

RELEASE AFTER

May 24, 1956

AIR RESCUE SERVICE CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The 29th of May 1956 marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Air Rescue Service. For ten years this world-wide MATS organization has been standing constant alert to save the lives of American airmen wherever they may be when trouble strikes. This is the primary mission of Air Rescue but during this same period its facilities and the knowledge and courage of its personnel have been at all times equally ready to assist anytime, anywhere, when lives might be saved and human suffering alleviated. When disaster strikes there is never any question as to whether those in need of help are American or foreign, military or civilian. Air Rescue Service is available to all.

Brigadier General Thomas J. Du Bose, Commander, Air Rescue Service, commented on the tenth anniversary from his headquarters at Orlando AFB, Florida, "It seems singularly appropriate that this anniversary should occur during a year when the United States Air Force is observing 'A Decade of Security Through Global Air Power.' To me it has always been a source of wonder and pride that the most potent and destructive military force ever known should create a special service dedicated to saving life. Its concept is typically American. All over the world Air Rescue affords daily proof that, as Americans, we hold human life to be the most precious commodity on earth. To the people of foreign lands who see Rescue in action, it serves as a constant rebuttal to those who propagandize against us. As an instrument of international good will its value is incalculable."

In the ten years since its founding an accurate count of the number of lives actually saved by ARS is impossible. Statistics are by no means complete. In many instances it is not possible to say positively that Rescue saved a survivor's life when the possibility exists that he might have been able to save himself. However, it can be definitely established that in the past ten years, over 4,078 people have been found and rescued from certain death by ARS personnel. This is a most conservative statistic and in all probability represents but a fraction of the true total.

Existing records do show that on search and rescue missions alone Air Rescuemen have flown over 173,351 hours. These hours do not include escort missions or orbit missions which Rescue flies every day of the year just to be on the scene in case trouble should develop. These 173,351 hours were flown for the sole purpose of seeking and saving downed military

(MORE)

and civilian flyers, accident victims, and the survivors of natural disasters. They were flown not only to aid citizens of the United States but those of practically every country this side of the iron curtain.

As a result of these missions ARS has directly aided a confirmed total of 44,520 people during the past ten years. This impressive figure does not include the literally countless thousands of people aboard aircraft that ARS has intercepted and escorted to safety. It does not include the many aircraft to which Rescue has supplied communication and navigational aid enabling them to reach their destination without difficulty. Because no estimate is possible, no claim is made for the number of lives and aircraft saved by missions of this sort.

Late in 1954, four AF C-119 "Flying Boxcars" headed for one of our far northern bases in Greenland which can only be approached by flying up a treacherous fiord. The fiord is 45 miles long, one to five miles wide and lined by mountains ranging up to a mile high. Even on a clear day, it's imposing. When the four big "Boxcars" reached the coast of Greenland, past the point of no return, they encountered unexpected bad weather blocking their approach to the base. Disaster was imminent.

A Rescue alert crew "scrambled" and rendezvoused with the C-119s at the fiord. Navigating solely by radar, the Rescue aircraft made two runs to the base, escorting two "Boxcars" on each trip. Of the four crews aboard the C-119s, how many would have survived is anybody's guess but certainly--had it not been for skilled assistance--all four aircraft would have been lost.

Air Rescue guards the air lanes of the world and no matter what its country of origin an aircraft in trouble can always call on Rescue to intercept it and lead it to safety. For example, should a Scandinavian airliner lose an engine on a flight over the Mediterranean, Rescue would fly out to meet him and escort him to his destination as willingly as they would one of our own big Air Force bombers. Should the trouble worsen and force the plane down, the Rescue plane would be on hand to render immediate assistance. When large flights of aircraft make long hauls over water or remote land masses, Rescue aircraft will fly what is termed an "orbit mission" and take up stations at strategic points along the proposed route to render navigational and communication assistance and to be in the vicinity should any difficulties develop. Every year the American taxpayer is saved untold millions of dollars by precautionary flights of this nature. The highly trained personnel whose lives are saved are priceless.

For heroic work in the face of natural disasters Rescue personnel have made headlines repeatedly during the past ten years. The majority of these disasters involved people of other countries and the exploits of Rescuemen have developed bonds of friendship that will never be broken. In the English and Dutch flood disasters in 1953 Rescue is credited with saving thousands of people but because the exact figure is impossible to confirm it is not mentioned in the earlier total.

In the Netherlands, Rescue flew Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard themselves over all the flood area. On occasion the Queen actually ordered her people into the helicopters to be saved. Subsequently the Prince wrote a letter of appreciation for Rescue's work during the emergency, and decorated certain outstanding Rescue personnel.

In England A/3C Reis Leming personally saved 27 people at the risk of his own life and was awarded the George Cross, England's second highest medal for valor. He also won the undying gratitude of the British people.

In February 1947 Rescue participated in its first major flood action when the Mamore River flooded in Bolivia. Native villages were wiped out in an area of over 100 square miles. ARS established an airlift and, under most difficult conditions, carried hundreds to safety. One C-47, the Air Force version of the old commercial DC-3, staggered aloft from one primitive airstrip with over 90 survivors aboard. To be sure, most were children but this figure probably still stands as a record for this type aircraft.

The untiring and selfless efforts of Rescue personnel during this highly publicized disaster made a great impression throughout all South America. Colonel Robert L. Rizon who directed the effort was awarded Bolivia's highest decoration, the Condor of the Andes, which is equivalent to our own Congressional Medal of Honor.

The pages of the past ten years of ARS history are crowded with references to outstanding achievements in the face of large scale disasters. In recent months, Rescue directed all operations by units of the Department of Defense during the two great New England floods and the floods in California. Rescue also has led the fight against floods in Japan, Italy, Mexico, Costa Rica, and at home in Kansas and Texas to mention but a few.

Rescue has been praised officially for flying in supplies and medical help and airlifting to safety critically injured survivors following earthquakes in Orleansville, Algeria and Greece, for example, and in a number of avalanche disasters in Austria, Italy and Switzerland. In 1951 ARS flew in serum and medical aid to help check the yellow fever epidemic in tiny Costa Rica. The Republic of Haiti dedicated a stamp to the Air Rescue Service for assistance rendered when that area was ravaged by Hurricane Hazel in October 1954.

Certain accomplishments of ARS personnel have bordered on the legendary and a list of such exploits for which recognition was forthcoming would be impressively long. To name but a few is to neglect many but any list would have to include the following:

July 1952. Operation Hop-A-Long, the first trans-Atlantic helicopter flight which demonstrated the feasibility of ferrying helicopters over extensive distances.

January 1954. Operation Skip-A-Long, in which helicopters were

ferried to Puerto Rico and Panama. The advantage of delivering the aircraft in flyable condition was graphically demonstrated when, within a few hours after arriving in Panama, one was utilized on a life-saving mission.

July 1952. The rescue of 32 people from the stormy Mediterranean by Captain Kendrick U. Reeves. His actions won him the Cheney Award ". . . for an act of valor, fortitude, self-sacrifice, and humanitarian interest in connection with aircraft."

July 1954. The saving of the survivors of the British Cathay-Pacific airliner shot down by the Chinese Reds. The rescue was made by an aircraft piloted by Captain Jack Woodyard practically under the guns of Communist fighter aircraft. Captain Woodyard and his crew were also decorated for heroism.

February 1951. The courageous helicopter rescue by Captain Daniel J. Miller of six wounded and exposed enemy infantrymen trapped behind enemy lines in Korea. Captain Miller made three successive trips behind the lines, landing on a small ridge under deadly enemy fire to effect the rescue. He also received the Cheney Award for his valor.

June 1951. Rescue of UN fighter pilot at night from a river deep in North Korean territory. In almost total darkness 1st Lt. John J. Najarian made a night water landing on the Taedong River, hauled the waterlogged survivor aboard his Rescue amphibian and accomplished a hazardous night take-off. He was unable to use any lights for fear of affording enemy gunners, who maintained relentless fire during the entire operation, too good a target. For his actions Lieut. Najarian was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, this nation's second highest decoration.

It was in Korea that ARS came into its own. Under combat conditions the magnificent accomplishments of this organization added a new dimension to the concept of aerial rescue. Prior to this time Air Rescue may be said to have been in its infancy--its formative period--and rescue techniques were largely experimental. In Korea, Rescue saved the lives of 9,680 fighting men and 996 of these were rescued from behind enemy lines.

To accomplish this meant the development and standardization of Rescue techniques and procedures and their refinement to a high degree of reliability. The helicopter established itself as an invaluable rescue vehicle. Many famous pilots, including triple jet ace Captain Joe McConnell, were picked up and lived to fly and fight again because of Air Rescue's battle "taxi" service. The high regard in which Rescue's contribution to the United Nation's effort was held is evidenced by the fact that it was the most decorated unit in Korea.

ARS was responsible, to a large degree, for the remarkably low mortality rate among the wounded--almost half the World War II incidence. By, helicopter, severely wounded men who could not have survived ground transportation were airborne from front-line aid stations to large

hospitals in the rear within minutes after being hit. In less than half an hour helicopters accomplished evacuations which often would have required a full day of tortuous overland travel by jeep. In these same helicopters Rescue became the first to give transfusions to the wounded men while airborne on their way to the rear area.

One important aspect of the ARS mission is to develop and perfect Rescue techniques and equipment. In its relatively brief existence great strides have been made. Perhaps the most spectacular Rescue technique, brought to a high degree of perfection by the Air Rescue Service, is Pararescue. The Pararescue personnel constitute a unique breed and are certainly among the best trained men in the Armed Forces today. Precision parachutists, highly trained medics, experts on survival under any earthly circumstances, these men will jump under almost any conditions if the possibility exists that there is a life to be saved. They live to jump; they jump to save lives and the lives they jump to save are not their own.

Tough and courageous, these men form an elite corps within Rescue and if a man is alive when they get to him, he couldn't be in better hands. Doctors who have seen Paramedics in action claim that, "to do more than these men can do, you'd have to parachute in a whole hospital."

Heroism is their stock in trade. Two of these men, T/Sgt Elliott Holder and S/Sgt Robert Christensen, jumped to the crash site of a Navy patrol bomber high on the Greenland polar ice cap, far above the Arctic Circle. They jumped in the faint hope that someone might have survived the crash. High winds nearly dragged Holder to his death over a 1,900 foot precipice. A howling Arctic storm with winds over 100 miles an hour pinned them down for 11 days. On the 12th day when the storm subsided, they were picked up by helicopter none the worse for wear--thanks to their superb training and conditioning.

In Rescue there is an axiom: there are always survivors until it is definitely established otherwise. Because of their dedication to this principle these two Sergeants could have paid with their lives. Instead they definitely established that with proper equipment and training, troops can survive for significant periods of time in the Arctic at its worst. A new chapter in Arctic warfare was opened.

On Friday the 13th of February 1953, shortly after midnight, T/Sgt Charles Abbott and S/Sgt John Bowers jumped over the flaming crash of a B-36 near Goose Air Base. It was 20 below zero when they stepped out of their SC-47 into the midnight darkness. After landing it took them four hours to crawl a mere 300 yards through the deep drifted snow before they finally reached the survivors. Despite the hard going they were able to treat the injured and at dawn 14 survivors and the Pararescuemen were taken by helicopter back to Goose Air Base.

Another Pararescue hero is A/1C Howard C. Griffus, Jr. who without hesitation leaped into the numbing waters of Cook Inlet, Alaska to save

the life of a fellow airman who had bailed out of a crippled jet fighter and was too near death to assist himself. Once in the water Airman Griffus placed the unconscious man in the sling of a Rescue helicopter and with complete disregard for his personal safety, waved the helicopter away so the man could be cared for more quickly. A second helicopter which had no hoist or other means of rescuing Griffus was able to keep him in sight until an ARS amphibian could make a water landing and effect his rescue.

From the frozen wastes of the Greenland Ice Cap and the Alaskan Tundra to the jungles of Panama and the searing sands of Saudi Arabia, Air Rescue-men have performed repeatedly such near-miracles in their humanitarian efforts to save life.

ARS has been in business ten years. In ten years, Rescue personnel have, according to the most conservative estimates, recovered on search and rescue missions, 20,647 persons and saved from certain death over 4,078. The latter figure amounts to more than one life saved per day ever since the organization came into existence.

In recent weeks, a Northwest Airlines "Stratocruiser" crashed in the icy waters of Puget Sound immediately after taking-off from the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The low water temperature made speed essential. The United Press reported, "The rescue, one of the fastest on record, was completed only a few minutes after the double-deck, four-engine plane went down about half way between Seattle and Tacoma." Two SA-16 Albatross Rescue amphibians were able to save 32 of the 37 persons aboard and avert another major airline disaster. The ARS squadron involved considered it, "All in a day's work."

It has been said that Rescuemen perform daily, as a matter of routine, acts for which they would be decorated in any other organization. This is not strictly correct because the business of saving life can never become "routine" despite occasional efforts to be blase.

The men that fly the missions are all skilled "professionals" in the highest sense of the word. Their business is saving lives but they can never become cold-blooded about the job they do any more than cold statistics can tell the full story of the ARS.

All living men have one enemy in common--death. When a life is saved, every man who helps cheat death or witnesses the fact feels more secure against this ultimate enemy. More than 4,078 people are living today because Air Rescue Service was on the job. They and countless thousands who have seen Rescue in action all over the world, will testify that the word "security" in the slogan, "A Decade of Security Through Global Air-power," means something more than fleets of bombers and supersonic interceptors.