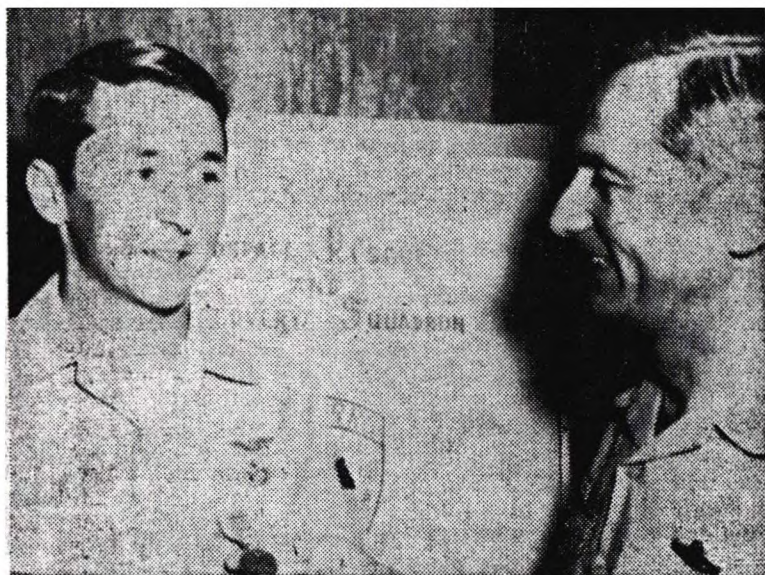


Receives Award For Heroism



Cited for heroism during his previous assignment, Sergeant Terry L. Wetzel of West Newton, is shown as he received U.S. Air Force Airman's Medal from his squadron commander Lieutenant Colonel Sidney A. Sosnow at Da Nang AB, Vietnam.

Risking his life in rough coastal waters off the Republic of Korea during the dramatic open-sea recovery of a stranded fisherman has earned a West Newton sergeant the highest U. S. Air Force noncombatant award for heroism.

Honored at DaNang AB, Vietnam, where he is now on duty, Sergeant Terry L. Wetzel has received the Airman's Medal for his valiant efforts during the recovery of the Korean victim.

Then assigned at Kunson Air Base, the 21-year-old sergeant was the pararescue medic on the rescue helicopter crew alerted to the emergency.

When the sergeant and his crew sighted the fisherman two miles off shore, he was clinging to a marker buoy which had a concrete base extending two feet above water and was topped by a 20-foot pole. Aware that the helicopter might easily be blown into the pole in the

turbulent weather, Sergeant Wetzel voluntarily plunged into the water some 20 feet from the buoy and battled strong undercurrents to reach the victim.

As the helicopter hovered above, an unexpected rescue boat arrived and the sergeant hoisted the Korean aboard. Sergeant Wetzel then climbed aboard to administer to the victim for shock and exposure. When they reached shore, the two were airlifted to Kunsan and the patient taken to a medical facility.

The sergeant, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth D. Wetzel of Hill and Main Street, West Newton, was cited because "his bravery and his high degree of professionalism undoubtedly saved a life and helped solidify the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea."

Sergeant Wetzel graduated from South Huntingdon High School in 1966 and entered the Air Force in 1967.

For First Rescue

PJ Earns Airman's Medal

DA NANG — The first rescue by Air Force pararescueman Sergeant Terry L. Wetzel has earned him the Airman's Medal for heroism.

Sergeant Wetzel, assigned to the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, was presented the medal recently by Lieutenant Colonel Sidney A.

Sosnow, 37th ARRS commander.

Sergeant Wetzel earned the award for heroism involving voluntary risk of his life to aid a Korean fisherman who was trapped at sea by a fast-rising tide in the Republic of Korea Oct. 25, 1968. The sergeant was stationed at Kunsan AB, Korea, at that time.

"I was on alert duty that day," recalled Sergeant Wetzel, "when our unit was contacted by the Korean Rescue Service. They asked for our assistance on a rescue mission off the coast and we immediately rushed to the scene.

"When we arrived in the area, we couldn't locate anyone in the water so we headed to the mainland. But the people on the shore kept waving and pointing out to sea so we headed back out again," said the pararescueman. "About two miles out we located the fisherman. He had climbed up on a marker buoy and was hanging on the best he could."

The buoy was a tower type, with a concrete base about two feet above the water, with a pole which stood 20 feet high in the center of it. "We tried to get in close enough to drop the hoist," added Sergeant Wetzel, "but the weather was so severe the turbulence could have thrown the helicopter into the pole and caused us to crash.

"The only thing left for us to do was to let me swim to the buoy. As soon as I dropped into the water the current caught me and before I knew it I was some 20 feet past the buoy. So I turned around and began swimming against the current to the buoy and the fisherman.

"I reached the buoy, climbed aboard and gave my life preserver to the fisherman. Then I tried to get him to turn loose the buoy and get into the water away from it so the helicopter crew could pick us up. He wouldn't turn loose the buoy so I thought I was going to have to force him down. But suddenly a boat appeared out of nowhere.

"The boat belonged to other fishermen who were trying on their own to rescue the man on the buoy but I didn't know it was anywhere around until it was nearly upon us," continued Sergeant Wetzel. "What happened next is still not clear in my mind