



## Pararescueman Honored

**MSGT HAROLD E. MOAK** of Stead AFB, Nev., who was recently selected as the Air Training Command's Outstanding Airman of the Year, is shown preparing to enter an HH-43F while on duty earlier in Vietnam. During nine months duty in Vietnam, the pararescue technician flew 143 combat missions and was awarded the Airman's Medal and Air Force Commendation Medal for his heroic actions on three separate occasions. In recognition of these and other deeds of heroism while on duty in Alaska, Libya and the Congo, Sergeant Moak was presented the ATC Medallion and a check for \$275 by LtGen William W. Momyer at a ceremony at Randolph AFB, Texas. The Outstanding Airman of the Year, was also made honorary mayor of San Antonio, toured the city as the guest of the Chamber of Commerce and was honored at a dinner in the NCO's Club at Randolph. (USAF photo)

The pilot of an A-1E bailed out at night over enemy-held territory after his aircraft was disabled while conducting an air strike in defense of the Special Forces camp at Ple Me. Evading capture by the Viet Cong, the downed pilot managed to maintain contact with the forward air controller and several attempts were made by Army helicopters to come to his aid—but they were driven off by the intense ground fire. While the downed pilot remained in hiding from the searching Viet Cong, two HUSKIES were scrambled from Bien Hoa AB and, after a three-and-a-half hour night flight over mountainous terrain, arrived at Pleiku. As they began the rescue attempt shortly after daylight, a heavy firefight broke out between enemy positions and the camp. Realizing the downed pilot could not escape capture much longer, Capt Dale L. Potter lowered his HH-43F until the rotor blades were only a few inches above the high elephant grass and the A-1E pilot was hastily snatched aboard. Firing at the time was described as "very intense."

Sharing in the hazardous rescue were the copilot, Capt David G. Henry, TSgt Richard A. Connon, a helicopter mechanic, and SSgt Leon Fullwood, pararescueman.

One of the most recent, and hazardous, missions involved two HH-43F crews from Det 7. Manning the primary helicopter were Lieutenant Machado, pilot; Captain Kneen, copilot; MSgt Harlan D. Longmire, helicopter mechanic; and SSgt David J. Wheeler, pararescue specialist. Aboard the secondary helo were Captain Solberg, pilot; Capt James C. Rodenberg, copilot; Sergeant Mapes, helicopter mechanic; and Airman Hughes, pararescue specialist.

This vivid description of the mission was included in a report on Lieutenant Machado's activities during the night-time evacuation of wounded Marines from a rice paddy in an active battlefield:

Lieutenant Machado distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force near Tam Ky, Republic of Vietnam on 9 December 1965. On that date, Lieutenant Machado led a flight of two rescue helicopters, at night, approximately 30 miles south of Da Nang to recover the crew of a

Marine helicopter downed by hostile fire while attempting to evacuate wounded Marines. Numerous small-arms tracers were observed throughout the flight to the active battlefield, known as "Operation Harvest Moon," and geographically located in a valley surrounded by mountainous terrain. Heavy small arms fire was encountered in the recovery area; and 50 caliber machine gun tracers described arcs no less than a mile long upon several occasions in an effort to down the aircraft flying overhead. Flares from an FC-47 were used for search until radio contact with a Marine patrol made it possible to find the exact location.

The patrol had recovered the crew from the helicopter, stating the pilot was killed and one crew member was in very serious condition. The Marine patrol also had 30 wounded men and requested their medical evacuation. Using flashlights, the Marines pinpointed the landing zone which was located in a rice paddy between two hamlets. To avoid drawing increased ground fire, Lieutenant Machado turned off all external lights and in total darkness landed in the paddy after three tracers zipped over the helicopter on final approach. He dispatched his crew to load the most seriously wounded personnel and render medical aid. Then, taking off in total darkness, he climbed in an erratic course to avoid known Viet Cong locations. While passing through 1000 feet of altitude, six mortar rounds were seen and heard exploding along the aircraft's ground path and about 500 yards slant range from the helicopter. Their concussion physically shook the entire aircraft and illuminated it sufficiently to draw several more small-arms tracers. Minutes after departing the area, a Marine helicopter was hit several times while approaching the same landing zone to evacuate the remaining wounded. This courageous and aggressive act in the face of hostile fire resulted in the evacuation of five seriously wounded personnel and within minutes gave them the benefits of hospital treatment. Lieutenant Machado's outstanding, humanitarian performance emphasizes his high esteem for a fellow man's life. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Machado has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force. ✦

*"It is my duty, as a member of the Air Rescue Service, to save life and to aid the injured.*

*"I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal desires and comforts.*

*"These things I do that others may live."—Code of the Aircrescuman*