



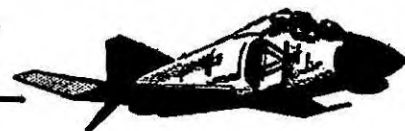
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Colonel Leske: 'On Sharing the Credit'

(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Col. Paul E. Leske, who relinquished command of the famed 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group Sept. 20. He retired from the Air Force after more than a quarter of a century's service and is now residing in Florida.)

TAN SON NHUT — It is with a large measure of pride and sorrow that I depart both the Air Force and one of the finest organizations ever to wear its colors.

When the history of this war is written, I believe the rescue

story will be the most outstanding human drama of the entire U.S. Air Force effort. It has been a personal pleasure and a deep honor to command the 1,200 dedicated officers and men of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Group (MAC).

The accomplishments of our "Jolly Green Giant" and "Pedro" rescue helicopter crews are well known. Their praises have been sung by many. The almost 2,000 combat aircrews and other personnel of all our Armed Forces who have been rescued from certain death or capture at enemy hands since 1965 have

rewarded us with their oft-expressed gratitude to the point that it has become at times embarrassing, yet always appreciated.

Our gallant PJ's (pararescuemen) have become a living legend. It is an honor which each and every man who has ever voluntarily descended "In to the valley" richly deserves. I am often asked, "what makes a PJ tick?" The answer lies within many of us. For most it is an expression of deep personal conviction and dedication, an effort to respond to the guidance so eloquently stated by our

late president: "ask what you can do for your country!" They are doers. For them, as for all our rescue crews, there is the psychic reward of being participants, not spectators, in the greatest human drama of our time.

Yet there are still others who richly deserve to share in the credit which has been so generously heaped upon our rescue crews, be they pilots, flight engineers or maroon beret-clad PJs.

There are the "Crown" crews who serve long, hard hours as
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'On Sharing the Credit'

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airborne mission commanders. These are the men who search for and locate downed airmen, wherever they may be in our 1.1 million square mile war zone. There are the Joint Search and Rescue Center (JS-ARC) personnel who spend long hours coordinating and directing the action. And while these are the people of our own 3rd ARRG, there are many others who complete the rescue picture too.

There are the Rescort (rescue escort) A-1 Sandy and Spad pilots, the men without whom our proud record could never have been achieved. These on-the-scene commanders, flying low and slow, endure unbelievable challenges, yet time and again are more than equal to every challenge. They are our strong right arm.

There are the Rescap pilots who fly top cover, when required — and it usually is, for our missions. Our people call them "fast movers." That they are. As we blink at their speed, so too do we nod our gratitude.

There are the forward air controllers, probably the most unsung of all heroes in this war, who fly their slow prop-driven aircraft right into the enemy's midst to provide the eyes, and frequently the ears, for our mission.

And just as far more than half of all those whom we have

rescued to date are from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy and friendly foreign forces, so too have members of all of our sister services become deeply involved in rescue activities. The U.S. Navy's "Big Mother" crews, the Army "Slicks" and "Gunships", and the Marines, too, have made many a pickup in addition to the statistics compiled by 3rd ARRG personnel.

In fact, when it comes to total involvement, there are U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy rescue pilots who fly with us on "Jolly Green Giant" missions, just as our pilots in turn fly with our sea-going services. Army personnel are an integral part of our JSARC operation. We work with the Marines every day. If ever there was inter-service teamwork, there is in rescue. I have yet to hear the man who has been rescued complain about what branch of service got him to safety.

Many, many people contribute to the rescue drama. None, however, is more important than the man who is being rescued. 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 is what air rescue is all about.

To each of those who have contributed to the Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Services' proud record, I offer my sincerest "Well done!"
