

'I Was Pretty Lucky . . .'

16Mar70 SAR

Crash Survivor: 'Don't Know How I Got Out'

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DA NANG — One of the nine survivors of Monday's crash of an EC121 super constellation electronic surveillance aircraft, a crash in which 22 U.S. Navy personnel died, said Tuesday that he has no idea how he got out of the aircraft alive.

"I just don't know. All I can remember is hitting, reaching for the door handle with my right arm and covering my face with my left. The next thing I knew I was out in this field," said CPO Robert K. Ishler, 31.

Ishler, from Hoquiam, Wash., who has

been flying for the Navy for 14 years, said it was his first crash.

Ishler was the plane's avionics electronics chief and suffered only minor cuts and bruises. None of the other eight survivors are listed in serious condition.

"The man sitting alongside me didn't know any more about what happened than I did," Ishler said. "He braced for the crash too and got out with a scratched leg. He doesn't know how he got out either."

"It was bound to happen sooner or later," he said. "I was pretty lucky."

"The first thing I knew about any trouble was when we hit. There wasn't any other warning. I knew we had crashed. You can just feel it, it wasn't anything like a normal landing," Ishler said.

The father of three said he was sitting in the extreme end of the aircraft, strapped to the floor next to the door. The tail section of the craft broke away from the main portion of the plane in the crash and that is where most of the nine survivors were reported riding.

"I don't know if I was thrown from the

plane or got out myself. I just remember hitting and then being outside, seeing other guys on the ground," Ishler said.

"I'm not a religious fanatic or anything — but maybe now," he said. "I was damned lucky to save my life, there's no doubt about it."

The sailor had only cuts and bruises. "I'm a little stiff," was his only complaint.

"I guess I'll have to think about going back to flying. I feel alright about it now, I guess. I think I'd fly now. But I don't know. I'll talk to my wife about it, too."

"I'm pretty lucky," he kept repeating.