

Avery, James Alley and Roy D. Prater, and Sgt. William R. Pearson, were honored at Arlington National Cemetery. Their remains were recently returned home from their fatal attempt to rescue a downed navigator in Vietnam; their helicopter crashed after being hit by enemy fire.

The object of their rescue attempt was Lt. Col. Iccal Hambleton, whose call sign was Bat-21. He was flying aboard an EB-66 leading a B-52 bomber strike when his aircraft was struck by a surface-to-air missile. The only one to eject safely, Hambleton landed near a highway junction on a Communist supply route.

Intelligence sources reported 30,000 enemy troops in the area. On the fourth day of search-and-rescue operations, Jolly Green 67 went down. All aboard were lost.

Air Force, Army and Navy teams continued fighting for the next seven days to retrieve Hambleton before he was saved.

A quarter century later, the funeral service for the Jolly Green 67 crew began with a fly-over by two MH-53J Pave Low III helicopters from Hurlburt Field, Fla. The Air Force Honor Guard and Air Force Band from Bolling Air Force Base, D.C., also helped commemorate the event.

Among the mass of people at Arlington paying respects to the helicopter crew were red beret-wearing pararescuemen who honored their fallen comrades. The veterans also represented parascuers who served in Southeast Asia and rescued more than 3,800 servicemembers during the war.

Among those who could not attend the funeral was Bat-21 himself; however, the 78-year-old Hambleton wrote about how much he appreciated the sacrifice of the Jolly Green 67 crew. Dan Manion, one of many pararescuemen who helped search for Hambleton, read the letter.

"This is a crew of real heroes," Manion said. "They were doing what they had been trained to do. They deserve all the accolades that we, the living, can bestow upon them. Again, I thank them, I honor them, and I will always hold great faith in my heart with them."

Col. Mark Clark was a first lieutenant at the time of the Bat-21 search, and was the first to go in trying to extract Hambleton. But Clark's OV-10 was shot down, and he became part of the Bat-21 rescue. He, too, was saved. He attended the Arlington ceremony and addressed the Jolly Green 67 family members.

"Each of you played a distinct role and forming the character of these men who so willingly paid a very dear price to help me get out of the jungles of Vietnam," he said. "You have my deepest sympathy -- you and these six brave men."

11

I had an opportunity to visit with the families of the crew of Jolly Green 67 on Tuesday 18 November. There must have been 50 family members and relatives of Captain Peter Chapman, Aircraft Commander; First Lieutenant John Call III, Copilot; Technical Sergeant Roy Prater, Flight Mechanic; Technical Sergeant Allen Avery, Pararescueman; Sergeant William Pearson, Pararescueman; Sergeant James Alley, Photographer. Darrel Whitcom (Nail 25) is the "historian" who is telling the Bat 21 story the way it should be (book due out this spring). Mark Clark Nail 38 was there as was the Niece of Iccal Hamblton (Bat 21). For over 2 hours the family listened to those of us who had been there tell the whole Bat 21 story from Blue Ghost 39 to Covey 225. Charts, graphs, even photographs were used. I don't think there has ever been such a gathering nor is there likely to be one again. There were a few misty eyes from those narrating. Jay Crowe, Jolly pilot (USCG exchange) of an earlier attempt at picking up Bat 21 told the harrowing story of that attempt and his crash landing.

I spoke to the first night, Easter Sunday 2 April 72, "ground fire like the fourth of July", my flaming egress after being hit by a 57mm AAA, and subsequent gear up landing. I also spoke to the attempt to get Bat 21 and Nail 38 on the 6th of April. I was the Sandy escorting and trying to protect Jolly Green 67. The room was quiet, the attention intense as I described the ingress, the ground fire hitting Jolly 67 and the subsequent fireball and crash. Being the one to escort and protect the Jolly Green, I thought there may be some who would seek to take out their pain on me. On the contrary, a very sweet elderly lady, hugged me, thanking me, and saying she knew we had all done our duty the best way possible. Over the next day each of the families personally thanked me and stated how brave they thought all who had been involved were. On Wed, 19 November 97, God decided to make it a clear crisp day with beautiful blue skies. About 300 people begin to gather at Arlington's administrative building. The ceremony of honor for the crewmembers of Jolly Green 67 at Arlington National Cemetery began at 11:00. These six brave men were members of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron during the spring of 1972. Six men finally coming home 25 years after their deaths in Vietnam. They died living their unit motto, "*That Others May Live*". In attendance were many of us gray haired veterans and about 250 young PJ's and young officers paying their respects to 6 very brave men.

The ceremony was flawless. We were driven by bus to the waiting caisson and Honor guard for the procession to Pershing Drive and the gravesite. The casket was transferred to the caisson drawn by 6 horses (3 of which were riderless). The honor guard colors and band marched off smartly to the strains of the Air Force song "Off we go..." I cried! A lone airman followed the honor guard carrying the POW/MIA flag. Behind him the family and the rest of us fall-in walking to the gravesite, stepping carefully around the horse droppings.

While the pallbearers lift the Colors from the casket, holding the flag taut, you could feel, then hear, and finally see two dark HH-53J PAVE LOW helicopters charge over the hillside at tree-top level. All too soon they passed overhead, that sound and sight so many of us knew would be there if we needed them. The lead aircraft trailed a wisp of green smoke out the aft hatch.

The speakers at the graveside were brief and eloquent, quoting in part from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Apropos, yet causing me to well in anger at news reports of Clinton selling plots in Arlington. I don't normally get political, yet I am deeply pained that heroes I knew and flew with would be sharing hallowed ground with political contributors.

"This is Sandy 5 on guard... All SAR forces egress and return to base."

Jolly Green 67 is home safe... "

The Homecoming

By
Ruth Spitler

A man of honor, fine and brave
Left home and loves behind
To rescue those across the world
Beyond the battle line.

The duels of men are deadly.
He that saves was lost.
No win could come from bloodied soil
At such a mighty cost.

So many years have gone awry.
Cruel walls and angry men
Have left him on the other side.
At last, he's here again.

Solemn cadence, march and drum
Guide him on his way
To his final resting place
Of honor on this day.

Beneath the lawns of Arlington
Our hero's come to rest.
To lay in God's own slumber
Among the very best.

Soft breezes whisper o'er him.
Cool rains mist on his tomb.
He sleeps in peaceful silence.
The rescuer is home.

JOLLY GREEN 67

CAPT PETER H. CHAPMAN

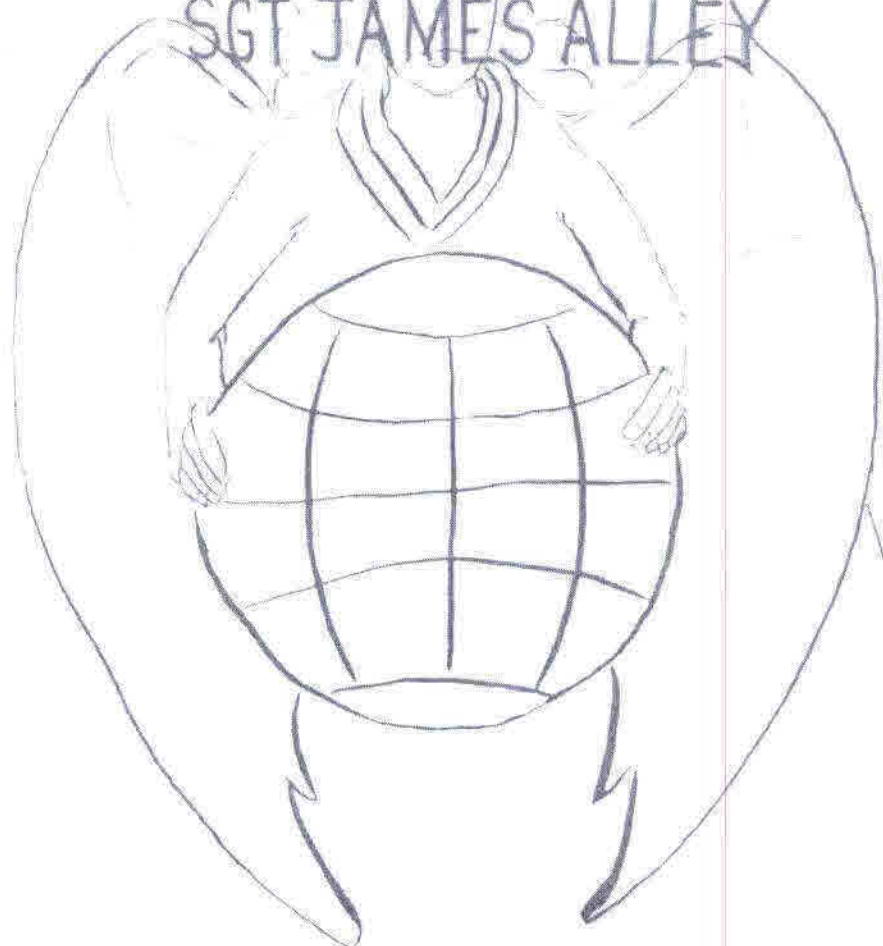
1LT JOHN H. CALL III

TSGT ROY D. PRATER

SGT WILLIAM R. PEARSON

TSGT ALLEN J. AVERY

SGT JAMES ALLEY



NO GREATER GIFT THAT A MAN GIVE
HIS LIFE.

"THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE"

JOLLY #2 SP6

H.R. (Randy) Pickelsimer
126 Jim Torrence Lane
Gastonia, NC 28052
704-866-7735
Email rpick_pj@juno.com



Dear Bob,

YOU WANTED INFO ON CREW MEMBERS IN SEA. THIS ONE IS ABOUT ROY PRATER (FELLIA APRIL 72 AND JOLLY 67). IT IS A COPY OF A SHORT LETTER I SENT TO BOB BALDWIN AND CAN BE DOCUMENTED THROUGH USAFSD RECORDS OR FROM JIM SPEARS PJ. WE WERE BOTH ON THE MISSION AND CREDITED WITH THE SAVES. MAYBE YOU CAN USE THIS IN SOME WAY TO HIGHLIGHT ROY PRATER.

TAKE CARE, RANDY

TO BOB BALDWIN:

ROY PRATER AND I WERE GOOD FRIENDS IN THE CANAL ZONE (69-70) AND ON SEVERAL GOOD MISSIONS TOGETHER. WE WERE ALSO TOGETHER AT DANANG WHEN JOLLY 67 WENT DOWN. THAT WAS A VERY SAD DAY.

THE ENCLOSED PICTURE IS ROY PRATER AT HIS BEST. HE WAS CREDITED WITH MORE THAN 200 SAVES ON THIS MISSION ALONE. HE PICKED PEOPLE UP FROM THE WATER, OUT OF TREES, FROM ROOF TOPS AND WHERE EVER. WE WERE THERE FOR SEVEN DAYS AND HAD TO REFUEL THOSE CH-3s WITH A HAND PUMP FROM 55 GAL. DRUMS. WHEN THE MISSION WAS OVER WE ALL WERE READY TO GO HOME.

ROY PRATER WAS A FINE MAN AND A DAMN GOOD FE. HE WAS THAT TYPE WE CAN ALL BE PROUD TO HAVE KNOWN AND WORKED WITH.

P.S. MY COMPUTER IS DOWN, I WILL SEND THE PICTURE LATER

Southern Command News

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QUARRY HEIGHTS, CANAL ZONE

Jan. 16, 1970

USAFSO Helicopter Helps Flood-Stricken Costa Ricans

Albrook AFB — Close cooperation between the Civil Guard of Costa Rica and personnel of the U.S. Air Forces Southern Command was instrumental in the movement of 216 Costa Rican civilians from flooded areas of Limon Province, Costa Rica, over last weekend.

After heavy rains started flooding the Caribbean coastal area of Costa Rica Friday morning, a request was made to the United States Embassy in San Jose by the Costa Rican Government for help in moving approximately 40 marooned people.

Bad weather greeted the CH-3 "Big Charlie" helicopter that was dispatched to Puerto Limon by the USAFSO Rescue Coordination Center at Albrook. The helicopter, piloted by Capt. John R. Squire and Capt. David E. Lyall, 24th Special Operations Squadron, encountered strong headwinds in the two and one-half hour flight from Albrook to Puerto Limon. Upon arrival at the Costa Rica coastal town, the runway was under water and there was a

100-foot visibility ceiling.

Landing on higher ground off the runway, the helicopter crew was greeted by Alfonso Sole, governor of Limon Province, and Capt. Thomas Flemings, commander of the Puerto Limon Civil Guard detachment.

Other USAFSO personnel who arrived on the helicopter were TSgt. Harvey R. Pickelsomer and TSgt. James A. Spears, pararescue personnel of the 605th Special Operations Squadron, and TSgt. Roy Prater and Sgt. Luis Garcia, helicopter mechanics with the 24th Organizational Maintenance Squadron.

At 6:30 Saturday morning the personnel from the Canal Zone started their operations and had picked up 41 marooned persons by 10 a.m. After dropping them off on higher ground, reports started arriving at the airport about other people who were in possible danger from flood waters.

The helicopter took off again and flew up the Sixaola River separating Costa Rica and Panama. Flying under a 100-foot ceiling, the helicopter followed the river and spotted people in the water, or on ground that appeared in imminent danger of flooding. Capt. Lyall said the water extended some three miles from the banks of the river.

The helicopter pilot described the area they were flying in as river valleys surrounded by mountains. All the lowlands were flooded and they had to follow the rivers inland from the coast.

The water was so high it covered a railroad that ran parallel to the river. According to Capt. Lyall, the water was high enough that there



EMERGENCY AIRLIFT — TSgt. Harvey R. Pickelsomer, (l) pararescue man from the 605th Special Operations Squadron, and TSgt. Roy Prater, helicopter mechanic with the 24th Organizational Maintenance Squadron, carry a 12-year old Costa Rican girl suffering from an appendicitis attack from a U.S. Air Forces Southern Command CH-3 "Big Charlie" helicopter at Puerto Limon, Costa Rica. The helicopter was in Costa Rica to help move villagers from their homes because of flood waters.

Continued on Page 2

A Tribute to Al Avery

I was walking the halls of the College Inn
When above the normal din
I heard the announcer say
That a helicopter had been shot down today.
I learned shortly thereafter that Al Avery was one of the crews,
But no one would attend to the news,
For the students it didn't matter
That we had lost an aircrew, and on they'd chatter.
But I had smelt
The air after a rocket attack and felt
The anguish of flesh torn asunder
In answer to the rocket's thunder.
Those students didn't comprehend
That we had lost friends:
True patriots who give
"That Others May Live."
I had seen Al at another ethos

After a rescue from Laos,
The tension in Al's face
Shows the intensity he bore in that place.
Al and the crew of Jolly 67
Went on April 6, 1972 into heaven!
They found that day their destiny,
And went to their place in history,
The heroes they became,
Were not recognized, and the blame
Is an American public
Which had grown apathetic.
And now, at last, they are buried
At Arlington National Cemetery, and are carried
In the highest esteem by the nation,
For the effects of their dedication,
For Al and the crew
Have again shown us what to do,
How the dedication to duty
Can lead into unity.
I was going to send flowers
But they wilt away in hours,
A poem, however, with words will last
For future generations to learn from the past.

Al, I bid you adieu.

This nation sometimes hasn't a clue
Of the sacrifice it takes for us to live
So that others may learn how to give.

It is raining as I pen these lines.
New storms are brewing in our times.

Let us hope future generations
Learn what it takes to live in peace among nations--

AND WE MAKE WAR NO MORE.

John C. Ratliff

November 19, 1997



Al Avery and the crew of Jolly 67 were buried on November 19, 1997 after having been lost on the rescue mission for BAT 21. They remained missing until recently, when several teams went into Vietnam to recover their remains. It took some time to identify them, and the crew was buried with over 100 watching. Unfortunately, on the very day of their burial, another "event" overshadowed their internment--a political controversy about who should be buried in Arlington. It seemed that there would be no real remembrance of their service. This is posted to honor this crew, who continued the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service's tradition of sacrifice.

"THESE THINGS WE DO, THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE."

The crews from the 37th ARRSq won the Presidential Unit Citation, Outstanding Unit Citation, and had over 613 "saves," or lives saved from its crews efforts. Al Avery had several of those saves credited to him.

Webmaster: John C. Ratliff

www.sorcom.com/~searat/Tribute.html

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[Return to Home Page](#)



Jolly Green 67 Memorial Page

Shot down on

6 April 1972

near Cam Lo, South Vietnam

Attempting the Rescue of Bat-21 Bravo and Nail 38 Bravo

Capt. Peter H. Chapman, Pilot; Buried on 1 Nov 1997 near Lock, Ohio

1st Lt. John H. Call, III, Co-Pilot; Buried 19 Nov 1997, Arlington National Cemetery

Tech. Sgt. Roy D. Prater, Flight Engineer; Buried 19 Nov 1997, Arlington National Cemetery

Sergeant William R. Pearson, Pararescueman; Buried 1 Nov 1997 in New Hampshire

Tech. Sgt. Allen J. Avery, Pararescueman; Buried 19 Nov 1997, Arlington National Cemetery



Don Call's Tribute to his brother John.

PJ John Ratliff's Tribute to Al Avery and Jolly Green 67

The Homecoming

The USAF announced on October 2, 1997 their remains had been returned to American soil.

Read a brief narrative of the Bat 21 mission by Darrel Whitcomb, Nail 25

The crew of Jolly Green 67 was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery

on Nov 19, 1997. Here is the AF News Service article on the ceremony.

More pictures from the services.

JUGR

37th ARRS
Memorial Service

South Manger, DaNang Airfield
Republic of Vietnam

12 April 1972

1530 Hours

ORDER OF SERVICE

- * Presentation of Colors Color Guard
- * Hymn "How Great Thou Art"
- * Invocation Chaplain Thomas F. Keane
- Responsive Reading "My Soul Is Thirsting"
- * Hymn "The Strife Is O'er, The Battle Done"
- Scripture Reading TSgt Raymond Gore
- Tribute Lt Colonel William Harris
- * Hymn "The Air Force Hymn"
- * Benediction Chaplain Thomas F. Keane

* PLEASE STAND

TRIBUTE

We, men of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron and friends, are here to pay honor to our fellow comrades:

TSgt Allen J. Avery
1Lt John H. Call III
Capt Peter H. Chapman II
Sgt William R. Pearson
TSgt Roy D. Prater
Sgt James Alley (40th ARRS)

NEXT

BACK

INDEX

Capt Peter H. Chapman II

Capt Peter H. Chapman II - Aircraft Commander - Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. Capt Chapman was born on 26 August 1940 in Canterbury, Ohio, where he was raised and educated. He entered the Air Force in the early 1960's and completed navigator training. Soon after, Capt Chapman entered pilot training and received his wings in 1964. He flew the MAC line and C-141's until he transitioned into helicopters. This was Capt Chapman's first tour in SEA. He is survived by his parents, Mr and Mrs Peter H. Chapman, Route #2, Canterbury, Ohio, 43011.

1Lt John H. Call

1Lt John H. Call - Copilot - Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. Lt Call was born on 9 February 1947 in Washington, D. C. He was raised in Silver Springs, MD, and graduated from the University of Maryland in 1969. He entered the Air Force in 1970 and went through the Army helicopter training program at Ft. Belton and Ft. Rucker. This was Lt Call's first tour in SEA. He is survived by his parents, Mr and Mrs John H. Call, 5 Greenland Court, Potosi, Maryland, 20854.

Sgt James Alley

Sgt James Alley - Combat Photographer - Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. Sgt Alley was born on 18 September 1949. His home is at Plantation, Florida and his last assignment was at Vandenburg AFB, California. Sgt Alley arrived in SEA during April 1971 and has been on flying status since he arrived. He has flown rescue missions with the Jolly Greens and was here to replace another sergeant who was slightly wounded by shrapnel. Sgt Alley had been stationed at Ubon Airfield, Thailand with the 40th ARRS and was at DaNang on TDY. He is survived by his parents and one sister.

NEXT

BACK

INDEX

TSgt Allen J. Avery

TSgt Allen J. Avery - Pararescueman - Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. TSgt Avery was born on 22 February 1943 in New York City, New York. He has been a pararescueman for about ten years. Sgt Avery's decorations include the Silver Star, Airmans Medal, Air Medal with 14 Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm. He is survived by his daughter Deborah K. Avery and his grandmother, Mrs. Sonil T. Avery, 56 Boyce Street, Auburn, Mass., 01501.

Sgt William H. Pearson

Sgt William H. Pearson - Pararescueman - Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. Sgt Pearson was born on 16 April 1931 in Concord New Hampshire. He entered the Air Force in 1970 and graduated from pararescue school in January 1971. This was Sgt Pearson's first tour in SEA where he flew on 118 combat missions. He is survived by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Pearson, Rt 1, Warner, New Hampshire.

TSgt Roy D. Prater

TSgt Roy D. Prater, Flight Engineer, Killed in action 6 April 1972, Vietnam. TSgt Prater was born on 1 July 1936 in Knoxville, Tennessee. He entered the Marine Corps in the 1950's and flew the H-34 helicopter. He then joined the Air Force and flew the Jolly Greens since they began production. TSgt Prater is survived by his wife Carol J. Prater and their three children, Dennis, Debra and Pamela, Route #4, Columbia City, Indiana, 45725. He is also survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Strickland, 118 Camolet Sub Division, Warner Robins, GA, 31093.

NEXT

BACK

INDEX

CAPTAIN PETER HAYDEN CHAPMAN II

Captain Peter H. Chapman II was a native of Centerburg, Ohio. He entered the Air Force through the Aviation Cadet Program in 1961. After commissioning as a navigator (he was a distinguished graduate and received the Daughters of the American Revolution Award for Academic Excellence), he was assigned as a transport navigator in C-135s at Travis Air Force Base, California (MATS). He attended pilot training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona in 1965, and returned to the 44th Air Transport Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, to fly the C-141. He attended Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama in 1969, where he again graduated with honors. In 1971, he trained in the HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopter and became a member of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Da Nang Airfield, RVN.

On April 6, 1972, Captain Chapman and his crew on H-53 Jolly Green 67 were launched to recover the crewmembers of an OV-10 and an RB-66 who were downed in the northern portion of Quang Tri Province, very close to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Vietnam. Prior to the arrival of Jolly Green 67, the area around the survivors was repeatedly bombed and strafed to neutralize enemy fire. When the A-1 "Sandies" (close air support tactical aircraft) and other aircraft had determined that the enemy fire had been suppressed, Jolly Green 67 was cleared for the recovery attempt. As Captain Chapman and his crew approached, slightly south of the survivors, Jolly Green 67 began receiving intense enemy ground fire. During the attempt to get out of the area, the aircraft was disabled and Captain Chapman and the entire crew were lost.

The Military Airlift Command (MAC), the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS), and the 1550 Aircrew Training and Test Wing (ATTW) are very proud to dedicate this building to the memory of Captain Peter H. Chapman -- one who exemplifies the motto, "THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE".

Captain Chapman was selected by the members of the 1550 Technical Training Squadron as particularly deserving of this recognition as a Rescue pilot because of his dedication to academic excellence. Chapman Hall houses all academic classrooms, slide/tape learning center, aircraft simulators (HH-53 and HH-3), and the new ARRS Museum. All ARRS crewmembers and all Air Force helicopter pilots receive their training here; this includes training for TH-1F, UH-1N, H-3, H-53, and the HC-130.

rescue mobilization offices in the Vietnamese Direct Air Support Centers at corps level. Other regulations called for a search and rescue training program as well as instructions to aircrews on rescue procedures.⁵⁴

In reality, the Vietnamese Air Force did not translate regulations into combat capability. For instance, when American local base rescue detachments at Binh Thuy and Pleiku were inactivated, the Vietnamese did not take over the mission. Whereas the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron had previously maintained two HH-43s at each of these bases, the Vietnamese Air Force occasionally kept one UH-1 at Binh Thuy for general usage, and its crew was untrained in rescue operations and procedures. Vietnam's search and rescue capability remained unfulfilled. Rescue operations were conducted haphazardly, generally with no planning or coordination. After the last Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service units left Vietnam in early 1973, downed Vietnamese aircrew members had to hope that a Vietnamese troop transport, cargo, or gunship helicopter would be able to pick them up. Otherwise they had to depend on their own ingenuity or evasion to get them safely back to friendly territory.⁵⁵

Fortunately for the Vietnamese and American aircrews, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service still had units stationed in South Vietnam during the hard fighting in the spring and summer of 1972. Indeed, during this period rescue service units participated in some of the largest and most difficult rescue operations of the war. On April 2, three days after the North Vietnamese began pouring into the South, Bat 21 and Bat 22, a pair of Douglas EB-66 twin-engine jet electronic warfare planes, were escorting three B-52s on a mission near the demilitarized zone. A missile site launched three SA-2s at Bat 21. One hit it broadside. The force of the explosion blew Lt. Col. Iceal E. Hambleton, an electronics warfare officer, out of the aircraft. All others presumably perished. Unhurt, except for a minor singeing, Hambleton used his survival radio to contact an OV-10 pilot circling nearby. The OV-10 pilot remembered hearing that an effort to evacuate U.S. Army advisors from Quang Tri had been canceled. He contacted the rescue force assembled for this operation, and soon its A-1s located Hambleton hiding in the underbrush near the Cam Lo River. Intense enemy fire convinced the A-1 pilots that the area was too dangerous for the Jolly Greens, so while the choppers hovered a safe distance away, the A-1s spent three hours blasting enemy positions and strafing anyone who got too close to the survivor.

Meanwhile, four U.S. Army UH-1 choppers heard the radio chatter from the rescue task force and decided to make their own unauthorized pickup attempt. As the four helicopters approached the downed airman, enemy gunners shot one of the choppers out of the sky, killing all aboard. Another damaged UH-1 limped toward the sea to make a crash landing on the beach south of Quang Tri.⁵⁶

Operations officers at Seventh Air Force, realizing that the rescue ac-

tivity was located in the middle of a major enemy troop concentration, established a no-fire zone, an area in which artillery fire was tightly controlled, seventeen miles in radius around the downed officer. This no-fire zone encompassed most of the area of operation of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's 3d Division, struggling to blunt the communist invasion drive.⁵⁷

Dawn brought poor weather that grounded the rescue forces. Nevertheless, two OV-10s from Nakhon Phanom obtained loran navigation fixes on the beleaguered flyer's position. The OV-10 pilots relayed the information back to the targeting center at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base for analysis and collation with recent photography of the area. Computers then printed out targets for bombers to pound through the clouds and haze. From April 2 through April 13 up to ninety strike sorties a day were used to keep enemy troops away. Enemy missiles shot down two OV-10s with the loss of two crewmen. The only HH-53 attempt to recover the man ended when enemy gunners brought it down killing its entire crew.⁵⁸

In spite of the air strikes, there were still too many troops, too many guns, and too much danger for the HH-53s to be used. Finally, the Marines volunteered to send a squad up the Cam L  river to meet the officer if he would swim downstream out of the main enemy force concentration. The forward air controllers relayed the instructions, and he made his way to the nearby river. He spent the next three nights floating downstream. On the third day he sighted a sampan with Americans in it. Using a pre-arranged signal he called out his rank and a color. The Marines scooped him out of the water and took him to an armored personnel carrier that carried him to a safe helicopter landing zone for evacuation to Da Nang.⁵⁹

These eleven days raised serious questions about search and rescue. Operational questions concerned the capabilities of the rescue task force. Giant HH-53 choppers, the finest aircrew recovery helicopters in the world, had been unable to operate in a concentration of enemy troops backed by radar-guided antiaircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles. The only Jolly Green that dared to go in for a recovery attempt was shot down. Col. Jack Allison, a helicopter pilot since 1951 and a veteran of numerous combat rescue missions, said that against opposition like that encountered in the Bat 21 mission, the traditional search and rescue task force was useless.⁶⁰

Large questions of suffering and morality were also raised. How much was one man's life worth? Was it worth more than the lives of those members of the Vietnamese Army's 3d Division, jeopardized when American air strikes were used to keep the North Vietnamese away from one downed flyer rather than used to support their efforts to halt the enemy offensive? Was one man's life worth more than the lives of two OV-10 crewmembers, five crewmen in the HH-53, and the crew of the Army Huey chopper that were lost during the rescue operation?

In the eleven day operation, thousands of enemy troops backed by