



RESCUE HELICOPTER—Pictured above is one of the helicopters used by the 74th ARS at Ladd field. The 74th has participated in numberless rescues in far corners of Alaska and some of its men have been decorated for

bravery, including Captain Dave Gardner who is at the controls of this rescue aircraft. S/Sgt. Cecil Pye is holding the portable fire extinguisher.

Type of helicopter used on the August 18, 1953 SAR with PJs jumping in before helo arrived

Survivors of Mountain Crash Tell of Rescue; Praise Pilot

Two Detroit manufacturers who survived a plane crash on a rugged Alaskan mountain 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle Tuesday said today they were "living on borrowed time," and they praised their rescuers for an outstanding job.

William Guse, president of the Composite Forging Company of Detroit and Albert LeClerc, head of the Paramount Engineering company, are both expected to return to their homes within a few weeks. Guse suffered no serious injuries, but LeClerc received a smashed vertebra in the crash. Both are in the hospital here.

The men, accompanied by Fred Wieler, Anchorage land office official formerly of Buffalo, N. Y. and pilot Bud Branham, were attempting to spot sheep from the air when they flew into a box canyon. It was too narrow to turn around, and they could not climb out due to a strong downdraft. The plane missed clearing the mountain top by only 20 feet.

The plane, a Grumman Widgcon was badly damaged but did not catch fire.

LeClerc was unable to move. Wieler was the first one out of the plane, and Guse and the pilot followed. Due to LeClerc's injury, they had some difficulty in removing him.

Lucky, the radio was still in operating condition. They contacted the village of Bettles, 10 miles away. A few hours later, a plane from the 74th Air Rescue Service at Ladd air force base near Fairbanks dropped two para-medics at the scene.

The medics, S/Sgt. Charles Chapman and airman First Class Walter Adkins, administered first aid, and shortly afterward a helicopter arrived with air force doctor Capt. Charles Blackwell.

All but Guse were removed that night, much of the evacuation taking place in darkness. Guse remained on the mountain with the two medics, as he was the least seriously injured.

Early the next morning, he too was taken to Fairbanks.

From his hospital bed today, Guse praised the 74th ARS and the civilian pilots who aided in the mission. He especially gave credit to helicopter pilot Capt. Dave Gardner.

"There was no flat place to set it down," Guse stated. "But he came in anyway and landed on the jagged rocks. He did a terrific job of taking us out, as the mountain was over 5,000 feet high and he made the last trip in near darkness."

"I know we'd have never made it on foot, and actually we're living on borrowed time. Only 200 feet from where we crashed, there was another canyon with a drop of over 1,000 feet," Guse said.

The sheep hunt had been planned since last January.

Pilot-guide Bud Branham suffered a broken jaw and lost all his lower front teeth. Wieler received a smashed vertebra.

MERCY FLIERS—Pictured above are the crewmen of a SA-16 which participated in the rescue mission on a 5,500-foot peak in the Brooks range last week. This plane brought the injured men from Bettles to Fairbanks. It was piloted by Major Joe Walker, commander of the 74th ARS, who is pictured second from left.

Rescued Pair Pay Tribute To Men of 74th Squadron

Men of the 74th Air Rescue Squadron received special praise last week for successfully carrying out a difficult rescue mission on a lonely peak in the Brooks range 80 miles north of Bettles.

The praise came from men who knew best what an outstanding job the rescue squadron did—the men who were rescued.

From their hospital beds here, both Albert LeClerc, and William Guse, Detroit businessmen who were among the four rescued, paid tribute to the fliers who snatched them from the 5,500 foot peak near Mt. Cairn.

Men Crashed

The two men crashed in a plane piloted by Bud Branham of Rainy Pass. A fourth person aboard was Fred Wieler, of the Bureau of Land Management.

Radio signals from the demolished aircraft brought both air force and civilian planes to the scene. The air force dropped two para-medics to give aid to the marooned and injured party on the peak.

Then a helicopter, piloted by Capt. Dave Gardner of Savannah, Tenn., took off from Ladd field with an air force medical officer

aboard. Flying the small "windmill" at an altitude that made controlling it very difficult, Capt. Gardner found the crash site, and made a difficult landing on jagged rocks.

The men were evacuated to a nearby lake, where civilian float planes took them to Bettles. At Bettles they were put aboard air force planes for the journey into Fairbanks.

"The helicopter pilot landed the aircraft on a tiny patch of rocks in gathering darkness," LeClerc said. "It was a wonderful job."

Small Area

(The air force reports that Capt. Gardner landed on a ten foot by twelve foot rock patch. He has been recommended for an air medal for the feat. The helicopter was very sluggish at the high altitude and the pilot could not see his instruments.)

Others who risked their lives in the rescue were the two para-medics, S/Sgt. Charles Chapman and A/1c Walter Adkins, who leaped from an air force plane and landed on a tiny plateau in the mountains.

"We are living on borrowed time," the rescued men told News-Miner reporter.



Heroes of Mountain Rescue To Receive Honors at Ladd

By FLORENCE STRAND

Three men of the 74th Air Rescue squadron will receive awards in a ceremony of high tribute tomorrow for their daring rescue last August of four downed flyers in the Endicott mountain range.

One of the men to be honored will receive the Soldier's medal at his bedside in Ladd air force base hospital, where he is being treated for a serious ailment, a public information officer stated today.

At 10 a.m. tomorrow during a special program, including a pass and review of the 74th ARS and speeches by visiting dignitaries, Capt. David Gardner and Airman 1/c Walter Atkins will receive an Oak Leaf cluster and the Soldier's medal respectively.

Following the ceremony, military officials will go to the bedside of S/Sgt. Charles Chapman to bestow upon him the Soldier's medal.

Doing the honors will be Major General George Acheson, commander of the Alaska Air command. Approximately 10 military

and civic officials are slated to attend the ceremonies.

Last August

The rescue mission which occasioned tomorrow's tribute occurred last August following the crash which left four men precariously perched in the hazardous Endicott mountain range. Captain Gardner piloted a helicopter in the dark under adverse conditions to the scene of the crash.

He evacuated the four men, one at a time, to a mobile medical unit. Sergeant Chapman and Airman Atkins parachuted to the mountain top and gave medical aid until evacuation.

Ladd's Proud As . . .

Soldiers Medal Presented Two ARS Men For Heroism

HQ ALASKAN AIR COMMAND, 16 January 1954—Award of the Soldier's Medal for heroism to Staff Sergeant Charles R. Chapman and Airman First Class Walter F. Adkins, both of the 74th Air Rescue Squadron, Ladd Air Force Base, was announced recently in General Orders of the Department of the Air Force, Washington, D. C.

Sergeant Chapman and Airman First Class Adkins distinguished themselves by an act of heroism involving voluntary risk of life in the Brooks Mountain Range near Fairbanks, Alaska, on 18 August 1953. On that date, a civilian aircraft with four men on board crashed into a mountain peak. Sergeant Chapman and Airman First Class Adkins were dispatched to the scene of the crash as para-medics aboard an SA-16 aircraft. Upon reaching the scene of the treacherous terrain and hazardous jumping conditions and left the decision to jump up to the discretion of the airmen. Fully cognizant of the personal risk involved they elected to jump to the aid of the critically injured men. Successfully planning the jump, they landed among rocks

and boulders and hiked 500 yards to the scene of the crash. Extracting the men from the wreckage, they proceeded to administer first aid and removed the critically wounded men to the scene of a helicopter pick-up. Though only three of the victims could be evacuated by helicopter that night, they dutifully remained with the last remaining survivor through the night until evacuation could be effected the next morning.

As stated in the General Order, the courage, fortitude and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Chapman and Airman First Class Adkins reflects the highest credit upon each individual, the Air Rescue Service and the United States Air Force.

WOMAN . . .

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air base, another successful para rescue practice flight accomplished.

Men who jumped that night included: A/2C Joe Mall, S/Sgt. Williams, A/1C Walter Adkins, S/Sgt. Charles Chapman and M/Sgt. Shier. A/1C Clair Rush was in charge of ground operations, and First Lt. Edward Markley is the public information officer, who made the reporter's flight possible.

Woman Reporter Describes Night Drop of Rescue Crews

(Marian Davenport, of the News-Miner staff, accompanied a 74th Air Rescue squadron crew on a night parapad mission over the Creamer's Dairy area last Friday. The society editor perched on a pile of air force gear and watched each serviceman jump. Here is a woman's view of the night rescue training mission.)

By MARIAN DAVENPORT

The streak of light marking the drop of Staff Sergeant Willard Williams from the 74th Air Rescue Squadron plane, suddenly caught, ballooned into a parachute, barely visible in the blackness of night, and swung wide, landing safely one and one-half minutes later within 20 feet of the target.

Four red flares marked his goal—a small area east of Creamer's dairy in the back lot, and soon another flare flamed brightly, indicating his landing position.

The practice "drop" was held Friday night under the skillful direction of pilot Capt. Herbert Layden and jump master, M/Sgt. Neil Shier.

Made Takeoff

The S. A. 16 triphibious plane, equipped to land on snow, water or land, left Ladd air base at 7 p.m. with Capt. Layden assisted by copilot Capt. William Dallas. Routine checks were made with the air force tower and the International airport tower, and a few minutes

later the plane was circling the area for maneuvers. Communication was made with the pilot and the door opened.

Two "spotter" chutes were dropped before the men started jumping. This gave Shier the "drift" the parachutists would encounter, while the rescue plane flew in a rectangular pattern around the area, always turning left to keep the target and jumper in view.

Approximately 300 feet of the 1200 foot altitude were lost just prior to each jump, after which the altitude and additional speed were regained.

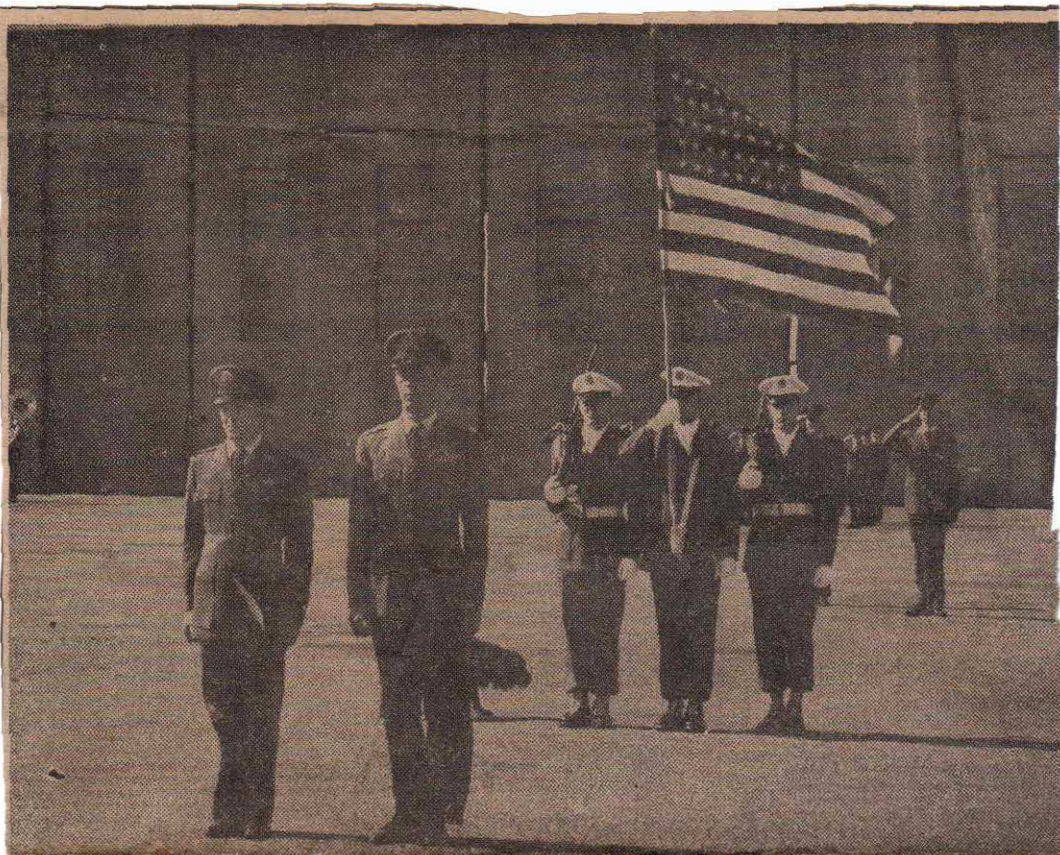
Plane Circled

In the darkness of the plane, men stood in line, rechecking their chutes and other gear, while the small, static line, which automatically opens the chute is fastened to the plane. As the moment arrives, for the drop, Shier shouts the command, hitting the jumper lightly at the same time. Not a moment is lost, with one step, he is over the ledge and drops into the darkness.

Each time the plane circled, another man jumped, with Shier, himself jumping last. He was checked, and communication to the pilot was made by engineer A/1C Warren Prouty.

The pilot then circled the field, waiting for the last flare before continuing back to Ladd

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(News-Miner photo by Francis)

HONORS FOR AIRMEN—Airman 1/c Walter Atkins, left, and Captain David Gardner stand stiffly at attention during a ceremony at Ladd air force base yesterday when they received, respectively, the Soldier's medal and an Oak Leaf cluster for their daring rescue last August of four downed fliers in the Endicott mountain range. Captain Gardner piloted a

helicopter in the dark under adverse conditions to the scene of the crash. He evacuated the four men, one at a time, to a mobile medical unit. S/Sgt. Charles Chapman and Airman Atkins parachuted to the mountain top and gave medical aid until evacuation. Chapman received his Soldier's medal in the base hospital, where he is in bed.



(News-Miner photo by Francis)

FOR HEROIC RESCUE—Major General George Acheson, commanding general of the Alaska Air Command, right, pins the Soldier's medal on the chest of S/Sgt. Charles Chapman, who assisted in the daring rescue of four downed fliers in the Endicott mountain range last August. Chapman is in the Ladd air force base hospital and could not participate in a review and ceremony yesterday, when two other heroes of the rescue were decorated.

Helicopter Pilot Named for Air Medal for Hazardous Operation

Captain David S. Gardner of Savannah, Tennessee has been recommended for the award of the Air Medal, for his extremely hazardous helicopter rescue of four severely injured flyers from a jagged rock-strewn mountain tip one hundred fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska's Brooks range.

After Sheep

The four men, two of whom were William Guse and Albert LeClerc, prominent Detroit manufacturers, had been searching for sheep when their private plane encountered a severe down-draft crashing them into the side of a mountain top. The pilot of the crashed aircraft re-rigged his radio and alerted authorities of his mishap.

On being notified of the situa-

tion, the 74th Air Rescue Squadron at Ladd AFB, dispatched Captain Gardner and a doctor to the scene of the crash. The 74th Air Rescue Squadron also dispatched two paramedics who arrived at the crash scene prior to Captain Gardner and, risked their lives jumping to a small plateau at the five thousand foot level near the survivors.

Rough Trip

Approaching darkness, turbulence and sluggishness of the aircraft at that altitude combined to make Captain Gardner's landing on a twelve foot by ten foot area one of the most difficult ever attempted in Alaska.

Working against time and darkness, unable to read his instrument panel and encountering severe downdrafts, Captain Gardner nonetheless managed to evacuate three of the more seriously injured men to a lake at the base of the mountain. A float plane then flew the patients to Fairbanks. The fourth man was evacuated the next morning.

74th Rescues Four From Crash On Mountain Side; Now Search For Another Plane And A Hunter

The 74th Air Rescue Squadron at Ladd Air Force Base successfully evacuated four persons whose light aircraft was dashed against the side of a canyon near Loon lake Tuesday.

They are presently searching, in conjunction with Canadian Air Force bombers, for a light two engined plane which disappeared on a flight from Juneau to Bellington, Wash., Monday.

A 74th helicopter also took part Tuesday and Wednesday in a search for an Eielson Air Force Base serviceman missing from a rabbit hunting trip since Monday in the Moose Creek Bluff area.

He is S/Sgt. Milton Wilson of the 58th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron at Eielson who became separated from his hunting companions Monday. Hundred man ground parties from both Ladd and Eielson are continuing the search, which they have been engaged in on both days.

Rescued Tuesday night and Wednesday morning under difficult conditions were: William Guse, Albert A. Leclerc, Fred Weiler and pilot-owner of the crashed Grumman Widgin, Bud Branham.

Branham is in Ladd hospital with a fractured jaw and will be transferred to Anchorage today. Leclerc and Weiler both sustained crush fractures of the spine and Leclerc a deep gash on his forehead. Guse suffered a wrenched knee and bruises.

None of the men is reported to be in critical condition. Weiler, Leclerc and Guse said in St. Joseph's hospital yesterday that they wished to express their gratitude to the

74th, and in particular to Captain Dave Gardner, pilot of the helicopter, and the two para-medics, S/Sgt. Charles Chapman and A/IC Walter Atkins, who parachuted from an SA-16 piloted by Captain Max Jorgensen, to give them first aid.

According to Weiler, they were making a landing approach to Lake 80 miles north of Bettles at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday and flying through a canyon when a down draft dashed the aircraft against the canyon wall at an altitude of 5,500 feet. The plane is a total wreck.

They radioed for help and the message was picked up by a Wien Alaska Airlines pilot, Fred Goodwin, who contacted the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

The SA-16 was at the scene of the wreck by 5 p.m. and dropped the two para-medics who requested medical supplies. These were flown to Bettles and dropped by parachute.

The helicopter arrived at 8:25 p.m. with a Ladd doctor, Captain Charles Blackwell, aboard. The men were evacuated by helicopter to the

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