

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 5,300 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

(Continued on page 8.)

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