

37th ARRS Makes Save Up North.

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Major Priest

"Everything happened so fast it was hard to tell exactly what was going on," recalled Major Priest. "We felt the concussion from the blast and the warning lights came on all over the instrument panel. The aircraft jerked up and we ejected."

The two pilots estimated that they landed within a quarter of a mile from each other. They immediately established radio contact and waited for the search and rescue (SAR) aircraft to come in.

"I landed in a tall tree and got hung



Major Cubberly

there," recalled Major Cubberly. "I could hear enemy troops on the ground below me. One of them was blowing a shrill whistle and the troops rejoined him down the hill and came back up again in two columns."

All this time the weight of the parachute was causing the tree branches to crack. "I thought the cracking noise might alert the troops below me, but they apparently didn't even notice me," related the major about the harrowing experience.

As poor weather and darkness crept over the area, the pilots prepared to spend the night there.

"Things really started happening fast

the next morning. As soon as it got light, we could see A-1 Skyraiders in the area."

"About 45 minutes later we saw the Jolly Green coming in," recalled Major Priest. "Before long they had picked me up and I was in the bird."

The rescue helicopter then went in and had the back-seater, Major Cubberly, picked up within five minutes.

Maj. Donald L. Jensen was the aircraft commander of the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter which made the pickup.

"This was a classic SAR mission. As soon as we went up this morning, everything went like clockwork. There was no heavy opposition and we were able to get right in there and pick up the survivors," commented Capt. Glen W. Walder, the co-pilot. "It turned out just like you hope they all do."

Other crewmembers on the rescue chopper were TSgt. Carlos J. McKinney, the flight engineer and the three pararescuemen, TSgt. Henry C. Kirk, SSgt. John C. Ratliff and A1C Danny D. Hancock.

Pilots Rescued From N. Vietnam

After 15 hours on the ground in North Vietnam, two F-4 Phantom pilots were picked up by rescue crews from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) and returned safely early Tuesday (March 23).

Majors Robert D. Priest and Robert L. Cubberly were forced to eject from their Phantom when it was hit by an enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) near Don Hoi north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

While flying as an armed escort for reconnaissance aircraft, the Phantom crews successfully evaded one SAM but a second SAM exploded near the Phantom causing many of the aircraft's systems to malfunction. It shortly thereafter burst into flames.

