

AWARDS - ARRS  
Pitsenbarger -

MAC NEWS SERVICE

Editorial

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ASK NOT WHAT YOU CAN DO.....

For A1C William H. Pitsenbarger there was never a choice. He was of the breed of men who need not be asked, "What can you do for your country?" He knew. He always knew.

He knew when he volunteered for training as a pararescueman. He knew when he completed Army paratrooper school, Navy underwater swim school and Air Force rescue and survival training.

He knew when he voluntarily entered a minefield to save a Vietnamese soldier who had been wounded. He knew each time he went down a rescue helicopter cable in Vietnam to help lift a fellow man to safety.

And he knew when he had himself lowered to a Vietnamese jungle floor to give aid to trapped Army infantrymen. He left the relative safety of a helicopter to join men who were facing death themselves. To those men he represented hope.

He also represented compassion as he used his medical skills and equipment to bandage the wounded. He was courage as he flitted from body to body, gathering ammunition and weapons for the walking wounded to use in a fight for their own lives.

And when his lifeless body was found next morning, he had become a statistic, a memorial to man's long quest for peace and freedom. He was also a legend.

Only two men among the trapped group lived to contribute to the legend of A1C William H. Pitsenbarger. But there were others, men who knew him, men who worked with him, men who owed their lives to him.

These were the men who provided the information about his exploits which earned him the Air Force Cross. He was the first enlisted man to receive the nation's second highest medal <sup>posthumously.</sup> He also earned the Airman's Medal, four Air Medals and a Purple Heart, all of which were presented to his parents recently by General J. P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff.

But medals shown to friends of the Pitsenbarger family in Piqua, Ohio, do not provide an answer to why an Ohio boy died in Vietnam.

Add 1 -- ASK NOT WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Between Piqua and Vietnam there is an incredible gap -- a gap of distance, of time, of culture and of values. Perhaps there is but one common link which bridges that gap, man's common devotion to the cause of freedom.

It is the cause that sent A1C William H. Pitsenbarger to Vietnam as a member of the U. S. Air Force's 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Bien Hoa AB. It is the cause for which he risked his own life to save the lives of others. And it was eventually the cause for which he died.

Army men he saved, Air Force personnel with whom he served, Vietnamese for whom he fought, his fellow citizens of this nation and the parents who loved him -- these are the people who must continue to bear the burden he carried so well. He displayed understanding, skill, dedication, courage and a sincere regard for other men.

There is no need for anyone to ask what William H. Pitsenbarger did for his country. The question we must ask, as citizens, and as military men, is: "What can we do for our country -- and for him?"

As military men we must give generously of our skills, keep bright the fire of individual dedication. We must extend ourselves to do more -- doing it better - for to do less is to lose faith with American First Class William H. Pitsenbarger who gave himself.

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