

Para-Rescue And Survival School Graduates Last Students At PBIA

The Para-Rescue and Survival School at Palm Beach International Airport graduated its last students in the past week and will move to McCall AF Detachment, Idaho, in the near future.

Lt. Col. Harry G. Howton presented the graduating students with diplomas certifying their completion of the three-month course.

Before actually "digging" into the training aspect of the course, the Para-Rescue students take two weeks of rugged physical training at PBIA, four weeks paratrooper training at Fort Benning, Ga.; four weeks of medical training at Gunter AF Base, Ala.; and three weeks academic classroom schooling at PBIA. They also practice night jumps, tree jumps, water jumps and jumpmaster training.

Then, for the next 10 days of training, they embark for the Big Cypress Swamp, living off the land, practicing stream crossing, jungle travel, M29C Weasel training, studying eatable plants and animals. A three-day mock mission is conducted at the end of the jungle training, carrying a patient through hazardous terrain.

The coastal survival phase of the course is conducted at Boca Grande Chica Island, just off Key West. For three days, the students are taught the use of life rafts, ocean methods, and fishing with available gear. They use parachute lines for fishing lines, can openers or wood and bones for fish hooks, they also learn how to make fish traps out of branches held together by parachute lines. They study eatable shell life and poisonous fish. Water purification along with medical techniques are only part of this phase of the training.

Six days are spent at Twenty-Nine Palms, Calif., where they conduct the mountain phase. This entails mountain climbing, litter evacuation and party climbing. For three days the students study and

one-man snow houses, snow caves and holes and only part of the training. Living off the land, the students learn how to prepare different types of traps and snares for catching game, how to prepare and preserve food, making fires, smoking food, building a rock oven and how to distinguish poisonous plants and animals from the non-poisonous ones. Walking in snow shoes sounds easy but actually doing so takes quite a bit of training. Mountain climbing in snow presents new perils to the students. At the last of the Arctic training, a mock evacuation problem is presented to the students. This involves medical work on frost bite, freezing and how to avoid them.

After successfully completing the three-month course, the students become Para-Rescue and Survival technicians and are sent to all parts of the world to rescue and aid persons in distress.

According to Lt. Col. John C. Shumate, commanding officer of the Para-Rescue and Survival School at Palm Beach International Airport, the school will move from PBIA and continue its training at McCall AF Detachment, Ida.