

PLUCKED FROM DENSE JUNGLE

Hq. 7AF, Saigon--Standing alone in a North Vietnam jungle, an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot waved frantically at the Air Force HH-3C helicopter passing overhead.

Someone in the helicopter waved back. For the first time since he ejected from his flaming plane, Maj. Joseph Hutto, of Natchez, Miss., knew he was going to be rescued.

Less than two hours before, Hutto was bombing a segment of Route 1, south of Vinh, and attacking a truck convoy moving military supplies toward infiltration routes to South Vietnam.

Diving through a hail of anti-aircraft fire, Hutto made two passes over the camouflaged trucks spraying them with 20mm cannon fire. As he pulled up from the second pass, he felt the F-105 shudder. Watching his cockpit fill with smoke, he radioed the other pilots in his flight and prepared to eject.

He turned the crippled jet toward the jungle to escape the populated coastal plain and anti-aircraft sites near Vinh. Over the mountains he ejected.

Thrown into the sky by catapult ejection, he blacked out for a moment, but recovered to feel the comforting jerk of an opening parachute.

Crashing through 100 feet of deep forest, Hutto landed on the side of a steep slope. He struggled out of his parachute, drank some water and tried to use his radio.

MORE

2--Plucked From Dense Jungle (Rel. No. 221)

Through the towering trees and tangled vines, he saw his wingman attacking north Vietnamese gun positions nearby. As he listened the sound of machine gun fire from enemy guns drew closer.

Convinced the gunners were coming after him, he started moving through the brush. Using fallen teak trees and animal trails to quiet his movements, he climbed toward the crest of a ridge.

Above him, the Thunderchiefs were replaced by four A-1E Skyraiders striking nearby Communist positions. One of the Skyraider pilots fired a pod of rockets near Hutto's hiding place silencing the ground fire.

Exhausted by his scramble through the jungle, Hutto stopped to use his radio and learned a helicopter was coming after him. Not knowing his parachute could not be seen from the air, he tried to radio his position by estimating the distance he moved from the chute.

When the helicopter appeared, Hutto fired a smoke flare giving away his position to both his rescuers and the enemy. In a barely audible whisper, he called to the helicopter, "Do you see my smoke?"

"Positive," came the reply, but the helicopter, commanded by 1st Lt. Thomas E. Kenny of Rochester, N.Y., moved out of sight then returned dropping the hoist cable about 100 yards from Hutto.

Hutto realized the smoke had drifted down the hill and tried to make radio contact with the chopper crew again to bring them closer. By this time he had completely lost his voice and wasn't sure his transmission was heard.

Rescue crewmen SSgt. Aaron D. Farrion of St. Louis, Mo., pararescue-medical, and Harold R. Schrader of Satellite, Fla., crew chief, spotted Hutto waving at the chopper.

MORE

3--Plucked From Dense Jungle (Rel. No. 221)

Farrion and Schrader radioed instructions to their pilot, Kenny, dropped the cable as the helicopter hovered over Hutto and hoisted him into the chopper.

No longer alone in the jungle, Hutto hugged everyone in sight and settled down for the flight to safety. (PACAF NS)

-30-

The Air Division Advisor

FRI. MARCH 4, 1966

TAN-SON-NHUT AB VIET NAM

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 pararescuer 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)

MR. NEE

AEROSPACE RESCUE and RECOVERY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

15 November 1966

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

ESKIMO COUPLE AIDED. Two Thule helicopters responded to a summons for help on 21 October when they rushed Sirkok Majok and his wife from their isolated island village to medical facilities at Kanak, 65 miles north of Thule. Both Eskimos were suffering from pneumonia. Crewmen on the Det 18, EARRC, aircraft said it was the worst time of year for evacuation from Kekertassuak; the ice was too thick for kayaks and too thin for dogsleds. Kekertassuak has no direct communication with the outside world other than signal lights and a radio receiver. When Orla Sandborg, inspector of Northern Greenland, saw the lights he called by radio and began asking questions. The ailing couple answered using pre-determined light signals. Just over an hour after the HH-43B's departure from Thule with a doctor and interpreter, the Eskimos were aboard. They were taken to Kanak Hospital where Mr. Majok's condition was listed as serious.

When the Bien Hoa control tower, the busiest in Southeast Asia, experienced a total power failure recently, ARRS came to the aid of the air traffic controller. An HH-43 helicopter was just returning to its scramble pad directly in front of the control tower when the power failure occurred. The air traffic controller grabbed a portable crash radio to keep ground contact, and ran to the chopper. Soon, he and Captain David L. Wiest, the Rescue pilot, were hovering some 50 feet above the ground alongside the runway. For 30 minutes, Captain Wiest kept his aircraft hovering while all air traffic control was conducted via the helicopter's radio system. A dangerous situation was averted because of the on-the-spot readiness and versatility of ARRS.

PILOT EJECTS FROM DISABLED JET. A pilot of the 356th Tactical Fighter Squadron ejected from his disabled F-100 at 1015 on 9 November, and was picked up by an HH-43B crew from Det 7, PARRC, at 1022 -- just seven minutes later. The pilot left his Super Sabre after making certain that it would not impact in a populated area. The jet crashed into a small grove of trees about two miles from Misawa AB. The pilot appeared to be unhurt, suffering only scratches, and the Rescuemen rushed him back to rescue operations where an ambulance waited to carry him to the base hospital for a complete examination.

For more than five years, the members of the 36th ARRSq at Tachikawa AB, Japan, have been giving aid to the Akitsu Crippled Children's Home. During these years, more than \$1000 has been donated, usually in the form of fuel, clothing, hospital needs and rehabilitation equipment. The squadron project officer, SSgt Walter Ewing, makes frequent checks with the home to find out its needs, and visits the home when funds are accumulated. There are a number of sanatoriums for crippled and mentally retarded children in Japan, but the Akitsu Home is the only one which will accept untrainable children. The 36th has chosen a commendable method of proving that Rescuemen care for human life, both professionally and on their own time.

RESCUEMEN KEPT ON THE GO. ARRS crews in Vietnam know of two type days -- busy and busier. One occasionally comes along, however, that makes all others appear serene, and such a day was experienced recently by an HH-43 crew of Det 1, 38th ARRSq, at Phan Rang AB. Captain Leonard D. Fialko and his Huskie crew were on an early morning training flight when word was received that a fighter aircraft was inbound carrying a bomb that had failed to release. The captain hastily returned to the alert pad, picked up an FSK and orbited his helicopter near the runway. Minutes later the fighter landed safely.

This emergency was hardly over when crew members spotted a gasoline fire near an Army communications tent. The chopper helped control the blaze with rotor downwash while a ground crew applied sand. The tent was saved and the helicopter crew continued their training mission. But again practice was cut short. An Army helicopter had made an emergency landing in an insecure area 10 miles from the base, so Captain Fialko headed for the spot, located the downed aircraft, recovered two pilots and returned them to base.

The crash phone interrupted the crew's few minutes on the ground. Another aircraft was coming in with a weapon that had failed to drop. As the crew scrambled to get into position they picked up a distress signal from a two-man F-4C crew ejecting a short distance from Phan Rang. Spotting the F-4C crash, Captain Fialko turned his chopper in that direction. Learning that the two had jumped from the burning aircraft, he landed long enough to let off a fireman and to get rid of his FSK, lightening the helicopter's load. The crew then proceeded at full speed to the crash site, spurred by a message from one of the downed crew members that he could hear crashing sounds around him and bullets whizzing through the trees. During the pickup of one of the downed jet pilots, the Rescue crew discovered that the crashing sounds were caused by a nearby herd of cattle and the bullet-like sounds were pieces of metal from the burning aircraft.

Delivering the recovered pilot to Phan Rang, the Rescuemen returned to search for the other F-4C crewman. He had been killed, however, and was later found by a ground party. Applying the old adage, "the busier the day, the faster it goes," Rescuemen at Phan Rang look forward to an awfully short year.

Airman Second Class Gordon C. Thayer, Det 6, 38th ARRSq, was awarded the Silver Star in a ceremony at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. The presentation was made on 5 November, by Lt General W. W. Momeyer, 7th Air Force Commander. Thayer received this high award for his actions on 25 August 1966, while participating in a mission to evacuate wounded U.S. soldiers from an area near Phouc Vinh. Thayer's helicopter was shot down by enemy fire, and although considerably shaken by the crash landing, Thayer with complete disregard for his own safety under continuing hostile fire, administered medical aid to the wounded until another evacuation helicopter arrived. Airman Thayer, who also has the DFC, Air Medal, and Air Force Commendation Medal, has been separated from the service at his own request. However, he has not yet had his fill of Southeast Asia and intends to return to Vietnam, if possible, as a civilian employee of a contracting firm.

A SAFETY CHECK MAY SAVE YOUR NECK.



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Orlando AFB, Fla

28 December 1966

600TH ARRS SAVE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Air Force's Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service recorded its 600th world-wide save during 1966 on Christmas eve in Vietnam.

ARRS claims a save when a survivor is removed from an environment where death or capture is imminent. Its 1966 total jumped from 599 to 612 on one mission, December 24th, civilian CL-44 crashed into a Vietnamese village and burst into flames. Two Rescue HH-43F helicopters rushed in, removed 13 injured Vietnamese villagers from the burning crash site to a Marine Field Hospital for treatment.

Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, headquartered at Orlando AFB, Florida, is a major sub-command of the Military Airlift Command. Commanded by Colonel Allison C. Brooks, it is the Air Force's primary search, rescue and recovery force.

Of its ⁶¹⁵~~600~~ rescues during 1966, more than ⁴⁰³~~400~~ have been saves in combat conditions.

Crewmembers for the Christmas eve mission were 1st Lt David R. Steveson, Denver, Colorado; 1st Lt Alfred R. Jacox, Jr., Thousand Island Park, N. Y.; A1C Wayne L. Boteler, New Orleans, La. and A1C Russell W. Price, Goldsboro, N. C. on the primary aircraft. Crewing the second helicopter were Captain Lawrence F. Marcom, Somerset, Ky.; 1st Lt Donald B. Sams, Hermiston, Oregon, SSgt Hubert O. Marsh, Frankfurt, Indiana and A1C John F. Tobes, Gilbertsville, N. Y.

28Dec66



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

Public Information Division, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois

MFS #671

(618) 256-5309

"THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE, VIETNAM STYLE"

By Bob Ruhl

MEDIA FEATURE SERVICE, HQ MAC, SCOTT AFB, ILL. -- The hare had a long lead on the tortoise when the two Air Force rescue helicopters churned out of the dust at Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam, and headed west.

"Don't kid yourself," said Capt. John B. Kneen, a Rescue pilot. "When we get a call for help, it's a race to see if we can pick up survivors at a crash site before the Viet Cong gets to them. They usually have a head start, but we win most of the races."

Winning life or death races is the job of the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron in Vietnam. Since December 1964, rescue crews have grabbed 450 survivors -- one of the most impressive achievements of the war -- from actual combat zones, including 114 downed pilots.

Flying in squatty, four-man HH-43 "Huskie" helicopters, Kneen was aboard the secondary aircraft while a close friend, Capt. Harold A. (Andy) Solberg, piloted the primary.

"We were in the air just 10 minutes after we got a call that an AC-47 attack aircraft was down about two miles from Ashau Camp," Kneen said. "The

M O R E

Page 2 - MFS #671, The Tortoise and the Hare, Vietnam Style

plane had gone down in a narrow valley that was barely wide enough for jet fighters to maneuver through and give us any support. We knew we were on our own for the most part."

The Huskies whirled away down the valley at 109 m. p. h. , flying directly over Viet Cong positions and skirting between 100-foot-tall trees to reach the crash site. "We were warned that the downed crew was under intense fire at close range," Kneen said, "and rescue attempts would be dangerous, if not impossible."

The crews of the unarmed helicopters decided to make a rescue attempt after an A-1 fighter made a low-level straffing run to keep the VC from over-running the survivors.

Low altitude, speed, surprise and tree cover kept the helicopters from being hit, Kneen noted, "but we found out that the Viet Cong were just 35 to 45 yards from the crash and moving in quickly."

Flying directly over the AC-47, the helicopters quick-stopped on a hill 75 feet from the downed aircraft. Seeing no survivors, the pilots moved the Huskies closer and hovered against the side of a hill.

"Suddenly three men ran from the plane and piled into Andy's helicopter," Kneen said. "The crew had to fire away at the VC while trying to pull men into the rear of the helicopter." The original plan was to take four survivors

M O R E

Page 3 - MFS #671, The Tortoise and the Hare, Vietnam Style

in the first helicopter and three in the second, which would maneuver into position after the first departed.

"Andy's Huskie left and we moved in," Kneen continued. "When the remaining survivors didn't show, our mechanic and pararescue specialist went out looking for them. They found two dead crewmen, and Andy learned from the survivors aboard his aircraft that the remaining crewmen were all dead."

Kneen took his helicopter up and hovered high, trying to alert his men on the ground. "When we went in to pick them up, we saw that they were pinned down by enemy fire less than 11 yards from our aircraft," Kneen said.

A fighter made another pass at the VC, and in the confusion the rescue crewmen raced to reach the helicopter. A machine gun tore up the ground around them, but they scrambled aboard and Kneen took off.

For their actions the crews were nominated for the Air Force Cross and Silver Star. Although both regard the Ashau Camp rescue as an exceptionally exciting day's work, they feel a mission last December during Operation Harvest Moon was especially hazardous.

"We landed at night in a rice paddy looking for a crew and passengers of a Marine helicopter that went down 30 miles south of Da Nang," Kneen said.

"We had to make a blackout landing. The survivors turned on flashlights for a second, then turned them off.

M O R E

Page 4 - MFS #671, The Tortoise and the Hare, Vietnam Style

"There were four Marines and one crew member on the ground. Tracers were flying all over the place as we made our final approach. Six mortar rounds went off about 1,500 feet behind us, and the Huskie really shook. We got more tracers as we took off and some 50 mm machine gun fire. I think we must have gotten 2,000 rounds fired at us but we didn't get a scratch on the aircraft.

"One helicopter that went in before us got shot down, and one got hit after us. But we managed to pick up three of the Marines."

Four or five people can be picked up at one time by a Huskie. "It's not a very big aircraft," Kneen said, "and the people are crowded. But they are usually in such a hurry to leave that they don't mind the close quarters."

All isn't gunfire and gallantry for the rescue crews of the 38th, a unit of the Military Airlift Command (MAC), with headquarters at Scott AFB, Ill. There's some in-between "shaking" time involved, too.

"Thinking about the missions before and after kind of gets you," said Solberg, a handsome 33-year-old father of two girls. "But during an actual rescue I thoroughly enjoy it. While you're on alert, you have the feeling of peace and security for some reason and you hope everything will be okay. On the other hand, you hope the action will pick up."

Action is a way of life for Solberg, from Tacoma, Wash., and Kneen, a 31-year-old father of five who hails from Belvidere, Vt.

M O R E

Page 5 - MFS #671, The Tortoise and the Hare, Vietnam Style

In their first six months at the blistering hot air base, 380 miles north of Saigon, each flew 176 hours, of which about 160 was combat time. Each has flown more than 200 combat sorties, counting local base rescue missions when they were called out to aid pilots landing with in-flight emergencies.

The ability to pass time constructively at the base, hemmed in by water, mountains and Marines, is an important skill. Kneen has completed three correspondence courses in higher mathematics and physics and is teaching himself French and to play the guitar. Solberg zipped through 35 books in four months and is also teaching himself to play the guitar.

Bird-watching is another of Solberg's avocations. "Just part of my background in wildlife management," he laughed. "You know, I've even tried birdwatching from a helicopter but it's just too tough."

But it's not nearly as hazardous as searching for downed pilots, crewmen or wounded allied soldiers and Marines at tree-top level--especially when you're the tortoise trying to outrace the hare.

R-146-66

28Dec66

NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

Public Information Division, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois

MFS #692



(618) 256-5309

1966

"NO ONE WALKS HOME FROM NORTH VIETNAM--AIR RESCUE IN ACTION"

by Lt. Jerry Poppink

MEDIA FEATURE SERVICE, HQ MAC, SCOTT AFB, Ill. -- Major Joe Hutto banked his big Thunderchief and began the attack. The F-105 screamed toward earth, the Pratt & Whitney engine roaring with 26,000 pounds of thrust. Meandering below him, criss-crossing the checkered delta land, was his target -- highway 1 -- the major artery that connects the North Vietnamese port city of Vinh with the no-man's land at the border.

It was Joe Hutto's 25th mission over North Vietnam.

Hutto's 20 mm Vulcan cannon began its deadly sputtering as the Thunderchief came on target. The shells cut a smooth pattern along the road as communist trucks ditched and figures scurried for cover. Suddenly one truck convulsed with a secondary explosion and was enveloped in a large orange fireball.

M O R E

Page 2 - No One Walks

The Republic fighter-bomber pulled out of the strafing run and began to climb, then suddenly shuddered violently. Hutto had been hit by the 12.7 mm guns that guarded the highway!

"Bill, I just took a hit," he radioed his wingman. "I'm on emergency fuel."

Fighting to regain altitude, he heard his wingman call back that his tail had been shot off and he was streaming fuel. Then the radio went dead.

For the 36-year-old native of Natchez, Mississippi, it was a time for instant decision--he knew his Thunderchief couldn't stay up much longer. His first thought was of rescue.

"I was only 20 miles from the Tonkin Gulf," he later recalled. "But even if the plane could have made it that far, I would have had to face the ring of anti-aircraft positions around Vinh, so that was out. I felt I'd have a better chance if I could reach the cover of the jungle. The worst place you want to go down is on flat delta land."

Aiming for the jungle, he gunned the last bit of speed out of his faltering F-105 and ejected at 5,000 feet.

Although he had never jumped before, he managed to maneuver with his chute, but sprained his wrist upon landing. As he unsnapped the parachute harness, his automatic electronic beeping signal began broadcasting his position. Within minutes, Air Force A-1Es had appeared overhead, flying protective

M O R E

Page 3 - No One Walks

cover. The steady drum of heavy guns opened on one side of him; the chatter of automatic weapons sounded on the other.

"The only thing I could think of was that the communists were coming after me through the jungle. That was about the time I saw the helicopter hedge-hopping over the trees looking for me. It came in so low, a lucky pistol shot might have downed it!"

Risking his position, Hutto fired an orange smoke flare, hoping the para-rescuemen would see it and get to him before the communists.

"Do you have my smoke?" he radioed. The reply was positive.

Moments later, the HH-3C -- known to aircrews as the Jolly Green Giant -- had dropped its 200-foot steel cable hoist through the jungle cover and Hutto was pulled to safety. It had been less than an hour and a half since he ejected.

"The pararescuemen were great," he said. "They checked me over, took a look at my wrist, gave me some water and a cigarette. And you know, I really enjoyed that cigarette, until I remembered I was a non-smoker."

For Major Joe Hutto, mission number 25, which had nearly ended in disaster, was safely completed. Had it not been for rescue, the story might have had a tragic ending. The fact remains that thus far in the Vietnam war, no one has walked out of North Vietnam!

A good many have been flown out, however, and the credit goes to the rough and rugged rescuemen who daily serve as aerial lifeguards over the war zone.

M O R E

Page 4 - No One Walks

Since they started keeping count, back in 1964, men of the Military Airlift Command's Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) have been credited with a total of 892 saves, 435 of whom were rescued from actual combat zones. Combat pilots unofficially figure a better than even chance of being rescued if shot down. The odds are even better for water rescues.

But the rescuers face even more hazards than the combat pilots themselves. Instead of sleek heavily-armed fighter-bombers such as the F-105, or the mach 2 F-4C, rescue pilots jockey slow and low-flying unarmed aircraft of all varieties.

Yet they are subjected to the same intense anti-aircraft fire, ground fire from automatic weapons and even bows and arrows! When the pararescuemen are on the ground -- as they frequently are, helping wounded pilots -- they also risk attack from enemy ground troops.

Rescue at sea provides its own particular brand of danger. Innocent looking junks, sampans or fishing boats are often floating batteries of machine guns or mortars. When an open-sea pickup must be made close to shore, even heavy field artillery is brought to bear on the rescue amphibians.

The dangers of open-sea rescue became clearly apparent last March when an HU-16 Albatross fixed wing amphibian was lost off the coast of Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam, while trying to save a pair of F-4C pilots literally from under the guns of communist shore mortars. Two rescuemen were killed in the barrage and the incident marked the first loss of an HU-16 in the Vietnam war.

M O R E

Page 5 - No One Walks

But danger is not confined to sea operations. ARRS personnel have won some 500 awards and decorations for action in Vietnam -- not a few of them awarded posthumously. And earlier this year, Bien Hoa's 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron became the first Military Airlift Command unit since Korea to win the Presidential Unit Citation.

Typical of a Vietnam pararescueman is TSgt. Chuck Walther, a 34-year-old rescue veteran from Parkersburg, West Virginia, who recently completed a year's tour at Bien Hoa.

During his twelve month tour, Chuck collected 13 medals for courage and professionalism under combat conditions.

"We operated three HH-43F helicopters at Bien Hoa," Walther said, "modified for combat operations with larger engines, armor plating, self-sealing gas tanks and a 217-foot hoist for air crew recovery missions.

"I flew 310 sorties from Bien Hoa, all in South Vietnam. These included fire suppression missions, local base rescues and air crew recovery missions in the combat zones. Personally, I was in on three or four actual saves, and many assists."

Walther admitted that the major hazard was the Viet Cong. On one rescue, deep in the heart of D Zone, two of Walther's pararescuemen treated and evacuated a stunned A-1E pilot, while the Viet Cong disarmed the bombs on the wrecked fighter only 150 yards away. "The VCs finally spotted our

M O R E

Page 6 - No One Walks

men," Walther related, "and the last man up the hoist fired two clips at them while dangling 40 or 50 feet in the air. At this time, the VCs were within 50 yards!"

In Walther's opinion, air cover plays a major role in any successful rescue. "Just before I left Bien Hoa, we received word that an F-100 pilot had gone down right smack at the edge of a VC village. Armed Hueys and F-100s were flying protective cover, and drawing a lot of fire both from the village and the edge of the jungle. We snuck in under the cover, and as far as we know, we were never even fired upon. The VCs were so busy with the F-100s and choppers dropping bombs and strafing, we got in and out without their even knowing it."

Although he had been on the ground many times, Walther said he had never been fired at by the VC. "In the air though, yes. Often we've seen the tracers coming up at us out of the jungle. But in my own mind, the biggest danger is from exploding ordnance when an aircraft crashes. Those 20mm shells "cook-off" for many hours, and when they go, it's just like a hand grenade going off. At Bien Hoa, a fireman standing between two of my pararescuemen was killed by an exploding 20mm."

Walther thought that night rescues were far more dangerous than day rescues. "At night, it's hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys -- they don't wear white hats and black hats. On one night mission, we were told that we would be met by popular forces on the ground, in the area where the crash took place.

M O R E

Page 7 - No One Walks

"Now, as you know, the VCs wear black uniforms, and when we landed in the dark and got out, what do we see all around us but these 50 black-clad Asiatics, all armed. Can you imagine how I felt? I didn't know whether to shoot or not. As it turned out, they were the popular forces--the home guard--and at night they always wear black uniforms. But you couldn't prove by me they weren't VCs!"

But the greatest risk in night rescues is the very real possibility of a Viet Cong trap. Walther remembers one mission in particular when he was searching for a crashed Vietnamese H-34.

"We were trying to find the wreckage and drawing all kinds of ground fire," he recalled. "We trained our spotlights on an opening in the jungle, and there was a Vietnamese waving back at us. Now put yourself in the pilot's place. So what are you going to do? Is it a trap or not? The rescue commander has to make this decision, because there's no one else to help him.

"We gambled and went in, but the pilot said 'One false move, anywhere on the line and...' And there's really no alternative! The pararescueman went down the line and searched the Viet pilot, and all the time, both our co-pilot and helicopter mechanic had their M-16s trained right on him. As it turned out, the pilot was 'clean.' But you have to take all the precautions, because you never know."

"You never know" might well be the unofficial motto of the rescuemen, in addition to their official motto, "That Others Might Live."

M O R E

Page 8 - No One Walks

From such bases as Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Da Nang, Pleiku, Binh Thuy and a score of other sites, rescue choppers and amphibians are scrambled day in and day out to dash off through mountain passes and along jungle rivers in a race to the death with the Viet Cong. More often than not, air rescue is the winner.

"It's not an easy life, at all," said Chuck Walther. "But then again, it's no picnic for the fighter pilots either. I figure anything we can do helps take the pressure off those guys. You get an awful lot of satisfaction in what you're doing when you pick a guy up out of the jungle, and believe me, they appreciate it. That's all the thanks we need."

MFS #692

-30-