

AFEHRI File 19-5-1-5

Research Materials/Source Documents

FILE TITLE: Background Material on Air Force Cross Recipient, Duane D. Hackney

Reviewed by:

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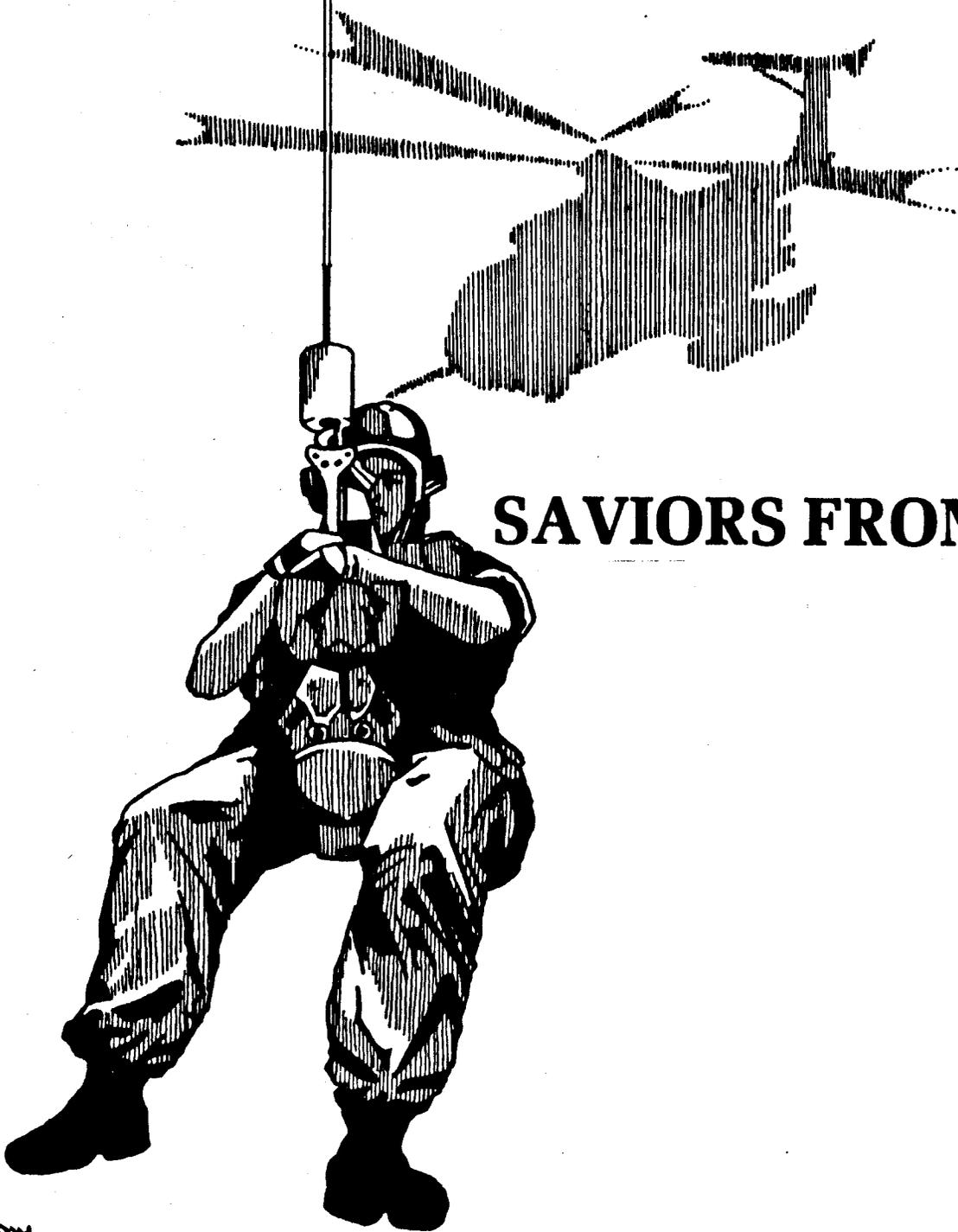
APPROVED BY:

Gary R. Akin

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF

Director

Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute



SAVIORS FROM ABOVE

P.M.

CMSGT Billy Davidson
Senior NCOA/EDF
Gunter AFB, AL 36114

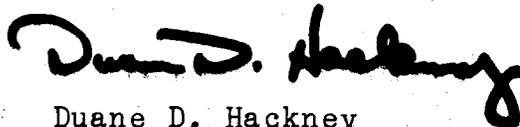
21 February 1984

Chief,

I hope you find these items appropriate as well as sufficient.

Carole and I hope to get down to Gunter AFB to see the display. Someday maybe our children and others to follow will know the blood, tears and most of all our fellow Americans left on the battle fields to preserve the freedom of this Great Nation.

Good Luck on the opening and tell all the guys I said, "Hello"!



Duane D. Hackney

P.S.

Let us here from you and how things went.

D.D.H.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO
DUANE D. HACKNEY

Airman Second Class Duane D. Hackney distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a Paramedic on an unarmed HH-3E rescue helicopter near Mu Gia Pass, North Vietnam, on 6 February 1967. On that date, Airman Hackney flew two sorties in a rescue effort of an American pilot downed in a heavily defended hostile area. On the first sortie, despite the presence of armed forces known to be hostile, entrenched in the vicinity, Airman Hackney volunteered to be lowered into the jungle to search for the survivor. He searched until the controlling Search and Rescue agency ordered an evacuation of the rescue forces. On the second sortie, Airman Hackney located the downed pilot, who was hoisted into the helicopter. As the rescue crew departed the area, intense and accurate 37MM flak tore into the helicopter amidship, causing extensive damage and a raging fire aboard the craft. With complete disregard for his own safety, Airman Hackney fitted his parachute to the rescued man. In this moment of impending disaster, Airman Hackney chose to place his responsibility to the survivor above his own life. The courageous paramedic located another parachute for himself and had just slipped his arms through the harness when a second 37MM round struck the crippled aircraft, sending it out of control. The force of the explosion blew Airman Hackney through the open cargo door and, though stunned, he managed to deploy the unbuckled parachute and make a successful landing. He was later recovered by a companion helicopter. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of hostile forces, Airman Hackney reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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THE SHORTEST LINE

It led to a distant, war-torn land and several close brushes with death.

LIKE most 18-year-olds with the scent of June graduation corsages still fresh in their nostrils, Duane D. Hackney was undecided.

The basic trainee was faced with selecting a career field that would not only hold his interest for the next four years, but would satisfy his strong desire to be of genuine service to his nation and to the Air Force.

Unable to decide, and impatient with his indecision, Hackney simply chose the shortest line he could find during the career counseling sessions at Lackland AFB, Tex. That short line was deceptive, however. It was to lead him into several encounters with danger thousands of miles away. A scant year and a half later, it also led him back to the US and a formal military parade where a four-star general pinned the Air Force Cross to his blouse.

But waiting in line that hot summer day in 1965, the Flint, Mich., youth who had lettered in football, baseball and swimming at Beecher High School had never heard of the Air Force Cross, the United States' second highest military decoration.

Nor had he any way of knowing that he would also return from Vietnam wearing the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, the Airman's Medal, the Air Medal with nine oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Hackney could not have known either that he would be named Airman of the Year in the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service and in its parent Military Airlift Command; or that he would be presented the 1967 Cheney Award for "an act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest performed in connection with aircraft."

When he approached the end of that career counseling line at Lackland, however, and met the pararescuemen in the maroon berets, Hackney knew suddenly that he had somehow picked exactly the right line to stand in.

Made to Order

The young airman soon discovered that he faced about a year of constant, strenuous training to qualify as a pararescueman. His skills of parachutist, scuba diver, medic, mountain climber, survival specialist and other rescue and recovery techniques were carefully and painstakingly woven together in a series of training schools that helped qualify him for his extraordinary job.

The learning process for a PJ is physically and mentally demanding and the candidate for the pararescueman's badge must be thoroughly convinced that this is what he really wants to do—or odds are that he won't make it. Duane Hackney never doubted for a minute his desire, or his ability, to meet these demands. He volunteered for duty with Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service units in Southeast Asia even before he received his maroon beret and pararescueman's badge.

Almost before he could say "Jolly Green Giant" he was on his way to Da Nang Air Base in Vietnam for duty with the 37th ARR Squadron. He began



flying missions immediately. On his 10th mission, in April 1966, he was hit by an enemy bullet while pulling a wounded Marine aboard his HH-3E Jolly Green Giant. His flight helmet probably saved his life.

"The round knocked me down," Hackney recalled later. "As I fell I pulled both of my legs up for balance. About that time another enemy bullet went through the pocket on the right side of my flight suit. It shattered my survival radio." The tense action took place about two miles south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), where a Marine helicopter had been downed by enemy ground fire.

"When we arrived at the scene we orbited the area while another Marine helicopter tried to pick up the downed crew. Unfortunately, the second chopper was also downed by enemy fire. Then, two flights of A-1E Skyraiders came in. They plastered the area to suppress ground fire, and dropped smoke to help cover our rescue efforts.

"We went in through the smoke and dropped the hoist. There was no ground fire at all, and it looked like an easy pickup. So the men on the ground sent up their most seriously wounded man first. Just as he reached the bottom of our helicopter we started taking small arms and automatic weapons fire.

"I was bent over in the hatchway, trying to pull the wounded man in, when the bullet hit my helmet." Back on his feet within a few seconds, Hackney pulled the man inside and placed himself between the Marine and the open hatch while he began first aid treatment.

The HH-3E had taken several damaging hits during the rescue, however, and was forced to withdraw. The crew made an emergency landing at nearby Dong Ha. Both Hackney and the wounded Marine were taken to a field hospital there, but the young PJ was released

within minutes and returned to duty. Next day, helicopter rescue men from other units picked up the remaining men at the scene of the multiple crash.

That 10th mission was memorable, but not nearly as vivid in Hackney's memory as the mission nearly a year later when he was blown out of his helicopter—the mission which won him the Air Force Cross.

It started early on the morning of February 6, 1967. A pilot was down in the dense jungle near Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam. There had reportedly been some voice (radio) contact with him, but apparently he had not been spotted from the air.

"He was down at the bottom of a pass, covered by three canopies of jungle growth," Hackney said. "Clouds were low, making it difficult to see very much of anything." The rescue HH-3E circled over the area as crew members searched anxiously for some sign of the pilot. Then Hackney spotted something below — something shining and asked if he could go down and look.

"There was flak all around us, but it was falling short," he remembered. The 6-foot, 180-pound PJ waited until his pilot jockeyed the Jolly Green Giant into position above the jungle, then rode the penetrator hoist to the ground and began pushing his way through the dark, heavy foliage.

Stumbling over rocks and roots, Hackney moved slowly through the dense growth. Finally, he found footprints that had obviously been made by American combat boots.

"I wanted to call out, but I was afraid I'd get Uncle Ho's (Ho Chi Minh) boys on me." He followed the prints but found nothing except a piece of tinsel. Then he was contacted by his crew and told to return to the copter. Disappointed, but low on fuel, they flew back to a forward operating base. Later that afternoon

Two months after mission that earned him the Air Force Cross, Hackney readies for more action.



A month after being blown out of his helicopter, Hackney (kneeling) was photographed with HH-3E rescue crew that picked up Capt. Robert C. Mays (behind Hackney) after 49 hours in jungle.



the crew was called out again for another try. Air Force pilots had spotted the downed flyer and marked his position. Two HH-3E helicopters headed for the area.

"This time we saw him," Hackney said. "I went down to help him get on the hoist. We made it up the hoist together and into the Jolly Green. I was bending over him, trying to treat his abrasions, when the flak hit us."

"There was smoke and flames everywhere. The pilot we had just rescued reached out an arm. I grabbed a parachute and put it on him as fast as I could (Hackney gave the airman his own chute). Then I found one for myself. I had it partially on when the second round of flak hit us."

Aircrew members in other USAF aircraft at the rescue site said later that the HH-3E was engulfed in flames and that there were gaping holes in the pilot's and copilot's areas of the cabin. Hackney didn't see the damage to his aircraft, however. He was suddenly dumped into open space, just a few hundred feet above the top tier of jungle growth.

"The sudden pressure (from the explosion) threw me back—hard. I felt a sharp pain in my left arm. I remember reaching for the door. Next thing I saw was the helicopter—from outside. I'd been blown out the rear door."

Trained to survive, Hackney reacted swiftly to his training. He pulled the D-ring on his chute, and hugged the unbuckled harness tight under his arms to keep from slipping out. As he hit the highest of the jungle trees, the chute opened just enough to break his fall. His crash through the branches was halted with a jolt when the chute risers snagged in the treetops. He freed himself from the harness and half climbed, half slid to the ground. He was the only survivor from the HH-3E.

"I guess I looked pretty rotten," Hackney said later. "I had blackened my face to prevent detection. My left arm and back were bleeding and burned and my right arm was rubbed raw." In addition to flash burns, the PJ had taken a few shrapnel hits.

"I knew the other helicopter would come back for me—either later in the afternoon or the next day." So the 19-year-old veteran of some 200 rescue missions in Vietnam began taking stock of his situation.

"I had my medical pouch with me, a pistol with six rounds of ammo, and some pencil smoke flares. I'd been wearing my camouflaged flight helmet when we were hit, but it was gone. When I heard sounds in the jungle I was worried, but I didn't see anything." Hackney wasn't worried about being picked up. He was more concerned about a Valentine card. It had cost him a buck and now he wondered if he would be able to send it to his girl friend in time.

Minutes later he heard an aircraft engine, then a US Air Force plane flew almost directly over him. "I got out the red smoke flare, opened it to mark my position, and found a pretty good spot to wait out the helicopter that I was sure would be arriving soon."

Actually, he was on the ground only about 30 minutes from the time he plummeted into the jungle trees until another HH-3E came in to pick him up. A former classmate in PJ training schools, A2C Luther Davis,

came down the hoist to get Hackney out of the jungle.

The end of a long and hair-raising day was almost over as the Jolly Green Giant raced for an air base in Thailand, but Hackney had one more "scare" in store for him. At the base dispensary a reading of his blood pressure showed that it was extremely high—210 over 180. But the exhausted Hackney had gone "out like a light" on a hospital stretcher.

When he heard a medical technician yelling for the doctor because he thought the young PJ had died, Hackney woke up suddenly. "That really scared me," he said.

February 6, 1967, was a day that Sgt. Duane D. Hackney will always remember. It was a day on which he nearly lost his life; a day when he did lose some of his closest friends after their helicopter was blown out of the sky. It was also a day when a young pararescue man had helped save a pilot's life, only to lose the man minutes later; and a day when it was the PJ's turn to be rescued. That Hackney survived his sudden, low-level "bailout" was a near-miracle. It was also a tribute to the thoroughness of his training.

Today, the 21-year-old pararescueman is assigned to the 41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Hamilton AFB, Calif. He has been awarded the Air Force Cross and numerous other decorations; has toured Military Airlift Command bases as the MAC Airman of the Year; was introduced to millions of TV viewers on *The Ed Sullivan Show*; was guest of honor during Hackney Day in Detroit, Mich.; received the coveted Cheney Award; and has had his fill of being a celebrity.

And it all started that day in June 1965, when Airman Basic Duane Hackney went to stand in the shortest counseling line he could find at Lackland AFB, Tex.

For Extraordinary Heroism

The story of Sgt. Duane D. Hackney is the first in a series of planned articles about US Air Force men who have been awarded the Air Force Cross, presented "for extraordinary heroism not justifying the award of the Medal of Honor. . . ."

Ninety-two* USAF officers and enlisted men have been awarded the Air Force Cross since it was authorized by the Congress on July 6, 1960. The first eight awards were made posthumously—the first to Maj. Rudolf Anderson, Jr., killed while flying a reconnaissance mission over Cuba in 1962.

The first enlisted man to be presented the Air Force Cross was honored posthumously. A1C William H. Pitsenbarger, a pararescueman, gave his life while attempting to save others. Sergeant Hackney was the first *living* enlisted man to be presented the Air Force Cross. As this article was prepared, only one other enlisted man—Sgt. Russell M. Hunt—has been presented the medal.

THE AIRMAN welcomes any information from readers that will assist us in the preparation of stories about the gallant airmen who have received the Air Force Cross. This information would be especially helpful in recreating the stories of those honored posthumously.

* As of August 23, 1968.



In 1967 Hackney became the first living enlisted man to be awarded the Air Force Cross.

Hackney, then a pararescueman with the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, had selflessly fitted a parachute on an injured fighter pilot after flak ignited the HH-3E Jolly Green Giant that was hurrying them out of North Vietnam. Hackney had rescued the pilot and the two had been hoisted aboard just moments before.

In the explosion that followed, Hackney was blown clear but not more than 100 feet above the heavy jungle growth that later helped break his fall. He was picked up 30 minutes later, the only survivor of the Jolly Green.

One piece of advice he said he took to heart came from his father, himself a Silver Star winner during World War II. "My dad told me to keep my head down," Hackney explained. "When they got the wire from the government telling them I had been wounded in the back, he wrote again and said: "I told you to keep your head down, I also meant your rump."

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Daniel Koehler takes part in services Wednesday afternoon for Duane Hackney. Before retiring from the military, Hackney was Koehler's supervisor for years at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base.

Saved lives recalled at funeral of most-decorated airman

By Dave Murray
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Duane D. Hackney, the nation's most decorated airman, was remembered Wednesday as a courageous man who risked his life countless times to rescue others.

About 150 people, many from the military and police, attended services at the Swartz Funeral Home in Mundy Township for Hackney, 46, who died Friday.

"You are surrounded, literally, by an army of friends," the Rev. Grant Wessel told family members at the start of the service.

Servicemen stood at attention at each side of Hackney's casket, with his red beret resting on the flag-



draped lid.

Wessel told mourners it would take too long to cite Hackney's achievements, but said his conduct stands as an impressive example to all.

In two tours in Vietnam, Hackney served as a paratrooper rescuer, dropping into the jungles to help grounded aviators.

During his 22-year military career, Hackney earned 72 medals and decorations, including the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Airman's Medal and Purple Heart.

He was the youngest and first living enlisted man to win the Air Force Cross, the next highest award to the Medal of Honor.

Not all of the citations were bright and flashy. Wessel said Hackney was equally proud of a simple black band presented to him by a Vietnamese tribal family after he rescued two sons from a burning building.

Please see **AIRMAN, C2**
(OVER)

Stearns was a program coordinator for contract services and Hamm was an administrative assistant.

AIRMAN

Continued from C1

In 1986, Hackney, a Flint native, was inducted into Michigan's Own Inc., a military and space museum in Frankenmuth.

Museum owner Stanley Bozich, a family friend, told mourners Hackney selected the rescue unit because it had the shortest line on a military assignment day.

After he learned the dangerous nature of the assignment, he stuck with it and eventually graduated top in his class.

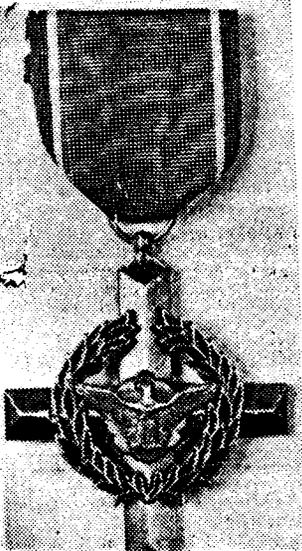
Bozich said Hackney dropped

into the jungle between 40 and 60 times on rescue missions, and people he saved have become fathers and grandfathers.

"Who knows how many people are here today because of a life saved by Duane Hackney?" he said.

Many wept as a tape of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." played after the eulogies.

At services at Sunset Hills Cemetery in Flint Township, a veterans' rifle team fired a 21-gun salute as airmen presented Hackney's family with three flags.



Air Force Cross



Duane D. Hackney

Air Force Gives Top Valor Award To Area Man

A 20-year-old Flint area pararescue medic has become the youngest man ever, and only the second enlisted man in history, to receive the Air Force Cross, that branch's highest decoration for valor in combat.

Airman 1.C. Duane D. Hackney, son of Mr. and Mrs. Glendon D. Hackney, 1107 W. Yale Ave., Mt. Morris Township, received the medal today in ceremonies at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

The first award of the Air Force Cross to an enlisted man was made posthumously. The decoration was established by Congress in 1960 and parallels the Army's Distinguished Service Cross and the Navy Cross.

The only higher military award is Medal of Honor.

Before 1960, the Air Force used the Army's Distinguished Service Cross for its highest decoration.

The airman, who wears the red beret of the elite Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, has received nearly every decoration awarded by the Air

Force for heroism and outstanding aerial achievement.

The medals, all of which he received for his tour of duty in Vietnam, include:

The Air Force Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Air Force Commendation Medal, three Air Medals, the Airman's Medal for Heroism and the Defense Service Medal.

An Air Force spokesman said he "probably" has the Vietnam Service Medal also.

Hackney, who has completed his tour in Vietnam and will be reassigned to Hamilton Air Force Base, Calif., was awarded the Air Force Cross for a mission over North Vietnam on which he risked his life three times to save a downed pilot.

In the rescue attempt he was blown out of his crashing unarmed helicopter and then was rescued himself from dense jungle near the Mu Gai Pass.

The Beecher High School graduate recently completed his second (voluntary) tour of duty in Vietnam.

Top airman's widow finds that medals won't fly body home

By James L. Smith
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The United States flew Duane Hackney to anywhere it was fighting, or might be: Vietnam, Turkey, Guyana, the South Pacific, Europe, Iceland, Wales and more.

Hackney, 46, the nation's most decorated airman from any war, died suddenly Friday in Pennsylvania.



Now, Hackney's wife, Carole Hackney, is worried his country won't fly him home to be buried in Flint, his hometown.

Hackney collapsed Friday morning while lifting weights in his home in Trout Run, Carole Hackney said. Hackney previously suffered heart attacks in 1980 and 1990 when he received a triple bypass.

When Carole Hackney went to Veterans Administration officials in Pennsylvania to arrange for her husband's body to be

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AIRMAN

Continued from A1

flown to Flint for a memorial service, she was told it was up to her to make the arrangements and the government would pay only up to \$1,500 in funeral costs.

That wasn't enough to get Hackney's body back to Flint.

"After all the things he did, it doesn't seem right," Carole Hackney said Friday.

U.S. Rep. Dale E. Kildee, D-Flint, had his staff begin work Friday night on trying to work out details to get Hackney's body home.

There was some difficulty in reaching people because of the holiday weekend, but his staff would continue to work on the problem, Kildee said.

During his 22-year career, Hackney earned 72 medals and decorations and served two tours in Vietnam. The medals include the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Airman's Medal and Purple Heart.

He was the youngest and first living enlisted man to win the Air Force Cross, the next highest award to the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was Airman of the Year in 1967.

In 1986, Hackney was inducted into Michigan's Own Inc., a military and space museum in Frankenmuth. His uniform, med-

als and decorations are on display there, said Stanley Bozich, the museum's owner.

Over the years, Bozich and Hackney have become very good friends.

"We're all shocked it happened because he's so young," Bozich said Friday night.

When the military wouldn't send Hackney, then a Chief Master Sergeant, to serve in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 he retired to northern Michigan and moved to Pennsylvania in 1992.

Hackney was set to begin his sophomore year at Lycoming College where he was studying nursing.

Despite all the medals, Hackney was not the stereotypical image of a warrior. In a 1991 Journal article, Hackney outlined his beliefs.

"I have always been a conscientious objector," he said. "I didn't want to kill people. I wanted to save them. I hate war. It's nothing but legalized murder.

"I don't have any use for people who say they are conscientious objectors in order to stay out of the service," he said then. "You don't have to fight. I never killed anyone."

In fact, as part of the Air Force para-rescue squads he was instrumental in saving many lives.

After three years in Vietnam, Hackney left the Air Force and

became a Genesee County Sheriff's deputy. He studied nursing at Mott Community College.

But four years later he re-enlisted and went back to para-rescue.

One of the more noteworthy assignments included a trip to Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978 as part of the effort to remove the bodies of 914 people who committed suicide on the order of the Rev. James Jones.

After he retired for good in 1991, Hackney enrolled in the nursing program at Northern Michigan University at Marquette.

In the 1991 article he hinted at his future.

"I want to be involved. To stir things up. Whenever I see a calm pond I want to throw a rock in it to make ripples. I intend to keep throwing rocks."

In addition to his wife, Hackney is survived by a son, Jason, 9; a sister, Janice Hackney of Grand Blanc Township; and a twin sister, Dianne Elford of Centerville, Ohio.

Heroic Rescue in Vietnam Jungle Described

By JAMES A. RANDALL JR.
Journal Staff Writer

DETROIT — Airman 1.C Duane D. Hackney, the Flint area's Air Force hero, met the press here Monday and came away a little awed but none the worse for wear.

Hackney, at 20 the youngest, and also the only living enlisted man, to receive the Air Force Cross, answered questions put to him by more than 30 newsmen at the Detroit Press Club.

AT TIMES rubbing his eyes in the glare of television lights, the baby-faced ("I sure hope this doesn't stick as a nickname," he said later) airman explained that he was "scared" on many of the helicopter rescue missions that took him into North Vietnam and to other territories he said he isn't allowed to name.

Hackney won the Air Force's highest award for valor in combat for one such mission. To the story of this mission he added information for the press.

The 6-foot 180-pounder flew

200 rescue missions this year in Southeast Asia and "can't remember how many" downed pilots and trapped soldiers he rescued.

He does, however, recall what was at first a "routine" mission, a mission that, like many others, was almost boring.

"We scrambled in the morning," Hackney said in a quiet voice. "We knew that the pilot was down in the jungle. There was voice contact with him but nobody had acutally seen him."

HACKNEY SAID the pilot was at the bottom of a jungle-covered pass. The crew of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, the Air Force's elite red beret pararescuemen, circled over the area in a helicopter. The aircraft went in for a look and encountered flak, which fell short.

Hackney was lowered into the jungle and, after some searching, found footprints made by U.S. combat boots.

"I wanted to call out, but was afraid I'd get Uncle Ho's boys on me," he laughed.

But the pilot wasn't found and Hackney returned to the helicopter.

In the afternoon they were called out again. The pilot had been spotted by another pilot.

JUST AS THE downed airman was picked up and was being given medical aid by Hackney, flak hit the helicopter.

"There was smoke and fire everywhere," he recalls. "The pilot reached out an arm and I put the parachute on him as fast as I could. I finally found one for myself and got it on just when the flak hit."

He was blown out of the helicopter, barely 200 feet above the jungle. He pulled the rip cord, but the parachute did not open fully and caught in some trees. He lowered himself to the jungle floor and suddenly heard enemy troops approaching.

A few minutes later he heard aircraft engines overhead and saw an Air Force plane fly over. He fired a red smoke flare, was spotted and later picked up by helicopter.

The helicopter from which he made his rescue had crashed, killing all aboard.

HACKNEY CAN'T quite remember why he won the Silver and Bronze Star medals, each presented for bravery in combat.

"I'm just not sure what missions were considered for the awards," he said matter-of-factly. "I was on one mission when we picked up 48 rounds of enemy fire in the helicopter — it looked like a piece of Swiss cheese — another when we had a SAM (surface-to-air missile) chasing us and another when MIG's (fighters) were after us."

He has 11 other decorations, although, ironically, he doesn't have the Good Conduct Medal — he hasn't been in the Air Force long enough to earn it.

One decoration he wears with pride is a red and black bracelet he received from a mountain tribe family for rescuing two sons from a burning hut. "They adopted me as a son,"

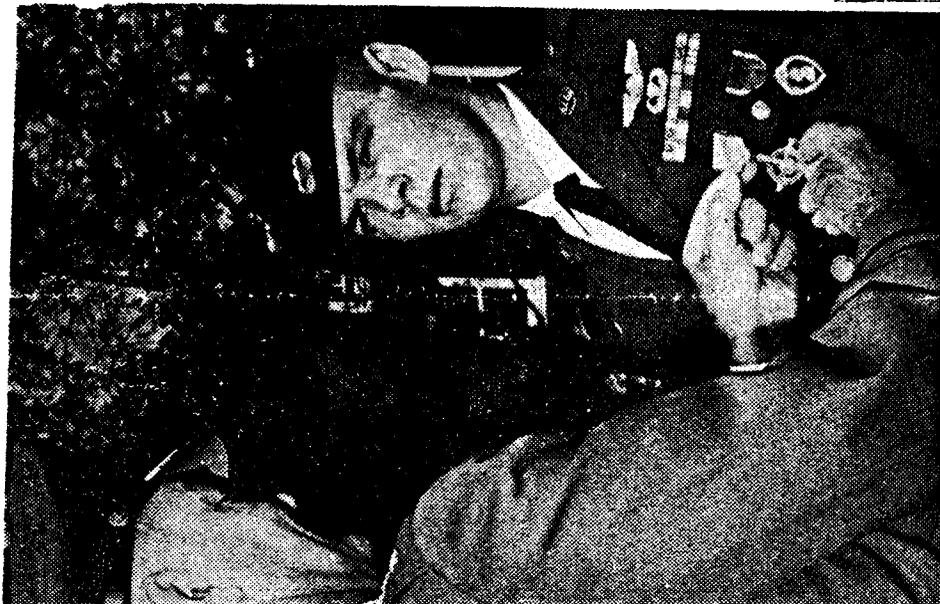
he said, "and at a celebration I ate with them. I thought it was roast beef. Turned out it was dog."

Hackney, who says his job is "99 per cent waiting and 1 per cent sheer terror," has in recent weeks answered a lot of questions and taken a lot of advice.

One piece of advice he said he took to heart came from his father, himself a Silver Star winner during World War II:

"My dad told me to keep my head down," Hackney explained. "When they got the wire from the government telling them I had been wounded in the back, he wrote again and said: 'I told you to keep your head down. I also meant your rump.'"

Jokes (or good advice) aside, Hackney says the first thing he's going to do when he gets 30 day's leave in a few weeks is "see my girl" and of course, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Glendon D. Hackney, 1109 W. Yale Ave., Mt. Morris Township.



Airman Hackney Gets Air Force Cross
Presented by Gen. Hovell M. Estes Jr.

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HE'S
BACK
IN
BLUE



At 20, SSgt. Duane Hackney, left, became the first living enlisted man to receive the Air Force Cross. That was in 1967. Today, at right, Hackney is 30 and happy to be back in uniform after a four-year break in service.

We thought you might like to know that Duane Hackney is back in blue.

Oh, his face is fuller now at 30, but there's no mistaking the faint glint of mischievousness in his eyes. It was even more pronounced in 1967 when he became the first living enlisted man to be awarded the Air Force Cross.

Hackney, then a pararescueman with the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, had selflessly fitted a parachute on an injured fighter pilot after flak ignited the HH-3E *Jolly Green Giant* that was hurrying them out of North Vietnam. Hackney had rescued the pilot and the two had been hoisted aboard just moments before.

In the explosion that followed, Hackney was blown clear but not more than 100 feet above the heavy jungle growth that later helped break his fall. He was picked up 30 minutes later, the only survivor of the *Jolly Green*.

When Hackney left the Air Force voluntarily four years ago, he had a chest full of medals besides the AFC—the Silver Star, the Airman's Medal, and the Purple Heart to

name a few. But the tech sergeant with two years in grade and a promising future chucked it all for a deputy sheriff's job near Detroit.

He admits he liked the job, the pay, his bachelor's apartment, and a new car almost every year. But a certain something was lacking.

Unabashedly he speaks of the challenges and personal satisfaction of being part of the team of Air Force professionals.

"I missed it," he says simply.

He is back now, as a staff sergeant, requalifying in his specialty. Not easy when you're 30 and those who were once your peers have progressed ahead of you.

But then the "new" PJ has done a few other things the tough way.

Welcome home, SSgt. Hackney!

AIRMAN

Aug 1977

War hero's body back home in Flint

Despite government red tape, the body of Duane D. Hackney, 46, the nation's most decorated airman, was back in his hometown Sunday.

An honor guard from the Oakley Trayner American Legion Post No. 64 was at Bishop Airport at 1:30 p.m. for the arrival of the body and Hackney's family.

Hackney died suddenly at his home in Trout Run, Pennsylvania.

Carole Hackney, the retired airman's wife, initially ran into problems getting Hackney's body home to Flint when a Veterans Administration official in Pennsylvania told her the government would only cover \$1,500 in funeral costs.

Local veterans' groups and U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee scrambled to iron out the paperwork to make sure the costs will be covered.

Services for Hackney are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at Swartz Funeral Home, 1225 W. Hill in Mundy Township.

Public visitation for friends is scheduled from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. today and Tuesday.

Cremation will follow Wednesday's service.

Donations are being accepted at the funeral home to cover an educational trust fund for Hackney's son, Jason, 9.

Mundy Twp.

Airman's courage remembered

Duane D. Hackney, the nation's most decorated airman, was remembered Wednesday as a courageous man who risked his life countless times to rescue others.

About 150 people, many from the military and police, attended services at the Swartz Funeral Home in Mundy Township for Hackney, 46, a Flint native who died Friday.

"You are surrounded, literally, by an army of friends," the Rev. Grant Wessel told family members at the start of the service.

Servicemen stood at attention at each side of Hackney's casket,

with his red beret resting on the flag-draped lid.

Wessel said it would take too long to cite Hackney's achievements, but said his conduct stands as an impressive example to all.

During his 22-year military career, Hackney earned 72 medals and decorations, including the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Hackney collapsed in his home in Trout Run, Penn., after lifting weights on Friday. He had suffered heart attacks in 1980 and 1990, when he underwent a triple bypass operation.

Enlisted man with most decorations dies at 46

By Neff Hudson
Times staff writer

WASHINGTON — As an Air Force pararescuer, retired CMSgt. Duane D. Hackney spent his 22-year career going places that other people were desperately trying to leave.

In the jungles of Vietnam, he survived 200 combat missions — many of them dangling from a line off a helicopter searching for downed pilots.



Hackney: in 1988.

In the mountains of northern Wales, he suffered for two days with a broken hip, a fractured skull, a broken clavicle and three broken ribs after a rescue mission went awry.

And he spent years on special operations deployments so sensitive that even his wife, Carole, doesn't know where he went. "He preferred to keep a lot of it private," she said. "He did a lot of things I'll never know about."

The years of strain and injuries caught up to Hackney Sept. 3 when he died of a heart attack while lifting weights at his home in Trout Run, Pa. He was 46 — and just two years retired from an Air Force career that made him the most decorated enlisted man in the service's history, officials said.

Carole Hackney described her husband as a passionate man who hated war but loved his troops. The combination earned him nearly every military award — including the Air Force's highest award for valor, the Air Force Cross — for a rescue mission in Vietnam.

On Feb. 6, 1967, Hackney volunteered to be lowered into the Southeast Asian jungle to find a downed pilot. After one attempt failed, he returned to base — then immediately went back when the pilot began broadcasting homing signals.

He found the pilot and got him safely aboard the helicopter when it was hit by flak. Hackney put his own parachute around the stunned pilot and helped him out the door.

As he grabbed a spare parachute for himself, another round of flak hit the helicopter and knocked him out the back. Although wounded, he managed to pull the cord on the unbuckled parachute and make it safely to the ground. Hackney was the only survivor of the rescue attempt.

He left the service in 1973 to work as a deputy sheriff in Michigan but returned four years later to resume his career as a pararescuer. In 1980 he entered the intelligence career field and served in special operations in Turkey and Grenada. He returned to his home state of Michigan in 1986 as a first sergeant at K.I. Sawyer AFB, where he remained until his retirement in July 1991.

In addition to the Air Force Cross, Hackney earned the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters, Airman's Medal, Purple Heart and 55 other honors.





