OFFICE OF INFORMATION TELEPHONE 67-3931 and 67-3932

NEWS RELEASE

Air Proving Ground Center

AIR FORCE SYSTEMS COMMAND Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE NO. 360 August 20, 1964

EGLIN AIRMAN SURVIVES 1,000 FOOT FREEFALL

EGLIN AFB, Fla... A para-rescueman assigned to the 48th Air Rescue Squadron at Eglin AFB, Fla., was on a standard training jump exercise when his main and auxiliary parachutes failed to open and he lived to tell about it. A2C Michael D. Leonard bailed out of a HC-54 Rescuemaster at 1,000 feet when the harrowing experience occurred.

For the training jump Leonard was equipped with jump boots, crash helmet, and standard pararescue clothing. Following the mission briefing, Leonard and 8 other jumpers boarded the HC-54. At the prescribed altitude and location the jumpers hooked their main chutes to the static line in the plane. The static line automatically opens the chute. After spotter chutes were dropped to determine wind velocity and direction, Airman Leonard was the second man to jump.

A2C Michael McManus, the jumpmaster, gave Leonard the go sign. After leaving the plane, Leonard felt a slight tug on the chute and looked up to find that the chute had not opened properly and was streaming. He tried to shake it loose so air could get into the canopy. After falling approximately 300 ft. he pulled the rip cord on his reserve chute. The reserve chute became entangled in the main chute and also streamed.

While plummeting to earth at over 100 ft. per second, Airman Leonard's training came to the forefront and he concentrated on the proper method of landing-rolling

MORE.....

just before impact. Leonard stated that the "proper landing is what saved him."

Airman Leonard was taken to the Eglin USAF Hospital and was found to have no broken bones and a scratch on the knee was his only injury.

Airman Leonard, a native of Lawler, Iowa, has been with the 48th ARS since January of 1963. He is a veteran of 30 jumps, and has participated in recovering cameras dropped from missiles in sub-orbital flights. His parents are Mr. and Mrs. Donald Leonard of Lawler, Iowa.

TEST OF COURAGE—A2C Michael D. Leonard, a pararescueman with the 48th Air Rescue Squadron, Eglin AFB, Fla., prepares for another mission following the freak 1,000-foot jump he survived without the aid of a parachute. The 22-year-old airman suffered only a scratched knee from the fall which occurred during jump training when his parachute failed to open. (AFNS)

(U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO)