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Leader of the Air Force's Jolly Green Giants Tells of Rescue

TAN SON NHUT — "Ask any man in my outfit, and he'll tell you we have the best mission in the Air Force." Speaking a bit too loud for the size of the room, Air Force Maj. Baylor R. Haynes, commander of an Air Force rescue helicopter unit, begins to talk about the men who are responsible for rescuing downed pilots in Communist North Vietnam.

"Every last one of them, and I mean the support people — clerks, supply men, the lot — as well as the chopper crews will tell you their job is to recover downed aircrew members," he continues in a loud gravelly voice — a result of flying helicopters since the early 1950s.

In his fatigue uniform, the burly Texan looks like the character whose name his unit bears — the "Jolly Green Giant." A veteran of world War II and the Korean War, Major Haynes typifies the spirit and morale of his men. He is an experienced rescue pilot with over 70 missions in H-5 and H-19 helicopters during the Korean War.

"We are called the Jolly Green Giants," Haynes says, "because of the size and coloring of our helicopters and the giant-size job my people are doing."

The rescue crews fly camouflaged HH-3C rescue helicopters, a modified version of the large, powerful CH-3C transport chopper,

For rescue work, the helicopter is equipped with armor plating, extra fuel tanks and a powerful winch with a jungle-penetrating hook for pick ups. On rescue missions, the huge green chopper carries a crew of four — two pilots, a flight engineer and a pararescue man.

Praising his aircrews, Haynes says, "We've got some of the most experienced chopper men in the rescue business. They know their job and work as a team to get it done."

Over the jungles of Communist North Vietnam, HH-3C pilots are often forced to hover at tree-top level or even go into

thick undergrowth to pick up a downed pilot. As the pilot lowers into the trees the other crew members watch for limbs which can wreck the helicopter.

Last November, an HH-3C crew on its first rescue mission over the Communist North actually landed in thick elephant grass to pick up a downed Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot.

Capt. Jerry W. Jennings, El Paso, Tex., was aircraft commander on the flight, and Capt. James O'Dell of Charleston, S.C. was co-pilot.

As the rescue crew neared the downed pilot, it received heavy flak. Jennings called for an Air Force A-1E Skyraider pilot to attack the enemy gun positions.

Firing over the head of the downed pilot, the Skyraider pilot silenced the Communist guns, but the rescue crew's problems weren't over.

When they went in to pick up the pilot, they discovered the hoist for their 250-foot cable would not work. It had worked during preflight and in another test just before the helicopter reached the pilot.

The rescue crew made two

passes over the pilot and picked up more ground fire each time. They called for more help from the A-1E pilots flying air cover.

After the Skyraider pilots again strafed the area, Jennings dropped the big rescue chopper into the brush next to the trapped pilot. The flight engineer and pararescueman pulled the pilot to safety, and Jennings took off, clipping the deep brush with his rotor blades and barely missing a hill.

Returning to base, they found they had gone deeper into the Communist North than any other rescue crew at that time.

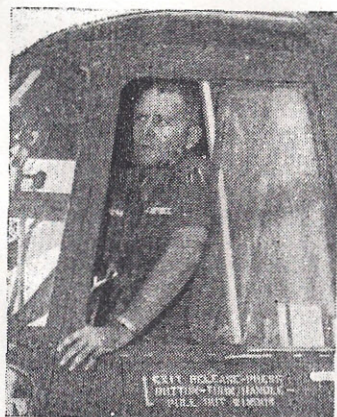
"Although it takes team work to do the job," says Major Haynes, "the individual heroism of my men never ceases to amaze me. I've got one man (SSgt. Berkeley E. Naugle of Gettysburg, Pa., a flight engineer) flying over North Vietnam right now who spent seven hours up there scrambling through the bushes last November."

Naugle bailed out of a burning HH-3C when it was shot down about 40 miles southwest of Hanoi, Nov. 6, 1965. He suffered severe burns, but was rescued at night by another helicopter crew.

The rescue crew spotted a dim, flickering of a cigarette lighter through the jungle canopy and made the rescue.

Since their assignment here, Haynes' crews have made 17 rescues in hostile territory. They share the Presidential Unit Citation with other members of the Military Airlift Command's 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron for rescue work in Southeast Asia.

Pointing to the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service emblem, Haynes says, "We're just like everyone else over here—doing a job to the best of our ability but we are all dedicated to the Rescue Service motto — 'That Others May Live'. That is our sole purpose for flying over North Vietnam or anywhere else.



'JOLLY GREEN' WARMS UP — Air Force Maj. Baylor R. Haynes, of Garland, Tex., preflights a rescue helicopter for a mission over Communist North Vietnam. Haynes is commander of the Air Force HH-3C rescue unit known as the "Jolly Green Giants." (U.S. Air Force Photo)