



3d ARRGp Hist, Jan-Mar 67

was too steep and rough to land, so Pedro elected to pull the survivors in from a low hover to expedite getting out of the area heavily infested with VC. While the crew chief pulled the survivors in, the medical technician checked them for injury and administered first aid. Five survivors were loaded in Pedro 44 (HH-43) and an empty UH-1D helicopter in the area picked up the remaining five. All aircraft departed the area at 1720 for Phan Rang. On the return flight the crew noticed a peculiar whistle from the blades; after landing, it was confirmed that the left set of blades had been damaged by brush in the confined pickup area.

OL 2-3-8-6 Feb (RCG Narrative)

(C) (Gp-4) Jolly Green 05 and 36 received scramble instructions at approximately 1000L. The mission was to recover a downed O-1F pilot, Nail 65, in an area northwest of Dong Hoi. Both Jolly Greens were airborne from alert base at 1005L. We proceeded to the area with JG 05 as low bird and JG 36 as high bird under escort of Sandys 7 and 8. We arrived in the area at 1035L and the search by JG 05 was conducted five to ten miles northeast of the originally reported fix. Sandys 7 and 8 reported voice contact with Nail 65 but were unable to positively locate his position; the Sandys also reported 37MM anti-aircraft fire in the area. When the Jolly Greens arrived in the area, voice contact was lost with Nail 65. A search was conducted by JG 05 but no contact was made with the survivor; the PJ was lowered in the suspected area with negative results. He was on the ground about five minutes and reported the terrain very rugged and steep. The PJ was brought back into the JG and the search was cancelled due to low clouds moving in very rapidly. Both Jolly Greens recovered at alert base at 1305L. Scrambled again at 1635 JG 05 and 36 proceeded to the same general area to recover Nail 65. After JG 05 had started down to the search area, the PJ in JG 36 reported 15 to 20 air bursts about 2000 feet below and in the 8 o'clock position from JG 36. One of the Sandys confirmed this and JG 36 moved to the northeast to avoid the area; altitude of JG 36 at the time of the bursts was between 10 and 11 thousand feet MSL. JG 05 had voice contact with Nail 65 and made a successful pickup at approximately 1735; they reported no ground fire during the recovery. Less than one minute after reporting the survivor on board and that they (JG 05) were pulling out, the co-pilot on JG 05 transmitted, "We've been hit, we've been hit". Sandys advised JG 05 to make it as far south and east as possible. Another transmission from 05 to the effect that they were on fire was heard. One of the Sandys told them that they were burning on top. About two to three minutes after JG 05 had reported being hit, a Sandy reported that the helicopter had crashed and was burning. Clouds in the immediate area of the pickup were broken to overcast with bases about 3000' MSL and tops generally about 5000' MSL except for scattered areas where the tops were higher. Some of the mountain peaks in the area were in the base of the clouds. The Sandys were unable to accompany either helicopter below the clouds. JG 36 sighted the smoke from JG 05 coming up through the overcast and spotted the actual



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wreckage about 1745; the co-pilot and PJ saw two chutes and some orange signal smoke near the downed helicopter. A second pass was made with the wreckage on the pilot's side of view; both the pilot and flight mechanic saw a man waving his arms. The survivor was recovered on the third pass; he was the PJ from JG 05. The inflight explosion of JG 05 had blown him clear of the aircraft at 200' altitude. The PJ pulled his rip cord and his chute opened just prior to contact with the ground. No one was seen in the other chute near the wreckage and it was definitely not fully deployed. JG 05 hit on the north side of a mountain about 200' from the top while heading south. The wreckage was burning and confined to one localized area. No other signals or signs of life were seen or heard by JG 36 and we left the area about 1755. We observed no ground fire during the pickup of JG 05's PJ. Communications were good on both missions, however, oriental voices were heard both morning and afternoon on what was believed to be UHF guard channel.

Det 1-38-5-11 Feb (RCC Narrative)

(U) At 1025L Detachment 1 was contacted by the 326th Medical Branch, Delta Company, requesting a tactical immediate medical evacuation of an injured US Army soldier. They stated that a hoist was required for the evacuation. Coordination was begun with the 35th TUOC for release which was approved at 1058L. Pedro 92 (HH-43), the alert helicopter, departed with two Army gun ships, Sidewinder 2 and 4, for the site of the medical evacuation, west of Phan Rang. It was located in known VC territory and was the scene of an Army search and destroy mission. Upon arrival no direct radio contact could be made with the ground party; however, contact was made over FM radio by relaying through the Sidewinder aircraft. Smoke was deployed by the ground party; wind was quite high with moderate turbulence. The site was 1800' indicated, located in the foothills of mountains up to 5000' MSL and was covered with 100' trees. An approach to a high hover was made to a small pinnacle where the ground party was located. The forest penetrator was lowered through the trees where personnel on the ground helped the injured soldier on the device. Full field gear and weapons were also brought up on the penetrator. Although no hostile fire was encountered, the position was vulnerable to fire from any direction. The soldier was given first aid by the medic for severe heat prostration and a severely sprained ankle.

OL 1-3-24-12 Feb

(U) SAR objective: Two aircrew members of USN RA-5C aircraft downed in the Tonkin Gulf southeast of Nam Dinh. Crown Bravo (HU-16) was diverted to the scene and two USN SA-3 helicopters were scrambled to the area. Navy A-1s and F-4s provided RESCAP/RESCORT for the rescue operation. One of the survivors was quickly recovered by Navy helicopter but the other one had a broken arm and was entangled in his parachute. Due to the injured arm, he was unable to get out of the parachute harness or get his knife. The helo tried to hover on the water and two men tried to pull the survivor into the aircraft but the rotor wash pushed him under water, under the helo and in front of the helicopter. At that time it had to leave due to a transmission overheat and another Navy helo was called in. A diver was lowered to the water and he attempted to

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3d ARRG Hist, Jan-Mar 67

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CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS

TO

DUANE D. HACKNEY

Airman Second Class Duane D. Hackney distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a Paramedic on an unarmed MH-32 rescue helicopter near Da Gia Pass, North Vietnam, on 6 February 1967. On that date, Airman Hackney flew two sorties in a rescue effort of an American pilot downed in a heavily defended hostile area. On the first sortie, despite the presence of armed forces known to be hostile, entrenched in the vicinity, Airman Hackney volunteered to be lowered into the jungle to search for the survivor. He searched until the controlling Search and Rescue agency ordered an evacuation of the rescue forces. On the second sortie, Airman Hackney located the downed pilot, who was hoisted into the helicopter. As the rescue crew departed the area, intense and accurate 37MM flame tore into the helicopter midship, causing extensive damage and a raging fire aboard the craft. With complete disregard for his own safety, Airman Hackney fitted his parachute to the rescued man. In this moment of impending disaster, Airman Hackney chose to place his responsibility to the survivor above his own life. The courageous paramedic located another parachute for himself and had just clipped his arms through the harness when a second 37MM round struck the crippled aircraft, sending it out of control. The force of the explosion blew Airman Hackney through the open cargo door and, though stunned, he managed to deploy the unbuckled parachute and make a successful landing. He was later recovered by a companion helicopter. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of hostile forces, Airman Hackney reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

6 FEB 67

AFT TIMES 第三種郵便物認可 OCTOBER 11, 1967

Vietnam Hero by Art Brewster

AIRMAN FIRST CLASS—
Duane D. HACKNEY
THE FIRST LIVING
ENLISTED MAN TO
RECEIVE THE AIR
FORCE CROSS...!!

THE MISSION: HE WAS LOWERED INTO NORTH VIETNAM JUNGLE TO SEARCH AND RESCUE A DOWNED PILOT. HE FOUND HIM, HELPED HIM ON BOARD THE "JOLLY GREEN GIANT"—FITTED HIS OWN 'CHUTE ON HIM... THEN GRABBED A 'CHUTE FOR HIMSELF... THE CHOPPER WAS HIT BY FLAK... BLEW UP... HACKNEY, BLOWN OUT, OPENED HIS 'CHUTE... THE ONLY SURVIVOR!!

THIS PARARESCUEMAN ALSO RESCUED TWO VIETNAM YOUNGSTERS FROM A BURNING HOME (HUT)... HE WAS WITH THE 37th AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY SQDN. (MAC)...

Veteran at 19

SEVENTH AIR FORCE NEWS

10 MARCH 1967

A Baby-Faced Hero of Pararescue

By WALLACE BEENE

S&S Vietnam Bureau Chief

DA NANG, Vietnam — There may be other young men around like A2C Duane D. Hackney, but not many.

At 19, with traces of baby fat still visible on his round face, he has been nominated for no less than 13 decorations or commendations, including the Air Force Cross, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, seven Air Medals, the Purple Heart and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

Hackney, of Flint, Mich., wears the red beret of the 37th ARRS Aerospace Rescue Recovery

Service) at Da Nang. His job: Pararescue.

Quiet, and rather shy, Hackney explains his feelings about rescue work in these words: "I don't really go for the idea of killing, myself. I would rather save a life."

Many of his jobs take a strong stomach—giving mouth to mouth resuscitation to drowned pilots, picking up pilots who didn't bail out in time, and aiding men mutilated in attacks like the one at Da Nang.

"We picked up one tug operator who had lost both arms and one leg during the rocket attack. He hit me in the mouth with one of the stumps and I got sick," Hackney explained in his quiet voice.

That he is still working at his job after his experience in north Vietnam is remarkable.

"On Feb. 6 we picked up a pilot near the Mu Gia pass. Before we could pull away, they opened up with 37mm fire.

"I had taken off all my gear to work on the pilot—sometimes they try to jump out of the chopper—and then we were on fire.

"One of the crewmen had his hair on fire and I grabbed a chute and put it on the pilot, but he wouldn't jump.

"I grabbed another chute for myself and didn't have time to buckle the leg straps. There was an explosion and I was blown out the door about 250 feet above the jungle.

"By instinct I pulled the D-ring and my chute opened just as I hit the trees that broke my fall. The chopper crashed into a cliff about 60 feet away and everybody else was killed.

"All my survival stuff was left in the chopper, but I always carry two smoke flares in my leg pockets. One of the Sandies (Sky-raidiers flying cover) spotted me and I climbed up to an open area where a Jolly Green (rescue copter) picked me up about 35 minutes later."

Despite burns and shrapnel wounds, Hackney was soon back on duty.

Surprisingly, he doesn't consider his narrow escape at Mu Gia his most dangerous mission.

"We were picking up a pilot with a foot injury and I had to go down at three o'clock in the morning. I helped load up the first pilot and then I saw a second chute in a tree.

"There was all sorts of ordinance scattered all over the ground and I was scared that I would step on something. I got over to the chute, but it hadn't opened in time and the pilot was



AIRMAN HACKNEY RELAXES BESIDE RESCUE CHOPPER.

in eight rescues, going out of the chopper on three of them.

"One day a patrol boat with seven Navy men and one Vietnamese was swamped off the coast. We spotted a man in a life jacket that looked like he was unconscious, so I put on my wet suit and was lowered down.

"There were strong gusts of wind and I tried to give hand signals to get in position, but I had to swim for him. I got him in the horsecollar and signaled to the hoist man, but they wouldn't leave me in the water.

"So I got in the horsecollar and about that time a big wave slapped the chopper and the pilot had to pull up about 100 feet with us dangling on the cable.

"Finally we got inside and I gave the man mouth to mouth resuscitation and pressed his stomach until all the water came up. It made me sick for a little bit, but you've got to try every



MARCH—Airman Hackney and color guard march front and center for presentation.

6 Feb 67

Airman First Class Duane D. Hackney, a pararescuer with the 37th ARR Squadron, was lowered from an HH-3 into the jungle in search of a downed fighter pilot. On the second try, he found the pilot, and the two men were hoisted to the aircraft. Moments later the helicopter was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Airman Hackney fitted the rescued pilot with a parachute and found another for himself. About that time, the HH-3 exploded. Airman Hackney's parachute opened about 200 feet off of the ground, and he landed in a tree. The helicopter crashed, killing all occupants. Airman Hackney was later rescued by another helicopter crew. He received the Air Force Cross.



Airman First Class Duane D. Hackney, equipped with pararescue gear.

Pararescueman Is First EM To Be Presented AF Cross

Airman First Class Duane D. Hackney, a 20-year-old pararescueman from Flint, Mich., recently became the first living enlisted man to receive the Air Force Cross.

General Howell M. Estes Jr., commander of Military Airlift Command, presented the award at an 800-man parade at Scott AFB, Ill., in early September.

Hackney, a crewman on a rescue helicopter in Southeast Asia, also received the Purple Heart from General Estes.

He was awarded the Cross for heroism on a rescue mission Feb. 6 over North Vietnam. He twice volunteered to be lowered into the jungle to search for a downed fighter pilot.

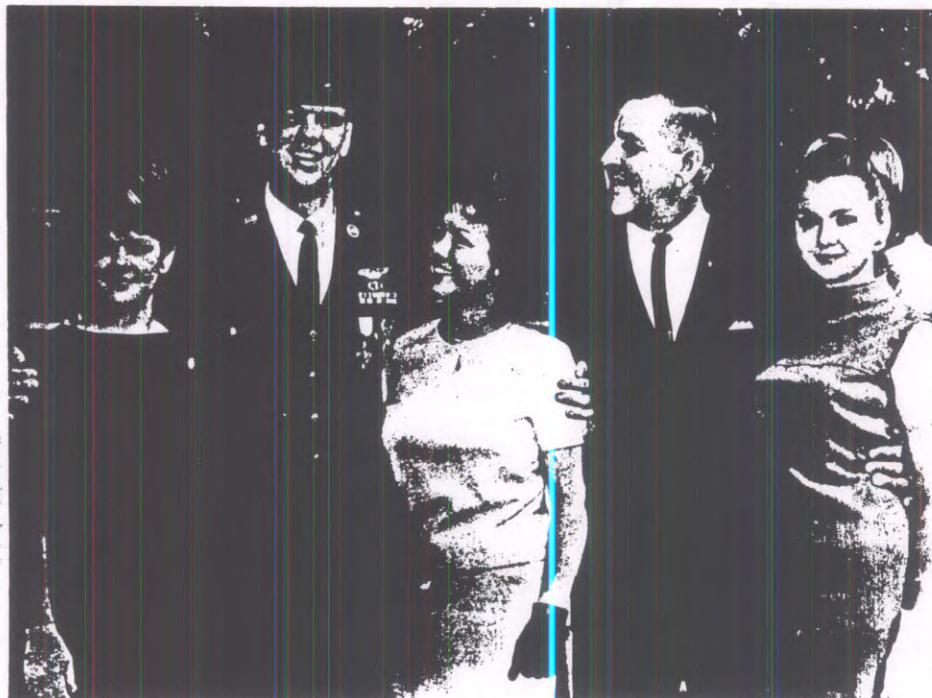
On the second attempt, Hackney located the pilot and both were hoisted to a waiting HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter.

When the chopper was hit by flak, Hackney put his parachute on the rescued pilot and found another for himself. Before he could put it completely on, a second hit blew him out of the cargo door.

His half-opened parachute hung in a tree and broke his fall. He was rescued by another helicopter.

Photos by
SSgt. Wallace Metcalf

Oct. 1, 1967



FAMILY—Members of Airman Hackney's family, flown to Scott for the ceremony by the Air Force, are (from left) sister Janice, mother Florence, father Glendon D. and twin sister Mrs. Diane Elford.

MAC PICTORIAL FEATURE

PREPARED BY INTERNAL INFORMATION DIVISION, DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION, HQ MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

ENLISTED MAN EARNS HIGH MILITARY HONOR

From Page 1
chute on the stunned pilot before locating one for himself. Moments later Hackney was blown out the rear door of the aircraft when another round of flak tore into the chopper, which crashed and burned.

As he was blown free of the chopper, just 200 feet from the ground, Hackney pulled the para-

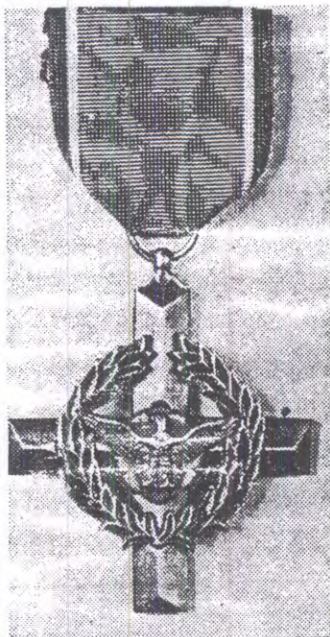
was stationed with the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang AB, Vietnam.

His next assignment will be with the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Hamilton AFB, Calif.

The Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, a service of the Military Airlift Command, has world-wide responsibilities in search and rescue operations for downed airmen, both military and civilians, and people trapped in natural disasters. The Service also takes part in space-shot recovery operations.

ARRS personnel have made more than 1,000 combat saves in Southeast Asia since December 1964.

The elite pararescuemen, who wear a distinctive maroon beret, are precision parachutists, SCUBA divers, trained medical technicians and survival experts.



AIR FORCE CROSS

chute ripcord. The chute opened and Hackney landed in a tree. He struggled free, reached the ground and later was picked up by another rescue helicopter.

The remaining crew and the rescued pilot were killed in the crash of the Jolly Green Giant.

He received shrapnel wounds of both arms and back and spent several days in a hospital.

Hackney, a 1965 graduate of Beecher High School in Flint, has served in the Air Force for two years and four months. He



HACKNEY ON DUTY — AIC Duane D. Hackney, who was awarded the Air Force Cross recently, checks over a jungle penetrator from his HH-60 Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter in Vietnam.

PAGE 25—Vallejo Times-Herald, Friday, Sept. 15, 1967

BOB CONSIDINE



Give Vietnam Chiefs Chance

Special to the Times-Herald

Airmen First Class Duane D. Hackney, 20-year-old hero from Flint, Mich., was presented with the Air Force Cross last Saturday at Scott AFB, Ill. He has participated in more than 200 missions involving the rescue of downed pilots, many of them in fiery North Vietnam.

On the mission which won him the coveted medal (only 48 of them have been awarded, most of them posthumously) Duane was blown out of his helicopter by a direct anti-aircraft hit. He suffered what was called "back injuries" in the glowing citation.

He got a letter from his father when it was all over. His father won the Silver Star and the Purple Heart in World War II for kicking a Japanese grenade out of a fox hole and falling over three buddies to protect them from the blast.

"My dad told me to keep my head down," Hackney said. "When he got the wire from the government telling him I had been wounded in the back, he wrote and said: 'I told you to keep your head down. I also meant your rump.'"

AIR FORCE

March 1989, Vol. 72, No. 3

Valor

By John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

76
28
48

USAF's Most Decorated PJ

In three tours as a pararescue man (PJ), Duane Hackney became one of the legendary heroes of the Vietnam War.

In June 1965, Duane Hackney graduated from high school at Flint, Mich., president of the student council and the recipient of an athletic scholarship offer. Clearly, great things lay ahead, but no one could have foreseen that he would become one of the most honored heroes of the Vietnam War, the recipient of 28 decorations for valor in combat (more than 70 awards and decorations in all), and winner of the Cheney Award for 1967. (The Cheney award is given annually to a member of USAF for an act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest performed in conjunction with aircraft.")

It all began when 18-year-old Hackney enlisted in the Air Force a few days after graduation, volunteering for pararescue training. An honor graduate in every phase of the tough, year-long course, he had his choice of assignments. The action was in Vietnam. Airman Second Class Hackney turned down assignments in Bermuda and England for Detachment 7, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, at Da Nang.

Three days after reporting for duty, Hackney flew his first combat mission. Somewhere on that mission, a .30-caliber slug buried itself in his leg. As the sportswriters say, Hackney came to play, not to sit on the sidelines. To avoid being grounded by the medics, he had one of his PJ friends remove the slug with a probe. That incident set the tone for the more than 200 combat missions he was to fly in three and a half years of Vietnam duty, all as a volunteer.

Five times in the months ahead his helicopter was shot down. He doesn't recall how often he went down into the jungle looking for survivors or how many lives his medical training helped him save. As he became a legend in the rescue world, he earned four DFCs, not for flying a certain number of missions but for specific acts of heroism, and 18 Air Medals, many for single acts of valor. Then came the Air Force Cross, the Silver Star, the Airman's Medal, the Purple Heart, and several foreign decorations.

Hackney's most celebrated mission was on Feb. 6, 1967. That morning he descended from a HH-3E Jolly Green Giant to look for a downed pilot near Mu Gia pass. The pilot had stopped his radio

transmissions, a clue that enemy troops were on his tail. For two hours, Hackney searched for the man, dodging enemy patrols, until the mission was called off because of weather.

Late that afternoon, the downed pilot came back on the air, and Hackney's crew headed for the rescue area. They had to get him out before dark, or the odds on success would drop dramatically. This time Hackney found his man, badly injured but alive, got him onto the forest penetrator, and started up to the chopper, drawing small-arms fire all the way. As the men were hauled aboard, the helicopter took a direct hit from a .37-mm antiaircraft gun and burst into flame. Wounded by shell fragments and suffering third-degree burns, Hackney, knowing that the HH-3 was not going to make it, put his own parachute on the rescued pilot and got him out of the doomed chopper. Maybe he could find another for himself. If not....

Groping through dense smoke, he found an oil-soaked chute and slipped it on. Before he could buckle the chute, a second .37-mm shell hit the HH-3, blowing him out the door. He doesn't remember pulling the ripcord of the unbuckled chute before hitting trees 250 feet below, then plunging 80 feet to a rock ledge in a crevasse.

When he regained consciousness, enemy troops were leaping across the crevasse a few feet above him. Once they were gone, Hackney popped his smoke and was picked up by the backup chopper, only to learn that his heroic attempt to save the downed pilot had not succeeded. There were no survivors from the rescue helicopter. Training and experience, helped along by a miracle, saved Hackney himself.

For that mission, Hackney received the Air Force Cross, the second awarded to an enlisted man. The first had gone posthumously to A1C William Pitsenbarger, also a pararescue man. (See "Valor," October '83 issue.)

In 1973, Hackney left the Air Force, the most decorated pararescue man of the Vietnam War. Four years later, missing the camaraderie of Air Force life, he enlisted again, returning to duty as a pararescue instructor. In 1981, he suffered a severe heart attack, the result of a rescue operation, and was permanently grounded--but not out.

Today, SMSgt. Duane Hackney is first sergeant of the 410th Security Police Squadron at K. I. Sawyer AFB, Mich., still guided by the philosophy that dominated his combat career: a dynamic sense of personal responsibility and compassion for his fellow men.

Published March 1989. For presentation on this web site, some Valor articles have been amended for accuracy.

[Return to Valor](#)

[Return to AIR FORCE Magazine](#)

THE SHORTEST LINE

It led to a distant, war-torn land and several close brushes with death.

LIKE most 18-year-olds with the scent of June graduation corsages still fresh in their nostrils, Duane D. Hackney was undecided.

The basic trainee was faced with selecting a career field that would not only hold his interest for the next four years, but would satisfy his strong desire to be of genuine service to his nation and to the Air Force.

Unable to decide, and impatient with his indecision, Hackney simply chose the shortest line he could find during the career counseling sessions at Lackland AFB, Tex. That short line was deceptive, however. It was to lead him into several encounters with danger thousands of miles away. A scant year and a half later, it also led him back to the US and a formal military parade where a four-star general pinned the Air Force Cross to his blouse.

But waiting in line that hot summer day in 1965, the Flint, Mich., youth who had lettered in football, baseball and swimming at Beecher High School had never heard of the Air Force Cross, the United States' second highest military decoration.

Nor had he any way of knowing that he would also return from Vietnam wearing the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, the Airman's Medal, the Air Medal with nine oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Hackney could not have known either that he would be named Airman of the Year in the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service and in its parent Military Airlift Command; or that he would be presented the 1967 Cheney Award for "an act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest performed in connection with aircraft."

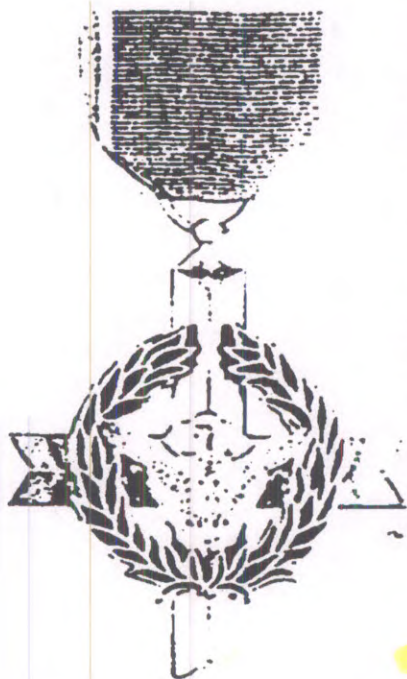
When he approached the end of that career counseling line at Lackland, however, and met the pararescuemen in the maroon berets, Hackney knew suddenly that he had somehow picked exactly the right line to stand in.

Made to Order

The young airman soon discovered that he faced about a year of constant, strenuous training to qualify as a pararescueman. His skills of parachutist, scuba diver, medic, mountain climber, survival specialist and other rescue and recovery techniques were carefully and painstakingly woven together in a series of training schools that helped qualify him for his extraordinary job.

The learning process for a PJ is physically and mentally demanding and the candidate for the pararescueman's badge must be thoroughly convinced that this is what he really wants to do—or odds are that he won't make it. Duane Hackney never doubted for a minute his desire, or his ability, to meet these demands. He volunteered for duty with Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service units in Southeast Asia even before he received his maroon beret and pararescueman's badge.

Almost before he could say "Jolly Green Giant" he was on his way to Da Nang Air Base in Vietnam for duty with the 37th ARR Squadron. He began



flying missions immediately. On his 10th mission, in April 1966, he was hit by an enemy bullet while pulling a wounded Marine aboard his HH-3E Jolly Green Giant. His flight helmet probably saved his life.

"The round knocked me down," Hackney recalled later. "As I fell I pulled both of my legs up for balance. About that time another enemy bullet went through the pocket on the right side of my flight suit. It shattered my survival radio." The tense action took place about two miles south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), where a Marine helicopter had been downed by enemy ground fire.

"When we arrived at the scene we orbited the area while another Marine helicopter tried to pick up the downed crew. Unfortunately, the second chopper was also downed by enemy fire. Then, two flights of A-1E Skyraiders came in. They plastered the area to suppress ground fire, and dropped smoke to help cover our rescue efforts.

"We went in through the smoke and dropped the hoist. There was no ground fire at all, and it looked like an easy pickup. So the men on the ground sent up their most seriously wounded man first. Just as he reached the bottom of our helicopter we started taking small arms and automatic weapons fire.

"I was bent over in the hatchway, trying to pull the wounded man in, when the bullet hit my helmet." Back on his feet within a few seconds, Hackney pulled the man inside and placed himself between the Marine and the open hatch while he began first aid treatment.

The HH-3E had taken several damaging hits during the rescue, however, and was forced to withdraw. The crew made an emergency landing at nearby Dong Ha. Both Hackney and the wounded Marine were taken to a field hospital there, but the young PJ was released

within minutes and returned to duty. Next day, helicopter rescue men from other units picked up the remaining men at the scene of the multiple crash.

That 10th mission was memorable, but not nearly as vivid in Hackney's memory as the mission nearly a year later when he was blown out of his helicopter—the mission which won him the Air Force Cross.

It started early on the morning of February 6, 1967. A pilot was down in the dense jungle near Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam. There had reportedly been some voice (radio) contact with him, but apparently he had not been spotted from the air.

"He was down at the bottom of a pass, covered by three canopies of jungle growth," Hackney said. "Clouds were low, making it difficult to see very much of anything." The rescue HH-3E circled over the area as crew members searched anxiously for some sign of the pilot. Then Hackney spotted something below — something shining and asked if he could go down and look.

"There was flak all around us, but it was falling short," he remembered. The 6-foot, 180-pound PJ waited until his pilot jockeyed the Jolly Green Giant into position above the jungle, then rode the penetrator hoist to the ground and began pushing his way through the dark, heavy foliage.

Stumbling over rocks and roots, Hackney moved slowly through the dense growth. Finally, he found footprints that had obviously been made by American combat boots.

"I wanted to call out, but I was afraid I'd get Uncle Ho's (Ho Chi Minh) boys on me." He followed the prints but found nothing except a piece of tinsel. Then he was contacted by his crew and told to return to the copter. Disappointed, but low on fuel, they flew back to a forward operating base. Later that afternoon

Two months after mission that earned him the Air Force Cross, Hackney readies for more action.



A month after being blown out of his helicopter, Hackney (kneeling) was photographed with HH-3E rescue crew that picked up Capt. Robert C. Moys (behind Hackney) after 49 hours in jungle.



the crew was called out again for another try. Air Force pilots had spotted the downed flyer and marked his position. Two HH-3E helicopters headed for the area.

"This time we saw him," Hackney said. "I went down to help him get on the hoist. We made it up the hoist together and into the Jolly Green. I was bending over him, trying to treat his abrasions, when the flak hit us."

"There was smoke and flames everywhere. The pilot we had just rescued reached out an arm. I grabbed a parachute and put it on him as fast as I could (Hackney gave the airman his own chute). Then I found one for myself. I had it partially on when the second round of flak hit us."

Aircrew members in other USAF aircraft at the rescue site said later that the HH-3E was engulfed in flames and that there were gaping holes in the pilot's and copilot's areas of the cabin. Hackney didn't see the damage to his aircraft, however. He was suddenly dumped into open space, just a few hundred feet above the top tier of jungle growth.

"The sudden pressure (from the explosion) threw me back—hard. I felt a sharp pain in my left arm. I remember reaching for the door. Next thing I saw was the helicopter—from outside. I'd been blown out the rear door."

Trained to survive, Hackney reacted swiftly to his training. He pulled the D-ring on his chute, and hugged the unbuckled harness tight under his arms to keep from slipping out. As he hit the highest of the jungle trees, the chute opened just enough to break his fall. His crash through the branches was halted with a jolt when the chute risers snagged in the treetops. He freed himself from the harness and half climbed, half slid to the ground. He was the only survivor from the HH-3E.

"I guess I looked pretty rotten," Hackney said later. "I had blackened my face to prevent detection. My left arm and back were bleeding and burned and my right arm was rubbed raw." In addition to flash burns, the PJ had taken a few shrapnel hits.

"I knew the other helicopter would come back for me—either later in the afternoon or the next day." So the 19-year-old veteran of some 200 rescue missions in Vietnam began taking stock of his situation.

"I had my medical pouch with me, a pistol with six rounds of ammo, and some pencil smoke flares. I'd been wearing my camouflaged flight helmet when we were hit, but it was gone. When I heard sounds in the jungle I was worried, but I didn't see anything." Hackney wasn't worried about being picked up. He was more concerned about a Valentine card. It had cost him a buck and now he wondered if he would be able to send it to his girl friend in time.

Minutes later he heard an aircraft engine, then a US Air Force plane flew almost directly over him. "I got out the red smoke flare, opened it to mark my position, and found a pretty good spot to wait out the helicopter that I was sure would be arriving soon."

Actually, he was on the ground only about 30 minutes from the time he plummeted into the jungle trees until another HH-3E came in to pick him up. A former classmate in PJ training schools, A2C Luther Davis,

came down the hoist to get Hackney out of the jungle.

The end of a long and hair-raising day was almost over as the Jolly Green Giant raced for an air base in Thailand, but Hackney had one more "scare" in store for him. At the base dispensary a reading of his blood pressure showed that it was extremely high—210 over 150. But the exhausted Hackney had gone "out like a light" on a hospital stretcher.

When he heard a medical technician yelling for the doctor because he thought the young PJ had died, Hackney woke up suddenly. "That really scared me," he said.

February 6, 1967, was a day that Sgt. Duane D. Hackney will always remember. It was a day on which he nearly lost his life; a day when he did lose some of his closest friends after their helicopter was blown out of the sky. It was also a day when a young pararescue man had helped save a pilot's life, only to lose the man minutes later; and a day when it was the PJ's turn to be rescued. That Hackney survived his sudden, low-level "bailout" was a near-miracle. It was also a tribute to the thoroughness of his training.

Today, the 21-year-old pararescue man is assigned to the 41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Hamilton AFB, Calif. He has been awarded the Air Force Cross and numerous other decorations; has toured Military Airlift Command bases as the MAC Airman of the Year; was introduced to millions of TV viewers on *The Ed Sullivan Show*; was guest of honor during Hackney Day in Detroit, Mich.; received the coveted Cheney Award; and has had his fill of being a celebrity.

And it all started that day in June 1965, when Airman Basic Duane Hackney went to stand in the shortest counseling line he could find at Lackland AFB, Tex.

For Extraordinary Heroism

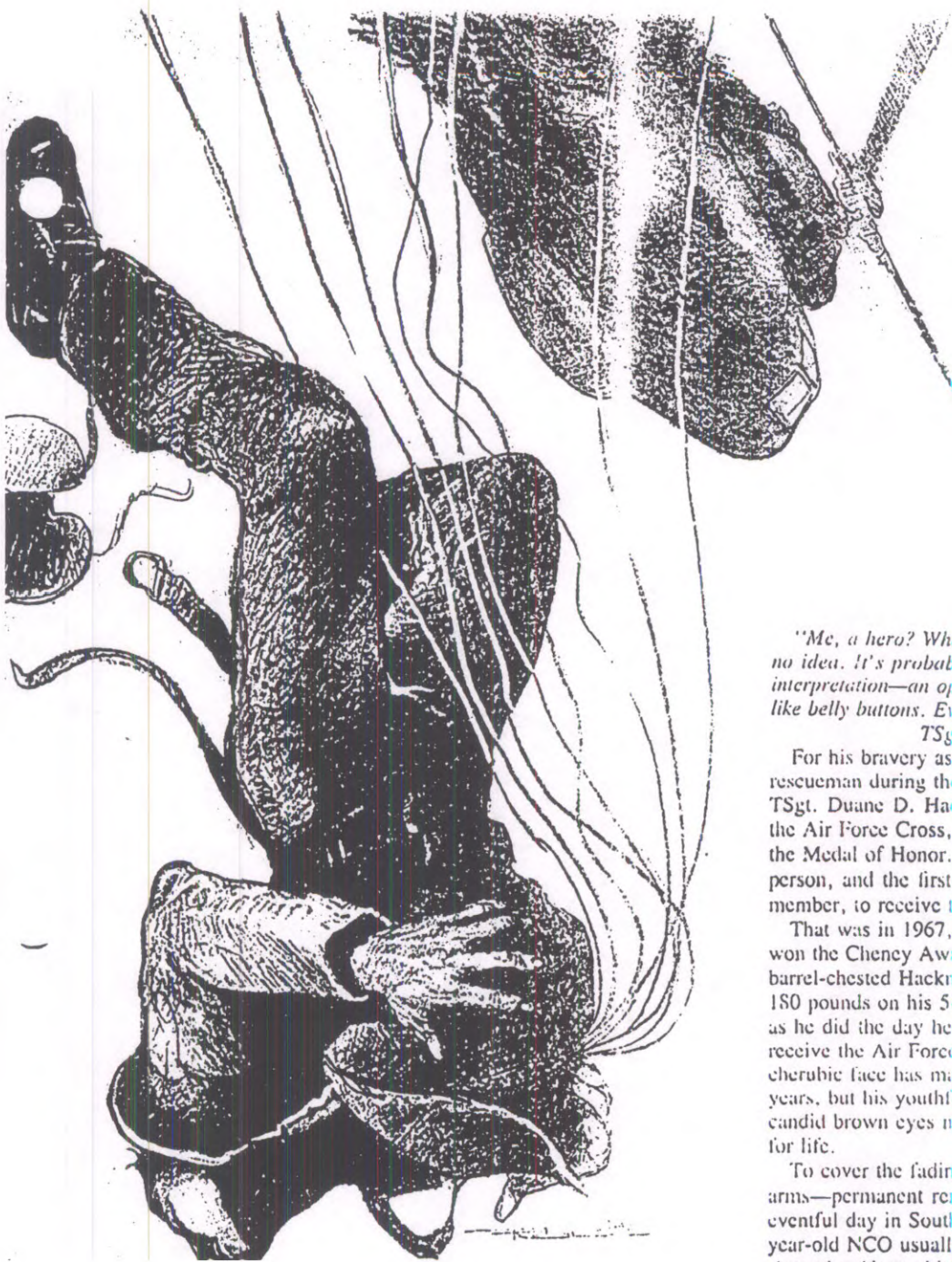
The story of Sgt. Duane D. Hackney is the first in a series of planned articles about US Air Force men who have been awarded the Air Force Cross, presented "for extraordinary heroism not justifying the award of the Medal of Honor. . . ."

Ninety-two* USAF officers and enlisted men have been awarded the Air Force Cross since it was authorized by the Congress on July 6, 1960. The first eight awards were made posthumously—the first to Maj. Rudolf Anderson, Jr., killed while flying a reconnaissance mission over Cuba in 1962.

The first enlisted man to be presented the Air Force Cross was honored posthumously, A1C William H. Pitsenbarger, a pararescue man, gave his life while attempting to save others. Sergeant Hackney was the first living enlisted man to be presented the Air Force Cross. As this article was prepared, only one other enlisted man—Sgt. Russell M. Hunt—has been presented the medal.

THE AIRMAN welcomes any information from readers that will assist us in the preparation of stories about the gallant airmen who have received the Air Force Cross. This information would be especially helpful in recreating the stories of those honored posthumously.

* As of August 23, 1968.



"Me, a hero? What's a hero? I have no idea. It's probably somebody's interpretation—an opinion. Opinions are like belly buttons. Everybody's got one."

TSgt. Duane D. Hackney

For his bravery as a 20-year-old pararescueman during the Vietnam conflict, TSgt. Duane D. Hackney was presented the Air Force Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor. He was the youngest person, and the first living enlisted member, to receive the medal.

That was in 1967, the year he also won the Cheney Award. Today, the barrel-chested Hackney carries the same 180 pounds on his 5-foot-10-inch frame as he did the day he stood at attention to receive the Air Force Cross. The once cherubic face has matured in the last 17 years, but his youthful appearance and candid brown eyes match his enthusiasm for life.

To cover the fading burn scars on his arms—permanent reminders of that eventful day in Southeast Asia—the 36-year-old NCO usually wears the long-sleeved uniform shirt with a tie. On his chest are eight rows of ribbons, which stretch from the top of his pocket nearly to the collar. The 54 medals make up enough fruit salad to serve lunch to a Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew.

TSgt. Hackney tells his stories with just the right mix of gusto, salty language, and humor laced with pathos. When recounting his Vietnam experiences, he punctuates his tales with slicing hand gestures and rolling eyeballs.

His emotions alternately soar, while remembering the adrenaline-pumping rush of combat, or plunge when he remembers the friends left behind forever in a distant jungle.

Blunt almost to a fault, TSgt. Hackney

hero of the Vietnam War,
gt. Duane Hackney is also a . . .

Survivor!

by TSgt. Dan Allsup
AIRMAN Staff Writer

Illustrations by SSgt Roel W. Wielinga
AFSCC Kelly AFB Texas



Project Warrior

said he joined the Air Force at 17 "on a whim" in 1965 to "get out of cutting the grass back home."

That snap decision wasn't the only one. His decision to join and become a pararescuer (PJ) in the Air Rescue and Recovery Service was also made on the spot; the line at the career counseling desk for the air rescue career field was shorter than the others at Lackland AFB, Texas, during basic training. He hated standing in long lines.

Despite being the youngest and smallest in his PJ class, and warnings that he probably wouldn't make it through the grueling, year-long training, he not only made it, he graduated with honors.

One benefit of being the class honor graduate was having first choice of assignments, which ran the gamut from Vietnam to Bermuda and Europe. The youngster opted to join the air rescue detachment at Da Nang AB in the Republic of Vietnam. Choosing a war zone for his first tour of duty wasn't just foolish bravado; he was ready for whatever the future had in store.

"By the time we got out of PJ school they had us so pumped up we thought we could walk on water," he said, "or at least give it a hell of a try. For me, there was really no choice about the assignment. The top graduates got lucky and could pick Vietnam; the others got stuck with Bermuda or England. We all knew where the action was."

It didn't take the young airman long to see the action he yearned for. Stepping off a C-130 onto Vietnamese soil for the first time, he and a buddy spotted a nearby Marine and shouted, "Hey Sarge! Where's the war?"

The reply was sobering. The grizzled veteran gave the overeager new troops a withering look and replied, "Look around, dummies! You're in it!"

He was indeed, especially on the morning of Feb. 6, 1967, near Mu Gai Pass in North Vietnam.

"Oh, man, that was so long ago," he says now. "We had just picked up our flight equipment to go on alert status when we heard a plane had gone down. They scrambled us at about 9 a.m."

"We were the primary rescue helicopter, an HH-3E *Jolly Green Giant*. As soon as we got near the area, we heard the downed pilot on the radio, but we couldn't see him. I was lowered to the

ground on a hoist. I looked around and saw footprints all around—Vietnamese footprints. I knew they were Vietnamese because the tread on their shoes was a lot different than the tread on our combat boots.

"We had lost radio contact with the pilot, so I figured the North Vietnamese were probably chasing him and he had to stop communicating for a while."

The PJ was in the jungle for nearly two hours, tripping over tangled vines and roots while trying to locate the downed pilot and avoiding contact with the enemy. Finally, the poor weather got worse and the rescue team was forced to abandon the search. They flew back to Da Nang and waited at base operations until late in the afternoon, when the downed pilot was heard from again.

"Once we knew the pilot was still alive, we decided to try it again—to go for it," TSgt. Hackney continued. "We knew we had to get him out before dark, because after the sun dropped, our chances for getting him would drop from about 90 percent to 30 percent."

"When we went in again, a *Sandy* [an A-1 Skyraider escort aircraft] told us not to go over this one ridge because of heavy AAA and small-arms fire. But we had to—that's where the pilot was! Once we got over the area, they lowered me on a hoist again, and this time I found the pilot. He was pretty messed up."

"I got him into the hoist, but on the way back up to the helicopter we started drawing more fire, so the *Sandy* dropped in and knocked them out. Then the enemy's anti-aircraft gun picked us up on radar. The first hit jarred us pretty bad, and there was a lot of fire and smoke. I knew we had to get out of the chopper."

In the confusion, TSgt. Hackney managed to find his parachute and strap it on the rescued pilot before helping him out of the HH-3E. Groping around in the heavy smoke looking for the fire extinguisher, the PJ found another parachute, this one oil-soaked. He had his arms through the harness when the second enemy round hit. The anti-aircraft shell severed the fuel line and blew the PJ through the closed door of the helicopter, 200 feet above the ground.

Semi-conscious, and weakened by shrapnel wounds and third-degree burns, TSgt. Hackney managed to pull the rip cord and hug the unbuckled parachute to his chest. He fell into a tree, which probably saved his life, but from there he plummeted downward onto a ledge in a crevasse about 80 feet below the jungle floor.

"When I came to on the ledge I could

look up and see the Vietnamese jumping from one side of the ravine to the other—looking for me. If they had ever looked down, they would have spotted me. I saw four of them, but I figured there were more in the area.

"A little later I heard an A-1E *Skyraider* over me and popped a flare. He saw my smoke and called in a *Jolly Green Giant* that came in and picked me up. I guess I was probably on the ground less than an hour the entire time."

The PJ later learned he was the only survivor of the aborted rescue effort. His four fellow crewmembers and the pilot he had pulled out of the jungle were never heard from again.

For giving the pilot his own parachute at great risk to his own life, then-Sgt. Hackney was presented the Air Force Cross by Gen. Howell M. Estes, then-commander-in-chief of the Military Airlift Command.

In the ceremony, conducted during a 800-man military parade at Scott AFB, Ill., Gen. Estes also presented the young pararescuer the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. Sgt. Hackney added those medals to the Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters, and an Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, awards he had earned on previous missions.

The ceremony opened the flood gates for other honors and national recognition. His heroics that day in February 1967 also won him the 1967 Cheney Award, presented to airmen who perform an "act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian mission in connection with an aircraft." He was also named the 1967 Military Airlift Command Airman of the Year.

Curiously, even during the anti-war, anti-hero era of the late 60s, the American people seemed eager to grasp the handsome, articulate airman and hold him high as an example to their youth. On a breathtaking, whirlwind public appearance tour, Sgt. Hackney was a guest on "The Tonight Show," "The Dating Game," and on the Art Linkletter and Joey Bishop programs. He spent the 1967 Christmas holidays in Monaco with Prince Ranier and Princess Grace.

But it wasn't all glory for the fair-skinned, blond PJ, who wouldn't have a shave regularly for another four years. He found himself looking for ways to dodge all the probing interviewers with microphones and cameras. The public appearances were frustrating chores that kept him from performing the lifesaving work he had trained for.

As a result, after less than eight years

in the Air Force—and with a line number for promotion to master sergeant—TSgt. Hackney decided to give civilian life a go. He said the decision was made exact because "war was winding down and I didn't see any future for combat rescue." Others, some who were close to him, said the pressure just got to be too much for him to handle.

Whatever the reasons, TSgt. Hackney soon became Deputy Hackney of the Tennessee County Sheriff's Department near his hometown of Flint, Mich. At first, he was attracted to police work, and eventually volunteered for duty with the department's scuba diving and riot control teams.

He liked police work so much it took him nearly four years to realize that something was missing.

"The main reason I came back to the

Air Force was because I missed the traveling and the camaraderie," he said.

"When I had an opportunity to get back in uniform as an E-4, I jumped at it."

He made it back through the ranks quickly, earning promotions to both staff and technical sergeant the first time he was eligible. After completing basic rescue training again, he became a PJ instructor at McClellan AFB, Calif. He later transferred to Iceland, then to England before his air rescue career came to an abrupt halt.

In 1981 the PJ suffered a serious heart attack. Although the doctors couldn't be certain, they speculated it may have been the aftermath of injuries he sustained while mountain climbing in Northern Wales.

TSgt. Hackney's thirst for adventure had finally caught up with him. After

four months in various hospitals, his case went to a medical review board; and his appeal to remain in pararescue was denied for medical reasons.

Today, TSgt. Hackney is assigned to the intelligence division of 23rd Air Force Headquarters at Scott AFB. He's reconciling himself to "life after pararescue" and becoming more aware of the important role his new duties play in the Air Force mission.

TSgt. Hackney recently married the former SrA. Carole Matlack—a controller with Scott's Rescue Control Center—whose knowledge of the Vietnam War comes mostly from history books. The NCO has mellowed with marriage and the passing years, he says, but he can still tell a good story.

Like when he was showering after his first mission in Vietnam and realized he had caught a .30 caliber round in his leg hours earlier. Afraid he'd be grounded if he reported the wound to the doctors, the PJ ran naked through the barracks to his buddies' room and coaxed them into removing the bullet with a medical probe, while he anesthetized himself with a bottle of whisky. Still as green as a pair of Lackland fatigues, the airman had been in-country for all of three days.

And there's the story of how he convinced his parents he was working as a clerk-typist. He didn't want them to worry about him, and they believed him until they saw his name in the newspaper headlines.

Then there was the time he landed at Travis AFB, Calif., fresh from the jungles. He was a two-striper, and a security policeman held him in custody until the major general who was meeting the returning hero verified that the young airman had actually earned all those medals he was wearing.

And he hasn't forgotten the day the helicopter he was flying in caught a barrage of enemy small-arms fire. The chopper managed to limp back to the base, but then its tail rotor got caught in concertina wire while trying to land. With the chopper spinning wildly out of control, the crew was able to scramble out the door and run for about 50 yards before it exploded.

Such "war" stories are exciting, and TSgt. Hackney has quite a few, many of them about his friends' exploits. But underlying the combat adventures of most wars are the memories of fallen comrades.

"I really don't think about Vietnam very much any more—only when somebody asks me about it," TSgt. Hackney said. "There's a vivid picture of it still in my mind, but you get to where you like





to forget about things like that. I lost a lot of good friends over there, but I can't let myself dwell on it.

"There's today, and there's tomorrow. Yesterday is gone, and you can't change that. But don't worry about it, and if there's a lesson to be learned, then learn it, and press on."

The former PJ learned his lessons well and, in his own way, he remembers his friends who didn't make it back. In front of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service headquarters building at Scott AFB is a small plaque commemorating the pararescuemen who lost their lives in Vietnam.

Although younger airmen in the organ-

ization are usually detailed to trim the grass around the marker, visitors are sometimes startled to see one of the Air Force's most decorated war heroes kneeling there in fatigues and clipping the grass with shears.

"I figure it's my job, too. If I don't cut the grass, who will? The young airmen out there may do it, but for them it's probably just another work detail." With a glance at the plaque, he said, "This plaque honors my friends—my buddies." He didn't have to say more.

Another insight into the character of Duane Hackney can be gleaned from a letter his sister, Dianne, wrote to his wife. Without her brother's knowledge, Dianne sent Carole a package of news clippings and photographs detailing her brother's heroism and combat missions in Vietnam.

"Duane said he didn't want these anymore because they bring back too many memories," Dianne wrote. "He lost a lot of friends and saw a lot of death, despair, and unhappiness. As he would say, 'It was something one does out of instinct.' I think that's why he was part of an elite group. . . . He was above average in instinct."

His instincts enabled him to help save others. They also helped him to survive.

photos by SSgt. Lou Comerger, AAVS
Arlington, Va.

TOP: SrA. Carole Hackney admits she wasn't aware her husband was a war hero until she read about his Vietnam actions while studying for a promotion test.

LEFT: TSgt. Hackney doesn't hesitate to help maintain this plaque commemorating his fallen friends who died so "that others may live."



Air Force Cross Won By Pararescue Airman

Airman First Class Duane D. Hackney, a 20-year-old pararescueman from Flint, Mich., recently became the first living enlisted man ever to receive the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military award.

Hackney, son of Mr. and Mrs. Glendon W. Hackney, 1107 W. Yale Ave., Flint, received the award from General Howell M. Estes, Jr., commander of the Military Airlift Command, after an 800-man military parade and review at Scott AFB, Ill.

The airman, a crewmember on a rescue helicopter in Southeast Asia, also received the Purple Heart during the ceremonies.

Forty-eight Air Force Crosses have been approved and presented since the beginning of the Vietnam war, many of them posthumously.

Hackney was awarded the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism Feb. 6 on a rescue mission over North Vietnam. Twice on the mission which began in the morning and continued in the afternoon, he volunteered to be lowered into the jungle in search of a downed fighter pilot.

On the second attempt, Hackney located the pilot and the two men were hoisted into the waiting HH-3E helicopter, the famed Jolly Green Giant. The chopper

was hit by 37mm flak and set afire.

Hackney fitted his own para-

See ENLISTED Page 6



AIRMAN HONORED—A1C Duane D. Hackney receives the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military decoration, from Gen. Howell M. Estes Jr., commander, Military Airlift Command, during recent ceremonies at Scott AFB, Ill. Airman Hackney was feted for his daring rescue of a downed pilot in North Vietnam.

FIFTIES

第三版 郵政特刊

OCTOBER 11, 1967

Vietnam Hero

by Art Brewster

AIRMAN FIRST CLASS—
DUANE D. HACKNEY
THE FIRST LIVING
ENLISTED MAN TO
RECEIVE THE AIR
FORCE CROSS...



THE
MISSION: HE WAS
LOWERED INTO NORTH
VIETNAM JUNGLE TO
SEARCH AND
RESCUE A
DOWNED
PILOT—HE
FOUND HIM,
HELPED HIM
ON BOARD THE "JOLLY GREEN
GIANT"—FITTED HIS OWN CHUTE ON
HIM...THEN GRABBED A CHUTE FOR
HIMSELF...THE CHOPPER WAS HIT BY FLAK...
BLEW UP...HACKNEY, BLOWN OUT, OPENED
HIS CHUTE...THE ONLY SURVIVOR!!



THIS PARARESCEMAN
ALSO RESCUED TWO VIETNAM
YOUNGSTERS FROM A BURNING
HOME (HUT)...HE WAS WITH THE 37th
AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY SQDN. (MAC)...