

1977

C I T A T I O N

TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE  
KOREN KOLLIGIAN, JR. TROPHY

Major Gale H. French distinguished himself by exceptional airmanship on 11 October 1977 when he averted a C-123 aircraft crash which could have resulted in a high loss of life and property.

Major French was performing copilot duties when the loss of an engine resulted in a severe aircraft fire. Dense black smoke and flames billowed into the aircraft cabin and partially incapacitated the pilot. Major French was forced to fly the aircraft with his head out of the cockpit window in order to see and avoid being overcome by smoke and fumes. The aircraft was flying over a heavily populated area while the raging fire was rapidly burning away the left wing, engine nacelle, and flight control surfaces. All communications, hydraulic and electrical systems, and the flight controls on the left side of the aircraft were lost. Using every resource available, and with exceptional skill, courage, and determination, he guided the stricken aircraft away from residential areas to the only available safe landing area. When the nose gear failed to extend, he successfully landed on the main wheels and kept the aircraft on the runway. Both pilots egressed through the cockpit windows. The fire, which had already consumed 30 percent of the aircraft, was subsequently extinguished.

The superb airmanship of Major French prevented serious injury, loss of life, and property damage to the surrounding community and reflects great credit upon himself, the Air Force Reserve, and the United States Air Force.