William H. Pitsenbarger: Air Force Cross Res Essay, Research Paper

BACKGROUND PAPER ON WILLIAM H. PITSENBARGER: AIR FORCE CROSS RECEIPENT 1. They die 1 So That Others May Live. This quote is part of the creed in which all pararescuemen live by. Born out of the mountainous jungles of Burma during World War II, pararescuemen (PJ s) save lives, regardless of personal sacrifices. They put the needs of those in danger higher than their own. Airmen First Class (A1C) William H. Pitsenbarger was one of those elite professionals. His fierce and rigorous schools prepared him for more than 250 combat missions in Vietnam. On April 11,1966 A1C Pitsenbarger would courageously proved his dedication one last time. Due to the accomplishments of that night, he was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross. Before we look at those accomplishments, we must first look at his background to fully understand this courageous story.2. At the age of 17 William felt that he needed to do something with his life. So he decided to join the United States Air Force. He was not satisfied with the Air Force decision to make him a Security Policemen, so he volunteered to join the Pararescue team. Pararescue volunteers are highly trained in four specific skills. They are scuba qualified by the Navy, trained in all aspect of parachuting by the Army, and qualified as medical, and survival specialist by the Air Force. Each one of these schools had a great impact on William s military life. Scuba school taught him how to use his diving skills to infiltrate areas surrounded by water undetected. In parachuting school he learned the basic skills required infiltrating an objective by static line airdrop. The medical course taught him how to manage trauma patients prior to evacuation and provide emergency medical treatment. Survival school taught basic survival techniques for remote areas-using minimal equipment. Each of these skills prepared him for the challenge he would face next.

3. On April 11, 1966 A1C William H. Pitsenbarger was lowered from an HH-43 helicopter into the jungle to treat wounded infantrymen and prepare them for evacuation. After two pickups by helicopter, he continued to work while evading enemy forces. When one the helicopters was badly hit and had to return to base, he chose to stay and help the remaining injured. Stranded in a hot combat area, swarming with enemy forces, William distributed needed ammo to remaining infantryman. In one incident he relinquished his own weapon to a wounded Army soldier who was unable to hold a rifle. The firefight latest throughout the evening. The next morning when reinforcements arrived, A1C Pitsenbarger was found dead-a rifle in one hand and a medical kit in the other. According to the Army reports an estimated 150 Viet Cong troops had been killed in the battle. On September 22, 1966, Air Force Chief of Staff John P. McConnell posthumously presented the Air Force Cross to William s parents for their son s heroic actions in Vietnam.4. All of those months of training prepared William for the harsh realties of war. With out those skills he would have not been able to do his job, which was to save lives. Airmen First Class William H. Pitsenbarger distinguished himself as a role motto in which all enlisted personnel should follow. His dream of doing something with himself of making his mark will be forever engraved in our minds. His story is an incredible testimony of courage and determination. As enlisted men and women we should not forget the sacrifices he made or the motto he believed in, So That Others May Live.