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Following is verbatim transcript of tape recording forwarded to this Hq by Hq 7AF in connection with recommendation for award of Medal of Honor to A1C William H Pitsenbarger.

A1C William H Pitsenbarger, the son of Mr and Mrs William F Pitsenbarger of 626 Gordon St, Piqua, Ohio, has given his life upholding the principles of his organization's motto "That Others May Live." A pararescue specialist with Detachment 6, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Sq at Bien Hoa Air Base, "Pit", as he was known to his friends and co-workers, was no stranger to death as a number of downed pilots and wounded ground troops owe their lives to his selfless devotion to duty.

Army Sgt Fred C Navarro of Hutchins, Kansas, is a squad leader with C Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, First Infantry Division. Sgt Navarro is recovering now from a wound he sustained the night that Ann Pitsenbarger was killed. Sgt Navarro can you tell us what happened the night that Pit was killed?

Ans - Well, sir, when it first started there was sniper fire and we were hit by artillery and the rescue chopper came in to take some of the men out and they had taken five or six of them out when there was heavy enemy fire and the chopper was forced to leave the area. Then about 10 minutes later the firing was pretty heavy and Pits, knowing that this area where he was was getting hit the hardest he took his pistol and gave it to one of the wounded men that couldn't hold a rifle. He took his rifle and then he went from place to place while the fire was going on, trying to get ammunition from the wounded and



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people that had been killed to get them ammo. Ten or fifteen minutes later he was back in the same area where he had left before. Then he was in the area about 10 to 15 more minutes when he was hit.

Q - You say he was left there. Could you tell us why he was left in the area?

Ans - Well, after they had took two or three men out, he came in on the hoist from the rescue chopper to help evacuate the wounded. He was unable to rescue about six guys when the Air Force chopper was under heavy fire and it was forced to take off. And then after the chopper left the basket that the wounded were being put in was caught in a tree and Pits wanted to climb the tree to get the basket so the same chopper could come back later because he told us if we waited until another chopper came then it would be too late. So he went ahead and done it.

Q - How long was he on the ground before he was hit?

Ans - He was on the ground for about one hour and 20 minutes and he was running from one place to another picking up ammo from the wounded, from the dead that couldn't fire, then after he distributed all this ammo out to the people then he went back to get some more and he came back with a handful of ammunition. Then he lay down there beside the section that was getting hit the hardest and he started firing, then he was hit.

Q - Were you able to talk to him at any time?

Ans - I talked to him when he was - when the chopper was fired at and it took off. They told us we were going to leave the area and set up in another place, and I talked to Pits when he was cutting



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trees to make litters and to carry the wounded out.

Q - While he was picking up this ammunition and bringing it back was he also taking care of the wounded?

Ans - Yes, he was, he was helping bandage and putting dressings on the wounded and making stretchers, and all that stuff. When it first started it was bad because they were firing from all directions and they had us surrounded, the fire was pretty heavy and Pits knew that the part that he was in was getting hit hard and that all the guys had run out of ammo. They couldn't get out because the fire was so bad, but somehow Pits made up his mind that he was going to get up and he got up. He ran all over the perimeter picking up ammunition then he came back and he distributed the ammo out to each guy that was still alive. When he came back to lay beside me, he must have had 20 magazines of ammunition. He lay there and he must have been able to see where the VC were because he was probably one out of 15 of the company that was firing semi-automatic. Everybody else that couldn't see anyone was firing automatic hoping that they would hit the VC.

Q - Could you tell us what time of night Amn Pitsenbarger got killed?

Ans - I think it was about 7:30.

Q - What happened immediately after this?

Ans - Well after that first time the fire stopped, about 15 minutes later and it was dark and then VC women and children came in and they started slitting throats and taking weapons.

Q - You say these were VC women and children, were you fighting these women and children?



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Ans - No. See those were hard-core VC and the hard-core VC come into a South Vietnamese village and they tell the South Vietnamese people that if they don't help them fight that they will destroy their village, kill all the women and children and if they don't help them fight that they'll take their wives and their kids away and take them off somewhere, so actually the South Vietnamese civilians don't have any choice but to go along with the VC. And usually in an attack with regular North Vietnamese you have the South or the local VC's making the first part of the attack and then the North Vietnamese come in.

Q - What were you doing during this time?

Ans - What time are you speaking about?

Q - Well while the women and children you say were slitting the throats of the GIs. What were you doing?

Ans - I was about 20 or 30 meters from them. At the time I didn't know this was going on. You must recall it was dark because the jungle had a triple canopy and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The interpreter told us later that the women and kids that had slit the throats and taken the weapons and carried the dead VC that we had killed off to make us think that we hadn't gotten anybody.

Q - Did you see any hard-core Viet Cong?

Ans - I seen a few drop out of the trees with 50 calibers.

Q - Did you stay there the rest of the night?

Ans - Yes, Sergeant, we did. After the fighting stopped we heard probably 100 Congs hollering at each other saying that they were going to destroy us. I was told by our Vietnamese interpreter, he told our Lt, to hurry and call in artillery all around us because they were going to



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assault us. And we called in the artillery and five or six rounds came in every 15 seconds from 8:30 that night until possibly seven that morning and they didn't get a chance to come in and get us..

Q - Did any of the artillery rounds land near your position?

Ans - They were landing pretty close, they had to drop them close to us because the VC were right on our back and the fighting was real heavy. The artillery probably landed 25 - 30 meters from us but actually if the fight would have started again, they would have had to drop it right on us.

Q - What was your location?

Ans - 45 miles east of Saigon about 12 miles west of Vung Tau.

The operation was Operation AVALANCHE.

Q - Sgt Navarro, were you wounded?

Ans - Yes sir, I was.

Q - How many men were originally in your squad.?

Ans - I had 10 in my squad.

Q - Could you tell us how many of those men made it?

Ans - Three, sir.

Q - Well how do you feel now?

Ans - I feel lucky just to be here.



A1C Henry J O'Bern, friend and co-worker of Amn Pitsenbarger's, had this to say, when asked if Pits knew what he was getting himself into when he volunteered to go down the hoist to rescue the wounded on the ground.

O'Bern - Yes, I do. Bill had gone down many a time before, he had gone down on his own. In fact only two weeks ago he went down there in very dense jungle. Later on he went in with the help of a Special Forces team. The Special Forces team themselves even said that if we're hit, which there were six of us down there at the time, they said we would definitely be killed in minutes. And Pits himself had gone in there three hours earlier on his own looking for a pilot and got the pilot and got him out in spite of the VC. He knew the score pretty well and he had been fired at quite a bit before. He knew the chance he was taking and it wasn't a case of going in there blindly.

Interviewer - In other words he volunteered to go in knowing what was on the ground.

Ans - Yeah, he did and he's been down picking out Army before, he's been under sniper fire before. He knew all about it.

Q - Well what type of guy was Pitsenbarger?

Ans - Well the usual thing everybody says is that he was a really fine fellow but in this case it's the honest truth. I think just about everybody in the squadron liked him. He was very pleasing, you can't even say anything really bad about him. He's probably had some small faults, just about everyone has, but all over everybody liked him. I'd say that he was almost the most popular guy in the squadron.



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Thank you Amn O'Bern.

It can truly be said that A1C William H. Pitsenbarger gave his life in the tradition of the men of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service "that others may live."

This is SSgt Ron Sears from Bien Hoa Air Base.

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