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41st Jumpers Save Aurora 7, Aid Astronaut

As most of the world now knows, two Air Rescue Service pararescuemen were in elite company on the afternoon of May 25th when they paid a surprise visit to Lt Commander Scott Carpenter aboard his liferaft in the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean east of Puerto Rico.

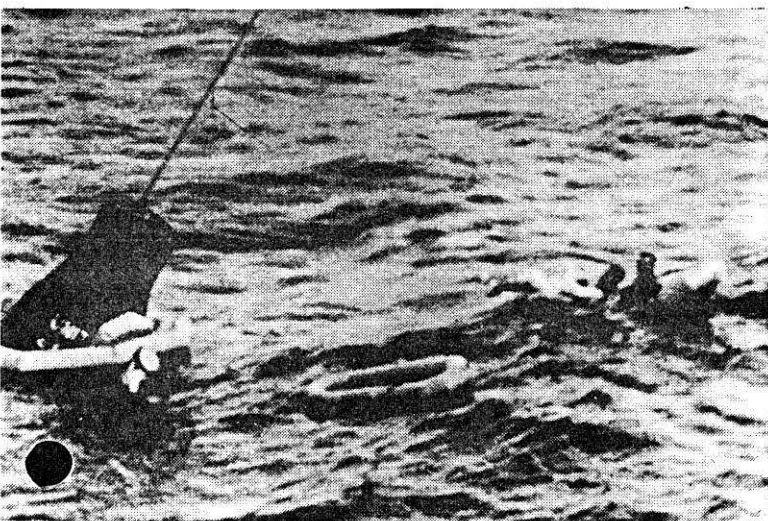
Staff Sergeant Ray McClure and Airman First Class John Heitsch, both assigned to the 41st Air Rescue Squadron at Hamilton Air Force Base, California, were the two uninvited "guests" but they were warmly received by the American astronaut who was patiently waiting to be rescued following his famed orbital flight which took him around the earth three times.

Pararescueman Heitsch was the first of the two Air Rescuemen to reach Carpenter and, after jumping from an SC-54 into the

ocean, swam underwater to the astronaut's raft. He came up on Carpenter's "blind side," reached up from the water, tapped him on the shoulder, and when the startled astronaut swung around, Heitsch simply said "Hi."

Comdr Carpenter wanted to know how he got there and who he was, for, with all the pararescue gear he was wearing, Heitsch probably gave the appearance of a man from MARS. Then the two-some was joined by Staff Sergeant McClure who also jumped from the Rescue SC-54 and the three-man party was complete.

Carpenter, being the gracious host that he was, offered the two Rescuemen a portion of his candy and water rations, but this was politely refused as McClure and Heitsch had just eaten lunch a short time before. (over)



RESCUEMEN with astronaut Receive congratulations from Gen. Cunningham.

The little party in the big ocean was somewhat of a stiff affair with the three men, bobbing around in their one-man dingies, only chit-chatting about who they were and something of their family lives. This is somewhat understandable since the pararescue men were under strict orders not to talk to the astronaut about his flight so as not to clutter up his mind prior to debriefing.

Part of the time that the two Air Rescue men spent with Carpenter they were involved in placing the flotation collar around the base of the Aurora 7 capsule in order to stabilize it. The capsule was listing pretty badly until the flotation gear was attached and this act possibly saved the spacecraft from sinking.

The day could have been a more spectacular success for ARS. A Rescue SA-16, which like the SC-54 was flying out of Roosevelt Roads, was in the area. The Rescue Crew Commander, 1st Lt Bruce H. Driscoll, had evaluated the seas as calm and eminently suitable for an open sea landing. However, he was ordered not to land and Navy Choppers made the pickup.

Following the dramatic rescue, McClure and Heitsch were returned to Patrick Air Force Base, Florida and from there were flown to New York City for personal appearances on major television network shows.

The two men flew to Orlando AFB, Fla., where they received the personal congratulations of Brigadier General Joseph A. Cunningham for "a job well done."



CHENEY AWARD for dramatic helicopter save was presented Lt W. A. Luther (left) and Sgt Seckley of Det 5 by General Curtis LeMay (right) at Armed Forces Day ceremony. Mrs. T. W. Streeter, co-donor of the trophy looks on.



KOSSLER AWARD, earned by all of Rescue, is received by General Cunningham from Mr. Lee S. Johnson at the annual American Helicopter Society Forum dinner.

VIGARE AFA NOMINEE

If the luck of the draw is in his favor, Technical Sergeant Lenote Vigare, veteran pararescueman from the 76th ARSq, may be able to attend the Air Force Association Convention in September. He was recently selected as the Air Rescue Service nominee to MATS for consideration to represent the command at the AFA affair which will be held in Las Vegas. Considering the many top-notch NCO's in Rescue, the selection amounts to quite an honor and Vigare's qualifications are, in point of fact, outstanding.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

Are you stranded on the high seas and short on drinking water? Think nothing of it, just radio for someone to drop you a 50 pound block of ice and your thirst craze is satisfied.

At least that is the recommendation of T/Sgt Lenote Vigare who recently made this suggestion when asked for help to supply water to a Navy mine sweeper operating near Guam.

The sweeper was low on drinking water and radioed the JRCC at Hickam requesting their assistance for an air drop of water-filled jerry cans. There were no cans to be had on the island so Sgt Vigare suggested that blocks of ice be dropped and it wasn't long before the Navy was sipping long, tall cool ones, thanks to an ingenious pararescueman.