

'Copter Pilot Wins Medals

Capt. Louis A. Ruddle, an aircraft commander with the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here, has been awarded three medals for his actions against an opposing armed force in Southeast Asia.

The captain was presented the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal by Maj. Gen. Robert L. Petit, deputy commander of Seventh/Thirteenth Air Force.

Captain Ruddle's actions as a copilot of an HH-53B "Jolly Green Giant" rescue helicopter while on a rescue mission of a downed aircraft resulted in the presentation of the DFC.

"The downed aircraft had landed in the center of a strong enemy troop concentration and the captain, with complete disregard for his own safety, provided invaluable assistance throughout the entire landing,

rescue and pickup of the survivors," his DFC citation stated.

The citation concluded that he pointed out hostile troop emplacements, reported areas of observed ground fire and assisted the aircraft commander in a forceful manner which greatly enhanced the success of the entire mission.

One month later Captain Ruddle became involved in a rescue that was to earn him the Silver Star.

As a rescue crew commander the captain "...rescued a seriously injured aircrew member who had been shot down in a heavily fortified hostile area," the Silver Star citation read.

The citation concluded that because of the nature of the survivor's injuries, Captain Ruddle kept his aircraft in the area and

under fire for 45 minutes while attempting to locate the downed airman. Three separate attempts were required when the captain was driven off on the first two attempts by the heavy ground fire.

He received the Air Medal for his participation for sustained aerial flight as a combat crew member in Southeast Asia for a three month period. The captain was cited for his "outstanding airmanship and courage exhibited in the successful accomplishment of important missions under extremely hazardous conditions including the continuous possibility of hostile ground fire."

Captain Ruddle joined the Air Force in 1959 and received his commission through the Aviation Cadets program in 1961. His wife and two children make their home in Portageville, Mo.

Pararescue NCO Wins Decorations

A pararescue recovery technician with the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here, MSgt. Leon Fullwood, has been awarded four medals for his heroic actions over Southeast Asia.

He received the Bronze Star, the first and second Oak Leaf Clusters to the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and the eighth Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal. The awards were presented by Lt. Col. Chester R. Ratcliffe Jr., the 40th commander.

Sergeant Fullwood received the Bronze Star for his "...meritorious achievement while engaged in ground operations against an opposing armed force in Southeast Asia, Aug. 30, 1968," according to the citation.

"On that date, Sergeant Fullwood was a member of a three-man team which attempted to recover the crew of a T-28 aircraft which had crashed into a river in a known insurgent area.

"With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Fullwood made repeated dives in the river, fighting a 12-knot

current, in an attempt to recover the crew," the citation concluded.

Three months later the sergeant earned the first Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC while a crew member on an HH-53B rescue helicopter while recovering an injured fighter pilot downed by enemy fire in hostile territory.

"By his heroic actions, the pickup was successful with the helicopter sustaining only minor damage," it concluded.

Early this year the sergeant was again involved in the rescue of a downed pilot in hostile territory. His helicopter was required to hover for 22 minutes over the injured pilot before a pickup could be made.

"Sergeant Fullwood with complete disregard for his own safety, provided accurate suppressive fire from his exposed gun position on the rear ramp of the helicopter, greatly minimizing the immediate threat to the recovery aircraft and contributing decisively to the success of the mission," his third citation stated. His actions in this rescue netted him the second Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC.



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MSGT. LEON FULLWOOD: FOUR MEDALS

-- MSgt. Leon Fullwood, a pararescue-man with the 40th ARRSq, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, was recently awarded four medals for his heroic actions in Southeast Asia.

He received the Bronze Star for being part of a three-man team which attempted to recover the crew of a T-28 aircraft which had crashed into a river in a known insurgent area on Aug. 30, 1968. He made repeated dives in the river, fighting a 12-knot current.

Two months later as a crewmember on an HH-53 helicopter, he earned the oak leaf cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross while recovering an injured fighter pilot downed by enemy fire in a hostile territory.

The HH-53 came under heavy automatic fire during the recovery and Ser-

geant Fullwood, while unprotected on the rear ramp, poured "devastatingly effective fire into the hostile positions," the citation reads. The pickup was a success.

Early this year, the pararescueman earned the second oak leaf cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross by again firing on enemy positions as his helicopter hovered for 22 minutes to pick up an injured pilot.

He also received the eighth oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal for being a member of a backup helicopter crew which circled over a pickup area to draw ground fire away from the recovery helicopter.

The medals were presented by Lt. Col. Chester R. Ratcliffe Jr., then 40th ARRSq commander.

SGT. ROBERT KOECHER: THREE MEDALS

-- Sgt. Robert P. Koehler, a pararescue-man with the 40th ARRSq, was awarded the Air Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross and the first oak leaf cluster to the DFC.

He received the DFC for a Nov. 9, 1968, mission in which he aided the successful recovery of an injured fighter pilot by manning an automatic rifle at the exposed helicopter door and supplying suppressive fire at enemy gun po-

sitions.

Three months later he earned the first oak leaf cluster to the DFC for again providing suppressive fire from an exposed gun position to aid the rescue of a downed airman in hostile territory.

He received the Air Medal for participating as an combat aircrew member in Southeast Asia from Aug. 24, 1968, to Nov. 25, 1968. Colonel Ratcliffe presented the medals.