

Mirror Flashes S-O-S

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DA NANG, Viet Nam — A three-by-five-inch mirror helped save an F-4B airman downed recently in Viet Cong territory.

Capt. Frank A. Huey was the pilot and Lt. John L. Arendale the radar intercept officer of an F-4B that swept low in a night bombing mission 25 miles west of Dong Ha. Ground fire hit the plane. "I knew we were going to crash," Arendale said. "I could see the tree tops coming up fast." Flames engulfed the plane just as the two Marines ejected. Huey parachuted to the ground safely; Arendale landed in a tree and broke a foot. The men were separated.

Huey heard Viet Cong nearby. He destroyed his personal belongings and set up his radio. He found a clearing large enough for a helicopter pickup and sat down to wait. Arendale covered his gear with leaves and hid under a nearby tree.

HH-3E Lifts Huey

The two men were able to talk by radio to rescue aircraft at 6:30 a.m. An hour later, an Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-3E helicopter picked up Huey. Arendale guided the copter to his location, and a paramedic was lowered on a cable to help him. The HH-3E was 50 yards away when Viet Cong fire endangered the helicopter, the paramedic, and the lieutenant. The paramedic jumped to the ground. Arendale's tree was hit by bullets, and he moved to a thick growth of undebrush. In the air, the HH-3E's crew chief was hit. The paramedic, unable to find Arendale, moved away from the firing. He was picked up the following morning by another HH-3E 10 miles away from the spot that he hit the ground.

Arendale popped his last smoke flare, but the jungle growth was too thick for the

HH-3E crew to spot it. He fired his pencil flares, but they went unseen. He moved higher up the ridge. The only things he saw were jets still pounding away at the Viet Cong. "I must have looked funny sitting in a clearing waving a handkerchief at the end of a stick," he said. He propped himself on a rock and sat there for almost four hours signaling with the only thing he had left, a three-by-five-inch mirror.

Finally, at noon, one of the HH-3Es that had been overhead for hours came down and picked him up. "I was sure the Viet Cong had me in sight all the time," Arendale said later. "Actually, nobody saw me. The HH-3E that picked me up had just called off the search because of low fuel, and was returning to its base when one of the crew saw the flicker of my mirror."



Lt. John Arendale, rescued by HH-3E hours after F4B was hit, gives Air Force nurse information before evacuation.