

AFEHRI File 19-5-1-20

Research Materials/Source Documents

FILE TITLE: Air Force Cross Recipient: CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative *G.R. Akin* date 7 JUN 98

EPC Representative *John C. ...* date 22 Jun 98

Scanner Operator *Matt Minto, Scansource* date 27 Jun 98
in house

APPROVED BY:

Gary R. Akin

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF
Director
Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

File 51-30
 Perm
____ Year (s)
Suspense _____

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

13 December 1968

SPECIAL ORDER
GB-645

By direction of the President, CMSGT RICHARD L ETOHBERGER, AF13409393, is awarded the Air Force Cross (posthumously) for extraordinary heroism while participating in military operations against an opposing armed force on 11 Mar 68.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE



J. P. McCONNELL, General, USAF
Chief of Staff

JOHN F. RASH, Colonel, USAF
Director of Administrative Services

DISTRIBUTION
GO

GB-645

File 51-30
✓ Perm
Year (s)

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
(POSTHUMOUS)
TO
RICHARD L. ETCHBERGER

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Chief Master Sergeant Richard L. Etchberger for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force on 11 March 1968. On this date, Sergeant Etchberger was manning a defensive position when the base was overrun by an enemy ground force. The enemy was able to deliver sustained and withering fire directly upon this position from higher ground. His entire crew dead or wounded, Sergeant Etchberger continued to return the enemy's fire thus denying them access to his position. During this entire period, Sergeant Etchberger continued to direct air strikes and call for air rescue on his emergency radio, thereby enabling the air evacuation force to locate the surrounded friendly element. When air rescue arrived Sergeant Etchberger deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire in order to place his three surviving wounded comrades in the rescue slings permitting them to be airlifted to safety. As Sergeant Etchberger was finally being rescued, he was fatally wounded by enemy ground fire. His fierce defense which culminated in the supreme sacrifice of his life, saved not only the lives of his three comrades but provided for the successful evacuation of the remaining survivors of the base. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb leadership, and aggressiveness Sergeant Etchberger reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

File 51-30
 Perms
 Year (s)
 Suspense

GUEST LIST

PRESENTATION OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS (POSTHUMOUS)
TO
CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT RICHARD L. EICHBERGER
1000, WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 1942
SECRETARY'S CONFERENCE ROOM

HOST: ✓ General John P. McConnell

RECIPIENT: Mrs. Katherine J. Etchberger (widow)

FAMILY: Richard C. Etchberger - age 11 (son)
 Cory R. Etchberger - age 9 (son)
 Sgt Gale S. Wilson, USAF (stepson)
 Mr. Donald G. Etchberger (father)
 Mrs. Kathryn E. Etchberger (mother)
 Mr. Robert L. Etchberger (brother)
 Mr. Roger Etchberger (uncle)

GUESTS: *The Secretary of the Air Force
 *The Under Secretary of the Air Force

✓ General John D. Ryan
 Lt General John W. Carpenter, III
 Lt General Seth J. McKee
 Lt General Kenneth E. Fletcher
 Lt General Lusine D. Clay, Jr.
 Maj General Otto J. Glasser

*tentative

GUESTS: (CONTD)

Maj General John W. Vogt, Jr.
Maj General Howard L. Crow
Maj General Gerald F. Keeling
Maj General Jack E. Thomas
Maj General Robert W. Menze
Maj General Glenn A. Kent
Maj General Clyde Box
Chaplain, Maj Gen, Edwin R. Chess
Maj General William C. Garland
Colonel C. W. Alford
Colonel Helen E. O'Day

SPECIAL GUESTS:

✓ Colonel John F. Moore, Jr. (AFXPS)
✓ Colonel Gerald M. Clayton (Project Manager)
✓ Lt Colonel Arthur J. Hojler (AFFDC)
✓ Lt Colonel Bob Cornetti
✓ Major Thomas M. Haskinson (AFXPS)
✓ Lt Trombette, USA (Family friend)
✓ CMSGT Paul W. Airey
✓ CMSGT Donald L. Harlow
✓ MSGT Stanley G. Davis (AFFDC)

January 17, 1969

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The highest decoration the Air Force can present for bravery, the Air Force Cross, has been awarded posthumously to Chief Master Sergeant Richard L. Etchberger of Hamburg, Pa.

The award was received by Mrs. Etchberger during Pentagon ceremonies held in the office of General John P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff.

The citation covered Sgt Etchberger's "extraordinary heroism" in Southeast Asia during conflict with an armed enemy when his base was overrun.

Sgt Etchberger called in air support on his emergency radio and requested air evacuation of the wounded. He deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire to place three wounded survivors into slings lowered by rescue helicopters and permitted them to be flown to safety.

During the continuing battle to rescue personnel, Sgt Etchberger was fatally wounded.

The citation states, in part, "His fierce defense which culminated in the supreme sacrifice of his life, saved not only the lives of his three comrades but provided for the successful evacuation of the remaining survivors . . . through his extraordinary heroism, superb leadership, and aggressiveness, Sgt Etchberger reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

Attending the ceremony in Washington with Mrs. Etchberger were: Mr. and Mrs. Donald Etchberger, Mr. Robert Etchberger, Mr. Roger Etchberger, Sgt Steve Wilson and Cory and Richard Etchberger.

END