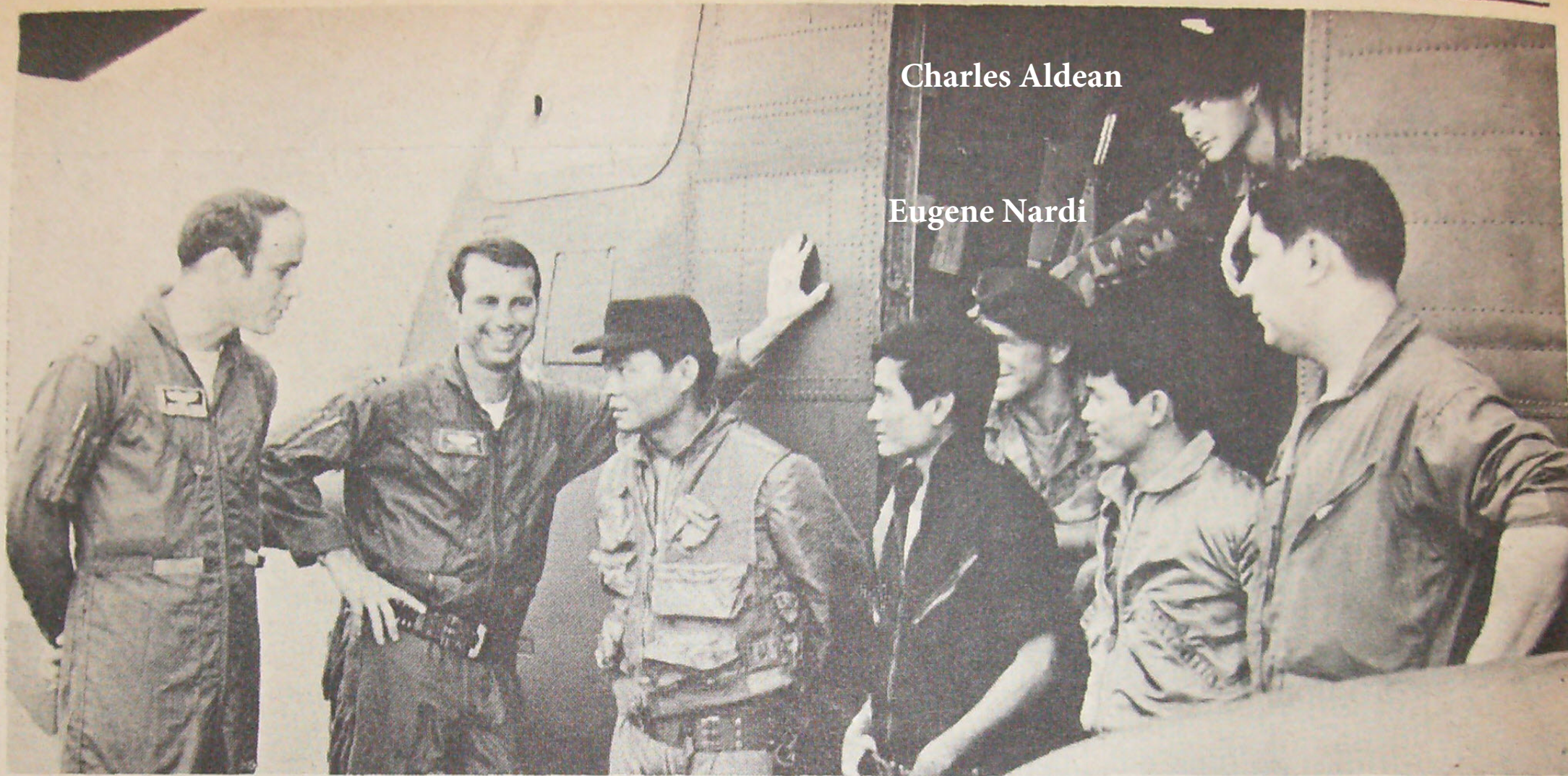




U.S. Air Force Photo By Capt Ron Peck

Safely snatched from the jaws ..., Vietnamese airmen chat with their rescuers at Bien Hoa.

Joint effort pays off

Seven saved in one mission

Seven saved in one mission

BIEN HÒA – Rescue crews from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron on alert here recently rescued seven crewmen and passengers of a downed Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) helicopter from possible capture or death by nearby enemy forces.

The VNAF helicopter was hit at 8:57 a.m., the seven airmen aboard it were on their way to safety via an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter. During those 31-minutes however, a lot happened.

As soon as the VNAF chopper went down, an emergency call went to 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group headquarters Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) at Tan Son Nhut. Maj. Jimmy Lewis, the duty controller, immediately located the site and his map while MSgt. Darryl D. Tincher plotted the position on the center's search and rescue map.

Major Lewis then punched the hot-line button for Bien Hoa, ordering the two HH-53s on alert there to launch. The next order of the day was

to get air cover over the downed crewmen. To do this, Major Lewis contacted the U.S. Army liaison officer with the JRCC, Lt. Col. Gus Greyhosky, and asked that Army

gunships be diverted to the rescue site.

Near Major Lewis, intelligence officers plotted the area again and evaluated it as "hot"... known enemy troop concentrations, within range of possible enemy mortars, good chance of ground fire.

Minutes after the crash, an Air Force OV-10 Bronco forward air control aircraft was on the scene, and notified the JRCC that there was enemy small-arms fire in the area, some as close as 50 yards north of the downed men.

JRCC had by then diverted a specially modified HC-130 Hercules aircraft to act as airborne command and control center for the rescue.

More minutes passed until finally voice contact was made with the Vietnamese crewmen. There was no injuries but they could hear enemy fire very close to them. They had not as yet made contact.

While the Jolly Greens were churning their way to the area, U.S. Army Cobra gunships had reached the scene and began working with their cohort, a tiny OH-6 low observation helicopter to suppress the enemy's fire and keep them away from the downed chopper.

The Jolly Greens arrived soon after. One of the big helicopters stood off to provide cover while the other went in for the rescue.

Aboard the rescue chopper making the pickup were Captains Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander, and Michael C. Sartori, co-pilot. Crewmen included Sgt. David Garcia, flight

12 November SAR. PJs on mission were
Charles B. Aldean & Eugene L. Nardi
DFC for Aldean.

Aboard the rescue chopper making the pickup were Captains Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander, and Michael C. Sartori, co-pilot. Crewmen included Sgt. David Garcia, flight engineer, and pararescuemen TSgt. Eugene L. Nardi and A1C Charles B. Aldean.

Captain Griffith brought the HH-53 in for a landing near the downed VNAF chopper, and the Vietnamese airmen quickly scrambled aboard. This was the second rescue mission of the week for the men at Bien Hoa earlier this week they pulled another eight men to safety, continuing to live up to their Service's motto - "That others may live."