

Guardman on target with pistol award



BULLSEYE—BG Kenneth L. Rieth takes aim and proudly pins the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge on Sgt. Ronald Bennett during ceremonies at the Dept. of Defense.

SP5 James Barrett

Sgt. Ronald Bennett aims to please. Nearly every time he aims at a target, he is pleased with the results—bullseye!

Bennett was recently awarded the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge after accumulating the mandatory 30 points in national matchpoint competition. These matches are so grueling and intense that it took a crack shot like Bennett three years to reach the 30 point level.

"I've been firing since I was 13 so the competition itself is not new to me, just the high calibre level of it," says Bennett. "It's really an exhausting sport because of the

great deal of concentration and mental discipline involved."

Currently assigned to the Small Arms Readiness Training Center at the N.J. Dept. of Defense, Bennett was named in May, 1981 to the prestigious National Guard Bureau Pistol Squad. He's the only New Jersey member on the 25-man squad, which draws Army and Air Guard members from the 50 states. Since October, 1979, Bennett has competed with the New Jersey State National Guard Pistol Team.

A veteran of Vietnam, Bennett was patrolling through the Khe Sahn valley with the 196th Light

Infantry Brigade. Suddenly, he and his unit received a very "intimate", firsthand encounter of the worst kind with the infamous Tet offensive. "It was about 7:30 A.M. on Jan. 9, 1968 when they opened up on us," recalled Bennett. "We took heavy losses but I was lucky and got out without a scratch."

In competition, Bennett used the 22, 38 and 45 calibre service pistols. The latter weapon had to meet certain specifications including trigger pull (not less than four lbs.), a seven inch sight radius (accuracy improves with a longer sight) and type of ammunition (Army 45 calibre). These "specs" eliminated any unfair advantage which might be gained by customizing the weapon.

When he competes, Bennett is on active duty status. The uniform is Class A; without blouse in Summer and a "woollypully" in Winter. All matches are held outdoors, rain or shine! The weapons used and entry fees are provided by the National Guard Bureau Marksmanship Training Unit in Nashville, Tennessee.

"I would like to give recognition to the Guard for all its help and support in my winning the award," emphasized Bennett. "I especially want to thank Col. Donald W. Kale, the State Marksmanship Coordinator."

The New Jersey Guard Pistol Team is always looking for new members—and you don't have to eat carrots every day or have nerves of steel. The current squad has 18 members, 10 pistol and eight rifle, and they practice indoors at the 150th Aviation Bn located at the Mercer County Airport. If interested, call Sgt. Bennett at the Carteret Police Dept. (201) 541-4181 or on drill weekends at (609) 883-6700 Ext. 274.

444th PAD/
SSG Michael Sopko