

OLD Oregon

Magazine of the University of Oregon Alumni Association • May-June 1962



TWO KINDS OF COURAGE

Phil Sherburne '64
and the CIA: an
exclusive interview

PAGE 6

Evan Hale '62
and the rescue
on Mt. St. Helens

PAGE 12

THE RESCUE



By LUCILE VAUGHAN PAYNE

Thursday, June 23, 1966. *From the report of the 304th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Portland International Airport, to Continental Air Command.*

At two minutes before 1:00 p.m. a small private plane, a four-passenger Super Mooney, left Boeing Field, Washington, via Airways to Troutdale. The pilot was Grant Erickson, 49 years old, approximately 300 hours total flying time. The Portland area was experiencing an unforecasted thunderstorm. At 2:10 Erickson reported his position as 30 miles east of Troutdale. At 2:20 he reported it as 20 miles northwest of Portland, altitude 8500, engine running rough. At this time the Portland Tower advised him to change to a new frequency.

No further reports were ever received.

Friday, June 24, 1966

On the vast snowfield of the Mt. St. Helens glacier the plane looked like a child's toy tossed carelessly aside and forgotten. It had landed, apparently, nose-up against the icy slope, then tilted slightly and started to slide. To its right lay the beginning of one of the small canyons that creased the crown of the mountain. The plane slid toward it, dipped over the edge, slid another 2000 feet down the slope, and stopped. It had been there now for almost 24 hours.

The man and woman in the front seat were dead. They were middle-aged people, pleasant-faced, well-dressed. The man lay sprawled in the pilot's seat, a deep wound over his temple. His wife, her skull crushed, had crumpled into the space between her seat and the engine. Both had died instantly. There was very little blood; it had



PHOTO: JAN FARDELL

frozen quickly in the icy wind that probed all night through the broken window.

Miles below, the valley lay warm and green. But it was very cold on the mountain.

The young man at the wheel of the Volkswagen had copper-red hair so severely clipped that his head looked almost shaved, and his face had the wind-burned, slightly flushed undertone characteristic of the fair-skinned, red-haired outdoorsman. Otherwise, almost everything about him—the perfectly pressed gray suit, the immaculate white shirt, the conservative tie—suggested only the well-tailored, pleasantly aloof, completely correct and very efficient young business or professional man. He was on his way back to Portland after a week's work in an Eastern Oregon branch bank. Beside him on the seat was a briefcase full of reports ready to turn in that afternoon. He was

an auditor for the U. S. National Bank of Oregon.

His name was Evan Hale: age 26, bachelor, bank auditor, '62 graduate of the University of Oregon School of Business; checker of figures, expert on loan risks, examiner of vaults, files, cash drawers, a young man who browsed through pages of financial data as other men might read novels.

But something did not quite fit the picture. It was in the eyes, possibly; they were a pale, rather opaque blue, and they seemed not so much to look at things as to register them, instantly and unemotionally, like a camera lens. But it was more than that; it was some quality in his person, something cool and alert, detached, disciplined, unassailable. Not arrogance. Something else, something subtler: a kind of bone-deep self-sufficiency.

As he edged into the increasing traffic near Portland, he hummed lightly in tune with the melody from the car radio. It was almost time for the noon news.

Seventy miles away, high up on the northwestern slope of Mt. St. Helens, a pretty auburn-haired young woman named Karla Little, age 25, sat in the rear seat of the wrecked Mooney, her eyes closed, her hands loose and quiet, her breathing slow and shallow. Her back was broken.

For most of the past 24 hours she had been unconscious. Yet something—some small sound in the cabin—had pulled her back again and again into instant, total awareness. It was perhaps the strangest sound ever heard on the barren waste of the glacier: the cry of an infant.

On Karla Little's lap, strapped into a pink plastic carrier, was her eight-week-old baby.

"And now the news," said the announcer. "Search efforts are underway today for the small private airplane that disappeared yesterday somewhere between Seattle and Portland. Hampered yesterday by storm conditions, search planes are now combing the Mt. St. Helens area, although visibility is still poor at higher elevations. Aboard the plane were the pilot, Grant Erickson, his wife, Dolly, their daughter, Mrs. Loren Little, and their eight-week-old granddaughter, Laurie. . . ."

Seconds later, his foot hard on the accelerator, Evan Hale was on the freeway headed for Portland International Airport. He would not be reporting for work at the U. S. National Bank this afternoon. As he drove he loosened his tie; the cool blue eyes were suddenly ablaze.

At almost exactly the moment that Evan Hale started toward the airport, the baby on Karla Little's lap stirred again and made the small sounds that a hungry, waking baby makes. In some dark recess of her mind



Aerial map study precedes each search mission.

Karla Little thought, *it's so cold* . . . and then instinctively her numbed hands reached for the baby, fumbling with straps and blankets and lifting it out of its carrier to hold it against her breast, thrusting its whole body under her clothing and next to her skin to give it warmth. The child began to nurse, and for the first time Karla Little was aware of the broken window and the *silence*, that was it, the silence from the front seat, and the immensity of ice and snow that lay beyond the window and the extraordinary fact that those inanimate objects she was sitting on seemed to be her legs. She felt a great need to talk to her husband. "You've got to get me to a doctor, Loren," she said. "My legs are paralyzed." But the thing that obsessed her was the little bag that held the baby's strained food and orange juice. "I can touch it," she told her husband, "I can even get my fingers on the latch, but

I can't pull it up from behind the seat." Her eyes filled with tears of frustration, but then it was all strange, dreamlike again, and she felt very calm. The baby was still all right. That was all that mattered.

Somewhere overhead she heard the motor of a plane; she stared out at the snow, and something flickered in her memory. Something about the Mooney . . . what was it? She could not remember. *I ought to signal*, she thought dreamily. *I ought to climb out the window and make signs in the snow and wave my arms*. But her body seemed to be paying no attention to her thoughts. It was very peculiar.

The noise of the search plane overhead dwindled and disappeared. They didn't see us, she thought. Then suddenly she remembered what it was that she had forgotten about the Mooney. It was white. It would be almost invisible on the snow.

2 p.m. The young man in the flight suit moved swiftly and efficiently through the quonset hut. The sign outside said "304th ARRS." The walls of the quonset were lined with storage shelves and hung with strange equipment: snow shoes, parachutes, litters, ropes, various unidentifiable, tightly-strapped canvas bundles. A long table ran the length of the hut. As the young man worked, a pile of equipment and clothing gradually accumulated on the table: flight jacket, a thickly padded helmet, a heavy, padded, many-pocketed pair of canvas trousers, a matching heavy jacket, a wreath of intricately folded and pleated nylon rope (brilliantly orange-and-white and unexpectedly gay among its earth-colored companions), a hand-crafted knife in a tooled leather case, a pair of snowshoes. A medical kit. A two-way radio. *Two* parachute packs. . . . Altogether, about 160 pounds of equipment.

As he worked, the young man kept one ear cocked for the familiar sound of the Albatross, the great, gray, lumbering rescue plane. It was already out for the second time that day, hunting for the lost Mooney. It could be back at any moment to pick him up. He snapped open his medical kit and ran a practiced eye over its contents: antibiotics, plaster, splints, Dextran, hemostat, rubber gloves, stethoscope, surgical tools . . . Everything was there, as he knew it would be—he never put it away after using it until it was complete again—but he was by instinct and profession a double-checker. He never took chances.

In less than 24 hours he would be stepping out into thin air from the door of an airplane, wearing or carrying on his person the entire 160 pounds of equipment on the table.

As the young man bent over the medical kit, the hard overhead light glinted on a stubble of coppery-red hair. Shut away in a wooden locker were the gray suit, the white shirt, the correct tie, the neatly polished shoes—

and the identity of the bank auditor, the businessman, the young-man-about-town.

This was the other Evan Hale.

Night fell. The infant still lay close and warm against Karla Little's flesh. She had managed to cover the broken window with one of the baby's blankets, and she leaned back now, exhausted, licking her dry lips. It would be nice to have a drink.

All afternoon she had heard, sometimes quite nearby, the motors of searching planes. Nobody had seen her.

She drifted in and out of consciousness, her mind hovering in some hazy area where nothing was quite real. Once or twice she called out to her parents, and then she stopped doing that. *Maybe they got out, maybe they're looking for help*, she thought. But the cold, impenetrable silence from the front of the plane seemed to be telling her something else, something she did not want to know.

She folded her arms around the baby and faced her second night on the mountain. She would not think about anything now except the baby.

The 304th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron based at Portland International Airport is one of five reserve air rescue squadrons in the United States. The other four are in California, Michigan, Florida, and Arizona. Altogether they make up what is possibly the smallest, the least known, and the most unusual military operation in the United States. The ARRS exists for one purpose: to save lives. The Portland squadron has five ancient Grumman Albatrosses at its disposal, a handful of mechanics, navigators, and pilots, and a tiny core of highly trained men called pararescuemen.

All the activities of a rescue squadron depend, ultimately, on the skill and courage of the pararescuemen. They are quite possibly the most highly trained, the most dedicated, the toughest, the most versatile, and the most daring men in U. S. military service. They are the men who rescue downed pilots in Viet Nam, recover space capsules from the ocean, and fly to the aid of disaster victims all over the world, whenever they are needed. They put their lives on the line daily to save the lives of others. The motto of the ARRS, in fact, attached to every report, printed on every letterhead, engraved forever in the brain of every pararescueman, is this: "That others may live."

A fully qualified pararescueman undergoes what is possibly the most fantastically rigorous training program in the world, and the training never stops. He must prove, every year, that he can jump, night or day, into any kind of terrain—mountain, forest, desert, jungle, Arctic waste—with full medical equipment, survive weeks of hardship, and provide skilled medical aid. He can set bones,

deliver babies, perform emergency surgical operations. He must be not only a master parachutist, but also a master mountain climber, skier, swimmer, scuba diver, tracker, hunter, and escape-and-evasion artist, skilled in the use of Judo and small arms for protection.

Few men survive even the initial screening, much less the training program for pararescue. In 1965, for example, only 16 of some 2,500 applicants remained after screening, and only a fraction of these 16 made it all the way through training. In all the world, in fact, there were only about 100 fully trained pararescuemen in June, 1966.

Evan Hale was one of them.

The third search flight of the day by the Albatross, with Evan Hale on board, yielded nothing. He slept that night on the floor of the quonset hut at the air base, in order to be instantly ready for the first flight the next morning. His jump-mate, if a jump were called for, would be M/Sgt. Gene Ingram, the only full-time regular Air Force pararescueman at the base. No pararescueman was ever permitted to jump alone, because of the danger of injury.

Hale rolled himself up in his sleeping bag. The weather was clearing; they could search higher tomorrow. It seemed almost certain now that the Mooney had crashed in the high country, and almost equally certain that there would be no survivors. Not after two nights in the open.

But he was not a young man given to morbid imaginings. His thoughts did not dwell on what might be happening at this moment somewhere in the mountains, or what might be found there the next day. Whatever it was, he was ready for it. He stretched out comfortably and, very quickly, went to sleep.

Saturday, June 23. Noon.

An Army helicopter sighted the crash first, and the news came crackling in to the men in the Albatross: *Mt. St. Helens, northwest slope, altitude 5500; we are landing to survey site.* The helicopter fluttered down to a nearby snowfield; the terrain was too steep and icy for a landing at the immediate scene. An Army lieutenant jumped off and began climbing toward the Mooney. The big gray rescue plane circled slowly above.

In the racketing interior of the Albatross, where the men could hear each other only through the intercom, M/Sgt. Gene Ingram pounded Evan Hale's arm, his voice coming through the earphones in an excited shout. "Look at that plane! Not a scratch. Somebody's alive down there, somebody's bound to be alive." He was a small dark man with glowing brown eyes, habitually slow and easygoing in speech and manner. Now the color was high in his face, his eyes snapping. "Come on, Major," he entreated the pilot through the intercom, "come on,

"I tell you, somebody's alive down there!" Ingram was right. Within minutes, the radio brought the news: there are survivors. The jump was on.



Hale: suddenly, new meaning.

come on, give the order, we gotta jump, c'mon, Major."

The pilot, Maj. William Siegal, stared unhappily at the icy crags and canyons beneath the plane. The men could not jump without his permission. "I don't know," he said. "It doesn't look very good down there to me."

"I tell you, somebody's *alive* down there," shouted Ingram. "There's gotta be. Look at that plane! Godammit, Major. . . ." A stupendous rage seemed to have seized him. He had been in rescue work for 18 years; in all that time, he had never found anybody alive at a crash site. It was the most terrible and constant disappointment of his career. He banged his fist against the side of the plane. "For 18 years I been bringing them out in rubber bags," he said furiously to Evan Hale, not caring in the least that the pilot could hear him through his own earphones, "and now maybe we got some live people down there, and he says it don't look too good to jump! Hell, we jumped worse places than this in the middle of the night."

"Take it easy, Gene," said Hale. He grinned at the



Ingram: "After 18 years. . . ."

angry little sergeant. The two were very good friends, the cool young college graduate and the 41-year-old career man who had spent most of his life in the service. They were friends in the way that only two men with absolute trust in each other can be friends. Each would place his life without hesitation in the other's hands; each had done so many times. Hale curbed his own impatience and tried to calm Ingram. No point in arguing with the major. He was responsible for their safety, and if all the passengers on the wrecked plane below were dead, he would almost certainly forbid a jump. The bodies could be carried out by climbers.

Then the electrifying message came in over the radio: *there are survivors.*

After that, there was no question about the jump, and from then on Ingram and Hale were in charge. They had already chosen a feasible drop zone, a snowfield about a quarter of a mile from the downed plane. Within seconds, the two men were in their helmets and bulky tree suits (always used when they jumped into forests or on hazardous terrain), their parachutes snapped to the static line. The wide door wheezed open with a blast of icy air. Then Ingram was out, falling. Behind him, instantly, came Evan Hale.

The Albatross droned on. Two parachutes bloomed in the high mountain air and drifted down, the two heavily laden men suddenly tiny against the immense glacier below.

They landed about 15 feet apart, on exactly the spot they had chosen, ripped off their parachutes and heavy tree suits, and started for the Mooney. The Army lieutenant was still standing beside it. The plane door was jammed. Through the window they could see Karla Little's pale face. It took the strength of all three men to pry open the door.

Evan Hale climbed in first. "The baby," she said. She

gave him a hazy look. "I'll take the baby," he said cheerfully. Eight-week-old Laurie Little blinked at him contentedly. He passed her in her plastic carrier out the door to Ingram, who laid the small bundle carefully on the snow beside the plane and climbed into the front seat with Hale, between the dead bodies. Both men had completely forgotten the Army lieutenant. They began to explain to Karla Little what had to be done, Hale examining her as he talked. Neck not broken, thank God, in spite of that massive contusion on the side of her head. But almost certainly a spinal injury. "We'll have to stretch those legs out," he said. "Then we'll pass you over the front seat and out of the plane, all stretched out. Just as though you're lying down." It would be tricky in

those crowded quarters. One slip might mean a severed spinal cord. He grinned reassuringly. "Just relax and pretend you're lying on a nice, soft mattress. Okay?" She nodded helplessly.

Very slowly, very carefully, he lifted her while Ingram straightened her legs. Then they began moving her, supporting her back every instant with their hands. She called out, once, as she caught a glimpse of the two dead bodies, and then she was silent. They laid her on the wing of the airplane, covering her with clothes from the suitcases and with signal panels from their kits.

Ingram signaled the Albatross to drop sleeping bags and a Stokes litter. Then, quickly and quietly, the two men determined their next step. Ingram would take the

When the men return from a mission, the airbase is often a lonely, almost deserted place.



The baby was safe. Now the unconscious woman had to be taken down the glacier, and it had to be fast. Speed was everything now.

baby down to the waiting helicopter immediately; Hale would finish the medical examination and bring down the mother. Ingram wrapped their two flight jackets around the baby and began a Z traverse of the glacier, holding the infant like some unbelievable and precious egg. Evan Hale got out his stethoscope. More bad news: a collapsed lung. A woman in shock, completely dehydrated, her back broken, maybe a concussion, and now a collapsed lung. Things would have to move fast. He began dressing her head wound. *Where was that damned litter?*

"I'm thirsty," Karla said faintly.

"Right," he said. "They're dropping some stuff off for you right now, including water." The extra supplies included drinking water; he could allow her a little. Unobtrusively, he stacked the medical kits beside her head to block her view; she kept turning her head in an attempt to look into the front seat. He radioed the Albatross, his voice low and urgent: *where are the supplies and the litter?*

Already in the drop zone, he was told; the helicopter would pick up and deliver them. Hale instructed the pilot, by hand signals, to make the drop 50 yards above the wreck. If things started to slide, the plane would block them. For the first time since his arrival at the scene, he became aware of the Army lieutenant, still standing helplessly by. "Go up and secure the things if you can," Hale told him. "I'll be right with you." The prop wash from the helicopter was already dislodging rocks and chunks of ice that were rolling down dangerously close to Mrs. Little. He stayed by to protect her until the helicopter made its drop and raced off, then climbed up to help the lieutenant bring down the equipment. Their descent loosed a new avalanche of boulders. As they tied the litter to the aircraft, one huge falling rock swept both men off their feet and sent them tumbling down the glacier another 50 yards.

They struggled back to the plane. "All set, now," Hale said to Mrs. Little. She was obviously deeper in shock now, but he continued to talk to her, explaining each step he took—something all pararescuemen are taught to do, simply as reassurance to their patients. He lined the litter with signal panels to keep out the snow (Stokes litters are made of wide-webbed metal mesh), rolled up two other signal panels to support the normal curvature

of her back, added an Arctic sleeping bag. Then the two men transferred her into the litter. "You'll get warm in a minute," he told her, "and you'll get drowsy. Just close your eyes and go to sleep. Not a thing to worry about now."

Mrs. Little closed her eyes and sank into complete unconsciousness.

Speed was everything now. Hale lashed her into the litter, shook out the brilliant nylon letdown rope (ordinarily used for descent from trees after forest jumps), and prepared to lower both the lieutenant and the woman to the waiting helicopter. He tied the lieutenant to one end of the rope, secured the litter a few yards farther up, and used himself as the anchor until the other man could secure his end of the rope to one of the large rocks below. It took about a dozen of these body belays to get down to the base of the steep ridge where the helicopter was now precariously balanced. Two men from the crew jumped out and slid down the ridge to help carry Mrs. Little aboard.

At 3:30 p.m., exactly three hours after the downed plane had been sighted, Karla Little was in the hospital. Evan Hale, alone now, climbed back to the wreckage to retrieve the equipment he and Ingram had left behind. The last thing he did before climbing wearily down the icy ridge again was to leave two body bags on the wing of the aircraft. *This time, he thought, somebody else will remove the dead.*

Only then did he come to the full and staggering realization of what had just happened on the mountain. All this day he had been operating on a level of training so high that he had been moving automatically, with no thought for anything except the job in hand, body and mind together performing like a perfectly tuned machine. He had been through dozens of similar rescue missions in practice. And through real ones, where there had been nothing to do except to collect the broken remains of shattered bodies and stuff them into rubber bags like those now lying on the wing of the Mooney. But this time. . . .

This time we brought two out alive! The perfectly tuned machine was suddenly swept with human emotion, with an almost overpowering sense of exaltation. It was unlike anything he had ever felt before. Up to that point he had been simply a young man who delighted in testing

his brain and nerve and muscle against the elements. But the woman and baby who came down the mountain today were *alive*.

And for the first time Evan Hale understood fully what it meant to be a pararescueman. This was what it was all about.

Karla Little spent eight months in the hospital; she must still wear a complete leg brace on one nerve-damaged leg, but she is now back, pretty and high-spirited as ever, in her role as a Seattle housewife and mother. Her husband is in the last year of medical studies to become a doctor; her daughter Laurie is a laughing, tumbling, delicious one-year-old. It is not likely that either would be alive today except for Hale and Ingram. No doctor could have reached them in time. And a single false move by an inexperienced would-be rescuer could have left her with both legs completely paralyzed for life.

Evan Hale is still a bank auditor. Nearly every week finds him deep in the ledgers of some branch of the U. S. National Bank or working at his desk in the auditing department in the Portland office. But when he is needed on a rescue mission, he is released immediately; when he is called up for a pararescue training session, he uses up his vacation time or takes time off without pay. Last fall he spent five weeks at the Navy's Scuba School in San Diego. In January, 1967, he spent two weeks at the Army training center in the Panama jungle, learning survival techniques perfected by the natives. This spring he hopes to go to the Air Force school in Alaska for a refresher course in Arctic survival.

Pararescuemen are sent for their training to whichever branch of the service offers the best—and toughest—course in the particular survival technique they must master. In the meantime, at their home bases, they study and take rigorous examinations in anatomy, medicine, surgery; at the Portland base, for example, doctors at the Veterans Hospital give the men opportunities to observe surgical operations and instruct them in everything from antibiotics to obstetrics.

It is not a schedule likely to give a young man much time to relax; it consumes not only most of Evan Hale's vacation time, but also most of his free evenings and weekends. Hale, however, seems to have some kind of secret patent on energy. As a student, for example, he



Karla Little: Courage to match her rescuers'.

completed his degree in less than three years—simultaneously holding down a part-time job in a Eugene bank and managing a social life that, he says with a reflective grin, was “highly satisfactory.” He also discovered sport parachuting while he was a student and became, instantly, an addict. And very soon an expert—so expert that he became Oregon's first licensed instructor in parachute jumping. The state has only two.

But sport jumping is something that Evan Hale does these days “just for relaxation” (after a hard day with the books, there is nothing, apparently, so soothing to the nerves of a tired bank auditor as a few free falls from an airplane). The real challenge for him now is in para-



Above, the auditor. Right, the pararescueman.

rescue. "Our ultimate goal," he says, "is to have all our men able to work 100 feet below the surface of the Atlantic, to deliver babies in an Eskimo village, to snatch pilots virtually from the hands of the Viet Cong, to live on snake, monkey, and iguana in South America, to scale glaciers and mountain peaks anywhere in the world In short, to be well-rounded persons, willing to challenge the elements and win."

It is a rather sweeping list for most people who aspire to be "well-rounded." But it seems a perfectly reasonable goal to T/Sgt. Evan Hale. After all, pararescuemen do all these things every day. And he has already done most of them in his spare time.

Meantime, he turns to the workaday world the polite, impersonal face of the young businessman, the very model of a modern bank employe, quick, assured, thorough, impeccably groomed, completely at ease. And, oddly enough, he likes his job. It, too, holds a challenge. But there is always, lurking somewhere in the cool blue eyes of the bank auditor, in the swift economy and authority of movement, that other Evan Hale—the man who jumps out of airplanes.



The question: which one is the real Evan Hale?

Which one is the real Evan Hale? It is quite possible that he is not quite certain himself. And that may be a good thing. Any young man of 26 needs, surely, at least one uncertainty.

Editor's note: In March of this year, at formal ceremonies in San Francisco, Evan Hale was named Outstanding Airman of the Year for the Air Force Reserve. (Each major command and operating agency of the Air Force selects one man for this honor. A total of 22 men, representing more than a million fellow airmen, were selected. Of these 22, three were pararescuemen.) In May, both Ingram and Hale will receive the Airman's Medal, the highest Air Force award given outside a combat zone.