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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NUMBER: BC-2023-01527

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(DECEASED)

COUNSEL: NONE

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(APPLICANT)

HEARING REQUESTED: NO

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

1. The decedent's NGB Form 22, *Report of Separation and Record of Service*, be corrected to reflect award of the Airman's Medal.
2. The decedent be considered for a ten percent increase on his retirement pay for extraordinary heroism.

APPLICANT'S CONTENTIONS

The decedent received the Airman's Medal on 6 Apr 86 for an act of heroism at Alvin Callendar Field, Belle Chasse, Louisiana on 17 Feb 84, yet it isn't reflected in his records. Adding the medal to the decedent's records will allow him to be eligible for a ten percent increase towards his retirement pay.

The applicant's complete submission is at Exhibit A.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The applicant is the widow of a deceased former Air National Guard master sergeant (E-7).

On 30 Nov 85, according to Special Order **Work-Product** and by direction of the President, the decedent was awarded the Airman's Medal for heroism involving voluntary risk of life under conditions other than those of conflict with an armed enemy of the United States.

On 30 Jul 95, according to NGB Form 22, the decedent retired from the Air National Guard. Block 15, *Decorations, Medals, Badges, Commendations, Citations, and Campaign Ribbons Awarded This Period* reflects: National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award, Air Reserve Forces Meritorious Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Louisiana National Guard Longevity Ribbon, Louisiana National Guard General Excellence Ribbon.

For more information, see the excerpt of the applicant's record at Exhibit B and the advisory at Exhibit C.

AIR FORCE EVALUATION

SAF/MRBP (Decorations Board) recommends granting the application. On 30 Nov 85, [the decedent] was awarded the Airman's Medal for heroism involving voluntary risk of life for his actions on 17 Feb 84. On that date, an F-4C aircraft experienced a blown right main tire while landing, departed the runway, and flipped inverted, trapping the aircraft commander in the front

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cockpit. With the ground saturated with over 2000 pounds of highly flammable jet fuel and the aircraft engine spitting 10 foot flames from the exhaust, [the decedent], with total disregard for his own life, ran to the assistance of the trapped pilot beneath the aircraft. Unable to see the pilot because the cockpit area had dug itself into the earth, [the decedent] began furiously digging under the aircraft with his bare hands. With the engine running at full military power and its intake only two feet away, its suction constantly threatened to pull him into the engine. Almost overcome by jet fuel vapors, [the decedent] continued his digging and finally gained access to the cockpit. He noticed the ejection seat had half fired and the 2000 pound thrust ejection rocket motor could ignite at any moment. Without hesitation, [the decedent] cautiously extracted the stunned and injured pilot from the cockpit and carried him to safety.

The narrative recommendation that accompanied the citation, which was provided by the applicant, also indicates that [the decedent] returned to the aircraft after saving the pilot, crawled under the aircraft, and shut down the aircraft's engine. On 30 Jul 95, the deceased former member retired and was transferred to the retired reserve to await retired pay at age 60. On 3 Feb 14, the deceased former member attained 60 years of age, thus entitling him to retired pay. On 22 Dec 22, the deceased former member passed away.

On 11 Dec 23, the SAF Decorations Board convened to review the application and accompanying evidence in accordance with (IAW) Department of the Air force Manual (DAFMAN) 36-2806, *Awards and Memorialization Program*. After a thorough review of the evidence of record, the Board concluded that [the decedent's] actions in the face of multiple lethal dangers met the criteria for extraordinary heroism. The Board noted that [the decedent] risked his life to save the pilot of the downed aircraft and, as an aircraft maintainer, full well knew the aircraft could explode at any moment. Additionally, he risked his life a second time when he returned to the aircraft to secure the engine, thus preventing the explosion of the thousands of gallons of fuel in and around the aircraft. In the board's view, [the decedent] made a conscious decision to repeatedly risk his life, which the Board concluded constitutes extraordinary heroism.

Title 10, United States Code, Section 8991 relates to computation of military retired pay. Paragraph (a)(2) addresses the entitlement for an additional 10 percent of retired pay for certain enlisted members credited with extraordinary heroism as follows:

"If a member who is retired under section 8914 of this title has been credited by the Secretary of the Air Force with extraordinary heroism in the line of duty, the member's retired pay shall be increased by 10 percent of the amount determined under paragraph (1) (but to no more than 75 percent of the retired pay base upon which the computation of such retired pay is based). The Secretary's determination as to extraordinary heroism is conclusive for all purposes."

Based on the evidence presented, the SAF Decorations Board recommends the Board approve the applicant's request for relief and correct the deceased former member's military personnel records to reflect that his Airman's Medal was awarded for extraordinary heroism, with entitlement to a 10 percent increase in military pay.

The complete advisory opinion is at Exhibit C.

APPLICANT'S REVIEW OF AIR FORCE EVALUATION

The Board sent a copy of the advisory opinion to the applicant on 19 Dec 23 for comment (Exhibit D) but has received no response.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. The application was timely filed.

2. The applicant exhausted all available non-judicial relief before applying to the Board.
3. After reviewing all Exhibits, the Board concludes the applicant is the victim of an error or injustice. The Board concurs with the rationale and recommendation of SAF/MRBP and finds a preponderance of the evidence substantiates the applicant's contentions. Therefore, the Board recommends correcting the applicant's records as indicated below.

RECOMMENDATION

The pertinent military records of the Department of the Air Force relating to DECEASED be corrected to show he was awarded the Airman's Medal for extraordinary heroism and is entitled to a 10 percent increase to his military retired pay.

CERTIFICATION

The following quorum of the Board, as defined in Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-2603, *Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR)*, paragraph 2.1, considered Docket Number BC-2023-01527 in Executive Session on 5 Jun 24:

Work-Product, Panel Chair
Work-Product, Panel Member
Work-Product, Panel Member

All members voted to correct the record. The panel considered the following:

- Exhibit A: Application, DD Form 149, w/atchs, dated 15 Apr 23.
- Exhibit B: Documentary evidence, including relevant excerpts from official records.
- Exhibit C: Advisory opinion, SAF/MRBP, dated 16 Dec 23.
- Exhibit D: Notification of advisory, SAF/MRBC to applicant, dated 19 Dec 23.

Taken together with all Exhibits, this document constitutes the true and complete Record of Proceedings, as required by DAFI 36-2603, paragraph 4.12.9.

6/20/2024

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Board Operations Manager, AFBCMR
Signed by: USAF