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**New Centralized Pay System To Affect SEA Bound-Men** *(Seventh Air Force News Dec. 4, 1968)*

**SAIGON** - By next spring, Air Force personnel stationed in Vietnam and Thailand will receive their pay checks from the Air Force Accounting and Finance Center.

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Under current American manpower levels in the two countries, the change in pay procedures will result in about a half million dollars in gold-flow savings.

The change from local to centralized pay will occur as individuals are sent to Southeast Asia rather than on a base-by-base changeover. Since tours of duty in SEA are for only one year, the shift to pay from Stateside rather than local finance offices will be completed in about 12 months after the first records are transferred to Denver.

The Finance Center began paying persons assigned to U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) in January, and by June had about 80,000 on its rolls.

Most information and inquiries regarding pay will move between Denver and Asia by airmail. However, changes of address and information on allotments and casual pay will be transmitted electronically.

Current plans are to airmail checks from Denver to three central points in Vietnam and one in Thailand. From there, they will reach troops through regular Air Force finance channels.

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### **Top 'Combat Saver' Leaves SEA - Young Rescueman Saves 51 Comrades** (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 4, 1968*)

**DA NANG** - At age 21, Sgt. Steve M. Northern, Riverside, Calif., has completed his second Vietnam tour.

Barely of voting age, Sergeant Northern has recorded more "combat saves" than any other person in history — 51. The all-time record was established by Sergeant Northern during two consecutive Southeast Asia tours as a Pararescueman (PJ) with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Aerospace Rescue & Recovery group.

The sergeant, born in Indianapolis, where his father was a championship race car driver, came to Southeast Asia in July 1966. He was first assigned to Bien Hoa AB, where he served as a PJ aboard HH-43 "Pedro" rescue helicopters.

He was wounded in action less than two months after his arrival, Sept. 10, 1966, and was awarded the Purple Heart.

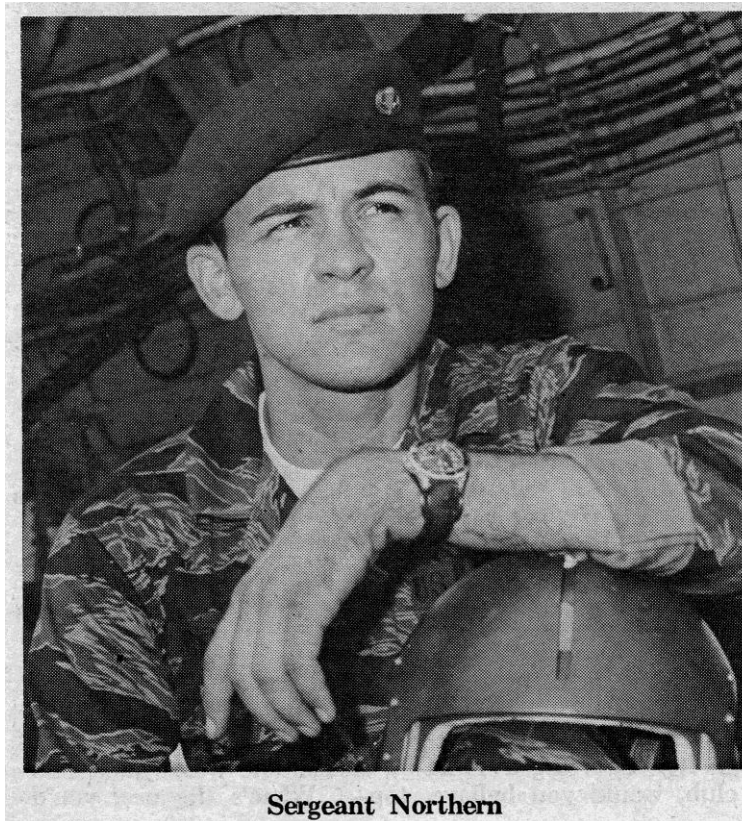
Enemy bullets couldn't stop him and he , went on to become one of the most highly decorated pararescuemen in the Nation's history.

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Sergeant Northern received the first of two Silver Stars for "gallantry in action" for a heroic rescue action July 15, 1967. His second Silver Star as a PJ came for an action Aug. 23, 1967, when he "volunteered to be lowered from his helicopter to aid an immobilized crash survivor located in a position completely surrounded by hostile troops and gun positions."

The citation continues: "Airman Northern carried the survivor to the hoist and shielded him with his own body as, they were brought into the helicopter ..."

Both Silver Stars came for actions with the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.



**Sergeant Northern**

While at Da Nang, the young NCO has flown more than 240 missions with the long-range "Jolly Green Giant." He flew an average of 45 combat missions a month, many deep into enemy territory and as far north as the Haiphong area of North Vietnam.

During his off-duty days, Sergeant Northern volunteered to fly rescue missions with Det. 7, 38th ARRS, also based at Da Nang.

At other times he participated in Medical Civic Action Patrol flights, offering medical aid to local Vietnamese villagers in the I Corps area.

During a rocket attack on Da Nang, Sergeant Northern and the 1968 "Airman of the Year," Sgt. Duane Hackney, aided 25 persons trapped under a C-130 Hercules which had been set afire by exploding 750-pound bombs ignited by enemy rockets.

Sergeant Northern's father, a championship "sprint car" driver was paralyzed following a race car crash in 1949, shortly before he was due to take part in the Indianapolis Speed Classic on Memorial Day 1949. He died on July 22, 1967, seven days before his son was due to complete his initial 12-month SEA tour.

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He completed his final two "combat saves" (all combat saves involve an action in which the survivor would have met certain death or enemy capture had he not been rescued; most are under enemy fire) off Tiger Island, North Vietnam, Oct. 20.

Ironically, Sergeant Northern's last save was of a fellow PJ, A1C Robert Cassiby, of Pittsburgh, Pa. The airman, and three other "Jolly Green Giant" crew members were rescued in dramatic action when their aircraft was destroyed by enemy fire while attempting to rescue two Marine Corps F-4 crewmen from the Gulf of Tonkin.

Asked how he felt about leaving Southeast Asia, the soft spoken, dark-haired, six foot one-inch, 175-pound PJ said: "I'll miss it!"

**Holds Combat Rescue Record: Can't Fry Eggs but He Saved 51 Men in War** (*Los Angeles Times, May 9, 1969*)

BY DAVE LARSEN

Times Staff Writer

The record for combat saves belongs to a young Vietnam war veteran from Hermosa Beach. But he can't fry eggs worth a damn,

A job as a cook Was what Steve M. Northern had in mind when he joined the Air Force. He wound up instead becoming a pararescueman, —and 51 men today owe their lives to his change of mind.

Northern made his decision while taking basic training, before he would have been sent to cook's school.

I got to thinking about how boring it would be cooking eggs," said Northern, "so I decided to become something more exciting."

One could say his subsequent assignments Involved some of that-- little chores such as being lowered from a helicopter to rescue a downed flier being shot at by the enemy.

After 29 consecutive months of this, the 22-year-old Northern had been awarded three Silver Stars, five Distinguished Flying Crosses, 15 Air Medals and a Purple Heart.

Northern, of 3302 Manhattan Ave., was discharged in December, but his exploits haven't been forgotten. Tuesday he will be in Dayton, Ohio, to receive the 1969 Avco-Aviation/Space Writers Assn. Helicopter Heroism Award.

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As a pararescueman (a parachutist trained in scuba diving and first aid), Northern flew more than 240 combat missions aboard helicopters, usually deep into enemy territory.

In winning one of his Silver Stars, he volunteered to be lowered to aid an immobilized man in an area surrounded by hostile troops and gun positions.

"Airman Northern carried the survivor to the hoist and shielded him with his own body as they were brought into the helicopter," read the citation.

The soft-spoken Northern shrugs it off. "The only time it bothered me was when I got back at night," he recalled. "Sometimes I would think about what could have happened."

Northern, who became a sergeant by the time he was discharged, looks forward now to a career as a race car driver, which was his late father's occupation.

In the meantime, he's still trying to learn how to fry an egg properly.

### **On The Line - Bob Considine** (*Playground Daily News, Jan 30, 1969*)

NEW YORK — PEOPLE. . PLACES...

Sure, there are a lot of young punks loose in the land, and they receive too much publicity. Here's a story, however, that tends to balance matters. It's about an Air Force sergeant named Steve Northern of Riverside, Calif. He's home after completing two tours in Southeast Asia as a Pararescueman with the 3rd Aerospace Rescue & Recovery-Group of the Military Airlift Command.

Steve, a good-looking kid barely old enough to vote, rescued the incredible number of 51 airmen shot down in enemy held territory during his two stretches. He jumped or was lowered into the jaws of enemy fire time after time, to find and rescue downed fliers who faced certain capture or death. He made a practice of not only carrying the wounded to the waiting helicopter hoist but protecting the men by shielding them with his own body.

Result: four Silver Stars, believed to be a record, and, of course, a few Purple Hearts.

Someone asked him how he felt, leaving Vietnam for Riverside.

"I'll miss it," he said wistfully.

P.S. — He went back - to school.

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**Sharon Airman Eludes Captors In Daring Escape** (*The Valley Independent, Monday, July 29, 1968*)

SAIGON (UPI) — A U. S. Marine pilot, shot down over North Vietnam, told today how he spent more than 20 hours clinging to a mud bank within a few feet of his would-be captors.

He was picked up amid blazing fire between U. S. rescue planes and Communist ground gunners.

"It was the most beautiful air show that I've ever seen," said Maj. Curtis Lawson, 37, of Sharon, Pa., after his rescue by a U. S. Air Force HH3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter.

(Lawson, one of five children of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lawson of 78 Wengler Ave., Sharon, joined the service in 1949. He has been in Vietnam since mid-January.

(His wife, Marvelene, and two daughters, Sharon, 9, and Janet, live in Millington, Tenn.

Jet fighters and A1E Skyraiders poured fire into Communist positions only yards from where Lawson was hiding half - submerged Thursday in a river 32 miles north of the demilitarized zone border.

"I never thought that we were going to get out of there, so we decided to go in firing and take lot of them with us," said Air Force Maj. Charles E. Wicker, of Baltimore. who piloted the rescue chopper.

Others aboard the Jolly Green Giant were co-pilot Robert E. Booth, 357 of Peekskill, N.Y.; Para-rescue man Sgt. Steve M. Northern, 21, of Riverside, Calif. and Flight Engineer Staff Sgt. John Enriquez, 28, of Duluth, Minn.

**Hit by ground fire**

Lawson and his bombardier-navigator were downed when their A6 Intruder was hit by groundfire. The second crewman has not been found and was listed officially as missing in action.

Lawson landed in a river.

I started swimming and the enemy, who were about 30 feet away, started shouting and making a lot of noise," he said. "I went to the other side of the river and got into a little over hang and hollowed out a gully for myself under some underbursh."

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He said he stayed in the water for more than nine hours, even after dark, "because I couldn't get out of the damn place."

A Communist search boat got so close he could have touched it.

At dawn, he said, he spotted an Air Force F100 Supersabre jet overhead and knew that rescuers had his position.

Eleven more hours elapsed. Air strikes were called in, some by Lawson over his radio.

"I was talking to the fighters above and they were laying it on close," Lawson said. "Matter of fact, I called in a spad on a 37 mm gun site that was right above me, close to the river's edge. Some of the debris from his ordinance fell in the water beside me."

### **Returned to Base**

One of the planes, piloted by Air Force Maj. Alan Hale, 32, of Payette, Idaho, was hit at least 15 times by the groundfire and had to return to base.

A fleet of Jolly Green Giants made three tries during the day but were pushed out of the area by the anti-aircraft fire.

Pilot Wicker told his crew to start firing at 1,000 feet with all machineguns and rifles they had.

"I really didn't think we were going to get out of there," said Wicker, "so we decided we'd take a lot of them with us."

Escorted by fighters, the chopper landed in the water about 20 yards from Lawson, who started swimming.

The Marine aviator was hauled aboard, Wicker said "and we went about 100 yards until I was able to pick up enough speed to get out of there fast - about 20 of the longest seconds of my life."

**Maj. Lawson Escapes After Long Ordeal** (*Post Herald and Register Beckley W.Va. Sunday Morning July 28, 1968*)

DA NANG, South Vietnam (UPI) - Maj. Curtis Lawson, 37, a marine from Millington, Tenn, hid neck deep in murky river waters for 20 ½ hours while North Vietnamese troops using dogs and boats searched for the downed pilot.

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Lawson told Saturday how he was plucked from the river by a "Jolly Green Giant" rescue helicopter as American jet fighter-bombers raked jungles to keep the communists at bay.

At one point during his ordeal a North Vietnamese patrol boat passed within three feet of Lawson.

The saga of the jungle terror began at 8:30 p.m. when North Vietnamese gunners riddled his A6 Intruder jet with antiaircraft fire and sent it crashing in flames just above the Demilitarized Zone.

The veteran of 70 combat missions over North Vietnam ejected, and his parachute floated gently into a river about 20 miles north of the DMZ. His co-pilot also got out but he has not been heard from and is listed as "missing in action."

"As I landed, I could hear people talking quite closely to me," Lawson recalled Saturday as he chatted with newsmen "Across the river, maybe 30 yards away, there were at least three 37 millimeter antiaircraft emplacements and a supply depot, quite a few people were running around."

In the hours that followed, as Lawson stood in the water with his head hidden by an overhanging bush, North Vietnamese troops slogged along the river banks looking for him. He said he could hear sniffing dogs.

At first light, American reconnaissance pilots spotted the general area where Lawson had gone down. Fighter planes swept over the jungles, and Lawson, using his survival radio, directed the pilots to targets threatening him.

"It was the most beautiful air show in the world." Lawson said in describing more than 120 sorties against the antiaircraft positions which had hit his plane.

The "Jolly Green Giant" dived through a hail of North Vietnamese bullets to rescue Lawson. The pickup was made by SSgt John Enriquez of Duluth, Minn., and Sgt. Steve Northern of Riverside, Calif. The helicopter pilot was Maj. Charles Wicker, 34 of Baltimore, Md., and the copilot was Lt. Robert E. Booth of Peekskill, N.Y.

As the helicopter whirled away, still under Communist fire, Lawson upholstered his .38 caliber pistol and emptied it into the jungle, hoping to hit some of the North Vietnamese who had surrounded him for a night and a day.



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### **Rites Set for Viet Hero Who Saved Airmen** (*Los Angeles Times, May 28, 1970*)

Funeral services for Steve M. Northern, 23, a highly decorated hero of the war in Vietnam, were conducted Wednesday at the White Funeral Home in Bellflower.

Mr. Northern of 13008 Carfax Ave., Bellflower, was killed Monday in an industrial accident at the Jorgensen Steel Co. in Lynwood.

During his 31 months service in Vietnam as an Air Force pararescueman, he flew more than 240 combat missions aboard helicopters and was credited with saving 51 men— most, of them airmen downed in enemy territory.

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### **The 2014 "Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB Reunion**

**Where: DoubleTree by Hilton, Reid Park, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson AZ**

**When: October 9-11**

**Single/Double rate \$99**

**Banquet 11 October in the Bonsai Room**



**You may now make your hotel reservations for the reunion. Click on the Double Tree logo above and it will take you to the Phan Rang AB Reunion Web Site. Please make your reservations early which will help us greatly in the planning process and also to insure that everyone that wants to attend gets the reunion rate. This is a smaller hotel than the previous year, so we have to watch it very carefully. Remember if circumstances prevent you from attending you can always cancel within 24 hours of your check-in date. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact [me](#).**

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### **New Life Now for Province** (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 4, 1968*)

**PHAN RANG** — When a group of Montagnards moved from their mountain homes to the hamlet of Hoai Trung last year, they exchanged the only way of life known to them for safety from Viet Cong terrorists.

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Located in a relatively secure region of Ninh Thuan Province, Hoai Trung is an agricultural community. Here, the Montagnards were free from the torture and death they had previously faced, but encountered a new problem — that of earning a living.

The Montagnards are not farmers but at Hoai Trung farming was the only livelihood available. And farming was not an immediate solution to their problem. Months would pass before the first crop became ready for harvest, and many more months would go by before the Montagnards became accustomed to their new environment.

Relief came through the U.S. Air Force Civic Action Program. Working with the Phan Rang AB civic action officer, the 310th Special Operations Squadron began a civic action program at Hoai Trung designed to help the Montagnards establish themselves in a new way of life.

Members of the C-123 unit have made approximately three trips a month to the hamlet since the program began. Using money donated by members of the squadron and by interested groups in the States, they have provided food, clothing and school supplies for the Montagnards who have settled in Hoai Trung.



Kenneth Rowsey: “Beaudeau going home.” Added by Kenneth Rowsey.

**Note: Beaudeau and Kenneth Rowsey were with Det. 8, 14th Aerial Port Sq.**

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**Doug's Comments:** I know not all of these stores may have a dateline of Phan Rang, but we have a lot of members and readers that have an interest in stores dealing with the B-57, F-100, C-119, C-47 and C-123 aircrafts. Some may have friends or may have even been stationed at one time at these other bases.

Also if you are new to the Phan Ranger mailing list and you would like copies of previous issues of the Phan Rang News, just send [me](#) a note and I'll send one your way. If you know of a Phan Rangers that would be interested in receiving news about Phan Rang AB, please let [me](#) know and I will add them to the mailing list.