

STRICKEN GERMAN SEAMEN SAVED BY JOLLY GREENS

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DA NANG — An unusual mission of mercy recently took the Jolly Green Giant crews of the 37th ARRSq far out into Asian waters to bring relief to two stricken seamen.

Two HH-3E helicopters were launched to aid two ill sailors aboard a German tanker steaming for Cam Ranh Bay off the South China Sea coast. Air Force Major Charles E. Wicker, 34, Baltimore, commanded the first chopper, while Major Leon Wright, 39, Iowa Park, Tex., followed in the backup chopper.

"It was a 300-mile flight," recalled Wicker, "and we intercepted the tanker a little more than a hundred miles off Cam Ranh Bay."

There were no radio communications with the ship, but the captain brought his ship to a halt when he spotted the circling helicopters. Wicker then lowered his pararescueman, Sgt. Thomas T. Winters, 21, San Jose, Calif., onto the bow of the ship with a hand radio.

The first few sailors Winters encountered spoke no English, but the ship's captain soon arrived and asked Winters in English to place the chopper in a hover over the stern of the ship, where pickup would be easier for the ailing seamen.

"It probably made it easier on the seamen," smiled Wicker, "but it made

it tougher on us, as I had only one point of reference in keeping the chopper in position, and the movement of the ship made it difficult for our flight engineer (Master Sergeant Charles L. Manes, 40, Glendale, Ariz.) to maintain the hoist in the proper position. I might add that Manes did one fine job on the hoist.

"One of the sick men could walk," added Winters, "but the other could not and seemed to be in severe pain. I put them both in the sling together, and sent them up clinging to each other. I then followed with their luggage."

Once aboard, the seamen were attended by Captain Denver H. Nelson, 27, Spencer, Iowa, who volunteered to go with the Jolly Green crew when he learned the nature of the mission.

"By the time we got them on board," said Nelson, "one of the sailors seemed to be much better. The second was still pretty sick, and I administered oxygen enroute to the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. They apparently had inhaled a lot of aviation gas fumes."

Aside from being an unusual pickup, the mission proved to be one of endurance, both for the HH-3E chopper and its crew. The entire mission, including the long haul back to Da Nang Air Base, covered more than 800 miles and eight and one half hours of flying time.

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