

Navy pilot shot down, rescued from Laos

DA NANG AFLD — After 15 hours on the ground in Laos, U.S. Navy Lt. Richard E. Forman Jr., was pulled to safety recently by rescue crews from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

The Navy A-7 Corsair pilot from the attack carrier USS Ranger was shot down by enemy fire 20 miles inside the Laotian border in an area where there is a heavy concentration of enemy anti-aircraft guns.

"I was making my third and final pass over the strike target when I was hit by the enemy fire. The aircraft burst into flames and went into uncontrolled flight, so I ejected," recalled Lieutenant Forman.

He described the area where he was shot down as having "rolling hills with a road winding through them. I landed in a pretty heavily vegetated area, so it was easy to find cover."

Although he did not see any enemy troops in the area, the lieutenant received ground fire while on his way down in the parachute. He also reported that he could hear vehicle traffic on the road some distance away.

"Early in the morning I got quite a scare when I heard some noise in the bushes around me. At first I thought the enemy was out looking for me. It really startled me when I found out it was just a bunch of wild turkeys."

A U.S. Air Force forward air controller from the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, 1st Lt. Richard K. Ottem, was directing the Navy pilot when he was hit. "The bullets ripped all along the belly of the aircraft," related Lieutenant Ottem, "but I saw a good chute and was able to make radio contact with the pilot after he had landed and found out he was all right."

Although he was low on fuel, the FAC stayed over the downed pilot until another aircraft came in to relieve him. The FACs from the 20th TASS maintained a constant vigil over the area throughout the night.

Early the next morning Lieutenant Ottem returned to the area to reinstitute the search and rescue effort. "I saw the chute go down and knew right where the man was, so I wanted to be there to help in the rescue effort," he explained. "It was a great relief when I heard that he had been picked up."

Surprisingly, the night seemed to go by pretty rapidly," recalled Lieutenant Forman. "The first thing in the morning I saw the FACs accompanied by A-1 Sandies in the area. The A-1s really saturated the area with their bombs."

After the area had been saturated by the Sandies and jet fighter bombers, an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant

very nice thing about the work North Vietnamese or Viet Cong in close to the man the rescue are trying to pick up, but they're killing or capturing him in the helicopter will come in and second target. Their favorite tricks is not to get just sit there and wait for us." Brown, "I don't know what it sure do like to shoot at us."

Port fails

and nine helicopters shot down started, which is not too bad when the conditions we fly in," he said. "Near every time you go out on you're likely to come back full."

He told the colonel just after a which his helicopter came back. It was one of the few unsuccessful missions he's flown. In that respect was by no means typical, but it was that he and his men will go back up a downed pilot.

A Navy man, lay in a jungle southern Laos, so badly wounded he popped a smoke grenade to signal aircraft or talk over his radio, keeping a call for help. It was that the pilot had both a broken leg and an arm.

Wait

Vietnamese were playing a "cat and mouse" game, waiting in a circle around the pilot, hoping to bag a rescue. Air Force A-1 Skyraiders bombed to suppress ground fire and clear the area. Colonel Brown's rescue chopper, known as a "BUFF."

After the preliminary bombing, Colonel Forman said that when he flew in to get the pilot, "everywhere you looked was shooting at us."

Forman nonetheless made it to a spot near the downed pilot. A pararescue team went to the door of the helicopter and he was lowered on a cable to the ground when he was hit by automatic

