Deserter, WFU Grad, Courageous, Says Dad

DANVILLE, Va. (UPI) — A physician whose son deserted from a U.S. Army post and sought asylum in Sweden said yesterday he feels his son showed "a lot of courage" in choosing the most difficult option in his opposition to the Vietnam war.

Dr. Clifford G. Gaddy said his son, Army Pvt. Clifford G. Gaddy Jr., 23, boarded a commercial airliner at Boston, Mass., last Feb. 22 and flew to Stockholm. Gaddy said his son deserted while on a weekend pass from his Army intelligence unit at Ft. Devills, near Boston.

"I had known all along that he objected to the war for moral reasons," Gaddy said, "but I didn't know how strongly he felt until I spent a day and a half in Boston discussing it with him and realized then that it was something very serious."

"I admire him for his courage because I feel he took the more difficult choice. The easiest course was for him to stay. I know he's not a coward. He has a lot of courage." Gaddy said.

Gaddy said his son, a 1968 graduate of Wake Forest University at Winston-Salem, N.C., was considered something of a phenomenon by Army officials who tested him for language capability before his voluntary enlistment in October 1968. He said Army tests showed the youth "had the highest aptitude in foreign language of anyone they had ever screened."

"They were rather excited at his capabilities," Gaddy said.

"He talked himself into going into intelligence because he had been promised he would be in language school and this was his interest."

The physician said he did not personally know how about it because he is separated from us," Gaddy said, "but he has always been a boy who directed his attention to doing things in the most positive way. He never demonstrated with any group or individually at college or anywhere else pertaining to war or for other reasons."

On the contrary, said Gaddy, his son was a wrestler and track and field athlete at George Washington High School here, as well as a member of the school's debating team, a Merit Scholar and president of the National Honor Society.

"I hope that he will pursue his efforts for a general discharge," said the physician. "This is what we would like for him to do."