

"It is my duty, as a member of the Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Service, to save life and aid the injured. I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal pleasures and comforts. These things I do that others may live."—This is the pledge of . . .

The Lifesavers: SEA's Air Rescuemen

By Maj. Carroll S. Shershun, USAF

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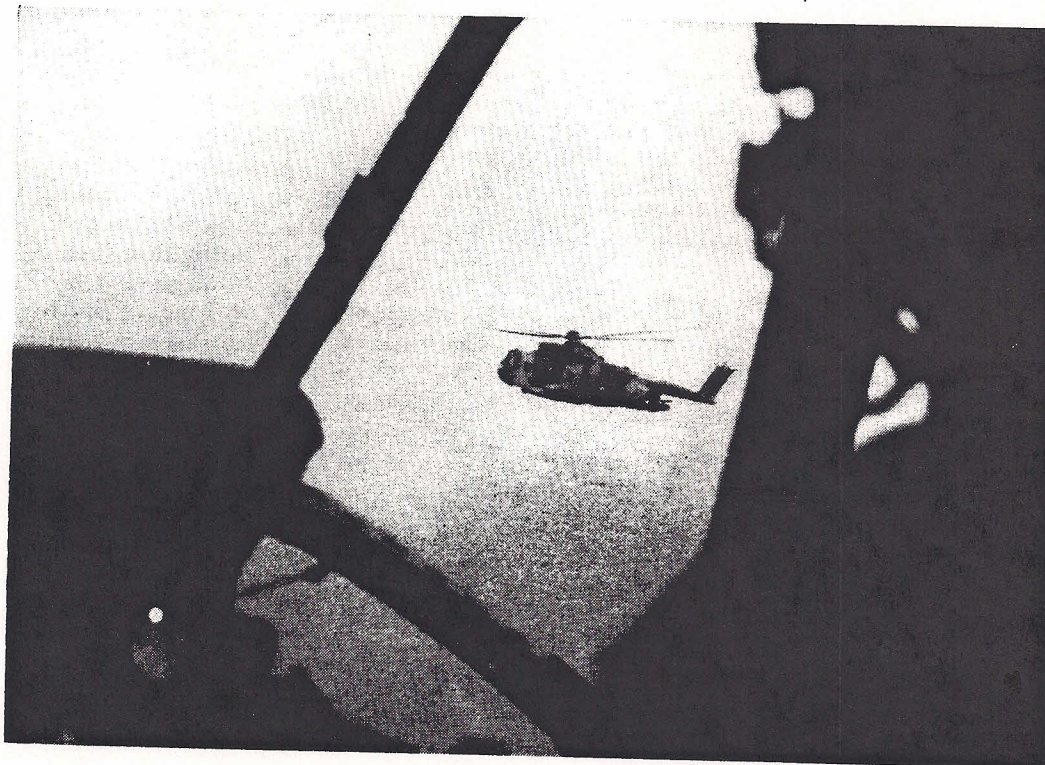
IT WAS July 2, 1968, but the fireworks crackling around the HH-3E Jolly Green Giant as it flew north across the DMZ weren't exactly the prelude to an Independence Day celebration.

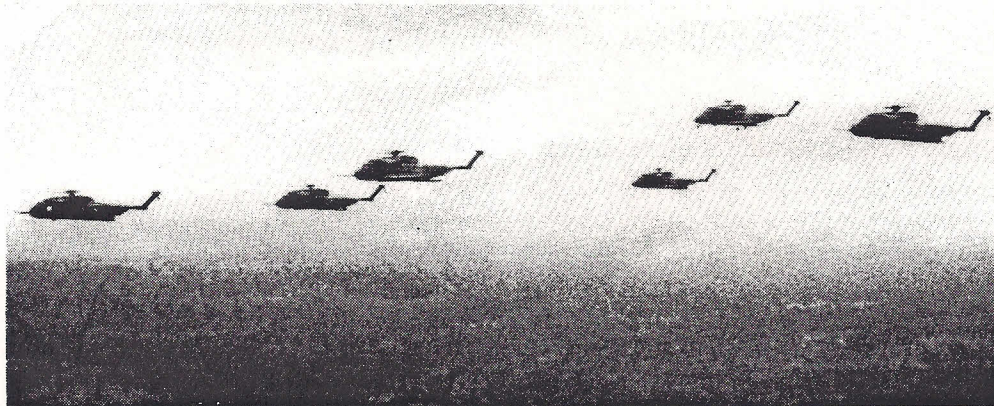
The helicopter, Jolly Green 21 of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron from Da Nang Air Base, was on a typical mission: recovery of an F-105 pilot downed in North Vietnam's thick jungle and surrounded by the enemy.

Jolly Green 21 was piloted by US Coast Guard Lt. Lance Eagan, one of three "exchange" pilots serving with the unit. He and his Air Force crew—Maj. Bob Booth, Sgt. Herbert H. Honer, and A1C Joel Talley—that day were to fly a mission that would long be remembered by all of them. Their recovery of the downed pilot was to become a classic example of the determination of air rescue crews.

The previous day, despite repeated fighter attacks
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Rescue helicopters work in pairs. Here "High Bird" keeps his leader in sight as they head out on a recovery mission over Vietnam. The high helicopter is always ready to take over if the "Low Bird" is shot down or severely damaged by hostile fire.





Six Jolly Green Buffs from the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron take to the skies. Some rescue helicopters while on missions have taken as many as eighty-nine hits by enemy fire without being downed.

Awards and Honors for ARRS

Capt. Gerald O. Young, a former 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service rescue crew commander, is one of four living Air Force men to wear the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for valor, for performing a daring rescue on November 8, 1967 (*see AF/SD, July '68 issue, p. 43*).

When "Gerald Young Day" was observed at his hometown of Wichita Falls, Tex., last June, that community's mayor said to the officer: "You are the personification of what every man in this room would like to be."

Captain Young, who was burned over twenty-five percent of his body during his gallant action at Khe Sanh, grimly answered: "Don't think of Gerald Young this day. Think of the Jolly Green Giants, air rescue, the Air Force, and the great work being done."

He paused then—as if trying to explain the decision to fly his aircraft into the maelstrom of bullets on an unknown hill—and said: "There is nothing in the world like the feeling you get when you've saved someone's life."

But there has been more formal recognition for the 1,200 authorized personnel of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. During the Vietnam War they so far have been awarded more than 7,900 individual decorations and two Presidential Unit Citations.

To date only six enlisted airmen have been awarded the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest award for gallantry. Five of those six men were members of the 3d ARRGp. The 1968 Airman of the Year and three of the last four Cheney Award winners were from 3d ARRGp (*see box on page 43*). Two of the three Air Force men selected by the US Junior Chamber of Commerce among America's top ten young men were from 3d Group.

As of March 10, 1969, the 1,200 men assigned to the unit's twenty-three locations throughout the Vietnam War zone had earned:

- 15 Air Force Crosses;
- 230 Silver Stars;
- 6 Legions of Merit;
- 1,120 Distinguished Flying Crosses;
- 70 Airman's Medals;
- 349 Bronze Star Medals;
- 5,127 Air Medals;
- 952 Air Force Commendation Medals;
- 74 Purple Hearts.

against North Vietnamese anti-aircraft positions, three other Jolly Greens attempting the recovery had been driven off after sustaining heavy battle damage, and the mission had finally been postponed because of darkness.

Now Jolly Green 21 was among those taking another crack at it.

She and several other aircraft of the rescue team had been scrambled even before sunrise and had drawn enemy fire while crossing the DMZ to a spot three miles beyond, where the downed pilot lay injured and unable to move.

Things had already heated up. A fourth HH-3E rescue chopper on the scene was almost immediately damaged by ground fire, and shortly thereafter an A-1 Spad supporting the mission was shot down and its pilot killed.

Then came a momentary lull as the rescue forces were withdrawn from the immediate sector to permit a B-52 strike within a few miles of the downed pilot.

With the B-52 strike over, the rescue operation was resumed. Lieutenant Eagan, at the controls of Jolly Green 21, dumped all extra fuel to allow his aircraft the greatest possible maneuverability and began his run for the downed pilot.

Bursts of 37/57-mm anti-aircraft artillery fire at close proximity shook the aircraft, and Lieutenant Eagan swung it into a series of violent maneuvers to evade the fire. While in a spiraling descent, he established voice contact with the injured pilot on the ground and bounced along over the high treetops until he spotted smoke from the downed man's survival flare rising faintly through the dense jungle canopy.

The men of Jolly Green 21 found themselves hovering over a small valley, the three sides of which rose about 200 feet above them. Now came another moment of truth—one in a long series, as the crewmembers of Jolly Green 21 remember it.

Not knowing precisely where the downed pilot, Air Force Lt. Col. Jack Modica, was lying but that he was unable to move, pararescueman Talley descended on a forest-penetration hoist suspended from a cable to a small clearing in the jungle.

The crew gritted its teeth as Airman Talley began what seemed an interminable search below and as Lieutenant Eagan struggled against high winds to keep the chopper in a hover position.

Rough terrain impeded Talley as he stumbled through vines, jagged rocks, and heavy undergrowth for ten minutes before finding Colonel Modica, whose back was broken. Airman Talley directed the Jolly

Green closer and Eagan lowered the aircraft into the trees, slicing off limbs and branches with his whirling blades to maneuver to a position within ten meters of the two men. Airman Talley then carried the injured pilot to the hoist, and, while Eagan maintained the hover, secured himself and Modica to it.

Just as the hoist began to ascend, the North Vietnamese opened up. Holding fire until then is a familiar enemy tactic, for it is just at this moment that the aircraft is most vulnerable.

Automatic weapons fire raked the helicopter. The first hit smashed the center windshield and because of the angle must have come from the hillside facing the chopper.

As automatic weapons fire continued to spray the underside of the aircraft, Eagan and Booth held their hover until the penetrator was clear of the treetops. Then they shot off at maximum power and swung into a left turn to shield the two men still on the hoist.

Not stopping to count battle damage, the men of Jolly Green 21 flew the injured pilot to the nearest medical facility for treatment. Later, it was determined that the helicopter had taken forty direct hits from small arms, .30-caliber, and .50-caliber weapons. A total of sixty-six bullet holes was counted. Helicopter crews consider it ironic that after suffering such severe damage—some choppers have taken as many as eighty-nine hits—a helicopter can be downed by a single bullet in a vulnerable location.

Although all four Jolly Green 21 crewmen were cheered by the successful outcome of their mission and that they had come through unscathed, for Airman Talley the event had particular significance—it was his first rescue mission with the 37th ARRS.

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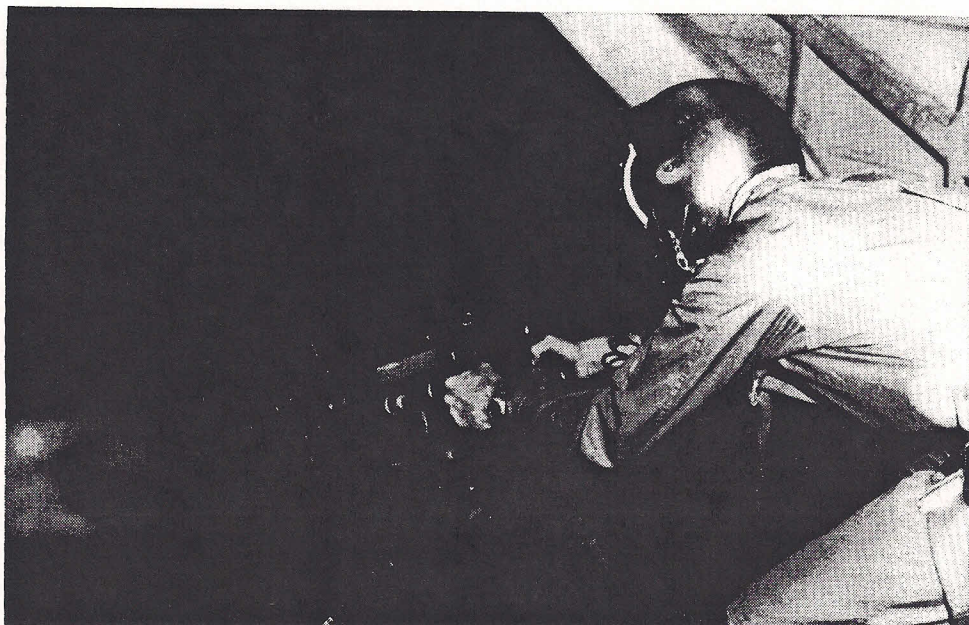
Lieutenant Eagan and I have become close friends. We have flown together off the coast of North Vietnam on three different occasions; sweated out the sound of emergency beepers; refueled from HC-130P Crown aircraft that add unlimited range to the aircraft of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, enabling them to go anywhere in the 1.1-million-square-mile "area of responsibility"—700,000 square miles of which is dense jungle. We have

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When a pilot is downed and either wounded or injured, it is often necessary for a pararescueman in a rescue helicopter to descend on the jungle penetrator lowered by a cable to assist him. Enemy fire is most effective then.

Rescue helicopter crewman aboard Jolly Green Buff fires machine gun in response to enemy fire. The helicopters also receive supporting fire from A-1 Sandys and Army Huey gunships but, despite close teamwork, the cost to the rescuers in casualties is high.



History of the 3d ARRGp.

Older than the separate USAF and the aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group was formed on February 14, 1944, at Gulfport Army Air Field, Miss. During the latter months of World War II, units of the Group operated from such places as Biak, Luzon, Dulag, Leyte, Noemfoor, Morotai, Mindoro, and Ie Shima in the Pacific. When the war ended the unit moved to Atsugi, Japan, to join other elements of the Fifth Air Force.

When North Korean Communist forces attacked the Republic of Korea on June 25, 1950, aircraft and men of the 3d Group were among the first US forces sent to that country. It was in Korea that the helicopter earned its reputation as an outstanding search and rescue aircraft.

From then until the termination of Korean hostilities on July 27, 1953, the Third's aircrews rescued 996 UN personnel from behind enemy lines. The Korean War produced forty aces, at least four of whom were saved by Air Rescue.

No unit in the entire Air Force has received more personal awards and decorations (more than 1,500). The Third was the first to receive the Presidential Unit Citation during the Korean War. Following the war, the Third was inactivated on June 18, 1957, at Nagoya AB, Japan.

As US participation in Vietnam progressed from a handful of advisers in 1962 to the large number of men and aircraft now involved, new rescue units were organized, equipped, and deployed. The Third was reactivated on January 8, 1966, having been preceded by Det. 3, Pacific Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Center, and the 38th ARRS.

ducked rockets at Da Nang, shared chow with the Marines at Quang Tri, met on dusty runways in Thailand, and dined by candlelight in Saigon. There's a unique comradeship born of combat—of flying, working, eating, relaxing together. You come to know and respect the kind of man who puts everything, including his life, on the line.

Despite the grimness of their mission and their determination to live up to their rescuemen's code, the men of air rescue are not without humor. When I asked Lance Eagan what it was like to fly the mission described above, he smiled and answered: "Have you ever been to a shooting gallery at an amusement park—and wondered what the sitting-duck target felt like?"

Lieutenant Eagan and Captain Booth, the first man to rescue two pilots from North Vietnam, are representative of all rescue pilots—whether they fly a Jolly Green or an HH-43 Pedro chopper, the local base rescue "bird" that looks like a sparrow trying to beat itself to death and that has been described by one pilot as an "aerodynamic miracle."

For all the joking aimed in its direction, the HH-43 Pedro and its crews at fourteen local base rescue detachments throughout South Vietnam and Thailand can boast having made the most saves of any aircraft in the war zone.

By February 1969 the Pedro pilots, who, in the days before the Jolly Green Giants, would fly north



Air Force Airman First Class Steven R. Tuttle, 20, with Detachment 11, 38th ARRSq. at Tuy Hoa AB, prepares to go out the open door of a hovering HH-43 Huskie helicopter.

of Hanoi refueling from fifty-gallon drums carried and dumped en route, had made a total of 772 combat saves. The HH-3E crews had logged 647, and the newer, bigger, higher-flying HH-53 Jolly Green Buff (Big Ugly Friendly Fellow, among other nicknames), manned by the men of the 40th ARRS only since December 1967, had recorded 110 combat saves. The remainder of the Air Force's combat saves were made by the HU-16 Dumbo amphibian prior to its phase-out in early 1967.

In addition to Coast Guard representation, Army and Navy personnel also serve on exchange duty with the 3d ARRGp. Army green has become familiar attire at the Seventh Air Force Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSARC), manned by 3d ARRGp personnel at Tan Son Nhut, which controls and coordinates all rescue missions in SEA—at sea or over the jungles.

While men of the Army, Navy, and Coast Guard are a part of the 3d Group, there's no distinction between services when it comes to the most important person in rescue—the man being rescued.

Over the past four years the 3d Group's "customers" have included more than 500 soldiers and approximately 300 sailors and Marines. The Army continues to be the unit's single largest customer.

The mission of 3d ARRGp is to "search for, locate, and recover combat aircrews throughout SEA." The unit commander, Col. Hollon H. Bridges, also is the director of search and rescue (SAR) and in that ca-



Maj. Robert I. McCann, a rescued pilot, is helped from a Jolly Green Giant named "Lucky Linda." Assisting him are SSgt. A. S. Avery, the PJ, and Lt. Col. J. S. Devlin, Jr.

capacity controls all of the SAR missions in the war zone.

A part of the Military Airlift Command, the 3d ARRGp's component squadrons include the 37th ARRS at Da Nang and Det. 1, 40th ARRS in Thailand, both of which fly HH-3E Jolly Greens; the 40th ARRS at Udorn RTAFB, with its HH-53 Buffs; the 39th ARRS at Tuy Hoa, RVN, and its HC-130P Crown aircraft, the only fixed-wing aircraft in rescue (Crowns serve as both command and control aircraft and are the only non-SAC aerial tankers in the active Air Force inventory); and the 38th ARRS, to which all HH-43 Pedro aircraft are assigned.

HH-43 detachments of the 38th ARRS are located at Bien Hoa, Binh Thuy, Cam Rahn Bay, Da Nang, Pleiku, Phan Rang, Phu Cat, Tan Son Nhut, and Tuy Hoa Air Bases, Republic of Vietnam, and Korat, Takhli,

Ubon, Udorn, and U-Tapao Airfields, all in Thailand.

The control structure for air rescue in Southeast Asia begins with Gen. George S. Brown, the Seventh Air Force commander. Although assigned to MAC, 3d ARRGp resources fall under the operational control of the Seventh Air Force commander.

The Joint Search and Rescue Center is an integral part of the Seventh Air Force combat operations center. In addition to JSARC, rescue controllers also are stationed at operating locations at Song Tra, RVN, and Udorn, Thailand. Each has instantaneous communication with all other SAR aircraft through the airborne mission controller, the HC-130P rescue crew commander.

When a pilot is downed anywhere in Southeast Asia, all necessary airborne resources of the Seventh and Seventh/Thirteenth Air Forces, the US Navy, Army, and Marine Corps are diverted to his rescue. As many as 189 combat strikes have been conducted in support of a single individual's rescue.

One essential element in the "rescue team" is the A-1 Sandy and Spad support flown by Seventh and Seventh/Thirteenth Air Force units. The rescue statistics compiled by the Jolly Green Giants would not have been possible without the close support provided by the prop-driven World War II vintage A-1s. Similar support is provided for Pedro rescue operations by Army Huey helicopter "gunships."

The combat SAR force is a true team effort in every respect. The relays they "run," the "baton" they pass in turning over airborne mission commander duties from Crown to Sandy to Jolly Green, as circumstances dictate, are as well timed and coordinated as an Olympic race. The big difference between the Olympics in sports and the olympics of SAR activity is that in the latter no prizes are given for second place.

The entire SAR operation is placed into effect almost instantly upon receipt of a "Mayday" from a downed aviator or his wingman. Within moments jet aircraft are dispatched to the scene to assess the situation and suppress enemy fire. A-1 pilots "work the area," dealing with small arms and other obvious enemy threats, prior to calling in the rescue helicopters.

Despite the many precautions taken, the cost to 3d ARRGp reflects the hazards involved. More than ninety members of the Group have been killed, wounded, captured, or declared missing in action. More than twenty aircraft have been lost, and severe battle damage has been suffered on more than sixty occasions.

Despite their losses, 3d ARRGp personnel have re-

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The Cheney Award—Once More to the Rescue Service

For the third time in the past four years a member of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (MAC) has won the coveted Cheney Award for heroism. It was the second successive year that the award has gone to a Jolly Green Giant pararescueman.

Sgt. Thomas A. Newman, 22, of Milwaukee, Wis., serving until recently with Det. 1, 40th ARRS, at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, was selected to receive the 1968 award for his "extraordinary heroism and valor" in the rescue of a downed Air Force pilot on May 30, 1968. The award, established in 1928 in memory of 1st Lt. William H. Cheney, killed in an air collision during World War I, is to be presented to Sergeant Newman at the Pentagon by the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. John P. McConnell. It consists of a certificate, a medal, and \$500.

Sergeant Newman also has been awarded the Air Force Cross, the Airman's Medal, and the Purple Heart.



An HH-3E Jolly Green Giant pulls up to the refueling drogue of an HC-130 aircraft to fill up its tanks. Such operations enable the rescue helicopters to extend range and time spent airborne, which in many cases means the difference between capture and rescue for pilots on the ground.

covered more than 100 persons for each of the twenty-one who have died in action. No estimate of the saving, beyond lives, is possible because of the many factors involved, yet the figure certainly would run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars in aircrew training alone.

However, since December 1, 1964, more than 2,400 persons have owed their lives to the men of the 3d ARRGp and others supporting the joint search and rescue team in Southeast Asia.

Operating under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, and against an enemy air defense system that has been described as the most complex and deadly in history, aircrews of the 3d Group have consistently accomplished their arduous missions with outstanding airmanship and dedication.

A total of over 1,600 of those rescued to date are classified as combat saves. Each has been plucked from almost certain death or capture by enemy forces. Had it not been for the gallantry of rescue helicopter

crews, who frequently remained motionless in a hover for up to twenty-five minutes while under intense enemy fire, combined with the outstanding professional performance of command and control and all other essential support personnel, combat losses in Southeast Asia would have been considerably higher.

The extraordinary heroism displayed by members of the 3d ARRGp has had a profound impact on the morale of all combat aircrews in the war zone and has earned for the rescue pilots the title of "the men with steel nerves." Testimonials from fighter pilots and others would fill volumes.

The question of statistics and cost was best answered by former 3d ARRGp commander Col. Paul Leske, USAF (Ret.): "When a man is downed, he is far more than a statistic. He is a fellow American, with a family at home, with hopes and dreams and a potential that cannot be measured. He is a man in trouble, and he needs help fast."

And that sums up the air rescue mission.—END



The author, Maj. Carroll Shershun, has served as staff information and civic-action officer of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (MAC) since last August, the only MAC information officer stationed in Southeast Asia. Major Shershun's duties have taken him to such diverse places as the flight deck of the USS Bennington and Special Forces camps in the mountains of Vietnam. He has flown on more than thirty combat missions. In his role as civic-action officer, Major Shershun, among other things, has devoted time and effort to the Air Rescue-sponsored Co-Nhi-Vien Viet Hoa orphanage near Saigon. Major Shershun, 38, is a veteran of more than seventeen years as an Air Force information officer. In May, he was the recipient of the Aerospace Writers Association's Orville Wright Award for "dedicated efforts to inform the public of the humanitarian aspects of the war in Vietnam," and the Public Relations Society of America's Silver Anvil Award for his work in community relations.