

Attempting to pinpoint the survivor location, Spad 11 made a low pass and received heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. Tipping pulled off and headed toward a safe area. Ballmes tried to talk to Spad 11, but received no response. The stricken aircraft trailed heavy black smoke and crashed a short distance from the target area without the canopy leaving the aircraft.³⁰⁷ The heavy enemy activity precluded a rescue attempt and Major Tipping was listed as Missing in Action. When the news was announced, it was greeted with sadness. Major Tipping was well liked by the maintainers. He always sat on the wing of his aircraft filling out the necessary forms while the Skyraider was pushed back into the revetment. He also, in a quiet voice, described the mission he had just completed. His loss was felt by everyone in the squadron.³⁰⁸



Chase View.³⁰⁹

On October 4, 1968, the DaNang SAR force scrambled to provide close air support to a Special Forces SOG team that had declared a Prairie Fire emergency. They were surrounded on

³⁰⁷ Ballmes interview.

³⁰⁸ PH633SOW, Volume I, July – September 1968, 22.

³⁰⁹ ARH, *Chase View*.

three sides and the ground fire was heavy. A Kingbee H-34 helicopter attempted to pick up the team, but was damaged by ground fire. It landed one half mile away and was abandoned. A Jolly Green tried for a pickup, but was hit badly, and had to recover at DaNang. Eight Spad flights had been diverted from other missions to help suppress the ground fire. The terrain in the area was mountainous and the Spads could only attack from two directions. Smoke from napalm and white phosphorous rockets along with rapidly deteriorating weather obscuring the landing zone, made all passes difficult. F-4 Phantoms tried to drop hi-drag MK 82 bombs, but they had to pull off dry on many passes due to their inability to acquire the target through the smoke and low hanging clouds. A second Jolly Green moved in and attempted to extract the ground team. But, it was hit by ground fire and crashed in flames. It was a morbid scene and those circling the area were sick at heart to think they had not suppressed all the weapons in the area.³¹⁰

Major Dineen, as on-scene commander, directed the Spads and fast movers in a coordinated and concentrated fire suppression effort around the friendly force. Not until darkness approached and weather conditions deteriorated to the point of making the pickup almost impossible did Dineen allow another Jolly Green to attempt the pickup. As the Jolly Green approached the pickup point, Dineen had all Spads in trail formation in a 6,000 feet orbit. The Spads headed down as the Jolly Green began to hover over the SOG team. As the Spads approached where the Jolly Green was hovering, a Spad rolled off on either side of the helicopter and strafed to suppress any hostile ground fire. The tactics worked and the pickup was successful. Not only was the surviving SOG team rescued, but also two survivors of the Jolly Green that had been shot down earlier.³¹¹

³¹⁰ H633SOW, Volume II, October – December 1968, 7.

³¹¹ H633SOW, Volume II, October – December 1968, 8.