

rescue efforts

very Service helicopters have rescue efforts in less than 24 civilian aircraft and her two the Pacific Ocean off the California coast in the rescue of an Icelandic after he had fallen about 120 area of the largest glacier in

civilian transport DeHaviland had been forced to turn around lack of fuel forced the aircraft --while the ARRS crews watched

adron at Hamilton AFB, Calif., are an emergency and would be 53 Super Jolly Green Giant and

Pacific, Inc., Agena, Guam, located their position to a Coast that the DeHaviland was consi-

ircraft, and 17 minutes later, res to light the area, and 10 lly ditched into the ocean.

vigil on the survivors below, was waiting, refueled in, and otting the survivors in a raft,

the crash site, and Sgt. Terry assist the survivors climb on helicopter. The first survivor ter ditching. Rotor wash from rrvivor on the raft about one m. However, MSgt. Donald W. ond survivor was successfully

ton AFB Hospital, where they

if Reykjavik, Iceland, was ex- miles due east of Keflavik. revasse when the rope he was

Helicopter medevacs

Panamanian women

HOWARD AFB, C.Z. -- An HH-3 Jolly Green Giant helicopter was sent on medical evacuation missions to recover two Panamanian women.

The Det. 2, 39th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing helicopter went first to Taboga Island to pick up 90-year-old Maria Carrera, who was suffering from a serious kidney infection.

She was returned to Paitilla Airport and taken by ambulance to Santo Tomas Hospital.

From Paitilla, the helicopter crew, which was commanded by Capt. John G. Woelfel, flew to the town of Patino on the gulf of San Miguel, about 85 miles southeast of Panama City.

There they picked up 20-year-old Elena Morio, who was suffering severe abdominal pains. She also was returned to Paitilla Airport and taken to Santo Tomas Hospital.

Third try success as ARRS crews save FACs down in Laos

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- Air Force fighter bombers and gunships teamed with HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants in the rescue of two downed forward air controllers (FACs) in an enemy-occupied area of the southern panhandle of Laos.

Rescue operations actually started 24 hours earlier when 1st Lt. David G. Breskman and Capt. Stephen L. Boretsky were forced to eject from their OV-10 after it was hit by communist ground fire. They landed between two major arteries of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the midst of numerous communist antiaircraft artillery locations.

The rescue was initiated almost immediately as the pilot of an accompanying OV-10 called in the enemy hit and reported seeing two good parachutes.

Conditions for the next 24 hours were spelled out as the rescue forces arrived on scene less than an hour after the call. An A-1 Skyraider escorting the rescue helicopters and flying over the area to locate the downed fliers, was hit by antiaircraft fire and downed. The pilot bailed out and was picked up by a helicopter in the area near the two downed OV-10 crewmen.

When rescue forces from the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron began taking intense antiaircraft and small arms fire tactical aircraft were called in to strike the enemy positions.

After an eight-hour exchange of fire, two A-1s led in an HH-53 piloted by Lt. Col. John Morse, into the area. The first attempt failed as the rescue forces encountered intense fire.

Throughout the night, Lieutenant Breskman, assisted the fighter bombers and gunships by directing their fire on enemy positions near him.

Meanwhile, the pair kept in hiding.

He and Captain Boretsky heard ordnance landing around them throughout the night. The captain even felt shrapnel falling from the air bursts.

Shortly after dawn, the rescue aircraft made a second attempt to pick up the pilots. Again, they ran into heavy ground fire, and the rescue team again was forced to withdraw.

Twenty-four hours after the FACs ejected, an HH-53 commanded by Maj. Kenneth E. Ernest, made a third and successful attempt.

With most small arms fire quieted, the HH-53 skimmed in low and fast to evade antiaircraft artillery, and hovered over the lieutenant. A1C Craig A. Marsh, pararescueman, rode the jungle penetrator down through the 150-foot trees, helped the lieutenant on board, and the two were hoisted to safety.

Then the helicopter maneuvered into position over Captain Boretsky and Airman Marsh repeated his descent, effecting the successful recovery of the captain.

Enemy fire trailed the helicopter as it raced out of danger.

Other crewmembers on the HH-53 were Capt. Mark L. Schibler, copilot; Sgt. Wolfgang Benninghoven, flight engineer; SSgt. Michael L. Walker, pararescueman; and SSgt. Kelly K. Shuman, combat photographer.

Date	Mission #	Sortie Length	Total A-1 Time	Total Combat Time	Aircraft
19 Mar	55	3.4	231.3	165.0	A-1H 139-608

Date	Mission #	Sortie Length	Total A-1 Time	Total Combat Time	Aircraft
19 Mar	56	2.2	233.5	167.2	A-1H 139-608

My first journal entry for 19 Mar 1972

SHOT DOWN 18 MAR

[Sandy 08 as wingman] SAR for Nail 31A/B... Major, Major [Maj Don Milner] and wingman came to DaNang to help in SAR [on the 18th of March]... they launched and shortly thereafter we [on the ground at DaNang] got word that Faas had been shot down [in A-1J 142-063].... We then got launched [on the 19th]... Enroute we heard that Major, Major had taken a bad hit [in A-1H 134-551] (see pictures)... *Burker* started to have radio problems so I had the lead for a while... Eventually, *Burker* got the lead back and we executed... My first real taste of ground fire and my first look at air bursts (37mm or 57mm)... Well planned SAR by Ron Smith... The airbursts never stopped, even during the pickup... On egress, I lost *Burker* and joined up on another A-1 flight... [Glen] Priebe never found the SAR in the Catcher's Mitt... RTB to NKP with a fly-by with King and the Jollys...SS

SAR Map

Sandy Lineup for Nail 31 SAR

Images from the Nail 31 SAR

Nail 31 SAR story in Pacific Stars and Stripes

Official Nail 31 SAR patch

This was a real shoot-em-up where we lost an A-1 and had at least three others damaged, one of them severely. Mike Faas was shot down on Day 1 of the SAR (18 Mar) while flying A-1J 142-063, and Major Don Milner took serious damage (flying A-1H 134-551) when a large caliber AAA round went through his right flap, then exploded, peppering the aft fuselage with shrapnel. This also occurred on Day 1 of the SAR effort. The weather in the SAR area was hazy with scattered to broken clouds at about 5,000 feet on both days.

Other accounts of this SAR are provided by Randy Jayne, Ron Smith and Buck Buchanan

My second journal entry for 19 Mar 1972

[Sandy 08 as wingman] RTB [sortie] to DaNang... tried the northern [Ho Chi Minh trail] crossing, but north of Saravane (Toumlan Valley) Burker started taking fire... airbursts just behind him... He was straight and level at the time and I told him to, "Break right!" which he promptly did... Celebrated at DaNang that night.

We launched back to DaNang later in the day so as to resume our Sandy alert commitment. The weather was still good with haze down below us. We cruised at about 10,000 feet enroute to DaNang.

We chose trail crossing points based on the latest reported enemy activity. The Nail 31 SAR area was north of our crossing point, but close enough to our crossing point to have enemy troops who were on the move and ready to fire at anything that came within their area. The Catcher's Mitt area was hit hard with airstrikes after the SAR to try and catch enemy forces that congregated on the area including an Arc Light on that section of the trail.

As we crossed this section of the trail, I saw airbursts directly behind Burker¹ and yelled at him to, "Break right." We both did so and I guarantee you we were moving around a lot more the rest of the way. It would have been extremely hard to explain how and why we got hit crossing where we did. There were a lot more forces on the alert due to the SAR than we had anticipated.

We landed at DaNang and re-cocked the aircraft to resume our Sandy alert status.

Date	Mission #	Sortie Length	Total A-1 Time	Total Combat Time	Aircraft
20 Mar	57	3.5	237.0	170.7	A-1H 139-608

Photos

These pages are under constant revision--Last Update: Monday, March 27, 2000

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Photos posed on this web page are provide for review and identification purposes. I am looking for details as who is depicted, what mission it represents, and any other details you may feel important. Use of these photos for any purpose other than review and comment is prohibited without the express approval of this author. New photos will be posted periodically. **Be advised that depending on your modem rate, these photos may take quite a while to load.** Click on the animated gif to forward e-mail comments to me.



Photo #1

Photo taken by Robert LaPointe

Sometime in 1971-72

Anyone know which SAR this is?

Can anyone identify who is in the photo?

SURVIVOR.
JPG





Robert LaPointe

From: <King2721@aol.com>
To: <rlapointe@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 1999 2:29 PM
Subject: Photo #1

Bob,

If that's an AK-47 in the survivor's hand, I would guess that he is one of the Nail 31 crew rescued March 19, 1972 from the Catcher's Mitt (Steel Tiger). His name is 1Lt David Breskman and he obtained the AK after winning a gun duel with an NVA soldier shortly after he was shot down on March 18, 1972.

Dave Preston

DOWN 18 MAR
RESCUED 19 MAR

OR HIS BACKSEATER?

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO:

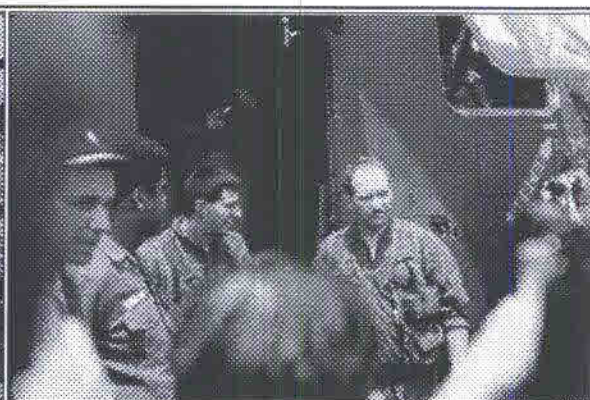
CRAIG A. MARSH

Airman First Class Craig A. Marsh distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as an HH-53C Pararescue Recovery Specialist in Southeast Asia on 19 March 1972. On that date, Airman Marsh courageously entered a highly defended hostile area in the rescue of two American airmen. Airman Marsh, with complete disregard for personal safety, volunteered to be lowered from the helicopter into an extremely hazardous area to render assistance in the successful recovery of the two injured airmen. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Airman Marsh reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.





The welcoming committee for Nail 31A/B



1Lt Dave Breskman and Capt Steve Boretsky



(Lto R) 1Lt Byron Hukee, Capt Ron Smith, Capt Bob Burke



Capt Ron Smith, Sandy low for the rescue



There are no small parts, only small players

where he was hiding, and he shot him. After getting his AK47, he crawled to a new hiding place. I decided it was now or never, and called for a smoke flight to seal off the river with the intent of bringing the Jolly and Sandy escort in from the south. The smoke flight never made it -- they got lost and God only knows where they went.

We were flying no higher than 100ft to avoid the guns to the north. At one point a 14.5 got my range and sent a long salvo in front of me. That low and already in a turn away, there was little I could do. His last round went through the nose cone of my right LAU 3 pod. He must have run out of his clip. We were also worried about fuel, and so I forgot I was on my tip tank. Suddenly everything got real quiet as my engine quit at 100ft. It really is amazing how training comes back quickly. I went to the boost pump, switched tanks, and turned the pump back on -- the engine immediately started. The survivors were really worried about that as they told me later -- they thought another person on the ground would delay their pickup.

After briefing the pick up team on my intentions, and getting ready to execute, King advised that there was only 1 Jolly in the area, and they recommended we wait. Another bad idea from King. The execution called for Scotty and me to head south while the Jolly and Sandy escort headed east. The plan was to rendezvous at a point marked by a WP bomb. There was the only thing you could hope to see. We arrived at the designated point, I dropped the bomb, and within 3 minutes the Jolly had it in sight. We then executed a daisy chain around the jolly on the reverse heading from the one we had gone out on. We had to use heading and time to get back since visibility was so bad. We picked up the survivor closest to the river first, and then the other. We got fire from north of the river as expected, but were all flying really low so they could not hit us.

The egress was also low until we got back to the original rendezvous point. On the way out we marked the way for the Jolly by launching WP rockets every time we passed the Jolly. After reaching the rendezvous point we climbed and headed west with no opposition. Although the mission only lasted a little more than 3 hours, I did not have enough gas to make it all the way back to NKP. Had to land at a Lima sight (can't remember the name, but we had several Raven FACs there).

Ron Smith

Captain Buck Buchanan's recollection of the Nail 31 SAR.

the run-in as briefed, escorted by the two Sandys, while we two set up a tight orbit and looked all around for the gun. It was near dusk, and at the point that the HH-53 was about 8000 feet out, surrounded by the smoke, I realized that something was very wrong. Instead of flying at an altitude which caused the rotor wash to beat down the tops of the trees, the Jolly was moving along at at least 150-200 feet above the tops of the trees. Both I and the Sandys were literally yelling at the Jolly, but to no effect. As the first survivor called out a tally ho at about 400 yards, and with me in a painfully good position to watch, the obvious occurred.

The North Vietnamese 37mm gunner, clearly amazed at this 60,000 pound shooting gallery target moving along at all of 30 knots, opened fire. As all of us who have climbed all over a 37mm gun know, the clip has a 6-8 shot capacity. I actually watched the large tracers come so close to the helicopter that from my vantage point, it appeared that a round or two literally passed through the rotor's circular path! In one of my best personal miracles, I watched the gunner-who had proven he could hit three aircraft moving much faster than this Jolly-MISS! The HH-53 immediately aborted out to the South, ending our attempt. With no smoke, limited daylight, and an intense anger at the "airmanship" we had witnessed, we started to take everyone home.

As we did, both Col Robinson-who was at this point below bingo, having been airborne almost an hour longer than me-and the on-scene OV-10 Nail both said that they thought they could pinpoint the gun, since unlike me, they had been looking from the East or West, and had a better perspective. After a quick discussion, both the Nail and Smoke 45 rtb'd for fuel, and I made one last effort to accomplish something in what had been an otherwise fruitless day. Two Navy A-7's, who had orbited above us and "watched the whole thing", indicated that they had four MK-82's each, and would like to jettison them on what we thought to be the gun emplacement. Since I had no forward firing ordnance at all except 20mm, I made one LONG RANGE straffing "run" ("tracer lob" would be a more accurate descriptor-If Nail 31, Mike Faas, and Don Morse had been unlucky, I had no desire to get too close to this guy!).

As sometimes happens, one Spad driver and two Navy SLUF guys reached unanimous agreement as to where we thought the gun was. The lead A-7 rolled in during what I remember as "deep dusk", and dropped about 200 feet to one side of the target. I gave his wingman my best Hurlburt imitation of a real FAC, right down to the color commentary, and Two proceeded to drop an absolute shack, with multiple small secondary explosions. At that point, out of gas, ideas, ordnance, and patience, we all went home.

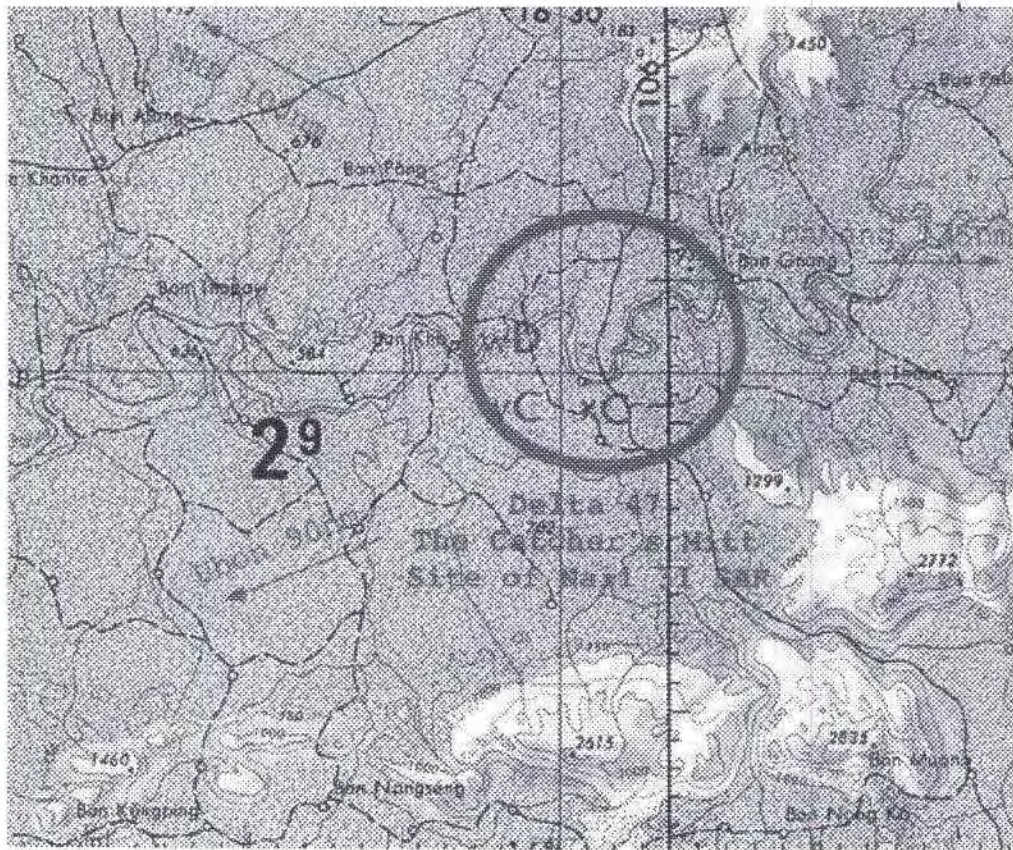
My next two recollections are diametrically different. First, I stormed TUOC in search of the Jolly pilot, to politely ask what on earth had gone on. I was met by the Ops Officer from the Jollies, in tow with the lead Jolly pilot, whom I had thought was "flying" the pickup attempt. The two of them told me what had happened, and if Joseph Heller had heard this story four decades ago, there would have been another chapter in "Catch 22". It seems that while on the refueling boom, the lead Jolly (Captain) was "told" by the backup

From: King2721@aol.com <King2721@aol.com>
To: rlapointe@gci.net <rlapointe@gci.net>
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Dave Preston



The site of the SAR for Nail 31 in Northern Steel Tiger