

Only 89 days to the PJ Reunion in Albuquerque. Don't miss a chance to see old teammates and visit the new Pararescue School Campus.

On June 27, 1972 pararescueman Charles D. McGrath participated in a combat SAR in Vietnam that resulted in him becoming the recipient of the Air Force Cross.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO
CHARLES D. MCGRATH

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Section 8742, Title 10, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Sergeant Charles D. McGrath for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as a Pararescueman on a HH-53C Rescue Helicopter in North Vietnam on 27 June 1972. On that date, while penetrating dense jungle to rescue a severely injured American airman, Sergeant McGrath exposed himself to intense ground fire in order to drag the incapacitated survivor to a suitable recovery area. Seeing his rescue aircraft crippled by the hostile fire, he directed air strikes against surrounding hostile ground forces until he was able to secure the survivor and himself to the penetrator of a backup helicopter. Rising through constant accurate ground fire, he shielded the survivor with his own body until they were successfully recovered into the aircraft where he immediately began providing the vital medical assistance required to save the lives of the survivor and an injured crew member. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant McGrath reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Sgt. McGrath wins AF Cross

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii— An Air Force pararescueman assigned to the 6594th Test Group here has been awarded the Air Force Cross for conspicuous heroism in combat.

Sgt. Charles D. McGrath was presented the Air Force's second highest medal for his heroism against hostile forces while rescuing the downed pilot of an Air Force F-4 jet aircraft.

Sergeant McGrath was lowered

by cable from a hovering Air Rescue helicopter to retrieve the injured pilot.

After locating the injured man, he carried him, amid intense enemy ground fire, to a clearing in a bamboo forest. Sergeant McGrath shielded the injured pilot with his own body as they were hoisted aboard the rescue helicopter. While suspended beneath the helicopter, the injured pilot was wounded by enemy fire, as well as a pararescueman who

was assisting the men from the door of the helicopter.

Once inside the rescue helicopter, Sergeant McGrath rendered life-sustaining medical treatment to the pilot and the wounded pararescueman during the flight back to a base in Thailand.

The commander-in-chief of the Pacific Air Forces, (PACAF) Gen. Lucius D. Clay, Jr., awarded Sergeant McGrath the heroism medal in ceremonies held here.

Hurt Jolly

Trailing a stream of fuel from a hole in its tank, a battle-damaged HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter is escorted out of North Vietnam by an HC-130 King refueling tanker. The helicopter of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron which was heavily damaged by small arms fire during rescue operations deep in enemy territory, had to refuel several times during the flight home.



U.S. Air Force Photo by Sgt. Jim Story

Two Phantom pilots rescued near Laos-NVN boarder

In a search and rescue (SAR) effort that spanned six hours late last month two U.S. Air Force Phantom pilots were rescued near the Laos-North Vietnam border west-southwest of Hanoi.

Maj. Robert C. Miller and Capt. Lynn Allen Aikman were rescued while other two crewmembers aboard the F-4s were listed as missing in action.

Early that morning, a SAR force had been dispatched to look for another downed airman. But when 1st Lt. Byron Hukee, an A-1 Sandy escort fighter pilot, heard a MIG call and that two additional aircraft were down, he turned the SAR force toward the scene.

"We made voice contact with Major Miller almost immediately, but were not in contact with the other three men. I decided to get the known survivor out of the area immediately," said Hukee, the on-scene commander.

Hukee called in the Super Jolly Green

Giant rescue helicopters. One chopper, piloted by Capt. Bennie F. Orrell, maneuvered over Miller, dropped the jungle penetrator within ten feet of the downed airman and hoisted him into the helicopter.

Because his SAR force was running low on fuel, Hukee turned it home. Two other Sandys came in and began searching for the other airmen on the ground.

"We came on the scene late in the day," explained Maj. James Harding, the on-scene commander for the second rescue attempt. "We made voice contact with the second man and called the Jollys into the area."

All the time, fast movers (jet fighters) and Sandy pilots busied themselves by suppressing ground fire. "We were shooting continually for 45 minutes," Harding said.

Directed by Harding, the first HH-53 went to where Aikman was suspected to be. The crew hovered over the area, but had trouble pinpointing the pilot in the jungle growth.

"When I got a glimpse of his parachute on the side of the hill, I told the guys to put me on the ground so I could get to him," said Sgt. Charles McGrath, one of the two PJs on the chopper. "I was about two feet away from him before he actually saw me," the PJ said.

While McGrath was on the ground, the HH-53 was damaged by ground fire and began losing its hydraulic utility power which operates the penetrator.

The Super Jolly commander, Maj. Lee W. Thacker Jr., decided to jettison the cable so he could get his aircraft away from the heavy small arms fire it was receiving.

When the damaged HH-53 moved out, Capt. Dale E. Stovall and his crew moved their Super Jolly in and lowered its penetrator to Aikman and McGrath.

"As we moved close to the helicopter, I could see ground fire putting holes in its side around the door," McGrath said.

McGrath and Aikman boarded Super Jolly safely and the SAR force returned home.