

Ron,

Let me tell you about another attempted rescue wherein I believe I failed my crewmembers by not recognizing their courage and recommending them for appropriate awards.

In August (31) or September 1967 we were scrambled off *USS Pratt* to attempt the rescue of an A-4 pilot named Richard Perry. I cannot remember the squadron. His plane was hit and slowly losing hydraulic pressure. His wingman stayed with him to steer him out to the gulf. Finally, after he had cleared the beach, he lost control of the aircraft but the east wind blew him back to the shore as his chute descended. His wingman had initial contact after the ejection but lost it in the descent.

We raced toward the shore and were told by the wingman that the chute had just landed in a small creek on the Do San Peninsular, which forms the southern boundary of Haiphong Harbor. Arriving at the scene at high speed, I saw the chute in the water, flared hard and held the flare through 40 Kts. indicated air speed shortly thereafter I did not have the A/S ind. in my scan but thought we were slow enough to launch a swimmer. Ernie Meyer went out on command and hit the water HARD. He had the wind knocked out of him but swam to the chute and raised the chute until he found the risers and pulled up the risers until he came face to face with the body. About this time we began receiving small arms fire from the shore and mortar rounds began dropping into the water in front of us .

What confronted Ernie in the water was a grizzly sight. Lt. Perry had been machine gunned in his chute during the descent and his face had been shot off. I believe Ernie regurgitated at the sight and gave me the thumbs down sign and the pick-up sign I attempted to signal to him to recover the body. He repeated the thumbs down and the pick up sign. I then told the hoist operator, on the ICS to take off his boots and helmet, go into the water and tell Ernie to recover the body. At this point, I saw mortar splashes in the water immediately in front of the helo. It did not look good. Skip Yates saw some folks come to the riverbank and begin firing at us with small arms and began setting up a machine gun tripod. He took the M-16 from its brackets on the instrument glare panel and began firing across the cockpit in front of me. I discouraged that quickly and called