For hours now they had been flying strictly on the gauges. The aircraft commander and co-pilot stared intently at the soft red-glowing instrument panel. The big Navy patrol bomber they were flying on a routine recon mission droned through weather so heavy and thick that it didn't even seem to swirl as it went past. It was a lousy day and they both knew that this was one hop on which they were both earning their flight pay. Occasionally they'd sip from a paper cup of cold coffee or suck on a cigarette.

The last thing they were aware of in this life was the instrument panel as it shattered and rushed up to meet them. High up on the polar ice-cap, miles above the Arctic Circle, their aircraft disintegrated against a mountain of ice.

After a search that lasted for days the wreckage was spotted from the air. Scattered over a treacherous and almost unapproachable area the crash was bordered on three sides by glaciers and ice-caps with extremely steep slopes, the fourth side was a sheering 19-hundred foot ice cliff which dropped off into the sea.

In an SA-16 Rescue amphibian specially equipped for Arctic operations two parachutists of the 55th Air Rescue Squadron, T/Sgt

Elliott Holder and S/Sgt Robert Christensen circled above the wreckage and without hesitation made the crucial decision to jump. They jumped because faint radio signals of undetermined origin indicated that someone might have survived the crash. Evaluation from the air was impossible and there were no areas nearby suitable for landing an aircraft. It is a rule in Rescue in that there are always survivors until first hand evidence is obtained to the contrary. Holder and Christensen risked their lives to bring aid to any of the 9 crew members of the Navy aircraft who, by some miracle, might still be alive in the wreckage.

Disregarding their own safety, they jumped in high winds, sub-zero temperatures and in the face of a threatening arctic storm. They landed on the ice-cap and were dragged for many yards by the winds before they were able to collapse their chutes. Christensen was dragged a quarter of a mile and came within a few yards of being swept to his death over the ice cliff.

They made their way over treacherous ice solpes to the scene of the crash which was more than a mile from the drop zone they had selected. The scene that greeted them on their arrival at the crash site was not a pleasant one. All aboard had met death almost instantly as their aircraft shattered against the ice-slope. This does not detract from the heroism of thetwo jumpers. The important and undeniable fact remains that Holder and Christensen jumped to save lives and the lives that they jumped to save were not their own.

For eleven days the arctic storm howled around them and prevented removal of the bodies. The temperature was below zero and the winds oftentimes exceeded 100 knots. On the 12th day, the storm abated and they were lifted from this ice prison by helicopter -- none the worse

for wear. Twelve days in a deep freeze and not even a cold. Top-notch training pays off.

In any future shooting war, the role of the paratroopers may will be a big one and viewed in this light the jumps of Holder and Christensen take on a special importance. Previously, no expert considered military operations in the Arctic practical or even possible on any significant scale because of the extreme cold, high winds, and difficult terrain. Now they have been forced to reconsider and re-evaluate. Now they acknowledge that not only are they possible, but if our northern bulwark of defenses is to be impregnable they must be planned for and guarded against.

These two Air Rescue paramedics proved conslusively that without proper equipment and training -- and a few "guts" -- troops can survive for significant periods of time under the worst of arctic conditions. The ice-cap jumps were not only chilly, they were spectacular and important. Also, they were typical of this unique group that serve with Air Rescue Service -- the pararescue men. "Guts" are stock in trade and heroism is a common virtue. Everytime they step out of an aircraft -- in training or when it's the realthing -- they take their lives in their hands.

As one grizzled Sergeant put it "learning to count right is an important part of a jumper's training. When you go over the side, you start counting: -- 1001 -- 1002 -- 1003. If your 'chute hasn't opened you keep right on counting and pull the emergency chood: -- 1004 -- 1005 -- 1006. If that doesn't open, you skip right on up to 10,000 because that's what your wife is gonna collect anyway."

Tough and courageous these men are not only proficient, precision jumpers but are specially trained in the techniques necessary for survival under any and all circumstances; they are expert medics and if a man is alive when they get to him he couldn't be in better hands. Whether it's the north pole or tropical jungles, the mountains, the desert or the middle of the ocean, with any luck at all pararescue men can get him out.

Men who have seen paramedics in action claim that "to do more than these men can do, you would have to parachute in an entire hospital -- staff and all." One paramedic, M/Sgt David "Scotty" Melville, was compelled by circumstances to jump alone into a Drop Zone on the side of a high mountain to aid a man suffering from a broken leg. He treated the man's injury, got him down the mountain to where he could be picked up and taken to a hospital. The only aspect of the mission considered noteworthy is that the jumper himself had broken a leg in landing on the treacherous terrain.

Pararescue men come in all sizes -- short and stocky, long and lanky -- and have backgrounds which are varied as the colors of the rainbow, but they are a special breed and are almost literally cast from the same mold. The highly effective training they received at the Pararescue and Survivor's School of the Continental Division, MATS practically guaranteed this. The consistently heroic conduct of these men under pressure demonstrates it and the countless successful rescues they have accomplished are an additional tribute to this training. Everything they learned they were made to do the hard way and push-ups were used to punctuate every point in training. ("Take 10 sokdier")

Their training fell roughly (and the adverb is used literally)

under three major headings: Airborne, medical and rescue and survival. After a thorough weeding out process, trainees were first sent to the Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia for a three - to five - weeks basic course. Here each trainee received instruction in parachuting techniques and completed five "live" jumps to earn his rated parachutist's badge.

It was a brutal course. In a typical class of 800 men despite the greatest care in selecting candidates, 200 could be counted on to wash out and of the original 800, only a very few would ever see duty with Air Rescue Service.

Most of the washouts were caused by the extreme tough physical condition program. The first day at school they ran a mile -- a tough haul if you are not used to it. After that they were brought along "slowly" so that at the end of 4 days, they were running 4 miles as fast as their instructors could prod them along. There were no rest periods. Everything was one done on the double and the reward for anything not measuring up to an instructor's idea of perfect was push-up assignment.

The rest of the wash-outs were caused by the 34-foot tower. Most of the trainees considered this torture device more frightening than their first live jump. It's designed to teach men in every detail the procedures involved in bailing out and landing. It also has built into it the same punishments and then some.

Moving on the double the men buckled on their parachute harness, sprinted up the circular stairway at the back of the tower, hooked on to a cable, sounded off, and hurled themselves out into space. As they

fell, they counted the aforementioned 1001—1002—1003.
After a 15-foot fall they hit the end of the static line with a spine-snapping jolt. As one slightly jump-punchy trainee put it, "that's worse than being hung."

This sudden stop simulated the opeing shock of the real thing. Then they were dropped the remaining 19 feet into a sawdust pit where they were judged on their PLFs (Parachute Landing Falls). One trainee who, after umpteen trips up the tower on the double, was understandably a little breathless a failed to sound off loud enough to please the instructor. "When you sound off, soldier, I wanta hear a noise like a bull." He paused a moment and apparently had a thought — "or did that last jump make a steer out of you."

If anyone of the dozen procedures wasn't done to the Instructor's liking, back up the tower they went. A dozen or more times they went through the same procedure if necessary until it didn't seem possible for human bodies to take more punishment without coming apart at the seams. One out of eight men out of every class decided either that he had — or was about to — and quit.

Here they learned to perform automatically the Jumpers' famous ritualistic, "shuffle, pivot, throw and go." They learned it or busted out.

For those that make the grade this tough training pays off. When the big day comes for the live jump — although a few slow down — very few freeze in the door. They tell of one General who, when the big moment came was literally knocked out the door by a private — who, incidentally, served under him. Once on the ground, the general thanked the man. "If it hadn't been for that body block you threw on me, I don't know if I would have made it," he admitted. But he never hesitated

after that.

For most of the men, completion of the basic airborne course pretty well wrapped it up. Qualified paratroopers that had made their marks took their place in the proud organizations of the airborne. However, for the pararescue men it was only the first rung on a rugged ladder.

Their next step was to the School of Aviation Medicine at Gunter AFB, Alabama, to attend the ARS specialist course. Here in a "jammed-packed" four weeks they were given the scoop on the latest developments in the field of advanced first aid. Here they learned how to diagnose and treat all but the most serious and complex cases.

They specialized in the results of violence such as battle casulties and aircraft crashes. For cases requiring the medical knowledge of a surgeon or doctor each man learned to describe exactly over radio a survivor's condition sufficiently well to receive and execute the required treatments.

They learned that such tongue twisters such as opthalmogy and otorhinolaryngology meant eye, ear, nose and throat the hard way. In addition they learned how to treat injuries and ailments affecting these areas. They studied in such widely varied fields as preventive medicine, dentistry, chemical and biological warfare, radiological decontamination and surgery as well as more obvious subjects.

When they left this school they knew how to treat headaches and skull fractures, hangnails and amputations -- practically anything but the common cold.

Next came probably the most colorful of all the Air Force's many schools -- the Pararescue and survival School. "Professors" at this

institution of higher learning held classes in some of the least hospitable areas on the North American Continent. Now, Rescue has all the training personnel it needs, and the school is temporarily closed, but while it was in business, it was really a pip.

The curriculum lasted nearly three months. For tropical training, the neophyte paramedics actually lived in the Florida Everglades. Coastal survival instruction was held on an uninhabited island southwest of Key West, Florida. Desert survival and mountain climbing training was conducted in the Joshua Tree National Monument area of the scorching Majave desert. The trainee got the scoop on arctic living in areas near McCall, Idaho where winter and summer conditions are similar to polar conditions.

Before he was through he knew the capabilities and limitations of the Rescue team and its marvelously varied and ingenuous equipment. He had proved his ability to select landing areas (drop zones) from the air. He knew how to drop spotter chutes and smoke flares to help him compute and correct for existing wind conditions.

Using totally different techniques from those learned from the mass jumps at the Airborne school, he was taught to make precision jumps from the aricraft types used in rescue work. He used steerable chutes to help him hit his target and before he was through, he could land on a pre-selected target the size of a blanket under almost any conditions with remarkable consistency. He and a partner formed a 2-man team called a "stick". Together they jumped day and night into water, trees, rocks, and open fields.

Few pople will have difficulty accepting the thesis that night jumping requires more courage then you find carried around by the average human. Pararescue men accept jumps as part of the job and make them

without hesitation no matter what the conditions when an actual mission is involved. When a B-36 crashed on a midnight approach to Goose Bay, two Rescue jumpers were over the flaming scene in a matter of mimutes and once they had spotted themselves over the wreckage, tumbled out of the SA-16 without hesitation. They aimed for the flames. However, the up-draft caused by the terrific heat of the burning gasoline carried them a quarter of a mile from their intended target. They landed wast-deep in soft snow. Progress was almost impossible. Attempts to drop them snow-shoes failed in the darkness. It took them 3 hours to reach the wreck-age. They did it by standing, diving forward into the snow struggling to their feet again and repeating the procedure. Lugging heavy medical kits didn't make the task any easier.

Once on the scene they attended those men who had miraculously sur-vived the crash, and searched that part of the wreckage which was cool enough to approach for the missing. At dawn all were picked up by helicopter. The survivors were sent to the hospital. The paramedics went back on alert. This was admittedly not a routine night.

Besides learning how to survive, pararescue trainees also learned how to travel. They learned to read maps and use the magnetic compass. Not only did they learn how to live, they also learned how to travel to any destination of rocks, mountains, snow, and desert, through all types of geographic diviations. In brief, they learned how to get out once they got in.

For example, in the desert phase of the training they were required to navigate across 55 miles of burning Mojave sand. Temperatures some-times hit the 150° mark. The water supply truck was positioned arbi-trarily near the center of their line of march. This they were supposed

to hit and they didn't dare miss it. Usually they travelled closer to 70 miles to cover the prescribed 55. The instructors who made the trek with them lived by an unwritten law never to correct them no matter how far off course they might wander.

As you may expect not all the trainees were as eager and as gung ho as the instructors and text books would have them. There is on record the report involving one student who faked a sprained ankle to avoid the hike. Later, caught jitter-bugging in a desert juke joint, he alibied, "Honest Sarg, it's OK on flat surfaces, but on rocks or soft sand, it gives me hell." When last heard from he was still doing push-ups.

In the mountain phase of the training the student was taught Swiss Alpine climbing techniques. Over and over again he rappelled himself and belayed other students and simulated survivors down from dizzy heights--always preparing for the day when he must do the same job for keeps. Often he was made to go back up these same "dizzy heights" hand over hand--just for drill. Underlining every phase of his training was a constant daily reminder that superb physical condition, operational readiness and speed are always of the essence. In Rescue, these essentials may mean lives.

Not long ago, an Air Force C-47 crashed in the Alps north of Nice, France, carrying 15 passengers and a crew of six to their deaths. Six Rescue jumpers picked a Drop Zone several hundred meters below the scene of the accident. The DZ was small and dangerous but despite high winds all six managed to steer their chutes into the target. It was a case of hit it or else.

Once "safely" on the ground they worked their way up the hazardous

face of the mountain to the crash scene, recovered the victims of the disaster and carried them down to where pack mules could be utilized to complete the grim task -- another example of arduous training paying big dividends.

Jumping at the high altitudes found in mountainous areas like the Alps is especially hazardous. Besides the obvious dangers imposed by the terrain, you fall faster through the rarified air and hit correspondingly harder. Why do men jump under such circumstances when the downed aircraft can be seen shattered on the cliffs below? They jump because it is always presumed that someone lives.

A ground party might take days or weeks to reach a scene that they can get to in minutes. In rescue work, minutes mean lives. It is a medical fact that even in the most terrible crashes, some survive for minutes, hours, even days but usually are so injured and in such a state of shock that they cannot help themselves. These are the ones the paramedics hope to reach in time to save when they jump on such a crash. They jump because they believe no life is expendable.

The recent B-47 crash in the Northern Saskatchewan area, in which three of the four men aboard were saved from almost certain death is another case in point. The Rescue squadron involved had trained in that very area only months before with rescue units of the Royal Canadian Air Force. When disaster struck they were ready and paramedics played starring roles.

Incidentally, M/Sgt Cecil D. Gray, the paramedic who accomplished the dramatic rescue of the seriously injured Captain T. L. Pittman, two days later led a land party up the sheer fact of Sandia mountain near Albuquerque, New Mexico to the crash site of a commercial airliner which carried 15 to their doom.

Since Air Rescue Service is world-wide in scope, working with both national and international civilian and military authorities, pararescue personnel must know and understand certain legal procedures. In the last phase of his training, the pararescue man learned about the correct disposition of human remains and personal effects, and how to mark and safeguard aircraft wreckage.

In the course of the curriculum, each trainee participated in three mock missions, all tough. One took place at about the 9,000-foot level in the rugged Rockies, another was held in the Mojave Desert, the third took place in the swamps of the Everglades in Florida.

In each case, teams of trainees jumped into designated areas near simulated accidents. Under the most realistic conditions conceivable, they would treat "survivors" and get them out the best way they could devise. They were entirely on their own in every respect and were usually forced to live off the land.

Occasionally, airdrops of supplies would be made, but usually they made it a point to eat what was available. One class of trainees loves to tell of the grizzled, grimy sheep herder who became violently ill at the sight of them munching on grasshoppers.

Jumps into tree and rock areas require special protection, no matter how tough a man is. For this they wear a tree suit and a heavy wire mask is attached to the crash-type helmet which is standard equipment on all jumps.

The tree suit is constructed of two layers of heavy canvas stitched and padded in strategic areas. In a large pocket on the right leg, a coil of rope is carried so that the jumper can lower himself to terra

arms should his 'chute become fouled in high trees. A heavy continuous strap is sewn down the outside of each leg of the suit, runs as a stirrup under each foot and up the inside of each leg, crossing below the crotch in such a way as to afford complete protection should the jumper be slammed into a tree trunk as he lands. Instructors demonstration this suit before uninitiated audiences usually include a horrifying demonstration of this strap's effectiveness in the course of each lecture. When it's least expected, the instructor launches a terrific kick at the grion of the man modeling the tree suit. So far the strap has never failed and the audiences are invariably impressed. As one laconic Sergeant puts it, "If it weren't for that strap our wives and girl friends would never let us jump."

On occasion, mock missions have developed into the real thing with surprising swiftness. One team took two days to chop its way two miles through thorny palmetto in the Everglades. The first day the patient they carried was simulated. The second day he was for real. One of the students had let his machete slip and almost carved his leg off. In spite of everything, he was in good shape and laughing when they got him out.

Not all mock mission misadventures have such an unfortunate twist however. One jumper on the Everglades detail landed in the plam trees and, instead of falling through, ended up suspended above a large and belligerent rattler. Did it disturb him? Not in the least. He lowered himself from his harness and caught the snake. His only problem he said later was that he couldn't decide whether to kill the snake and eat him or keep him for a pet. He chose the latter alternative. As a matter of fact the jumpers seemed to have a penchant for strange pets. Besides snakes, the list would include alligators, wildcars, coons, and one

unit in California has a white bobed-tail rat with the courage of a tiger.

Another group of jumpers adopted a rattler out of the Mojave Desert. En route Mountain Home, Idaho, in a C-54 the snake got loose. While the jumpers tried to entice the reptile back in his cage, the flight attendant bolted forward to the pilots' compartment and delivered an ultimatum. "I ain't going back there no more," he said. "They're all nuts back there."

Whether his appraisal was accurate or not, one thing seems certain -- it takes a very special type of the species homo sapiens to make a para-rescue man. In any other branch of the service the deeds they perform as daily routine would be considered worthy of special commendation. To them it's the life they love and few would have it any other way. They live to jump and they jump to save lives.

In every sense of the word, most of them are truly dedicated men. It is the sort of dedication that must be seen to be believed. Among themselves, off-duty and on, they do little but talk rescue and survival. (One important exception being, of course, WOMEN.) They spend their spare time perfection standard equipment and techniques, devising new. Collapsible snowshoes that can be carried with them when they jump, a hollow tubular pack-frame that can be used as an extra canteen, para-packets that can be dropped to snow-bound motorists to keep them warm until the roads are clear, are three typical gimmicks they've dreamed up.

Like Marines, they have esprit de corps that sets them apart and confidence that just won't quit. They have enormous and fully justified pride in their physical prowess and tell quiet stories of their accomplishments that , coming from anyone else, would be unpardonable braggadocio.

One jumper at March AFB, California, tells how the control tower notified them that a KC-97 tanker plowed into the top of the 3,000-foot mountain lying 5 miles NNE of the field. "The guys in the tower thought we were lyin' when we called in 22 minutes later and told 'em we were on the scene. They couldn't believe that we'd piled into our crash truck, bounced out there and scrambled up that hill in only 22 minutes. I'll admit we were kinda winded."

The men in the contro l tower had every right to be skeptical. On the surface the story sounds fantastic. It is unless you know the paramedics.

Famed radio commentator Eric Sevareid was in a group of survivors saved by jumpers during World Was II. He has paid them a superb tribute difficult to improve. Of the men who risked their lives to save his, he later wrote, "Gallant is a precious work; they deserve it." Paramedic personnel of the Air Force's Air Rescue Service stand ready at all times to carry on in this great tradition -- that others may live.

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