

Capsule 'Baby Sitters' Get Medals, Mainland Trip



Sergeants Vigare, Vargas and McClure (from left) wear their Air Medals and point to Hawaii on a globe.—Star-Bulletin Photo.

The three sergeants who spent a night baby-sitting for Discoverer XXV's instrument capsule got their rewards today in the form of medals and orders to the Mainland.

The object of all the fuss—the capsule laden with instruments the nature of which hasn't been disclosed—is in Sunnyvale, California, being dissected by scientists.

The sergeants received Air Medals from General Emmett O'Donnell Jr., Pacific Air Forces commander, at Hickam Air Force Base.

Technical Sergeant Leote M. Vigare and Staff Sergeants William Vargas and Ray E. McClure leave for the Mainland tonight.

They'll spend a week making television appearances and relaxing.

The Dave Garroway show and perhaps the Ed Sullivan Show are on their schedule in New York City.

Discoverer XXV was launched Friday and orbited earth for more than 50 hours before its capsule was ejected into the Pacific Ocean northeast of Oahu Sunday.

The sergeants, all parascue men, parachuted to the capsule, bobbed on the waves with it all Sunday night and were picked up by the destroyer Radford yesterday.

"Everything happened so fast it seems like it didn't happen at all," said Vigare.

Both Vigare and Vargas were seasick some of the time but otherwise the three men had to contend only with sleepiness and boredom.

Vargas was the first to jump and he landed within 20 yards of the floating capsule.

He soon was joined by McClure and a kit containing rafts and other gear.

Vigare joined them later. It took five minutes to get the capsule into the raft and lashed down for the night.

The three men got little sleep because of radio checks every half-hour and at 2 a.m. they asked for an hour's relief from the radio so they could rest.

The Radford arrived on the scene after a high-speed run from Oahu.

A giant Navy boatswain's mate was the last man to touch the capsule before it was locked inside a canister.

A boom and winch lifted the capsule aboard, where 315-pound Donald H. Graham took over.

Graham, the shot put and heaving line champion of

Destroyer Flotilla Five, grabbed the capsule and heaved it into the can.

"I guess it weighed about 100 pounds or so," said the six-foot, five-inch Graham.

Others said the capsule weighed much more.

The Radford returned to Oahu and the capsule was put aboard an Air Force C-130 for the flight to the Mainland.

"It was a good recovery operation all around," said

Air Force Lieutenant Colonel T. A. Ahola, commander of the 659th Air Recovery Control Group.

"We did what we set out to do."

Ahola said the capsule landed too far north of the programmed recovery area to be air-snatched by the waiting C-119 Flying Boxcars from Hickam.

The crew of one C-119, piloted by Captain Warren C. Schensted, saw the capsule

in the water and flashed the signal.

The three sergeants were dropped into the ocean by a plane from the 76th Air Rescue Squadron.

Other planes droned over the capsule through Sunday night to guard the capsule and the sergeants from possible interception by outsiders.

"It cost plenty and we didn't want to lose all of that," said Ahola.

Hawaiian



Staff Sergeant William Vargas tests the biceps of Boatswain's Mate Donald H. Graham who, in a Space Age feat early last week, lifted the Discoverer XXV instrument capsule from the destroyer Radford's deck into a shipping canister. Six-foot-five-inch, 315-pound Graham is the pride of the destroyer's muscle department. —Star-Bulletin Photo.

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

★★★★

HONOLULU, HAWAII, MONDAY, JUNE 19, 1961

Phone 57-911

Skindivers Grab Satellite Capsule

By JACK SCHREIBMAN
Associated Press

Three parachuting skindivers who spent a lonely all-night sea vigil with the precious payload of Discoverer XV satellite were taken from the ocean with the capsule today.

The Navy destroyer Radford, after steaming all night at high speed from Pearl Harbor, reached the trio, their raft and the capsule recovered from outer space at 7:09 a.m.

A Navy spokesman said: "The men and the capsule are in excellent condition."

The Radford was to dock back at Pearl Harbor at 8 tonight.

The capsule will be flown for examination by Air Force scientists to Sunnyvale, California.

Yesterday's recovery of the 300-pound instrument-packed capsule was the fifth success in the long Discoverer series. Three capsules were snagged on the fly

by C119 Flying Boxcars, and a fourth was fished from the sea.

But Discoverer XXV's capsule was the first to be taken from the Pacific by flippered skindivers who leaped into the water with parachutes from 1,000 feet altitude.

The technique clears a giant hurdle in the Air Force's hot quest to uncover any and all means of recovering capsules triggered earthward after whipping around the globe in outer space.

"Recovery by the skindivers really worked," said a jubilant Air Force spokesman. "We know now we can get anything that comes back from outer space."

The Air Force's enthusiasm was not a bit dampened by the fact the C119s missed a chance to grab the capsule before it hit the sea.

Recovery personnel, based at Hickam Air Force Base, have always expressed a

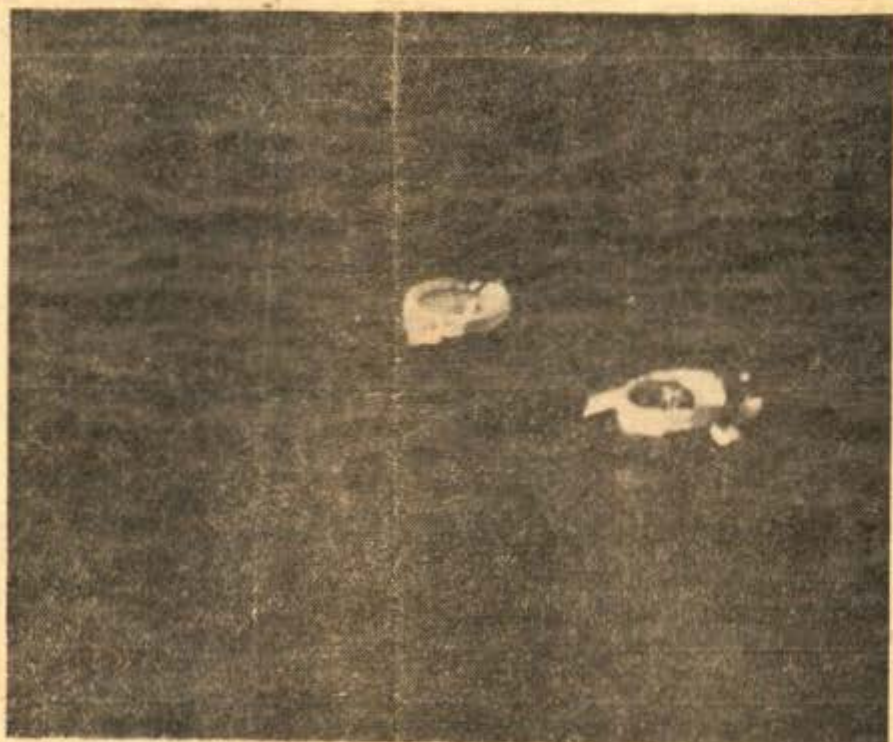
Turn to Page 1-A, Column 1

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

★★★★

HONOLULU, HAWAII, MONDAY, JUNE 19, 1961

Phone 57-911



The Discoverer XXV capsule, pulled from the sea 340 miles north and east of Oahu by an Air Force skindiver-parachute team yesterday, rests in the raft at the left. The other raft carries the three rescuemen from the Hickam-based 76th Air Rescue Squadron.—Air Force Photo.

Skindivers Grab Capsule

Continued from Page 1

team spirit. Recovery by any means is always considered a cause for celebration.

The Discoverer package fell north of the planned impact area, called the "ball park." The spot the capsule ditched is 340 miles north and east of Oahu, the spokesman said.

The three-man team parachuted into the sea at 4:52 p.m. They rolled the bobbing capsule into an inflatable raft and settled down for a long, wet wait.

3 IDENTIFIED

The men, called "pararescuemen," were Staff Sergeant Ray E. McClure, 31, of 24 South Mayville Street, Mount Sterling,

Kentucky; Staff Sergeant William Vargas, 30, of Honolulu, and Technical Sergeant Leote M. Vigare, on temporary duty from Anderson Air Force Base, Guam.

The polar-orbiting capsule, after a ride of 50 hours and 3 minutes, was kicked earthward on signal from 250 miles over Kodiak, Alaska.

The capsule carried samples of metals to determine their reaction to outer space. Also aboard were three Geiger tubes to monitor cosmic radiation.

It was not revealed whether the capsule contained spy-in-the-sky equipment for the planned Samos satellite surveillance system.

The Honolulu Advertiser

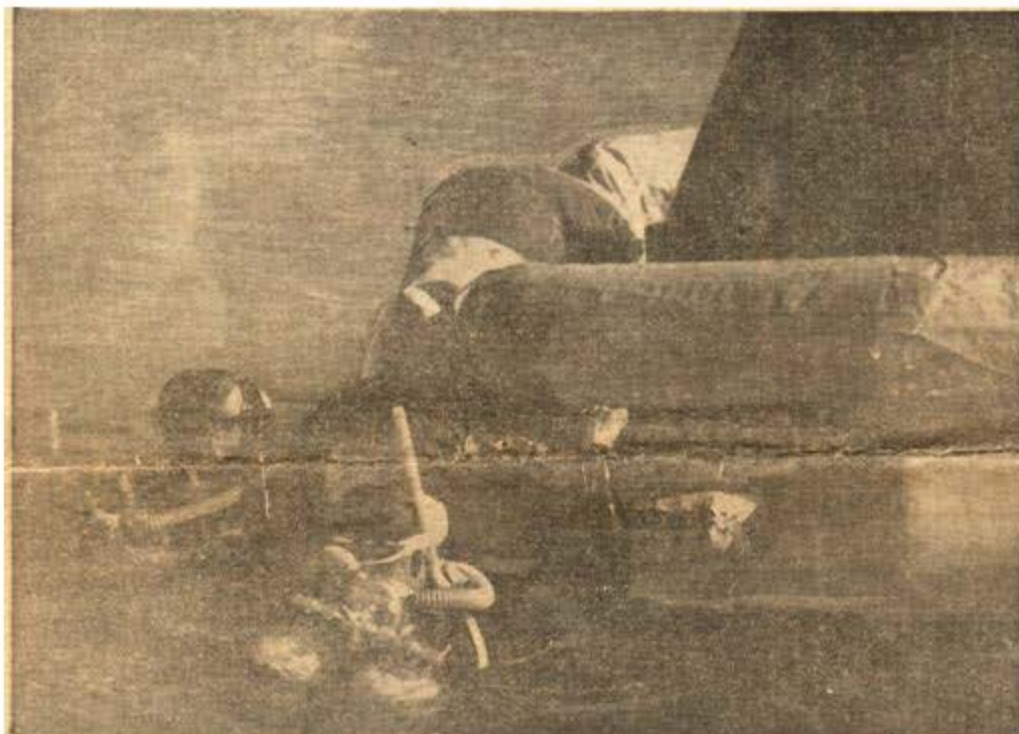
★ ★

105TH YEAR, NO. 35,391

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 1961

10 CENTS

FROGMEN STAND VIGIL ON FLOATING CAPSULE



U. S. Air Force

Air Force frogmen safely secure precious nosecone inside liferaft in simulated recovery operation.

The Honolulu Advertiser

★ ★

105TH YEAR, NO. 35,391

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 1961

10 CENTS

FROGMEN STAND VIGIL ON FLOATING CAPSULE

Planes Miss Mid-Air Catch

By JAMES CUNNINGHAM

The Discoverer 25 satellite nose cone was successfully recovered late yesterday after a two-day space ride and is bobbing out the night on a rubber raft in Hawaiian waters.

The spectacular sea recovery of the errant satellite was accomplished by a team of parachuting Air Force frogmen led by Kauai-born Staff Sergeant William Vargas.

THE CAPSULE, carrying a secret cargo which is believed to include spy-in-the-sky test gear and possibly some form of Earth life, eluded Hickam-based air-snatch pursuers and plunked into the ocean on its return from space.

The heat-scorched capsule hissed into the Pacific well north of the intended recovery area, beyond the reach of either the sky-hooks of the 6593rd Recovery Squadron or the ship-borne helicopters of the Pacific Missile Range recovery force.

Parachuting SCUBA divers of the 76th Air Rescue Squadron at Hickam saved the capsule from suffering the fate of Discoverer 15, which also veered off course and sank at

sea before surface vessels could reach the scene.

THE para-rescue SCUBA-men jumped from a low-flying SC-54 Rescuemaster with a pair of 20-man rubber life rafts and hoisted the 130-pound capsule aboard one raft.

Leading the rescue team was 30-year-old Vargas, a career aviator with 249 jumps to his credit. He resides in the Momiiani suburb of Pearl City and is the son of Victor Vargas, chief engineer of the Grove Farm sugar plantation at Poloa.

With him were fellow jumpers T/Sgt. Leote M. Vignara and S/Sgt. Ray E. McClure.

THE TRIO are sitting guard on the precious space capsule until the destroyer USS Radford, which sailed from Honolulu at 4:15 p.m., reaches the scene sometime after 7 a.m. today.

A 76th Air Rescue Squadron plane, with new unit commander Col. William Welch aboard, is circling over the rubber raft in a night-long vigil against approach by un-

See Discoverer on A-6, Col. 6

★ Discoverer

Continued from Page 1

friendly or unidentified ships.

An earlier attempt to pick up the capsule and para-rescuemen by amphibious aircraft was called off because of darkness. A Coast Guard SA-16 amphibian took off on that mission, but night fell before it could reach the scene.

DISCOVERER 25 was launched at 1:03 p.m. Hawaiian time Saturday from Vandenberg AFB, Calif. The satellite was called down by electronic signals some 50 hours later, on its 33rd orbit around the earth.

The capsule now bobbing on the rubber raft is the fifth in the Discoverer series to be recovered after a space ride. Three were snatched in the air by Hickam-based C-119 Flying Boxcars and a fourth was rescued from the sea by helicopter-borne Navy frogmen.



U. S. Air Force

Sgt. Vargas, outfitted for Discoverer 25 pickup, make practice drop with liferaft used in recovery.

The Honolulu Advertiser



105TH YEAR, NO. 35,392

TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 1961

10 CENTS

Frogmen Caught 'Big Brass Knob'

By JAMES F. CUNNINGHAM

"It looked like a big brass knob somebody had been polishing for about five hours."

That was Kauai-born Staff Sgt. William Vargas's reaction when he first set eyes on the gold-plated Discoverer 25 satellite capsule.

Vargas was first of a three-man team of Air Force parachute-frogmen to reach the

scientifically - precious satellite as it bobbed in the Pacific some 380 miles northeast of Honolulu late Sunday.

VARGAS and his two parachute buddies, Tech. Sgt. Leote V. Vigare of North Hollywood and Staff Sgt. Ray E. McClure of Mt. Sterling, Ky., were interviewed at a press conference aboard the

destroyer USS Radford upon reaching Pearl Harbor last night.

Air Force space systems division courier, Capt. Albert W. Johnson, met the ship and immediately whisked the capsule away to Hickam Air Force Base.

An Air Force C-130 Hercules plane was waiting there to speed the closely guarded

Discoverer 25 capsule to scientific laboratories at Sunnyvale, Calif., for analysis of the instruments and materials which had ridden 50 hours in space.

THE CAPSULE was locked in a 1½-foot-high metal can when displayed to newcomers and newsmen.

"But it looked like some-

thing shiny, new and right out of a present box when I swam up to it in the water," Vargas told newsmen.

THE THREE airmen, who will receive the Air Medal and a week-long trip to New York today, proved themselves as parachutists and

See Discoverer on A-6, Col. 3

frogmen — but not as sailors.

Both Vargas and Vigare confessed to having become very seasick during the 16-hour vigil beside the capsule on the open seas.

Vigare, who acted as jumpmaster, said there was "never a minute's worry" about losing the capsule once it was aboard the 20-man liferaft.

It was lashed to the raft with a cargo net.

The only loss during the ticklish operation was Vargas's \$70 underwater watch. He attached it to a line holding the capsule, but it somehow came loose and went to the bottom.



U.S. Air Force

Discoverer 25 capsule is in raft at left; frogmen who saved it in another nearby raft.



U.S. Air Force

Destroyer Radford prepares to take precious cargo aboard from rafts (arrows) northeast of Oahu.

NEXT ISSUE
OCT. 27

DEADLINE
OCT. 20
NOON



The Chanticleer



A MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE NEWSPAPER

Vol. 4 No. 19

ORLANDO AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

Oct. 13, 1961

Three Dads Who Spent Vigil With Capsule Talk At Travis

FAIRFIELD — Three ruddy complexioned, 31-year-old fathers, who spent all Father's Day night, June 18, aboard a tiny raft in a chilly, mildly rolling Pacific Ocean, returned to the mainland Wednesday landing at Travis Air Force Base.

What distinguishes these particular fathers, moreover, from other fathers, is that — in going through the 14-hour all-night ordeal — they were performing a historic feat — that of retrieving a space capsule for the first time by the use of parachutists.

The trio, all para rescue men from the Air Rescue Service operating out of Hickam AFB, Hawaii, are S/Sgt. William V. Vargas, of Kila, Hawaii; T/Sgt. Lenote Vigare of North Hollywood; and S/Sgt. Ray E. McClure of Mt. Sterling, Ky.

After arriving at Travis, the three vigorous-looking chutists of short-medium height, were asked to describe the experience.

"How was it out there," they were asked.

CALL IT ROUGH

In unison, they replied, "rough." But then they quickly admitted it really wasn't too bad "even though two of us got seasick."

McClure, the one able to escape the sea malady, to the smiling agreement of the other two, quipped, "I was the only sailor in the bunch."

IN RAFT

It was necessary for the trio to remain in the raft from 4:46 p.m. to 7:05 a.m. "somewhere north of

Hawaii" to keep an all night vigil virtually hugging the instrument-packed nose cone of the discoverer launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

The capsule and the trio in the doughnut-shaped raft were plucked from the ocean by the U.S. Radford, a destroyer.

The reason the para rescue unit team was called into play is because the capsule parachuted into the ocean out of reach of the C-119 recovery aircraft scheduled to snare it while it was descending.

The three rescue men said spotter aircraft had the position of the quarry in less than 30 minutes after impact.

MEN JUMP

Vigare said, "it took us about 45 minutes to get to it. At an altitude of a thousand feet, Vargas was the first to jump."

"He landed about 20 yards away and swam to it. He secured the capsule to his one man raft and then McClure jumped landing 35 yards away."

Vigare said he himself remained aboard the plane for 40 minutes later "to deliver instructions and necessary survival and flotation equipment to the water-borne men."

After Vigare jumped, he related, "we muscled the capsule into the raft and made preparations to ride out the night."

From his headquarters at Orlando AFB, Fla., Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Cunningham, of Air Rescue Service, praised the work of the para rescue team pointing

out that it was the first time that an outerspace vehicle had been retrieved in this manner.

THREE DADS

The three fathers — Vargas has three, Vigare, one, and McClure, two — were all trained at Key West, Fla., by the Navy's underwater swimmers school. In addition to the aquatic skills the para rescuers are precision parachutists, advanced medical technicians and experts at survival under any earthly condition, the Air Force said.

The chutists before the leaps were aboard an SC-54 Rescue-master piloted by Major John A. Means, 45.

Capt. Warren C. Schensted, in a C-119, was credited with first spotting the capsule in the water. Schensted also was credited with first locating Discoverer XIII several months ago.

The group remained at Travis yesterday awaiting orders of where and when they will report for further duty.

HEADQUARTERS
AIR RESCUE SERVICE
MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
APO 953, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDER (PACIFIC)

26 June 1961

Lt Colonel Willard D. Welch
76 Air Rescue Squadron
APO 953, San Francisco, California

Dear Bill:

This is a form letter to all Commanders and the 5th and 13th AF Liaison Officers. Inclosed are Minutes of the ARS Staff Meetings for 26 May, 2 and 9 June for your information.

RECOVERY OF DISCOVERER XXV:

For the first time since Air Rescue Service was given the additional mission of space hardware recovery, ARS, Pacific forces have been called upon to effect an actual recovery.

Thanks to the many months of thought, planning and training given to perfecting the necessary techniques, our first effort in this area was as completely successful as if it had been a daily occurrence for the past two years.

The interest in this successful mission extended to top USAF levels. General Curtis LeMay recommended the presentation of the Air Medal to the three pararescue men who made the recovery. General Emmett O'Donnell Jr made the actual presentations at Hickam AFB on 20 June 1961. Brigadier General Joseph Cunningham sent me the following message, "I wish to extend to you and your personnel my most sincere congratulations for the outstanding performance and devotion to duty displayed during the recovery of Discoverer 25.

"The traditions of the Air Rescue Service have been greatly enhanced in this first actual recovery by Air Rescue Service personnel of one of America's space vehicles. It is my desire that special recognition be given the pararescue men who have demonstrated so effectively to the world this new dimension in rescue.

"They exhibited the true courage and valor required in their duties. Again, well done." Cunningham.

Equal interest was displayed by civilian sources. You have no doubt already seen the news release from ARS Headquarters, an information copy of which was sent to all ARS units. Here in Hawaii particularly, the mission was given top priority on the front page of all local newspapers and on TV and radio newscasts during the entire mission. The three men involved have gone to the mainland to appear on TV shows.

The pararescue men who performed so outstandingly on this mission are TSgt L. M. Vigore, SSgt W. T. Varga and SSgt R. E. McClure. The 1st Air Rescue Service are proud of these three men and of our entire corps of dedicated pararescue men whose unstinting labors and devotion make such missions possible. As the results of this mission show, there is a definite payoff to our continual training.

We now desire that you bring the contents of this letter to the attention of all Air Rescue Service personnel and particularly to all pararescue personnel assigned.

Sincerely,

EARL G. BEAUDRY
Colonel, USAF







