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38th ARRSq Hist, Jul - Sep 1969

10

On 10 July 1969, HH-43B #60-278 crashed when the pilot thought he had experienced engine failure while on a training flight. The crew received only minor injuries but the aircraft was damaged beyond economical repair.

On 19 July 1969, HH-43B #59-1562 was destroyed when it was struck by blast and flying debris when a crashed and burning B-52 blew up. Two of the Pedro crewmembers were killed in the crash² and one was severely injured.³

On 7 August 1969, HH-43B #60-282 was lost at sea after experiencing complete engine failure while being flown from Tuy Hoa to Cam Ranh Bay. The crew escaped the sinking aircraft with minor injuries, and were rescued by an Army helicopter.

On 13 August 1969, HH-43F #62-4508 was extensively damaged when it rolled on its side after snagging a runway barrier cable during landing roll after a practice autorotation. The crew escaped with only minor injuries. This aircraft will hopefully be returned to operation after extensive repairs.

2. Major Davis, Warren K.,
TSgt Cohen, Harry H.,
3. SSgt Miles, Tommy T.,

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Sergeant Larry W. Maysey

USMC outpost of Khe Sanh. Jolly 26 attempts to pick up the remaining two survivors, both now wounded. Fighting, both in the air and on the ground, is intense. Larry jumps from the safety of '26, and runs down a steep slope rescuing the two remaining men. '26 is now being slammed with small arms fire. Just after Larry helps both survivors safely onboard, an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) strikes the number one engine, fatally crippling the bird. The engine explodes, inverting the aircraft wherein it rolls and skids down a deep ravine and bursts into flames within one hundred yards of the other two crashed choppers. Only the pilot and one other man survive the fiery crash. Sergeant Maysey receives the Air Force Cross posthumously. The pilot, Captain Gerald Young, is rescued later that day and subsequently receives the Medal of Honor.

9 June 1968 - **SERGEANT JAMES D. LOCKER.** In the middle of a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) encampment, thirty-seven miles west of Hue RVN, a USMC fighter pilot lies on the ground with a broken arm and leg. The enemy is using him as bait to lure SAR aircraft, especially the very vulnerable Jolly Green Giants, within killing range. Air strikes pound the area and brutalize the enemy, but with little effect. Three times the first Jolly attempts to reach the survivor, but each time it is repelled by awesome enemy firepower. When that Jolly is forced to depart because of low fuel, Jim's aircraft assumes the low bird role. The crew fights its way in but is forced to withdraw. Again it goes in, this time surrounded by gunships, but, again, the enemy meets them head on. As the crew hovers over the survivor, bullets punch into the aircraft and it begins to burn. The Jolly attempts to exit, but is mortally wounded; it settles to the ground and explodes, killing Jim and all others onboard. The pilot, USCG Lieutenant Jack Rittichier, one of three U.S. Coast Guard exchange pilots flying with the 37th ARRS at Da Nang AB, becomes one of the USCG's war fatalities.

25 December 1968 - **AIRMAN FIRST CLASS CHARLES D. KING.** Jolly 17 is notified on 24 December 1968 that Panda 01 is down in Laos. It departs airborne alert for the site, later joining up with Jolly 15 at the orbit point. A parachute is spotted near where the survivor went down; however, it is thought that

naissance team. The site is known to be hot, surrounded by a well-disciplined, crack North Vietnamese Army (NVA) battalion. A Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) and a U.S. ARMY helicopter have already been shot down and destroyed. Illuminated by a C-130 flare ship dropping LUU-2 parachute flares, Jolly 29 makes a pickup of three survivors before being driven off by intense enemy fire. '29, with heavy battle damage, lands at the

particular parachute is from another source, because the downed crewman had been seen descending into the trees. Since no contact has been made with the downed crewmen, the search is postponed with all aircraft returning to base. The next day the decision is made to reexamine the parachute that had been seen. Eventually, Jolly 17 comes into a hover over the chute. Both the flight engineer and Charlie King see a man hanging in the harness. Charlie

volunteers to descend and retrieve the pilot. Once on the ground, he calls for slack in the hoist cable and moves to the survivor. He fastens the survivor to the hoist and calls for the flight engineer to take up the slack. He uses the hoist to help move the survivor under the helicopter. When Charlie is approximately ten feet from the hoisting area, gunfire erupts. First '17 is pelted with enemy fire, then the men on the ground. Charlie calls on the radio, "I'm hit, I'm hit, pull up,



Airman First Class Charles D. King

pull up." The pilot immediately ascends, tearing the hoist from its mount as the entangled cable first tightens, then snaps. Jolly 17 departs the area with battle damage, leaving Airman King and the downed crewman on the ground. He is declared missing in action and later promoted in sequence with other MIAs to Chief Master Sergeant. He is never heard from again. A distinguished graduate from his pararescue class, Sergeant Charlie King is officially declared killed in action on 5 December 1978. He is awarded the Air Force Cross posthumously.

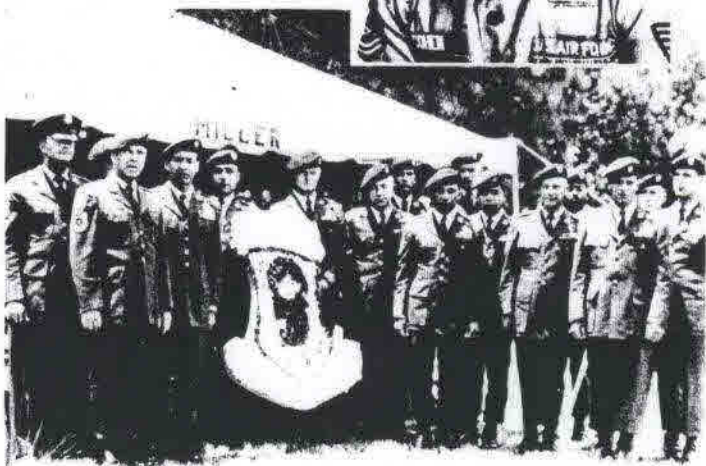
19 July 1969 - **TECHNICAL SERGEANT HARRY M. COHEN.** At Detachment 12, 38th ARRS, Utapao AB, Thailand, an HH-43 Huskie is scrambled in response to a bomber emergency during a heavy rainstorm. The crew



Sergeant James D. Locker

Right: Technical Sergeant Harry M. Cohen

Below: Pararescuemen pay their last respects to their friend Harry Cohen.



includes Technical Sergeant Cohen and Staff Sergeant Tommy Miles, pararescuemen/firefighters. The bomber has aborted a heavyweight takeoff and has run off the end of the runway, its forward gear collapsing and catching the aircraft on fire. The Huskie approaches the nose of the bomber, hovers momentarily, then proceeds to hover three or four hundred yards from the scene. The crew is unable to get confirmation that the bomber's tail-gunner cleared the wreckage so they return to the scene. They make a fly-by, clockwise around the tail of the bomber at about 200 feet, and are westbound at approximately 500 to 600 feet from the bomber when the bombs explode. Shrapnel and debris tear the rotor system from the helicopter and it crashes, killing the pilot and Sergeant Cohen. Miraculously, Tommy Miles survives with massive life-threatening injuries, but after extensive surgery he returns to pararescue duty and eventually retires after a long and successful career.

6 December 1969 - **AIRMAN FIRST CLASS DAVID M. DAVISON**. Boxer-22, an F-4C, goes down in Laos directly over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, an awesomely fortified transportation network.

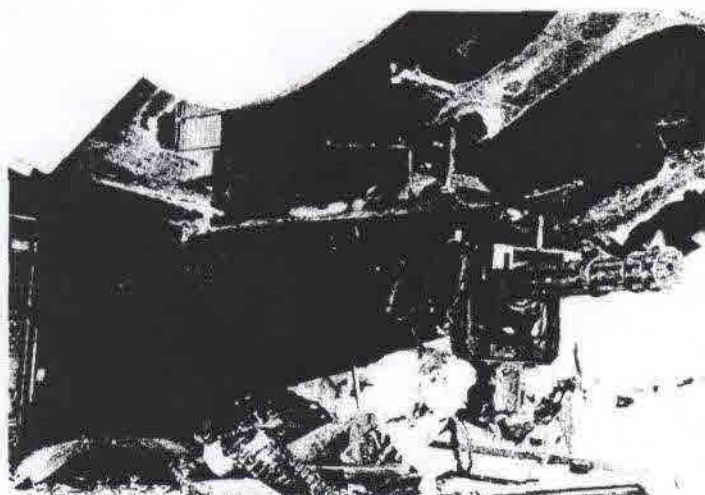


Airman First Class
David M. Davison

During the next three days, ARRS coordinates one of the largest search and rescue missions ever to be conducted in Southeast Asia. Airman Davison loses his life during the prosecution of this mission. The search and rescue task force flies 336 sorties and fifty-one hours in support. Although the F-4 pilot is never recovered, the navigator, First Lieutenant Woodrow J. Bergeron, Jr., is rescued. Pararescuemen Gene Nardi and Curt "Snake" Phythian are

crewmembers on the Jolly that makes the most attempts to effect a recovery. Nearly forty pararescuemen participate in direct action against the enemy. Some are wounded in the fray. When it is over, five of the ten helicopters involved never fly again because of the battle damage. Five Sandy A-1's suffer heavy damage.

(Authors' Note: At the 1988 Pararescue reunion in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Lieutenant Bergeron was the guest speaker at the banquet.)

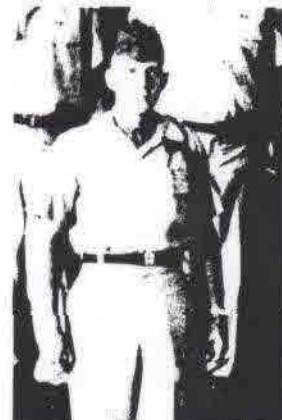


Damaged HH-53 from Boxer 22 mission.

28 January 1970 - **SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT WILLIAM D. PRUETT/MASTER SERGEANT WILLIAM C. SUTTON**. Anti-aircraft guns shoot down an F-105 fighter-bomber along the border Between North Vietnam and Laos. It is one of the first aircraft losses since the bombing halt ordered by President Johnson, fifteen months prior. Sergeants Pruett and Sutton are TDY to an HH-53 unit in Thailand, and are crew members on one of the HH-53s launched to effect the recovery of the F-105 crew. The mission is deep in enemy territory; and often the forces penetrate North Vietnamese airspace. This does not go unnoticed by communist ground radar controllers who launch at least one Soviet MiG fighter against the intruders. Although U.S. airborne radar control aircraft are aware of, and broadcast the MiG's presence, little concern is rendered by the overwhelmingly superior American force. The North Vietnamese Air Force is not known for brazen acts of courage. But this is not a typical MiG fighter pilot. Hugging the lowlands and valley of the mountainous region, he skillfully conceals himself in adverse weather and slips through the American protective combat screen. He launches first one air-to-air missile that misses Pruett's and Sutton's aircraft, then, immediately, another one. It impacts, bringing the huge helicopter down. The six-man crew is lost. This is believed to be the first time a helicopter is brought down by an air-to-air missile during the Vietnam War.



Senior Master Sergeant
William D. Pruett



Master Sergeant
William C. Sutton

25 May 1970 - **STAFF SERGEANT LUTHER E. DAVIS**. Sergeant Luther Davis is assigned to the HH-3E squadron at Da Nang AB, RVN. He is on his second combat tour. When an Air Force fighter jet is knocked from the skies by communist forces, he and his crew race the clock and advancing enemy troops to see who arrives at the survivor's position first. When his helicopter pulls into the area for a pickup, it is evident the bad guys are there first. They launch a deadly barrage of ground fire at his approaching helicopter, shredding it to pieces as it crashes into the jungle. Immediately it catches fire. Hands and arms aflame, Luther frees himself of his equipment and prepares to escape the inferno. It is then that he notices the struggling form of his flight engineer engulfed in flames, unable to release his own gunner's belt. Sergeant Davis bounds to his side, grabs the nylon strap that connects the belt to the aircraft and, since his own badly burned hands cannot grasp the knife secured to his web gear, he plunges hands and belt into the flames. Eventually, the belt begins to melt, and Luther is able to pull it in two. He lunges to the crew entrance door with



Miles43.jpg

Name: Technical Sergeant Harry Cohen PJ

Date of Birth: February 8, 1933

Home of Record: Chicago, Illinois

Date of Casualty: July 19, 1969

Age at Loss: 35 years old

Vietnam Veteran's Memorial
Wall Panel 2E - Row 20Detachment #12, 38th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron
Utapao Air Base, Thailand

Aircraft Model: HH-43B

Aircraft Tail Number: 59-1562

Callsign: Pedro 70

INCIDENT SUMMARY

Technical Sergeant Cohen and his crew scramble in response to a B-52 which has aborted its take-off. The B-52's nose gear collapses, the aircraft crashes and begins to burn. There is a question of whether the tail-gunner has evacuated the burning aircraft. Major Davis flies his helicopter by the burning aircraft while his crew attempts to locate the tail-gunner. The ordinance on the B-52 begins to explode. Major Davis' helicopter is struck by shrapnel and debris and his helicopter crashes. Major Davis and one of his crew members is killed. A third crew member is very seriously injured but survives the crash.

A/C MAJOR WARREN A. DAVIS KIA

2 CREW KILLED COHEN WAS #2

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
TO
TOMMY MILES JR.

Staff Sergeant Tommy Miles Jr., distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as a Pararescueman at U-Tapao Airfield, Thailand, on 19 July 1969. On that date, Sergeant Miles was on a crew of a HH-43 helicopter participating in a rescue of crewmembers of a burning B-52 which was fully loaded with bombs. The helicopter, because of reduced visibility from the driving rain, hovered directly over the burning B-52, insuring that all the crewmembers had been evacuated. Following successful evacuation of the aircrew the bomb load of the burning aircraft exploded and, because of the heroic efforts of the helicopter aircrew in moving their aircraft closely into the crash scene to affect the rescue, the helicopter was fatally struck by debris. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Miles reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

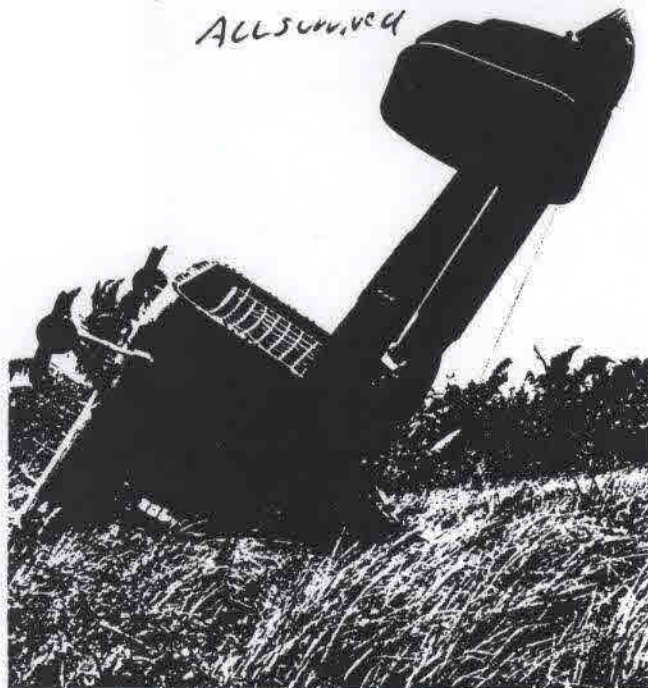
Robert LaPointe

From: Civitillo, Frank [Frank.Civitillo@med.va.gov]
Sent: Thursday, November 14, 2002 4:45 AM
To: 'rlapointe@gci.net'
Subject: Harry Cohen

Hi, Sarge,

I'm an Air Force Veteran who was at U-Tapao when the B52 exploded on 7/19/69. Sgt. Cohen and Major Davis both died that day. Major Davis date of death reflects 7/19/69, but Sgt Cohen shows 1965. Please make this correction. Also the call sign was pedro 70. I shared a few beers with Sgt. Cohen at the NCO club , but I did not know Maj. Davis. Still feel the pain and won't forget. Frank

UTAPAC #1
ALL SURVIVED



A low approach at low airspeed in a downwind condition equals one bashed HH-43.

with VFR helicopter operations near thunderstorms. Lightning, hail and gusty winds should all be treated with extreme caution. Second, use the helicopter's capability to land enroute . . . and wait if severe weather cannot be avoided. Sage advice.

VI

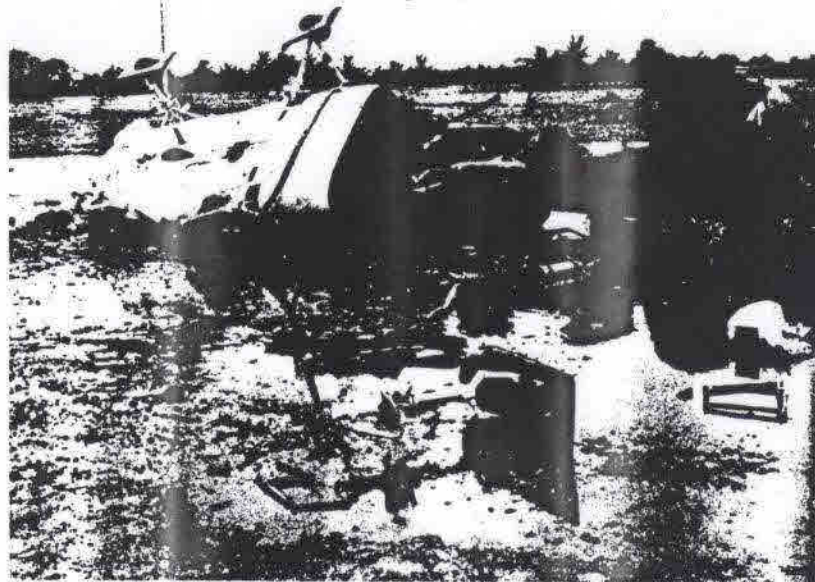
This HH-43 was on a routine training flight at a Far East base. The mission proceeded normally through several patterns, approaches and hovering maneuvers until the crew turned onto a downwind leg for a termination landing. While they were spacing for traffic, the flight engineer spotted some dense smoke north of the field. The pilot decided to investigate.

As he approached the smoke area, he continued descending in a shallow left turn while reducing airspeed to 30 or 35 knots. As he attempted to level for a slow flight across the area, he increased power. There was no response and the chopper continued to descend until the right rotor blades struck a tree and broke off. The nose pitched down and the helicopter hit the ground and rolled over. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured.

The accident investigating board found the primary cause of this accident to be Operator Factor, in that the pilot attempted a low approach at low air-

UTAPAC #2

MASON W. K. DAVIS P
TST COLON AS
2 Killed
1 Survived
SSgt Tommy M. H. P



When the bombs exploded, this helicopter was blown out of the sky.

speed in a downwind condition. He failed to recognize and provide for normal engine acceleration lag time, allowing his helicopter to settle into a tree. As usual, there were contributing factors: fatigue and supervisory . . . but as always, the pilot bears the final responsibility for a safe flight.

VII

The next Huskie accident had more serious consequences. This HH-43B was scrambled in response to a bomber emergency during a heavy rain storm. The bomber had aborted a heavy-weight takeoff and had run off the end of the runway. Its forward gear had collapsed and the aircraft started burning. The Huskie approached the nose of the bomber, hovered momentarily, then proceeded to hold three or four hundred yards from the scene. The pilot was unable to get confirmation that the bomber's tail gunner was clear so he returned to the scene. He made a fly-by clockwise around the tail of the bomber at about 200 feet and was westbound at approximately 500 to 600 feet from the bomber when the bombs exploded. Shrapnel and debris from the explosion tore the entire rotor system from the helicopter and it crashed, killing two of the three men aboard.

This pilot had asked the tower for a time factor

MAY 16, 1973

Pararescueman Tom Miles was . . . too tough to die

DET 12 38ARRS

Heavy, hot torrents of rain were streaking down upon the alert shelter at U-Tapao, Thailand, as pararescueman Tom Miles, then a staff sergeant, sat with his alert partner thinking the myriad of thoughts that only a man stationed in Southeast Asia can think. Home, wife, kids, mission, life, death . . . all may have been speeding through his brain.

Little did Tom know, that on that July 19th in 1969 at approximately 2 p.m., a drama would begin that would affect his life 24 hours a day for more than three years . . . It was Tom's turn to wrestle with fate.

"My alert teammate and I were just sitting, and waiting that day. That's all you can do on alert . . . wait," Miles reflects. Suddenly, the horn went off and the scramble began.

As Tom and his partner made their way to the chopper on the pad, they were told that a B-52 had crashed and was burning. Their job was to scramble along with the HH-43B's pilot on a fire suppression mission. They were airborne within 10 minutes, on what seemed to be a routine mission, so routine in fact, that the chopper's co-pilot did not have to accompany them. They soon found out, however, that it would be far from routine.

A few minutes after take-off, they spotted the giant bomber with the entire nose section engulfed in flames. The crew, with the exception of the tailgunner, was assembled outside of the burning bird. The pilot made a pass at the aircraft from 12 o'clock to the 6 o'clock position, searching for the gunner. Suddenly, the pilot said, "I see his escape rope." He pulled the Huskie into a turn over the aircraft. There was a great rumble as the B-52 exploded, blowing the helicopter out of the sky, killing the pilot and Miles' partner.

"The last thing I remember was a flash," says

Tom. "The next thing I knew, I mean really knew, was that I was in a hospital bed." At that time though, Tom did not know that six weeks had elapsed and he was not in Thailand, but in Wilford Hall Hospital where he was destined to spend an entire year undergoing extensive medical care.

Extensive injuries

As that B-52 exploded, Miles had been knocked out of the rear end of the chopper, and had fallen some 200 feet to the jungle floor. An ambulance from the base made it to the scene and picked up the unconscious airman. In the accident, he had sustained multiple injuries. Both of his legs and his arm were broken, his jawbone was fractured in two places, he had a punctured stomach, a hole in his hard palate and extensive head, facial and internal injuries. His only chance for survival was to air-evacuate him to the U. S.

Doctors attended his immediate wounds, and arranged to fly him out on an evacuation flight, a flight that would return him to his homeland, but not before he had "died" twice. Two times as he lay suspended in limbo, Tom's breathing and heart stopped. It was only some inner "strength" and quick action by medical personnel he never saw, that saved his life.

Upon arrival at Wilford Hall, he was admitted into the intensive care unit, where he lay unconscious to the world around him and the efforts that were being made to save his life. "They took great care of me there," praises Tom.

After being transferred from intensive care, Tom underwent lengthy orthopedic treatment. His broken bones were mended, and he then began the seemingly endless cycle of casts and cast changes that patients with severe bone injuries must undergo. With treatment complete, he started on the long road up through physical therapy.

"I guess I was one of their worst patients," chuckles the PJ. "I wanted to do everything for myself, and if I couldn't, I would get mad. I never wanted anyone to help me. I gave them a pretty good notion of what I was like."

pararescuemen. "They really did a great job. They motivate you and if it wouldn't have been for the other PJ's coming down to see me, I probably would have never made it."

"I had an attitude like, 'You're hurt boy, you may not make it'. Then they challenged me with bits like, 'Hey boy, what's wrong with you, you can't walk like me.' That makes you think, and give your all to get straightened out."

After his discharge from Wilford Hall, Miles was assigned to Eglin, where he worked with the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Training Center as a Field Committee instructor for one year. But he wasn't satisfied. "I was a pararescueman, but not a flying or jumping PJ," he relates. He worked hard at his job of providing students with field, survival and ground navigation training, but something important was lacking from his life . . . he wasn't "operational".

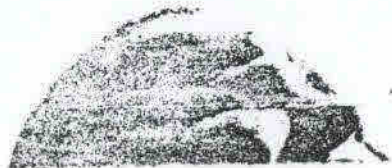
To Tom, a master parachutist with 67 jumps before his injury, being operational is the most important part of his job. When you look at Tom Miles, his whole being radiates action and determination. It was this determination that led him to the conclusion that he had to get back in the air. There was one problem . . . he couldn't pass the physical.

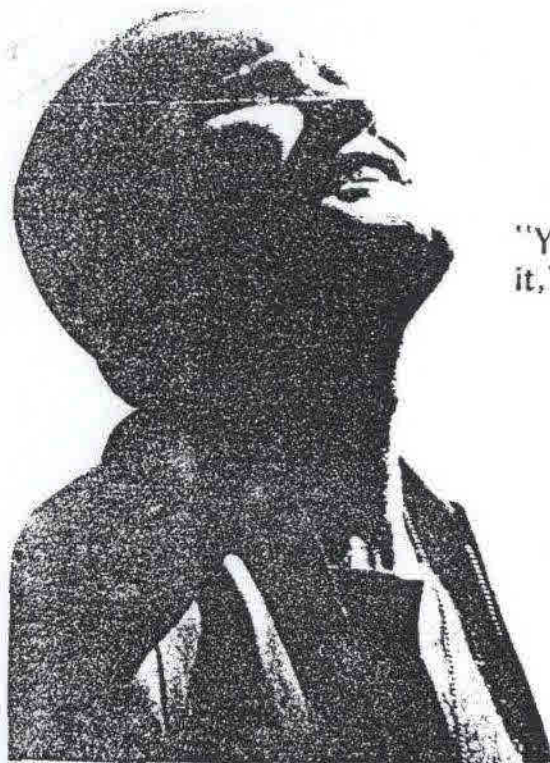
He began an intense physical and mental campaign to put himself in top condition to pass that flight physical, bearing in mind his own philosophy that, "If you have the right mental attitude, you can do just about anything." After more hard months of strain and frustration, Tom finally passed the physical that would open the door to flight and jump status once again.

Once again, Tom gives a majority of the credit for this accomplishment to his fellow airmen in his present unit, the 55th ARRSq. "People like my commander, Lt. Col. Coy Farrar and fellow PJ's like CMSgt. Joe Vigare really challenged me. They gave me a goal to meet. They made me mad, and I wanted to show them what I could do."

Jumping again

TSgt. Tom Miles did show them what he could do recently, when he made his first jump in over three years on a training mission.





"You've made it, you've really made it," reflects Miles after his jump.

They brought him through alright, but only after many months of determined effort by both the therapists and Tom himself. The anger and frustration that comes from a disability, either permanent or temporary, is something that only a disabled person can comprehend.

Lots of help

Pararescueman Tom Miles met this frustration and beat his disabilities, but not alone. He gives a lot of credit to the therapists and other

therapy.

"I guess I was one of their worst patients," chuckles the PJ. "I wanted to do everything for myself, and if I couldn't, I would get mad. I never wanted anyone to help me. I gave them a pretty good ration of grief in P. T., but they finally brought me through."

could do.

Jumping again

TSgt. Tom Miles did show them what he could do recently, when he made his first jump in over three years on a training mission. "When I got up in the door of the aircraft, I was a little apprehensive," reveals Tom. "I was set to make a perfect jump", and he did.

"Yes I was apprehensive before the jump... but when I went out of the aircraft, it was beautiful" he describes. "I looked up and saw the chute and the sky, and I said to myself, 'You have really made it, you've really made it!'"

A ten year Air Force veteran, Sergeant Miles was trained as a PJ at Eglin in 1966 after serving his first four years in the military as a physiological training specialist. He is currently serving in Keflavik, Iceland, and holds the Silver Star Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism, Air Medal, Purple Heart, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

by SSgt. Ken Peterson

"Yes, I was apprehensive before the jump..."

FIRST JUMP -- Apprehension reflects in his face as TSgt. Tom Miles readies to make his first parachute jump in over three years. Sergeant Miles, severely injured in Southeast Asia, made the jump in full pararescue gear over the Gulf of Mexico near Eglin.

