boy will grow up to be as brave a young man as your son is. As his mother, you have every right to feel very proud of your son and the part he is playing in supporting our national policy in Southeast Asia.

I am enclosing a photo taken in the hospital the morning after Tom picked me up.

Sincerely,

Norman P. Phillips
Colonel, USAF

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
HEADQUARTERS 388TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WING (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96288

5 June 1968

Sgt Thomas A. Newman
Det 1, 40th ARRS
APO 96310

Dear Sgt Newman

Colonel Phillips requested that I send you the inclosed photos.

Due to the length of time it will take for his arms to completely heal, he was air evacuated to Chelsea Naval Hospital today. He left in tremendously high spirits with a parade of vehicles accompanying his ambulance.

Please accept my sincere thanks on behalf of all the 388th "fighter jocks" for a difficult and hazardous job well done!

Sincerely


PAUL P. DOUGLAS, JR., Colonel, USAF
Commander


PACAF KRTAFB THAILAND

NAGEL, RICHARD A., JR.

"Captain Richard A. Nagel, Jr. distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a C-123 pilot at Dau Tieng, Republic of Vietnam, on 26 November 1966. On that date, Captain Nagel's aircraft was struck by intense, accurately directed hostile fire which caused an uncontrollable fire in the cargo compartment, rendered the flap system inoperative, and partially disabled the landing gear mechanism. Although blinded by smoke and on the verge of collapse from intense heat and fumes, Captain Nagel remained undaunted. As the fire engulfed the cargo compartment, passengers began to crowd the cockpit of the aircraft hampering his ability to maneuver the aircraft. Demonstrating superb airmanship and a profound regard for his fellow man, Captain Nagel continued to fly the crippled aircraft and executed a crash landing...."

NEWMAN, THOMAS A.

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Sergeant Thomas A. Newman for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as an HH-3E Helicopter Pararescue Specialist in Southeast Asia, on 30 May 1968. On that date, Sergeant Newman voluntarily descended into a hostile jungle environment to rescue a downed Air Force pilot. With complete disregard for his own life, and hampered by darkness and concentrated automatic weapons fire, he requested the rescue helicopter above him to enter a nearby orbit, both for the safety of the crewmembers, and to prevent the hovering aircraft from establishing the survivor's location for the unfriendly ground forces. When the rescue helicopter returned, he secured the injured airman to the forest penetrator and protected him with his own body as they ascended to the helicopter...."

NORRIS, WILLIAM C.

"Lieutenant Colonel William C. Norris distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 12 August 1967. On that date, Colonel Norris led a strike force of twenty F-105 aircraft against a key installation in the North Vietnamese supply line. Skillfully evading surface-to-air missile launches, he positioned his force for the bomb run. Four MIG-17's engaged his flight from the rear. Colonel Norris turned toward the MIG's, drew them away from his attack force, eluded them, and returned to successfully attack the target...."

OLDS, ROBIN

"Colonel Robin Olds distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force in Southeast Asia as strike mission commander on 11 August 1967. On that date, Colonel Olds led his strike force of eight F-4C aircraft against a key railroad and highway bridge in North Vietnam. Despite intense, accurately directed fire, multiple surface-to-air missile attacks on his force, and continuous harassment by MIG fighters defending the target, Colonel Olds, with undaunted determination, indomitable courage, and professional skill, led his force through to help destroy this significant bridge. As a result the flow of war materials into this area was appreciably reduced...."

OLSEN, DON P.

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Major Don P. Olsen for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as Rescue Crew Commander of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 5 October 1968. On that date, Major Olsen volunteered to attempt the extremely hazardous extraction of a Special Forces Team after their insertion helicopter had been shot down and the team surrounded by hostile forces. Despite low cloud cover which prevented the use of fighter escort, Major Olsen, with undaunted determination, indomitable courage and professional skill, penetrated the hostile area and established a hover adjacent to the burning aircraft. In the face of hostile fire, Major Olsen held a prolonged hover and effected the rescue of the two crash survivors and the six surviving team members...."

Sergeant Thomas A. Newman

Incident date: 30 May 1968

Aircraft position: Pararescue Technician

Place of incident: Near Savannakhet, Laos

Unit: Detachment 1, 40 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron

Location of unit: Nakhon Phanom, Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand

Synopsis: Sergeant Newman's "Jolly Green" crew was launched to rescue a downed F-105 "Thunderchief" pilot near Savannakhet, Laos. While enroute, the helicopter's copilot stated that the downed pilot was incapacitated and that Sergeant Newman may need to descend by hoist. Sergeant Newman volunteered, and upon arrival at the scene descended into the hostile jungle. Knowing that enemy was nearby, Sergeant Newman set up a circular search to locate the survivor in the extremely dark jungle. After making one circle, Sergeant Newman saw automatic weapons fire being directed at the helicopter hovering overhead. Sergeant Newman requested that the helicopter leave the immediate area to protect themselves, and to make it quiet, so he could hear in the jungle. After the helicopter departed, Sergeant Newman saw a muzzle flash to his side. Not knowing if it was the downed crewman, Sergeant Newman dropped to the ground. He saw another muzzle flash that illuminated the pilot. Sergeant Newman inched closer knowing that the downed crewman could mistake him for the enemy. Risking detection by the enemy, Sergeant Newman called out to the crewman. When he was certain that the person barely detectible in the dim light was the survivor he moved to him and prepared him for extraction. (2:--)(1:18)

It was extremely dark. Sergeant Newman and Col Norman Phillips, the downed crewman, could both hear weapons fire and movement around them. Sergeant Newman radioed that he was going to shut down his radio for a few minutes so they could be extremely quiet. Within 20 minutes the noise had subsided and Sergeant Newman called the helicopter back overhead. When the forest

AF EHH

penetrator (rescue device) was lowered, Sergeant Newman lost the cable in the vines. He radioed for the aircrew to take up some of the excess cable on the ground. When the helicopter did so, Sergeant Newman's foot became entangled in the cable and jerked him upward through the trees. He was upside down, some 80 feet up. He lost his rifle and radio, although the radio was still attached to him. Sergeant Newman radioed the helicopter that he was entangled and to lower him back to the ground. At this point, he could also see automatic weapons fire 50-75 yards away being directed at the "Jolly." His body caught the branches as he was descending through the trees. This loosened his foot from the cable, causing him to fall to the ground.

Miraculously, he only sprained his wrist. Sergeant Newman put Col Phillips on the forest penetrator and joined him there, protecting him with his own body during the ascent to the helicopter. As they were being hoisted automatic weapons fire was being directed at the helicopter. (2:--) (1:18)

I was able to accomplish an oral interview with Capt Thomas A. Newman. Captain Newman works for the USAF Occupational Measurement Center, Randolph AFB, Texas. He told me that when Colonel Phillips fired his revolver, he'd noticed that the shot hadn't been directed at him. Captain Newman also said that when he yelled to the survivor, that Colonel Phillips answered with "up here." But, he was still just as cautious as ever when he approached Colonel Phillips from the rear. Captain Newman said he felt pretty bad as he was hanging upside down entangled in the cable. He'd come to rescue the downed crewman and had botched things up. But, he said he remained calm and collected, and was able to correct the situation. Captain Newman said that he'd almost received an Article 15 because he hadn't worn his aircrew helmet to the ground. (10:--)

Captain Newman was awarded the Air Force Cross for heroism. He was later awarded the "Cheney" award by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He was the 12th enlisted person in history to win the prestigious award. The annual award recognizes acts of valor, self sacrifice, or extreme fortitude in connection with a military aircraft. (19:36)

See TABs E, K, and L for reference material



SEARCHER



NEWSLETTER OF THE 41st AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY WING

VOL II NO 4

APRIL 1969

PACAF RP 64-1

SERGEANT NEWMAN'S

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN — For the third time in the past four years a member of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group has won the coveted Cheney Award for heroism. For the second successive year the highest annual award for heroism has gone to a "Jolly Green Giant" pararescueman (PJ).

Sgt. Thomas A. Newman, 22, of Milwaukee, Wisc., assigned until recently as a PJ with Det. 1, 40th ARRS, at Nakhon Phanom RTAB, Thailand, was selected for the 1968 award for his "extraordinary heroism and valor" in the rescue of a wounded Air Force O-2 pilot on May 30, 1968.

Despite the known presence of enemy forces, Sergeant Newman voluntarily descended through the double canopied dense jungle to complete the rescue under story-book conditions.

After being lowered on the forest penetrator, Sergeant Newman was forced to search for the pilot in expanding circles since it was too dark to see more than a few feet. He knew that the pilot Air Force Col. Norman P. Phillips, had broken his arm when he bailed out and needed assistance.

As the enemy forces approached, Ser -

30 MAY 68 SAR

Pararescue Sergeant Wins Air Force Cross

SAIGON—The third Air Force Cross awarded to a living enlisted man was presented recently to Sgt. Thomas A. Newman, a pararescue specialist assigned to Det. 1, 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Sq., Nakhon Phanom RTAFB. The medal was presented by Gen. Howell M. Estes Jr., commander of Military Airlift Command.

The other living enlisted men to be awarded the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military honor for gallantry in action, are Sgts. Duane Hackney and Russell M. Hunt, also pararescue specialists.

On May 30, Newman was told that a downed pilot had broken his arm when he bailed out, and needed assistance. The area was known to contain concentrated unfriendly ground forces, but Newman volunteered to descend from an HH-3E on the jungle penetrator even though he knew that the pilot was within range of several anti-aircraft weapons.

After being lowered on the penetrator, Newman was forced to search for the pilot in expanding circles since it was too dark to see more than a few feet.

To keep the helicopter crew from being subjected to ground fire, he told them to move out until he could find the downed pilot.

Suddenly he saw a muzzle flash. He began to crawl toward the source, believing it to be the downed pilot. His gamble paid off as he called to the pilot and began to inch his way toward him, hoping he would not be mistaken for one of the hostile forces.

Reaching the pilot, he cut him free of his flight and survival gear.

As he worked, Newman could see flashes and hear weapons firing, both at him and at the helicopter. He could also hear people moving through the brush, searching for them.

After 20 minutes, when the noise had settled down, Newman called in the rescue helicopter. Again ground fire was received as the copter hovered and lowered the penetrator.

As he turned to assist the pilot, Newman lost sight of the penetrator in the darkness. Searching for the device, he found the cable, but realized that there was an excess of cable on the ground.

He radioed for the slack to be taken up. The cable went rapidly, but his foot was tangled in the cable and he was snatched off his feet, caught by the ankle.

As he was jerked, Newman dropped his weapon and his radio, which was secured to his vest by a strap. He rose through the trees feet first. He could see weapons fire within 50 to 75 yards of him and the helicopter.

Entangled in the trees, his leg and ankle were violently wrenched as he was pulled through the branches. He managed to retrieve his radio by the restraining strap and notified the helicopter crew that he was caught in the cable. He was already 80 feet in the air.

As he was lowered through the trees, Newman was slowed by branches which loosened the cable around his ankle. He fell the last 20 feet to the ground, spraining his left wrist.

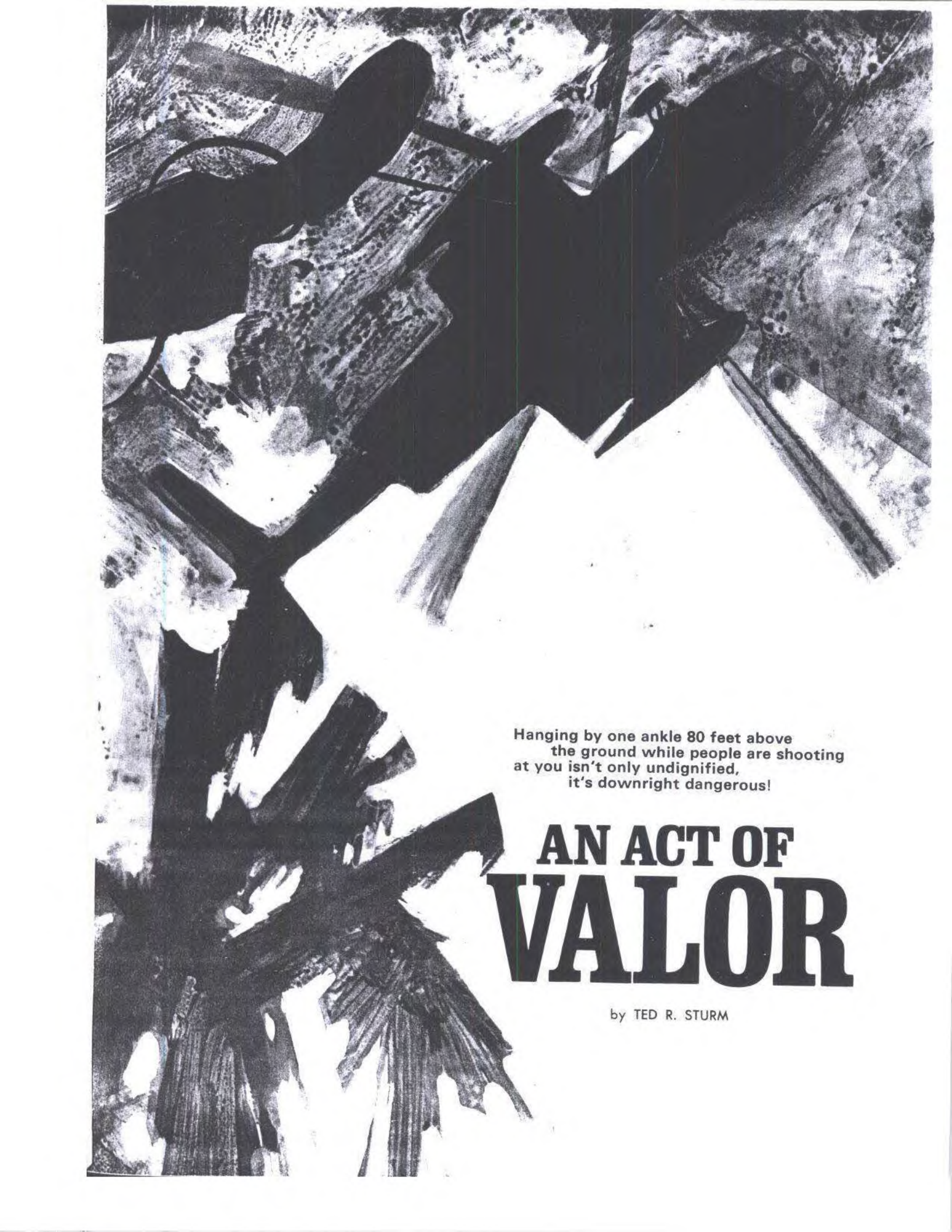
But he quickly recovered and secured the injured pilot and himself to the penetrator. Newman protected the survivor with his body from the ground fire which was becoming increasingly accurate.

1962



Sgt. Thomas A. Newman

During a rescue mission in Laos on May 30, 1968, 40th ARRS para-rescueman Sgt. Thomas A. Newman descended from a Jolly Green helicopter while under heavy hostile fire to rescue a downed Air Force pilot. Hindered by darkness and concentrated automatic weapons fire, he asked the helicopter pilot to hover out of enemy range to avoid being hit or disclosing his location. He kept searching for the downed pilot, risking detection by the enemy by calling the pilot's name. Newman finally found him and radioed for the Jolly Green. When the chopper returned, Newman secured the pilot to the hoist and shielded him with his own body as they were lifted into the aircraft.



Hanging by one ankle 80 feet above
the ground while people are shooting
at you isn't only undignified,
it's downright dangerous!

AN ACT OF VALOR

by TED R. STURM

Newman wasted no time
in getting to where
the action is.

Through a growing darkness heightened by the dense forest, Sgt. Thomas A. Newman saw the outline of a man.

Flashes from a gun muzzle first attracted his attention, and as he inched his M-16 forward, it occurred to him to hold his fire. It was possible the shadowy figure was the injured F-105 pilot.

On the other hand, it could very well be an enemy soldier. They were all around, constantly announcing their presence by small arms fire. But even if it *were* the pilot, Newman wasn't sure how to reach him. More likely than not, the man was nervous, and would shoot at anything that moved.

The sergeant watched for another moment and then, even though he might give his position away to the enemy, he decided to shout. Immediately he heard a reply from the figure ahead.

"Over here!" the man answered.

"Sounds American," Newman muttered to himself. "Still, you can't tell. Almost everybody speaks a little English." There was only one way to find out.

Still on his stomach, Sergeant Newman inched forward. It was the pilot, all right, still in his life preserver, G-suit and survival gear. His arm was broken, as Newman had heard earlier. In a matter of minutes, the sergeant cut him free of his gear, and administered first aid.

Both he and the pilot, Col. Norman P. Phillips, could hear people moving through the brush, closing in on their position. Obviously, they had to get out of there in a hurry. But it was not to be an easy, routine rescue this time. Old Dame Fortune was feeling mischievous and had a few more surprises cooked up for this *Thunderchief* pilot and the pararescueman who had come to save him.

But some days are like that. Some days you *never* forget. And the fact that this was Memorial Day—May 30, 1968—only served as an additional reminder that sometimes the difference between a memory and a memorial can be a fraction of an inch, a single strand, or a split second.

Some men wonder, when they find themselves in a very tough spot, how they came to be there. Newman didn't wonder. He knew. When he joined the Air Force in 1965, he wasted no time in getting to where the action is. While he was still in basic, he volunteered for pararescue duty. About a year later, after seven tough, grueling schools that transformed the former high school student into a rescue expert, he was shipped to Guam. That was his first step toward the jungle he now shared with Colonel Phillips and an unknown number of enemy troops.

Newman was a busy man during the 19 months he spent on Guam. Before he left, he managed to help save a civilian seaman suffering from acute insulin shock; assisted a Navy corpsman in saving a chief petty officer who suffered a heart attack aboard a submarine; was credited with saving the lives of two Japanese fishermen who suffered severe burns in an engine room fire on board the fishing vessel *Shoichi Maru*, and aided in the treatment and evacuation of four more. In each of these cases, the indomitable sergeant had to parachute into the open sea.

Sergeant Newman was accepted for duty in Southeast Asia and departed for Eglin AFB, Fla., in December 1967. There he took pararescue specialist training in the HH-3E helicopter. After PACAF Jungle Survival School at Clark AB in the Philippines, he arrived at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, in March 1968.

That's the kind of a man in whose hands Colonel Phillips' life now lay. And although all pararescue men are the kind of people you trust in any

situation, Newman had a deep inner strength that he would be forced to draw on before the day ended.

In fact, even before he got on the ground to find the downed pilot, the situation got a little sticky. Newman and his "Jolly Green" crew had been scrambled to recover Phillips after his F-105 had been clobbered by 37mm antiaircraft fire west of Khe Sanh. He had bailed out and, because of the broken arm and a dislocated shoulder, was unable to get himself on the forest penetrator hoist that was to be lowered to him.

So Newman volunteered to ride the hoist down through two layers of jungle treetops and help strap the pilot on. Phillips was down in an area dotted with antiaircraft weapons and numerous enemy units armed with small arms and handheld automatic weapons. Not only that, but the poor visibility brought on by approaching darkness made it impossible for Newman to evaluate the area. He was unable to predetermine his escape routes should he and the pilot be forced to get to an alternate pickup area on foot.

As fighter escort aircraft strafed and bombed the area, Newman's chopper moved in. It was then the radio crackled with another bit of bad news. Because of his broken arm, the pilot was not able to ignite a smoke flare. Finding him would be tough.

Nevertheless, Newman secured himself to the penetrator, and as the helicopter hovered over the downed airman's suspected position, the pararescue-man was lowered to the ground. He immediately established radio contact with the hovering Jolly Green, but could not contact Colonel Phillips.

There was only one way to find the pilot in the darkness and the dense foliage—hunt for him! Newman began to work his way in a constantly expanding circle. He had just completed the first circuit when he noticed that his hovering Jolly Green was catching a lot of automatic weapons fire from a ridge above him.

This situation brought three immediate problems into focus. First, the noise from the helicopter prevented Newman from hearing the enemy or the downed pilot. Second, he feared for the safety of the helicopter crew, and third, the hovering bird would soon draw the enemy forces to his position. Sergeant Newman asked the helicopter to leave. As it moved out, it was subject again to a barrage of heavy automatic weapons fire.

It was only a matter of seconds after the helicopter left that Newman saw the muzzle flash and the shadowy figure that turned out to be Colonel Phillips.

Now, as the colonel and the sergeant huddled in the foliage, they decided the enemy was too close to risk a pickup.

Getting his helicopter crew on the radio, Newman advised them to stand off. He also told them he would be shutting off his radio for a few minutes to evaluate the situation before he called them back in. There was still the danger of their being shot down by ground fire.

For nearly 20 minutes he and the pilot remained motionless, listening and watching for sounds of the enemy. Neither man moved nor made a sound, preventing the enemy from pinpointing their position. Soon the noise of movement in the undergrowth died away.

Now the sergeant called the helicopter in for the pickup. Again, as the chopper moved over their position, it received ground fire. Still they lowered the jungle penetrator. As Newman turned to help Colonel Phillips get on the hoist, he lost sight of the penetrator in the darkness. The numerous vines hanging from the trees all looked like the cable, and Newman had to search more by feel than sight. Finally, he found it, but realized the heli-

... He was hanging upside down 70 to 80 feet above the ground.



Thomas A. Newman, now a civilian, receives the Cheney Award from Chief of Staff John D. Ryan in honor of his act of valor.

copter crew had dropped too much cable. Because of the excess on the ground, Newman could not follow it to the penetrator seat itself.

He asked the helicopter to take up the slack.

That's when it happened! One of those incidents occurred that can never be anticipated. Apparently Newman's statement was misinterpreted, and before he realized he was standing in the midst of the snarled hoist line, the cable was reeled in. It looped his ankle, jerking him skyward, upside down.

The violence of the jolt tore his radio and weapon from his hands. As he rose higher and higher he became entangled in the trees and his leg and ankle were wrenched brutally as he was pulled through the branches by sheer force. Then he went through the second tree canopy, buffeted and banged by the branches, lashed by the vines. Below, he could see the enemy's muzzle flashes, not more than 75 yards from him and the helicopter.

Fortunately, his radio was tied to his vest and he pulled it to him. Incredibly calm, he informed the helicopter crew of his predicament and asked them to lower him. At this point he was hanging upside down 70 to 80 feet above the ground and within 20 feet of the helicopter. Dimly, he could see the penetrator dangling some 30 feet below.

Most of the return trip was far less violent and much more comforting! Using his hands, he was able to avoid entanglement with vines and branches. But as he dropped through the trees the cable loosened around his ankle and he fell the last 20 feet to the ground.

Breaking the impact with his hands, Newman sprained his left wrist. By then, however, the colonel had reached the penetrator. Newman secured him to the seat, strapped himself on and told the chopper to reel away. Again on the trip up, increasingly accurate ground fire gave them a wild ride, but, amazingly, neither man was hit.

As they flew home, Sergeant Newman took care of the pilot's wounds, splinted his broken arm and checked his dislocated shoulder. He then treated him for shock, making him as comfortable as possible.

It had been a day to remember all right. Sergeant Newman and Colonel Phillips would never forget it. Neither would the United States Air Force.

Weeks later, Sergeant Newman became the third living enlisted man to be awarded the Air Force Cross. As Gen. Howell M. Estes, Jr., former commander of the Military Airlift Command, pinned the nation's second highest award on Sergeant Newman's chest, the words of the citation captured a little of the spirit of Newman's Memorial Day.

"Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness, Sergeant Newman reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force," the citation read.

But the Air Force was not finished rewarding this intrepid airman. Some 20 months after he rescued Colonel Phillips, Thomas A. Newman stood in the office of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and became the 12th enlisted man in history to receive or share in the receipt of the Cheney Award.

The award, established in 1928 in memory of 1st Lt. William H. Cheney, who was killed in an air collision during World War I, consists of a certificate, a bronze medal and a \$500 honorarium. Annually it recognizes an "act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest performed in connection with aircraft."

Today Tom Newman is a technical assistant at Doctor's Hospital in Milwaukee, Wis. He left the Air Force early in 1969. But this former airman has carved a niche in Air Force history. And it will stand through the ages as a testimonial to the courage, fortitude and valor of America's airmen. 

1968 (cont)

30 Mar 68
(cont) helicopters downed by hostile fire in the A Chau Valley, Vietnam. Despite friendly support from A-1E, AH-1, and UH-1 gunships and A-37s, the H-3s were under constant enemy fire during the rescue. Leading the H-3s, Major Joe B. Green and his crew picked up four of the surviving Marines on his third approach. A second H-3, piloted by Major Jerry M. Griggs, picked up four more, and a third H-3, piloted by Major Stuart H. Hoag, picked up the remaining six Marines. Majors Green and Griggs later received the Air Force Cross as a result of their actions.

10 Apr 68 Two Philippine fishing boats capsized in rough seas about 400 miles north of Clark AB, dumping 31 fishermen overboard five miles from shore. The 31st ARR Squadron sent an HC-130 to the scene, and two pararescuemen parachuted into the ocean to aid the victims. The pararescuemen rescued about 17 fishermen and put them in life rafts dropped from the HC-130.

22 Apr 68 The Lebanese cargo ship *Alheli*, with 26 crewmen aboard, radioed that they were sinking in rough seas about 900 miles east of Bermuda. An HC-130 from the 55th ARR Squadron, Kindley AFB, Bermuda, orbited the sinking ship, vectored a British ship, the *Megantic*, to the scene, then dropped flares to aid the loading of the survivors aboard *Megantic*.

30 May 68 Sergeant Thomas A. Newman, a pararescueman, rescued a downed F-105 pilot near Savannakhet, Laos. After Sergeant Newman was lowered into the jungle at the location of the survivor, enemy fire threatened his crew and aircraft, and Sergeant Newman requested that they evacuate. Another HH-53 descended and lowered its hoist in the darkness.



Sergeant Thomas A. Newman

In response to a tug, the crew reeled up the hoist, but lowered it again because Sergeant Newman was caught in the coiled cable. Finally, they reeled in the pararescueman and the downed

1968 (cont)

30 May 68 (cont) pilot, who had a broken arm and leg. Sergeant Newman was later awarded the Air Force Cross and the Cheney Award for 1968.

20 Jun 68 HQ ARRS moved from Orlando AFB, Florida, to Scott AFB, Illinois.

2 Jul 68 Airman First Class Joel E. Talley, a pararescueman engaged in his first combat mission as a member of the 37th ARR Squadron, distinguished himself during a dangerous rescue mission near Dong Ha, Vietnam. A downed F-105 pilot was injured, and he was quickly surrounded by enemy forces who established a "flak trap" for the rescue forces.

Rescue attempts on

1 July resulted in battle damage to an

H-3. On 2 July another H-3 was heavily damaged and forced to

withdraw, and an F-105 was shot



General Howell M. Estes, Jr., presents the Air Force Cross to Airman First Class Joel E. Talley.

down by ground fire. Finally, an H-3 penetrated the enemy defenses, and Airman Talley descended and found the injured pilot. While Airman Talley and the survivor were being hoisted, enemy fire raked the H-3, leaving more than 40 hits. The aircraft immediately exited, dragging the two men on the hoist. Both were successfully recovered, and Airman Talley was later awarded the Air Force Cross.

4 Aug-
5 Aug 68

Late at night, the 33d ARR Squadron was alerted that a Japanese fishing vessel, the *Miya Maru*, was sinking in the East China Sea with 12 crewmen aboard. An HU-16 was dispatched, and two pararescuemen and a survival kit were parachuted to the survivors. The HU-16 alerted a surface ship, which picked up the sailors and the pararescuemen.