

Downed AF Pilot's View Of Chopper: 'Mighty Good'

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DA NANG, Vietnam (Special) — "It looked mighty good!" is the way U.S. Air Force Maj. Jerome D. Siderius described the HH53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter that plucked him out of the water after he ejected from his F4 Phantom near Hue.

The Phantom was hit by anti-aircraft fire while on a mission, causing the plane to explode and burn while returning to Da Nang. The two-man crew ejected.

The other crew member has been listed as missing in action. His name is being withheld pending notification of kin.

"The wingman told us that we had been hit but there was no damage apparent at first," said Siderius.

"The first indication of trouble was a low fuel flow in the left engine. The wingman said he saw fuel streaming from one of the engines. Then lights came on indicating a fire in the aircraft and all of a sudden there was a terrific explosion."

"The wingman radioed us and yelled, 'You're on fire. Bail out! Bail out!' and we both punched out," said Siderius.

"It seemed like I floated through the air for a long time. When I hit the water I inflated my life jacket and raft, then climbed in."

"It was a funny feeling just sitting there. You know that the rescue crews know you are there, but you wonder if they'll spot you and what will happen next," he added.

Air Force Maj. Donald L. Jensen was the aircraft commander of the Jolly Green Giant that rescued Siderius.

"We were on another mission in the area when we received word that the Phantom had gone down," recalled Jensen. "We immediately diverted to the scene, pushing the Jolly Green just as far as it would go."

"Coming over the area, I saw one man out to the left in an orange life raft. We came in slow and low over the downed man and dropped the 'PJ' (para-rescueman) into the water."

The pararescueman was SSgt. Jules C. Smith. "I jumped into the water from about 15 feet up and swam to Siderius. He was uninjured so I helped him out of the life raft, briefed him on the procedure and helped him onto the penetrator. Then I climbed

on the penetrator myself and they pulled us into the chopper," recalled Smith.

"We then continued the search for the other downed man. We saw an oil slick and spotted the aircraft wreckage in shallow water, but there was no sign of the other man."

"We received word to return to Da Nang with the major. When we left there were other aircraft in the area searching for the missing pilot," added Jensen.

MAJOR JENSEN MAKES IT 598 FOR THE

37th ARRS

ST. PAUL DISPATCH

St. Paul Major Had Vital Role In Perilous Helicopter Rescue

DA NANG, Vietnam (Special) — U.S. Air Force Maj. Jensen related today the perilous but successful recovery of a Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter that was shot down while trying to recover the body of an American soldier from a downed helicopter.

The Super Jolly Green was shot down Monday 15 miles south of Chu Lai, a coastal city 340 miles northeast of Saigon. It was repaired on a river sandbar while under intermittent enemy fire and was flown to safety along with the repair crews, who had been helicopter-lifted to the site.

THE COMMANDER of the helicopter, Air Force Maj. Donald L. Jensen, 35, of St. Paul, Minn., said his flight engineer was wounded by enemy ground fire and that an accompanying helicopter also was hit but made it back to its base.

"We had to make an emergency landing on a nearby sandbar," Jensen said later. "We radioed for help and an Army Huey helicopter came in and picked us up. The Army troops set up a perimeter guard around the aircraft and we were taken to Quang Ngai, where the other damaged Super Jolly Green was wait-

ing to return us to Da Nang."

IN DA NANG, a volunteer repair team was formed to recover the downed helicopter.

"We knew that if we didn't get the aircraft out that night, we'd lose it," said Lt. Col. Royal A. Brown Jr., 47, of Flomaton, Ala., operations officer of the 37th Rescue Squadron. The Super Jolly Green Giants cost about \$2.5 million each.

"The situation was critical because we had young maintenance men who had never been under enemy fire before and we had to drop them in territory that the enemy had surrounded," Brown said. "The area where the aircraft was located was flat, so we knew we had to get out of there by the time darkness set in."

THE SIX-MAN repair team, headed by Capt. John C. Rogers, 26, of Cushing, Okla., flew with Jensen to the downed helicopter. The team broke into three teams and went to work.

"We worked just like a computer," said Sgt. Armando C. Zamora, 23, of El Paso, Tex. "The main thing was just to get that bird back."

Another member of the team, Sgt. Larry B. Gilante, 20, of Reseda, Calif., said the crew stuffed putty in a hole in the gear box that was causing oil to leak out of one of the engines. "We knew it was only temporary, but it worked," Gilante said.

Other repairs stripped the helicopter of weapons and heavy equipment to lighten it.

AN HOUR after the maintenance team landed, Maj. Jensen lifted the Super Jolly Green from the sandbar, but he was able to take only two members of the six-man team with him to Quang Ngai and safety.

The men who stayed at the crash site came under enemy mortar and small arms fire as soon as darkness set in. Armed only with rifles, they dug holes in the sand to escape the fire.

A Huey helicopter that had been sent to pick up the remaining repair crewmen was forced to turn back because of the enemy fire.

"It was really a terrible feeling to see that Huey go back," said Capt. Rogers, "but we knew he had to do it."

When the firing stopped, the Huey came in and made a hasty pickup of the stranded maintenance men.