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By 1200, Gen Giai considered the situation hopeless. Attempts to break out of the Citadel to join Marine and Ranger units 1200 meters to the south were unsuccessful. After receiving information that 10,000 additional rounds of enemy artillery fire were forecast, General Gaia issued evacuation orders for a second time. The ARVN evacuation plan called for the 1st Armored Brigade, 1st, 4th, and 5th Ranger Groups, and 57th ARVN Regiment to attempt to push south on Route 1. Brigade 147 (VNMC) was directed to escort the 3d ARVN Division Headquarters south to link up with Brigade 369 (VNMC) north of the My Chanh River. The remaining tanks and armored personnel carriers would move in the center of the column with the Division Staff. ^{100/}

The emergency evacuation of U.S. and ARVN personnel from the Quang Tri Citadel, already a hazardous operation, was complicated by a rapid disintegration of the ARVN command and control structure. This collapse resulted in the total loss of communication among the remaining RVNAF combat units and placed the lives of American advisors within the Citadel in jeopardy. Completely cut off, U.S. advisors and ARVN Headquarters personnel remained in the Citadel. ^{101/}

Seventh Air Force agencies Blue Chip, the Joint Rescue and Coordination Center (JRCC), and I-DASC coordinated a SAR evacuation plan for the besieged defenders in the Citadel. The original pickup zone selected by I-DASC was an open field 1000 yards from the Citadel, but enemy pressure required the pickup point to be altered to the more secure Citadel heli-port.

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During this time, three FACs were assigned to cover the Citadel area with other FACs providing coverage for RVNAF units retreating south.^{102/} At

1400, 7AF JRCC ordered the rescue components at Da Nang to execute the Quang Tri evacuation plan. The 37th ARRS initiated the plan at 1500, and all forces were in the area by 1525 in a "feet wet" orbit east of Quang Tri. The weather at launch, enroute, and in the objective area was clear with a visibility of 15 miles.^{103/}

Major Brookbank, 3d Division ALO, coordinated the fire support and rescue team efforts from his position within the walls of the Citadel. Major Brookbank said that:^{104/}

each FAC was given four sets of TACAIR to commence air support at 1530 with the "Jolly Greens" due in at 1535. The power station was blown at 1520 by the NVA and control of TACAIR was turned over to Ramrod (ABCCC), by land line to I-DASC. Army advisors proceeded to burn classified materials and destroy all equipment with high explosives. Four squads had been formed in case the evacuation failed and a breakout had to be made. The air cover commenced at 1530 as F-4s delivered every type of ordnance. The tactical situation dictated that normal safe distances be waived. So, we could do nothing but watch, wait, and thank God for the U.S. Air Force.

Despite the fast mover F-4 strikes, some enemy artillery continued to hit the Citadel. One 105mm shell impacted five feet beneath an American guarding the south wall. (Because the soft dirt absorbed the full impact, there were no casualties.) Finally, at 1630, after a sustained barrage of TACAIR strikes, the FAC called for the rescue forces. The Jolly Greens were coming in. A-1 Sandy aircraft from Da Nang AB led the Jolly Greens to the Citadel in five-minute intervals.

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As the Jolly Greens made their dangerous, low-level approach, landed, and completed the evacuation, the Sandys flew clover leaf fire suppression patterns, and the two Hobo (A-1) aircraft from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB placed down an effective smoke screen. Jolly Green 71 landed on the small pad inside the Citadel surrounded by a burning bunker to the north, a 12-foot wall to the south, and buildings to the east and west. The aircraft received no ground fire, but, while on final approach, the tail gunner fired at some NVA outside the Citadel who were observed to be aiming small arms weapons. Jolly Green 71 departed the pickup area at 1652 after two minutes on the ground, and landed at Da Nang AB at 1745 with 37 survivors.^{105/}

^{104/} The second rescue aircraft, Jolly Green 65, entered the area escorted by Sandy 11. About one mile out, the pilot started an auto-rotative descent from 4000 feet and landed on a northeasterly heading. The pilot gave the following report:^{106/}

Most of the buildings were on fire causing heavy black smoke to blow northeast shielding us from the heaviest concentration of enemy troops. The survivors boarded through the aft ramp and after two to three minutes, we took off with forty-seven passengers.

Although a ground advisor had identified a need for four rescue helicopters, Jolly Green 21, the third aircraft to ingress, successfully evacuated the remaining 45 survivors. A fourth Jolly Green landed, but took off in 30 seconds when the pilot discovered everyone had been evacuated.

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The SAR evacuation of 132 personnel from the Citadel reflected a tremendous USAF team performance. The rescue forces achieved their goal while braving perilous conditions and without suffering a single casualty or aircraft loss. Only the professionalism of the TACAIR (A-1 and F-4),
FAC, and rescue crewmembers enabled this outstanding accomplishment. ^{107/}

After the collapse of the Citadel defense, evacuating elements of the RVNAF moved south for the next two days. During this time, USAF FACs were constantly aloft, maintaining communication contact, providing RECCE for the retreating columns, and directing TACAIR strikes against pursuing NVA forces. Seventh Air Force placed emphasis on the destruction of vehicular traffic between the DMZ and Dong Ha, and the protection of the retreating elements. One retreating element, the 5th Ranger Group, made contact with a USAF FAC at 1400 on 1 May. The Ranger advisor gave an account which relates the hazardous nature of the mission of the USAF FAC: ^{108/}

The FAC spotted targets and directed airstrikes from 1600 hours until he was shot down at approximately 1800 hours, parachuting into the leading elements of 5th Ranger Group. His replacement FAC continued to direct airstrikes and extraction of the downed FAC was planned but was abandoned when a Skyraider flying cover was hit and forced to head for the coast. Air support was diverted to support the damaged aircraft.

This Ranger unit was cut off by enemy forces and was forced behind enemy lines. Attacked from several directions while within the enemy's defensive positions, the 5th Ranger Group scattered into fairly small elements. The following day the downed FAC arranged a helicopter extraction for the three Ranger advisors and himself. ^{109/}

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HM Sgt. Cayetano Pina

RS Sgt. Robert L. La Point

RS Sgt. David W. Young

On 1 May 72 the 37th ARRSq was involved in the largest evacuation in the 37th's history, when 129 U.S. Military personnel were evacuated from within the walls of the Quang Tri Citadel. The first aircraft into the Citadel was Jolly Green 71 flown by Major Jackson K. Scott, Jr. He received no ground fire on his ingress into the Citadel and after two minutes on the ground he had a full load of passengers and he egressed the area and RTB'd to Da Nang with 37 survivors.

As Jolly Green 71 egressed the area the second aircraft Jolly Green 65 headed into the Citadel. Capt. Griffith initiated a autorotative descent and landed on the northeastern edge of the LZ. He egressed the area without any problems and RTB'd to Da Nang with 47 survivors.

As Jolly Green 71 egressed the area the Sandies again escorted the Jolly Green into the Citadel. The third aircraft into the area was Jolly Green 21. Captain Weimer landed and picked up the remaining 45 survivors and RTB'd to Da Nang.

After Jolly Green 21 had egressed the area, Captain Sutton in Jolly Green 72 went into the Citadel to make sure all personnel had been evacuated. He exited the Citadel with no survivors as the first three Jolly Green's had picked up the 129 personnel from the soon to be overrunned Citadel.

A fifth aircraft continued to hold feet wet in support of the other four aircraft. This aircraft was Jolly Green 60 piloted by Capt. Wall.

CREW ROSTERS

Jolly Green 71

AC Major Jackson K. Scott Jr.
 CP Capt. David E. Mullenix
 HM Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell
 RS Sgt. Robert L. La Pointe
 RS Sgt. David W. Young

Jolly Green 65

AC Capt. Rodney S. Griffith
 CP Major Anthony A. Gates
 HM SSgt David Garcia
 RS SSgt. Cole E. Panning
 RS Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid II

Jolly Green 21

AC Capt. John R. Weimer Jr.
 CP Capt. Gary A. Dake
 HM SSgt. William A. Simm
 RS A1C. Michael L. Aillet
 RS Sgt. Richard L. Steed

Jolly Green 72

AC Capt. Donald A. Sutton
 CP Major Jerry J. Gilbert
 HM SSgt. Jimmy O. Minshew
 RS Sgt. Daniel G. Manion
 RS Sgt. William J. Thompson

Jolly Green 60

AC Capt. Richard L. Wall
 CP 2Lt. James M. McCorkle
 HM Sgt. John W. Drayer
 RS Sgt. John W. Stephens
 RS Sgt. Michael L. Wagner

On 26 May at 1230 local time King notified the 37th ARRSq that an F-4 was down in the vicinity of Ke Sanh. Jolly Green 21 and 71 were returning from a fraggd orbit at the time and landed at Da Nang to plan a route to the area. After one and a half hours of planning with Sandy 7 and 8 the two Jollies and two Sandies took off for the SAR area. While Capt. Dake was in the hover to

SURVIVOR -
NAME, RANK
SSAN, ORIG.

MAY 72

DATE	CREW	JG #	SAVE #		SAVE LOCATION	TYPE SA
05 MAY 72	MAJ GATES	65	838	CAPT PETER	10. N. 11. SOUTH	ONE COMB
	CAPT CAKE			KULZER	WEST OF CH 103,	
	SSGT GARCIA			XXXXXXXXXX		
	SGT WAGNER			334 T.F.S.		
	SGT HARECH					
	MAJ GILBERT			CAPT ROBERT		ONE COMB
	CAPT HARRISON	21	839	CAPT STOCK		
	CAPT HARRISON			XXXXXXXXXX		
	SSGT SIMM			334 T.F.S.		
	SSGT PANNING					
	SGT MCQUOID					
01 MAY 72	MAJOR SCOTT	709	709	NAMES	QUANG TRI	132 137 COMB
	CAPT MILLER	71	THRU	ON LIST	CITADEL	SAVE
	SGT BLACKWELL		745	IN THIS		
	SGT YOUNG			BOOK		
	SGT LA POINTE					
				ATTACHED		
01 MAY 72	CAPT GRIFFITH	65	716	TO BACK OF		
	MAJOR GATES		THRU	BOOK		
	SSGT GARCIA		730			
	SSGT PANNING					
	SGT MCQUOID					
07 MAY 72	CAPT WEIMER	21	791			
	CAPT DARE		THRU			
	SGT SIMM		837			
	MAJ BILLET					
	SGT STEED					

30 APR 72

2230Z	gt	SSgt Haller to Duty
2305Z	LY	JG 21 ↑ TNG SAR
0330Z	LY	ITEM 11 - SB DN: JZ VE 10XEM. 21
0520Z	B	JG 65 + 71 ↑ for Orbit
0620Z 0620Z	B	JG 21 ↓ fm TNG due to # Gyra
0700Z	B	JG 65 + 71 ↓ fm Orbit
1015Z	LY	QUEEN SCRAMBLED ALPHAS FOR G-123 & 310/74/77. A-3-045
1020Z	LY	JOLLY G 65 + 71 ↑.
1045Z	LY	QUEEN ADVISES JOKER SAY 3 TO PUT 4 JOLLIES & CREWS ON ALERT ASAP.
1050Z	LY	JG 65 + 71 RTB.
1100Z	LY	JG 65 + 71 ↓ FM SAR.
1115Z	LY	ALL 4 JOLLIES AND CREWS ON ALERT
1400Z	gt	A-3 put on 45 minute alert status.

1 MAY 72

30 Apr 2000Z	gt	SSgt Haller to Duty
0505Z	LY	QUEEN SCRAMBLED JOLLIES FOR HOBOKEN 10 & FEETWET. XXXXXXXXXX
0510Z	LY	JG 71 + 65 ↑ ON SCRAMBLE
0530Z	LY	BIG MOTHER MADE PICKUP JOLLIES RTB; SANDIES HOLDING.
0605Z	LY	JG 71 + 65 ↓ FM SAR. XXXXXXXXXX
0715Z	B	JG 71, 65, 21, 72, 60 ↑ SAR (A-3-046 Open)
0950Z	LY	JG 71, 65, 21 ↓ FM SAR. A-3-046 CLSD

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1 SOS 1-31 May 72

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V. NARRATIVE

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DOC A

The enemy offensive in South Viet Nam and the resumed bombing of North Viet Nam were over shadowing influences on the operations of the 1st SOS during May. Three A-1's were shot down by SA-7 missiles but all pilots were rescued. The Sandys participated in eleven SARs during which 145 Americans were rescued. There were no accidents or incidents.

On 28 April Gunsmoke 01 (F-4) was shot down near Quang Tri. Hobo 40/41/44/45 were in the area on a strike mission and they immediately organized a SAR. The two survivors who bail-out feet wet, were spotted by the Hobos even before they hit the water three miles from shore. An immediate pick-up was made with the Da Nang Jolly Greens.

On 1 May Sandys 07/08 were ordered to plan the evacuation of all the American advisors in Quang Tri. Quang Tri was surrounded and about to fall to the NVA. The Sandys planned, organized, and executed the rescue effort that afternoon. Sandys 07/08/11/12 and Smoke 22/23 lead four Jolly Greens in to the heart of the surrounded city without fast mover support and rescued 129 American advisors. The city fell only hours later.

During the evacuation Bilk 34 (O-2) was shot down about 10 miles southwest of Quang Tri and Sandys 07/08 (Capt Throckmorton, Lt Seitz) left the Jollys feet wet and proceeded to search for Bilk 34. Bilk 34 was in friendly hands but surrounded by NVA, so the Sandys attempted to stabilize the area around the friendly. Bilk 34 reported 471 launches and the Sandys attacked the missile positions. Sandy 08 (Lt Joe Seitz) took a direct

Air Force HH-53s carry out largest evacuation of the war

TAN SON NHUT AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF) — Five U.S. Air Force HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict on Monday evening May 1, when they airlifted 132 Americans and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and anti-aircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force 0-2 Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft and A-1 Sandy rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green

Giant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. Pararescue specialist (PJ) Sgt. Robert L. LaPointe, of Lynn, Mass., silenced them with bursts from his mini-gun in the rear of the helicopter.

After his helicopter landed, LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the

continued on page 8

HH-53s Largest evacuation

continued from page 1

ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second, 45. And the third, 50.

The fourth Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK-47 automatic weapon and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. PJ Sgt. William J. Thompson, of San Jose, Calif., knocked out the AK-47 with bursts of his mini-gun and the sniper fire was suppressed by PJ Sgt. Daniel G. Manion of Richfield Springs, N.Y.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

Besides LaPointe, the crew on the first Jolly Green Giant to land included Maj. Jackson B. Scott Jr., aircraft commander from Summerville, S.C.; Capt. David E. Mullenix, co-pilot from Burdette, Ark.; Sgt. Ronald

Blackwell, flight engineer from Titusville, Fla.; and Sgt. David Young, a PJ from Clinton, Iowa.

The second helicopter crew consisted of Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander from Choctaw, Okla.; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, co-pilot from Crossett, Ark.; SSgt. David Garcia, flight engineer from Santa Ana, Calif.; and PJs SSgt. Cole E. Panning, LaPorte, Tex., and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid II, OF Chicago.

The third HH-53 was crewed by Capt. John R. Weimer, aircraft commander from Akron, Ohio; Capt. Gary A. Dake, co-pilot from Kenfield, N.Y.; SSgt. William A. Sinn, flight engineer from Pittsburgh; and PJs Sgt. Michael A. Aillet, Houston, and Sgt. Richard L. Steed, Santa Ana.

Besides Manion and Thompson on the fourth helicopter, were Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander from Ridley, Md.; Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, co-pilot from Lafayette, La.; and SSgt. Jimmie D. Minshew, flight engineer from Gadsden, Ala.

Last Newsman Out of Fallen City

(In the following dispatch, the last journalist to escape from Quang Tri, freelance photographer Ennio Locobucci, describes the fall of the city to North Vietnamese forces.)

By ENNIO LACOBUCCI

SAIGON (UPI) — I didn't believe we would get out. I thought we would be killed.

The ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) were running away. Some of them took off their uniforms and mixed in with the refugees. They left some brand new rifles and ammunition behind.

By late Monday our chances were getting slimmer and slimmer. I knew we would have to rely on the American helicopters to get us out.

I arrived in Quang Tri last Wednesday by hitch-hiking from Phu Bai to Hue and taking a taxi from there to Quang Tri. I think my car was the last one to get through before the road was cut.

When I got into Quang Tri I tried to find out what was going on. I realized the situation was very bad. The civilians were panicky.

People were packing to move to the south. Then the heavy shelling started.

The enemy guns were concentrating on a bridge to the south, which was later blown by the Americans to try to slow the Communist advance.

I made my way to the American compound. The people there were glad to see me.

The Americans wanted to know what was happening south of Quang Tri.

They were very nervous. So was I.

The next day, Friday, I left the compound to take pictures of wounded, and got wounded myself.

I was taking pictures of some trucks of civilians that had been ambushed on Highway 1 just south of the city when I was lifted from the ground and dropped back again. I got some shrapnel

in my leg. It was a slight wound. The truck I was in had hit a mine. People were screaming.

I took pictures. Here on the road, mines had killed about 30 people and injured about 60 who had been in three big trucks.

When I returned to Quang Tri the shelling was heavier.

Helicopters could not land. There was too much fire.

I decided to try to get out. I thought the only way to do this was by road. I got a ride in a jeep to the point where I had seen the trucks mined.

I went past the site by going off the road and through some dunes.

There was no traffic coming north from Hue. I was frightened. I was alone. I decided to go back to Quang Tri.

I passed the bodies I had photographed the previous day. Refugees were streaming south as I went north. Shells were impacting all around. I saw bits of arms and legs lying along the highway.

When I got back to the American compound there were only a few South Vietnamese still there with the Americans. Everyone was scared. Sunday, when I went back into Quang Tri City, I saw there were fewer soldiers than there had been.

The refugees were leaving in droves. The soldiers were all mixed up with them.

I realized the danger so I went back to the American compound. On the way back I took pictures of the ARVN moving out with the refugees.

The B52 strikes were getting closer and closer. At this point, we all wondered how we could get out. I was pinning my hopes on the Americans.

Late Saturday, we moved to Quang Tri's old citadel, the ARVN headquarters. When we got there, we knew we were still surrounded.

I was told by the Americans we would march out to the coast and a ship on the gulf would pick us up. That night we slept on the floor of the citadel.

About mid-day Sunday, the incoming rounds landed very close. The ARVN packed up and tried to run south to Hue by road.

A South Vietnamese general tried to make it to Hue in an armored personnel carrier. He returned about an hour later.

The citadel was burning and then they began to fire on us with mortars.

I was sure we would not get out. I thought it would be a disaster.

Then the choppers came in.

Businessmen Elect

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States Chamber of Commerce announced Saturday the election of William S. Lowe, board chairman of A.P. Green Refractories Co., Mexico, Mo., as its new president.

THAT'S US The Helicopter That Got Away

DA NANG, Vietnam (AP) — North Vietnamese troops in Quang Tri tried to lure an American rescue helicopter into a trap but were killed when the Americans recognized the ruse.

The incident was one of the harrowing aspects of Monday's rescue operation that pulled 80 Americans, 51 Vietnamese and a French photographer out of the city just before it was abandoned to the North Vietnamese.

While none of four big Air Force Jolly Green Giant helicopters was damaged, two supporting aircraft were lost to ground fire and one pilot is missing, officials said.

Otherwise the daring operation went off nearly as planned, although Air Force rescuers said there was a mad rush by refugees for the first helicopter when it landed—possibly because they didn't realize there would be more.

One of the rescue specialists, Sgt. Robert Lapointe, 22, Lynn,

Mass., found himself stranded on the ground as the first helicopter lifted out.

After 15 minutes the remaining persons on the ground were pretty well organized and "we didn't have any more trouble loading them," Lapointe said. "When the second helicopter landed, I was the first to get

(Continued on Back Page, Col. 4)

Red Ruse Fails

(Continued From Page 1)

on. I sure wasn't going to be left behind."

Lapointe and the other rescuer, Sgt. David W. Young, 23, Clinton, Iowa, said they drew less fire from North Vietnamese troops on the ground than expected.

"It sure was the noisiest place I've ever been in, though," Lapointe said. "There were explosions going on all over the place."

Lapointe said that as his helicopter came in two men in dirty, dark clothes emerged from an alley and fired on the aircraft.

"I opened up with my mini-gun and got rid of them," he said. "We didn't have any trouble on the ground."

While three of the big helicopters took part in the actual rescue, the fourth, hovering as a reserve ship, received a radio call to fly down to the rescue site.

The call was a fake by North Vietnamese troops using the American radio frequency, an officer said. The message was, "Hey, we've got more people down here."

The helicopter landed and a rescuer jumped off to make a search. He saw two enemy soldiers coming toward him, firing a machine gun. A gunner aboard the chopper killed them, the rescuer jumped aboard and the helicopter pulled out.

"There are so many frequencies, and Charlie knows some of ours. We've been sucked in before," an officer said.

The city itself was otherwise deserted, the rescuers said. "We saw nothing moving," said Young. "Quang Tri always looked desolate, but it's really desolate now. There were a lot of shelled out houses and some military equipment in the streets."

"It looks like maybe some of the South Vietnamese just left everything behind, changed into civilian clothes and went south."

The first helicopter came out with 37 persons, the second with 45 and the third with 50. There was one woman in the group, a Vietnamese nurse.

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SOUND familer



...they called it "Mission Impossible."

...piled it off ... to everyone's surprise—
... they renamed it ...

Miracle Mission

by TED R. STURM

You wouldn't think a bunch of guys would be relieved when they got the word to start a run into a death trap, would you?

But they were. As anyone who has been in combat knows, the anticipation can sometimes be worse than the battle itself.

That's why the call from the survivors in Quang Tri's Citadel was so welcome. It fulfilled the vocally expressed desire of more than one member of the *Jolly Green* rescue force to "get the damn show on the road." After an hour of orbiting, they were anxious.

"We're standing by to receive the helos," the men on the ground radioed, and Maj. Jackson R. Scott, commander of the first *Jolly Green* scheduled to land, immediately announced that he was starting in.

"Stay away from the stream beds," came a radioed warning.

"Roger that," Scott replied. "Where can we expect the most ground fire?"

"Mainly from the two o'clock position at first," his guiding Forward Air Controller answered, "but after you're over the city, it will come from all over."

"Ah, roger," Scott said as he swung the big bird toward what had to be the hottest target area in Vietnam that day. Behind him, three more *Super Jolly Green Giants*, the big HH-53s of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Sq. at Da Nang AB, awaited their turns.

For most of the 20 *Jolly Green* crewmembers in the four HH-53s that particular Monday, May 1, 1972, it was a rescue mission the likes of which had never before been tried in Southeast Asia. And since then, it has been acclaimed as the largest aerial evacuation of the Vietnam War—truly a miraculous mission.

Certainly the situation into which the rescuemen were flying at Quang Tri gave little cause for optimism. In fact, it had all the earmarks of a disaster waiting to happen.

Caught in the onslaught of the North Vietnamese offensive that had begun March 30 with a drive across the DMZ, Quang Tri was now surrounded by four North Vietnam Army (NVA) divisions. The enemy had cut Highway 1, the only escape route south to safety, and had been pound-

ing Quang Tri with artillery, mortars, and rockets for several weeks.

Grouped in the Citadel, a walled military compound in the middle of Quang Tri proper, were 80 American advisors, and several members of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). There was only one way out—by helicopter.

And there was precious little time left.

What made the situation potentially disastrous for the *Jolly Green Giants* was the fact that the landing zone was small. Located inside the Citadel, it was large enough for only one helicopter at a time. And like everything else of military significance in Quang Tri, the LZ had been zeroed in by enemy artillery for several days. Add to that the fact that any approach to the Citadel was over several miles of NV-held territory, and you get some idea of why people were a bit edgy.

"If we sent the birds in low, they would be subject to intense ground fire, including the hand-held Strella—now called the Quail—that heat-seeking missile," said Col. William M. Harris, IV, then a lieutenant colonel and commander of the 37th ARRS. "On the other hand, if we sent them in high, they would be fair game for the SAMs. There simply was no 'safe' altitude for the *Jolly Greens*."

According to the evacuation plan, three helicopters, with two on airborne standby, would be needed to get the people out of Quang Tri.

"Initially, we planned for 120 people. Each of the three *Jollys*, 3 to 5 minutes apart, was to pick up 40. As it turned out, we evacuated 132!"

The number of people to be rescued wasn't the only thing that changed during the operation. The situation on the ground was extremely fluid, and the enemy was beginning to move into and past Quang Tri faster than expected. Therefore, not only was there far less time left than many had hoped for, but the need to keep air strikes in and around the city meant the helicopters couldn't move into Quang Tri as early in the afternoon as the planners had hoped. That's why people were getting anxious to get the show on the road.

Orbiting over the coastline, east of Quang Tri, the helicopter crews tried

to keep abreast of everything happening on the ground and in the air.

While they waited, the *Jolly Green* crews used the time to recheck everything. Guns were checked and rechecked, armor adjusted and fuel and power computations gone over. Aboard Major Scott's aircraft was an Army helicopter pilot who had been into the Citadel many times. He would serve as a guide to the LZ for the lead *Jolly Green*. Scott's copilot, Capt. David E. Mullenix, spent much of the waiting time explaining the *Jolly Green's* characteristics to the Army lieutenant, who flew the smaller Army *Cobra* and *Huey*.

Voices crackled continuously over the radio.

"I'm going to put a smoke rocket on the beach where I want you to enter." It was *Sandy Seven*, the A-1E leader whose support flight would pave the way for the *Jollies*.

"Roger," Scott acknowledged. "Are you in touch with *Bilk*?" *Bilk* was the FAC guiding the whole operation.

"*Roger, Jolly Seven One*," *Sandy Seven* answered. "*He's directing some fast movers on a strike*." Fast movers were the F-4 *Phantoms* working the area around Quang Tri.

"D.K.," Scott said. "I can't contact him. Ask him if there is some kind of delay we don't know about, or if we can go ahead in."

In a few minutes *Sandy Seven* answered. He told the rescue force that there were enemy tanks in the area, and that things were kind of mixed up on the ground.

"*They're trying to straighten it out now*," *Sandy Seven* said. "*Bilk wants you to stand by*."

Captain Mullenix, who had interrupted his rundown on the HH-53 long enough to listen, said to Scott over the intercom:

"So they got tanks in there they didn't know about, eh? I don't think we ought to rush into anything. Let them take all the time they need to get things ready."

Scott nodded his agreement, and checked with his engineer, Sgt. Ronald Blackwell. "How about refiguring to find out how much power we'll need to hover in ground effect with 4,500 pounds of fuel?"

"Roger, sir," Blackwell answered,

"stand by one." In a few minutes he had the answer. "You'll need 95 percent, Major."

"Thanks, Sergeant Blackwell," Major Scott answered.

The radio crackled again. "*SAM! SAM! Vicinity of DMZ—everybody keep your heads up!*"

The voice was unknown, but it didn't matter. The threat wasn't close enough to worry the *Jolly Greens* anyway.

That's when the call came in to start the run. In the back, the two PJs, SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe and Sgt. David Young made sure their mini-guns were ready.

The *Sandys* had done their job well, strafing and bombing enemy positions, but there were so many enemy troops below, the *Jolly Greens* would still have to weave through a corridor of ground fire from tanks and anti-aircraft guns. Then, on the ground even for a few minutes, they would be extremely vulnerable.

As Major Scott brought the big helicopter closer to the Citadel, the crew eliminated all but the absolutely necessary talk.

"We're starting the run-in," Scott told Bilk. "OK, Babes," the FAC came back.

"Lieutenant, where's that LZ?"

"Just west of that smoke, Major. See that yellow smoke in the middle, there? Just west of it," the Army man replied.

"Engineer, start the APP."

"It's on, sir, it's on!" Blackwell came back. The APP is the Auxiliary Power Plant.

"All set in the back, Major. No ground fire yet." It was LaPointe's voice.

"Watch those houses over there! OK, OK, you're looking good, Scotty!"

"*SAM threat, Western DMZ!*"

"*Diamond Six, Bilk Control, Diamond Six, Bilk Control*."

"*Clear the primary, Diamond, clear the primary!*"

Nobody in the helicopters paid any attention to the constant radio chatter. All eyes were on the LZ and the crowd of people waiting for the *Jolly Green*, now only a few yards away.

Artillery and rocket shells were exploding all over Quang Tri, and as Scott's aircraft drew nearer the LZ,

machine gun fire could be heard, even above the engine's roar. The NVA was shooting blindly, however, since a heavy smoke screen blanketed three sides of the LZ.

"OK, we're down," somebody said. "Let's get those people on!"

As Sergeant LaPointe got ready to leave, he noticed two snipers shooting at the *Jolly Green* from outside the LZ. LaPointe leaped to his minigun and made short work of the enemy soldiers. Then he got to the loading chore, counting as the Army men boarded the chopper.

"... 35, 36, 37, that's it, that's it!" he said over the intercom. "Take 'er up!"

"*Jolly Green* Seven One," Major Scott informed the FAC. "We're on the way out."

The heavily laden *Jolly Green* laboriously fought for altitude, narrowly missing a tall pole as it pulled up and over the wall of the Citadel.

"Everything OK in the back, LaPointe?" asked Major Scott as he nursed the bird into the air.

There was no reply.

"La Pointe?"

Still no answer.

"Are you on, LaPointe?" Scott asked again, urgently.

"I don't think LaPointe made it," somebody answered.

"Who told me to go? Who told me to take off?" Major Scott was truly concerned by now.

"LaPointe did, sir," Sergeant Young answered.

"He'll come out on the next chopper," Mullenix said. "I wonder what happened?"

Slowly, as the *Jolly Green* lifted clear, Scott reported that they were at 1,500 feet, and climbing 1,000 feet a minute.

"Great work, Scotty," a voice said.

"We're not out yet," he replied.

"Lordy, look at the tanks down there!"

Blackwell at that point noted that as far as he could determine, the *Jolly Green* had taken no hits. Nobody could believe it. As they moved out, they saw the second *Jolly Green* heading in for the LZ.

"There goes Rod," said Captain Mullenix.

Capt. Rodney S. Griffith and his

crew in the second *Jolly* got by with only sporadic small arms fire as they hopped and swerved their way into the besieged city.

They repeated Scott's performance, only this time they picked up 45 people instead of the expected 30. They also got Sergeant LaPointe, who was only too happy to climb aboard Griffith's *Jolly Green*. Later he explained that he fell off his helicopter as he was trying to keep more people from boarding—just as he gave Major Scott the word to go.

Now Griffith got the signal to lift off and he reacted immediately. As he lifted the aircraft to clear the roof of the buildings between them and the wall of the Citadel, he noticed that his rotor speed was at 92 percent—a bit low.

His copilot, Maj. Anthony A. Gates, started jettisoning fuel as Griffith moved forward to gain translational lift.

He crossed the wall descending, trying to milk up the rotor speed.

Once clear of the city, Griffith's *Jolly* just skimmed the rice paddies as he kept trying to get enough speed to climb. An enemy tank, sitting on the first large dike southeast of the city, caused Griffith to shudder.

"We've made it this far," he thought, "and now it's going to be all over!"

As they crossed over the tank at about 50 feet, they saw that it had already had been hit and was just a burned out shell!

Half way back to the beach they got up to 3,500 feet, and for the first time Griffith figured they just might make it.

The miracle mission was now half over. In the third *Jolly Green Giant*, Capt. John R. Weimer and his crew got ready to take their turn at bat. Following basically the same pattern, he jockeyed his bird onto the smoking LZ, and loaded 50 people. They picked up some light fire as they lifted off, and as they moved out over the wall, they could see enemy ground troops making their way toward the landing zone.

By all rights, that should have ended the rescue, since Weimer was convinced he had brought out the last of the evacuees. But Capt. Donald A. Sutton, commanding *Jolly* number

four, picked up a radio message from the Citadel.

"Hey," the voice said, "we've got more people down here!"

Sutton set his *Jolly* on the spot as his PJs got ready to pick up the survivors, who were supposed to run up the ramp in the back of the aircraft as soon as it landed. When nobody showed for almost a full minute, Sgt. William J. Thompson stuck his head out the back to have a look. He saw no survivors, but he did see an enemy soldier who immediately began to walk a stream of automatic AK-47 fire toward Thompson and the helicopter. With lightning speed, the PJ leaped to his minigun. A short burst stopped the soldier in his tracks. Additional sniper fire was silenced by the other PJ, Sgt. Daniel G. Manion, who was also firing away with his minigun.

Meanwhile, the pilot had gotten radio confirmation from the air that there were no more survivors, and he immediately decided he and his *Jolly Green* crew could find a much better place to while away the time. Sutton poured on the power and his chopper lifted up and away.

They got no survivors, but they did gain the distinction of being the last Americans in Quang Tri.

What of the radio call that had brought them in? A trap. It was the enemy, pulling the helicopter in for what they must have figured was a sure kill. But they didn't reckon with either Captain Sutton or his fast-shooting PJs!

By 1850 hours, the operation was over. Everybody was safe at Da Nang.

But the most incredible part of the story was just being realized. *Not one crewmember or evacuee sustained any injury whatsoever! Moreover, there was not one bit of battle damage to any helicopter! Not even a single bullet hole!*

And while one *Sandys* supporting the rescue was downed, as was a FAC aircraft, both pilots were saved. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1E in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

"I can only say the Lord was with us all that day," Colonel Harris said later. He was also effusive in his praise of the team effort represented by the

Quang Tri rescue.

"Without the support of the FACs, the F-4s, the *Sandys* and the Navy, we couldn't have pulled this one off at all. But I also hope everyone will remember the team members who didn't make the headlines," he said.

He was referring to the *Jolly Green* maintenance men and all the support people who get plenty of work, but little glory.

"When we had only a few short hours to prepare for this mission," he pointed out, "these guys worked



through the night getting our birds ready to fly. I sure hope everyone remembers them!"

The men who flew those *Jolly Greens* into the jaws of death and out again that day still marvel that they are all alive.

As one man said, "Quang Tri was kind of like deliberately putting your foot into a bear trap and waiting for the snap that didn't come.

"Or sitting in a bunker and watching a bomb land a foot away, then discovering it's a dud. You feel like you have only seconds to live."

Not that Quang Tri was an unsprung trap or a dud—only that for some unknown reason it neither snapped nor blew up when by all conceivable odds it should have done both. Within minutes after the last *Jolly Green* pulled out of the Citadel, it and Quang Tri proper was overrun by the enemy.

That's pretty close.

Even for a miracle mission.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

TO

ROBERT L. LAPOINTE

Sergeant Robert L. Lapointe distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight at Quang Tri City, Republic of Vietnam, on 1 May 1972. On that date, while serving as a Pararescue Specialist on an HH-53 helicopter, Sergeant Lapointe participated in the successful rescue of one hundred twenty-nine American and Vietnamese Army personnel from the surrounded and besieged Citadel at Quang Tri. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Lapointe reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

612-40-0939

evacuation report information
for 3 ARRG
37 ARRS

For date 720501

3 ARRG was a US Air Force unit

37 ARRS was a US Air Force unit

Primary service involved, US Air Force

Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam

Location, Quang Tri

Description: The 3rd ARR Group evacuated 132 persons from the citadel in the besieged city of Quang Tri to Da Nang, Vietnam. Five HH-53s of the 37th ARR Squadron were used for this mission. No one was injured, despite the nearby presence of enemy forces. Staff Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescueman in the first HH-53, silenced enemy snipers with a mini-gun. When the plane landed, Sergeant LaPointe organized the evacuees and maintained ground control until the second HH-53 departed.

Comment: SSG LaPointe, Robert L.; pararescueman;

The source for this information was *ARRS History*

Please send additions or corrections to:

Gary Roush Email address: webmaster@vhpa.org

[Return to panel index](#)

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Last updated 10/04/98

HH-53's Evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

Tan Son Nhut, RVN – Fine Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri. Three of the HH-53's, of the 37th ARRS at DaNang airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated, and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to DaNang. U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital. Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation. While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and an A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot hailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The A-1 pilot ditched his aircraft in the ocean and was picked up by Army helicopters.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from enemy soldiers. SSgt Robert LaPointe, a pararescueman, silenced them with bursts from his minigun from the rear of the helicopter. After the helicopter landed, Sgt LaPointe jumped out and organized the people on the ground so the operation would go more smoothly. He remained on the ground until he boarded the second helicopter to land. The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second 45, and the third 50.

The fourth helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK47 automatic weapons and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt William J Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK47 with bursts from his minigun. The sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt Daniel G Manion, another PJ. All the HH-53's returned safely to DaNang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Major Jackson R Scott Jr., aircraft commander, Captain David F. Mullein, co-pilot, Sgt Ronald W Blackwell, flight engineer, SSgt Robert L LaPointe and Sgt David W Young, pararescuemen. The second helicopter crew was Captain Rodney S Griffith, aircraft commander, Major Anthony A Gates, co-pilot, SSgt David Garcia, flight engineer, SSgt Cole E Panning and Sgt Charles B McQuoid, pararescuemen. The third Jolly was crewed by Captain John R Wicner, aircraft commander, Captain Garry A Dace, co-pilot, SSgt William A SIMM, flight engineer, Sgt Michael A Aillet and Sgt Richard L Steed, PJ's. The fourth helicopter was crewed by Captain Donald A Sutton, aircraft commander, Major Gerry J Gilbert, co-pilot, SSgt Jimmy D Mince, flight engineer, Sgt William J Thompson and Sgt Daniel G Manion, PJ's.

American advisors evacuated from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at DaNang Airfield. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th ARRS.



A Girl Scout carries a little girl to an waiting truck. Boy and Girl Scouts assisted more than 5,000 refugees airlifted into Tan Son Nhut from the Central Highlands.

JAF NEWS 26 MAY 72 VOL 2 #15 P 2

TAN SON NHUT AB - Five U.S. Air Force HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict may when they airlifted 132 Americans and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and anti-aircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 FAC and A-1 Sandy were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean

and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. Pararescue specialist SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe silenced them with bursts from his mini-gun in the rear of the helicopter.

After his helicopter landed, LaPointe jumped out and organized the people on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second, 45, and the third, 50.

The fourth Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK-47 automatic weapon and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. PJ Sgt. William Thompson knocked out the AK-47 with bursts of his mini-gun and the sniper fire was suppressed by PJ Sgt. Daniel G. Manion.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

One lady, fighting fatigue, held her naked sleeping infant and reassured another older daughter. Her son, a man of 10, stood by with his hand on her shoulder in a touching protective tableau.

A mother quietly pleaded in English for a doctor as she rocked a tiny form in a blanket, dabbing at tears which in the afternoon sun reflected far more than the simple sorrow of one seeking safety.

The stream of refugees brought to the city of Saigon a glimpse of the very real price being paid by those caught in the path of the invading armies. Observers saw people obsessed with leaving the tragedy of war and simply fleeing...not to anything but from the communist threat.

The women scrambled aboard the trucks, first handing their infants and small tote bags to scouts or soldiers. When all space was filled, the young mothers tried to keep the crush of humanity from their babies. Women incapable of realizing they were long past the point of exhaustion.

To the refugees, the cramped space aboard these "Freedom Birds" was willingly accepted in return for the assurance of security and at least temporary respite from the rockets, the artillery and the menace of the North Vietnamese invasion of their homeland.

Jollys evacuate Quang Tri

American advisors evacuated from Quang Tri are greeted by Da Nang ground troops.



U.S. Air Force Photo

AIR RESCUE

Vol. 3 No. 4

Scott AFB, Ill. 62225

April 1973

Jolly pilot nets Silver Star

McCHORD AFB, Wash. — Maj. Rodney S. Griffith, 4th Military Airlift Squadron, was recently awarded the Silver Star, the nation's third highest military honor.

On May 1, 1972, while serving as an HH-53 helicopter commander in the Republic of Vietnam, Major Griffith (then captain) participated in an emergency evacuation of 129 American and Vietnamese Army men from besieged Quang Tri.

Despite U. S. Air Force and Navy air strikes to pave the way for the rescue operation, Major Griffith's helicopter had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns to and from the provincial capital.

Landing in the midst of the

burning city with artillery bursts all around them, Major Griffith and his crew brought 47 American advisors to safety unharmed.

"At the time I was scared to death," Major Griffith said. "Considering all the other rescue missions I had participated in during my tour in Vietnam, this was the first time I felt we weren't going to make it out."

During the ceremony, Col. Charles A. Bonney, Jr., vice commander of McChord's 62nd Military Airlift Wing, lauded Major Griffith saying "You, sir, are a man I am proud to be associated with."

Major Griffith is presently a flight examiner with McChord's 4th Military Airlift Wing.



Col. Charles A. Bonney, vice commander of McChord's 62nd Military Airlift Wing, pins the Silver Star on Maj. Rodney S. Griffith at ceremonies held there recently. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

Two PJs save Norse sailor

Two pararescuemen parachuted into the Atlantic 150 miles east of New York to rescue a survivor of an abandoned Norwegian freighter March 25.

The pararescuemen, TSgt. Roy A. Taylor, 24, of Quincy, Mass., and Sgt. Rickey J. Cofer, 23, Big Bend, Wis., parachuted from their HC-130 to a small wood and styrofoam bright orange "life box" to rescue Stein Gabrielsen, 23, of Oslo, Norway.

Gabrielsen was one of 30 crewmembers of the Norse Variant a 541-foot Norwegian coal freighter

enroute to Hamburg, Germany from Norfolk, Va. Less than 200 miles from New York, a severe Atlantic storm destroyed the ship and the sailors abandoned the vessel.

An extensive search effort by the Air Force and Coast Guard was hampered by the stormy seas. At 9 A.M., March 25, an HC-130 from Pease AFB, N.H., sighted three box-like rafts within a 25 square mile radius, but only one had a survivor.

The two pararescuemen parachuted to within 25 feet of the raft, inflated their personal dinghies,

and dogpaddled to the survivor. Once there, they attached their rafts to the survivor's raft and began treating him for shock and exposure.

Two hours later, the S.S. Mobile Lube, a commercial tanker, picked up the two pararescuemen and the survivor. From the Mobile Lube they were transported by helicopter to the Coast Guard cutter Cherokee and then to the aircraft carrier Independence. The pararescuemen were flown to Norfolk Naval Air Station. Gabrielsen remained on the carrier under a doctor's care.



GUNFIGHTER GAZETTE

Vol VI, Number 18

DA NANG AIRFIELD

May 6, 1972

Jollys evacuate Quang Tri advisors

"This may have been the biggest and the hottest extraction in the history of the Air Force rescue service," exclaimed Lt. Col. William M. Harris, commander of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here.

Four of the squadron's Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters, accompanied by heavy close air support, went into Quang Tri City at approximately 1635 hours Monday, bringing out all the remaining American advisors. A total of 132 personnel were lifted from the center of the city, including some ARVN and Popular Forces. All personnel landed safely here and the mission was terminated at 1850 hours.

Despite the close air support provided by U.S. Air Force fighter-bombers, the Jollys received considerable ground fire from inside and around the city, with mortar and artillery rounds coming in from the surrounding areas and sporadic ground and sniper fire from inside the city itself. At the time of the rescue, Quang Tri was surrounded by three NVA divisions. There was no battle damage to the four helicopters.

The first Jolly to go in airlifted 37 of the advisors.

While on the ground, the crew encountered hostile sniper fire from two enemy troops. Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescueman (PJ), returned fire with the mini-gun from his position in the rear of the aircraft. Both snipers were believed to be dead.

(Continued on Page 6)

Quang Tri evacuated...

(Continued from Page 1)

The second Jolly encountered sporadic small arms fire, but "nothing close" during their touchdown. 45 persons were picked up this time.

The third helicopter experienced light hostile fire as they lifted the remaining 50 persons. However, they reported that ground troops were approaching the landing pad as they lifted off.

Since the original plan for the rescue was for each bird to pick up 40 persons, the fourth bird went in expecting to pick up the last load of advisors.

The advisors were supposed to run up the ramp in the back of the aircraft as soon as it touched down. When no one came, Sgt. William J. Thompson, another pararescuer, stuck his head out to look around. Almost immediately, an enemy troop began "walking up" automatic M-16 fire towards his position. Quickly slipping behind the mini-gun, Thompson silenced the gunman.

After getting a radio affirmation that all the American advisors had been picked up, Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander, decided the area was too hot to stick around.

Although Captain Sutton's crew did not pick up any survivors, they have the distinction of being the last Americans in Quang Tri.

Both the rescue crews and the advisors commented on the smoothness and efficiency of the mission. One advisor said, "The Air Force did a tremendous job of laying down very close air-to-ground support. They must have laid out one hell of an operation to get us out."

Captain Harris added, "The FACs (forward air controllers) worked with the fast-movers (fighter-bombers) and did a tremendous job of putting in air strikes and all the good ordnance at the critical places. The Sandys (A-1 Skyraiders) did a fantastic job of laying in air support and escorting our Jollies."

Crewing the first HH-53 rescue helicopter were Maj. Jackson K. Scott, Jr., aircraft commander; Capt. David E. Mullenix, co-pilot; Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell, flight engineer; Sgt. David W. Young, and Sgt. LaPointe, pararescuemen.

The second chopper was crewed by Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, co-pilot; SSgt. David Garcia, flight engineer; and SSgt. Cole E. Panning and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid II, pararescuemen.

On board the third rescue craft were Capt. John K. Weimer, aircraft commander; Capt. Gary A. Dake, co-pilot; SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer; and Sgt. Richard L. Stead and A1C Michael A. Aillet, were the pararescuemen.

Along with Captain Sutton on the fourth chopper were Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, co-pilot, SSgt. Jimmy D. Minshew, flight engineer; and Sergeant Manion and Sergeant Thompson, pararescuemen.



AMERICAN ADVISORS EVACUATED from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at Da Nang Afd. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

HH-53s evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- Fire Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th ARRSq at Da Nang Afd., were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters,

which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground

forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescuer, silenced them with bursts from his mini-gun in the rear of the helicopter.

After his helicopter landed, Sergeant

LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second, 45 and the third, 50.

The fourth Super Jolly Green Giant landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK-47 automatic weapon and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt. William J. Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK-47 with bursts of his mini-gun and the sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt. Daniel G. Manion, another PJ.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Maj. Jackson R. Scott Jr., aircraft commander; Capt. David E. Mullenix, copilot; Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell, flight engineer; and Sgt. David Young, PJ.

The second helicopter crew was Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, copilot; SSgt.

David Garcia, flight engineer; SSgt. Cole E. Panning and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid, PJs.

The third Super Jolly Green Giant was crewed by Capt. John R. Weimer, aircraft commander; Capt. Gary A. Dake, copilot; SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer; Sgt. Michael A. Aillet and Sgt. Richard L. Steed, PJs.

Besides the PJs on the fourth helicopter, were Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander; Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, copilot; and SSgt. Jimmie D. Minshaw, flight engineer.

76th locates missing skiff

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii -- Locating an overdue 17-foot skiff in the middle of the night promised to be a difficult task for the rescue alert crew of the 76th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

Nevertheless, some sound consideration of the boat's probable drift and a little luck resulted in the speedy locating of the tiny vessel just seven miles off shore.

The boat, Fireball, missing from Kailua-Kona with six people on board, was too small to register on the HC-130 airborne radar and a visual sighting would depend on a chance sighting of the vessel's running lights on the dark surface of the sea.

The 76th ARRSq HC-130 scrambled as the sun was setting and headed directly toward Kona, where they began a low level search in the dark for the missing skiff. After locating one boat, which was determined not to be the Fireball, the crew resumed their search along the craft's probable line of drift.

They had no sooner reentered their pattern when a sharp eyed scanner spotted a light in the water. As the HC-130 turned toward it, another light began to blink.

Three dots, three dashes, three dots -- the SOS, international signal of distress.

Barely a half hour after arriving over Kona, the rescue crew had located their search object.

Capt. Richard L. Cecil, the HC-130's pilot, dropped illumination flares to positively identify the boat and the crew could clearly make out six people on board.

All that was required was to circle the disabled Firebird until the Coast Guard cutter Cape Newagen arrived to tow the boat, which had suffered engine failure, in to shore.

Reserves get HC-130s

ROBINS AFB, Ga. -- The first HC-130 aircraft to be assigned to an Air Force Reserve unit has been delivered to the 305th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Selfridge ANG Base, Mich.

Nine additional Hercules aircraft will be delivered to the 305th ARRSq and the 303rd ARRSq at March AFB, Calif., as replacements for the older HC-97 Stratofreighters.

Receipt of the faster, more modern Hercules will enable the 303rd and the 305th to more effectively assist in every type of ARRS mission. Additionally, the units will eventually have complete compatibility with active duty rescue units, based on the ability of the reservist to fly side-by-side with regular force crewmembers in a mixed-crew posture.

Tri city said another 16 American fighting men stayed behind with South Vietnamese Marines.

AIR FORCE TIMES

May 31, 1972



Evacuated men are safe now and can sport big grins.

Copters Evacuate 132 From Embattled City

TAN SON NHUT AB, Vietnam (7AF) — Five U.S. Air Force HH-53 helicopters performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict May 1 evening when they airlifted 132 Americans and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri to Da Nang.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and anti-aircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft and A-1 rescue support fighter were shot down.

394 Refugees

... ON ONE PLANE

See Page 30

The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter. The first Super Jolly Green Gi-

ant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. Pararescue specialist SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe silenced them with his mini-gun.

After his helicopter landed, LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The fourth helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received automatic weapon and sniper fire. PJ Sgt. William J. Thompson, knocked out the automatic and the sniper fire was suppressed by PJ Sgt. Daniel G. Manion.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

1 May 1972 -- The 3d ARR Group evacuated 132 persons from the citadel in the besieged city of Quang Tri, South Vietnam, to Da Nang. Four HH-53s of the 37th ARR Squadron at Da Nang took off for Quang Tri. They planned to have three Jolly Green Giants pick up all the survivors while the fourth chopper loitered outside the city, ready to dash in if needed. The North Vietnamese had moved SA-2 surface-to-air missiles south, and their area of coverage encompassed Quang Tri City. This factor caused the helicopters to approach the city at treetop level in spite of the risk of automatic weapons fire which they usually managed to avoid by flying above 3,000 feet.

Over the nearly demolished outskirts of the city, the three Jolly Greens moved in a single file up a corridor blasted by the A-1s to the walls of the fortress. As the first chopper settled into the citadel, enemy small arms fire increased to an intensity that caused so much confusion, only 37 men managed to climb aboard before the pilot pulled away. Staff Sergeant Robert LaPointe silenced the enemy snipers with the on-board minigun and then departed the aircraft to organize the remaining survivors. With order restored, the second chopper loaded 45 people and quickly took off.

Staff Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe.



The third Jolly Green landed in the fortress and loaded the 50 remaining survivors and Sergeant LaPointe just as quickly as the second helicopter. Its pilot pulled up and headed for safety. Minutes later the North Vietnamese flag flew over the citadel ruins. Sergeant LaPointe was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his cool actions under fire.

Clinton GI Helps Save 80 Yanks



Sgt. David Young

"Oh, that's my kid," Mrs. Warren C. Young, Clinton, Iowa, exclaimed when she learned that Sgt. David W. Young, 23, was safe after helping rescue 80 Americans, and others from Quang Tri just before that city was abandoned to the North Vietnamese Monday.

When she heard details of the rescue operation from an Associated Press release, Mrs. Young recognized the name of another Air Force man, Sgt. Robert Lapointe, 22.

"**THAT'S DAVE'S** buddy," said Mrs. Young, whose first word of the harrowing incident came to her from the Times-Democrat today.

Sgt. Young and Sgt. Lapointe reported to the Associated Press they drew less fire than expected from North Vietnamese troops on the ground but it was the noisiest place they've ever been in.

"There were explosions going on all over the place," Lapointe said.

Lapointe found himself stranded on the ground as the first helicopter lifted out.

He said as his helicopter came in two men in dirty dark clothes emerged from an alley and fired on the craft. "I opened up with my minigun and got rid of them," he said. "We didn't have any trouble on the ground."

SGT. YOUNG said the city itself was deserted. "We saw nothing moving. Quang Tri always looked desolate, but it's really

desolate now. There were a lot of shelled-out houses and some military equipment in the streets."

"It looks like maybe some of the South Vietnamese just left everything behind, changed into civilian clothes and went south."

The first helicopter came out with 37 persons, the second with 45 and the third 50, including the 80 Americans, 43 Vietnamese and a French photographer.

Lapointe said when he found himself stranded on the ground as the first helicopter lifted out, he helped organize the remaining persons.

"**AFTER 15** minutes, we didn't have any trouble loading them," Lapointe said. "When the second helicopter landed, I was the first to get on. I sure wasn't going to be left behind."

While three of the big helicopters took part in the actual rescue, a fourth, hovering as a reserve ship, received a radio call to fly down to the rescue site.

The call was a fake by North Vietnamese troops using the American radio fre-

—DARING

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Daring Rescue Mission—

Continued From Page 1

quency, an officer said. The message was, "Hey we's got more people down here."

The helicopter landed and a rescueman jumped off to make a search. He saw two enemy soldiers coming toward him, firing a machine gun. A gunner aboard the chopper killed them, the rescueman jumped aboard, and the helicopter pulled out.

TWO SUPPORTING aircraft were lost to ground fire and one pilot is missing, officials said in Vietnam.

Otherwise the daring operation went off nearly as planned although rescuemen said there was a mad rush by refugees for the first of four big Air Force Jolly Green Giant helicopters, possibly because they did not realize there would be more.

Sgt. Young, whose parents reside at

1911 N. 6th St., Clinton, entered the Air Force in September 1967. He recently extended his enlistment by 2 years.

YOUNG HAS spent 1½ years in Vietnam and his mother hopes he will return to the United States in time for a leave permitting him to attend his Clinton High School class' fifth-year reunion in July.

When the Clinton airman returns to his station, he probably will find a letter from his youngest sister, Susie, a third-grader at Horace Mann School, Clinton.

Their mother said, "I never change a word. He puts them up in the building, and all his buddies read them."

Sgt. Young has a brother, Doug, a junior at Clinton High School, and sister, Karen, who attends Clinton Community College where the sergeant was enrolled before enlisting.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Willetts:

This is to acknowledge your kind letter of June 5 to Secretary of the Air Force, Robert C. Seamans, Jr.

We have been unable, so far, to identify the Air Force unit that performed the rescue operation you mentioned at Quang Tri on May 1, 1972.

However, we are sending a copy of your letter to the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service in hopes that they will forward your sentiments to the men who performed the rescue.

Again, we appreciate your gratitude and support of the U. S. Air Force.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM D. HATCHER, Colonel, USAF
Chief, Community Relations Division
Office of Information

Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Willetts
Rural Route 1
Box 414A
LeClaire, Iowa 52753

Rural Rte 1, Box 411A
LeClaire, Iowa 52753

June 5, 1972

Secretary of the Air Force
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

My wife and I wish to express our deepest gratitude to the courageous men of the United States Air Force who took part in, or supported, the daring mission to rescue American Advisors in Quang Tri City last month.

Our son, Capt. James F. Willetts, U. S. Army, was one of those rescued.

The attached newspaper copy (with the Clinton GI article overprinted) tells the story.

While the Advisors were encircled at Quang Tri, the press services carried accounts of the impossibility of air rescue because of intense ground shelling and anti-aircraft fire. Ground escape had been cut off by the enemy several days before.

It was a very hazardous mission for the men of the Air Force to undertake and we want them to know that their brave effort was appreciated. We are sure the families of the other 79 American Advisors feel the same way.

Our son has not returned from Vietnam as yet and the newspaper account carries no word of the Air Force unit concerned or its address.

Will you please see that word of this letter gets to the men of the Air Force who planned, supported and executed the rescue.

Sincerely,

copy of news
acct. inclosed.

Mr. & Mrs. B. A. Willetts

Mr. & Mrs. B. A. Willetts

Good Morning!

It's Thursday, May 4, 1972

Davenport-Bettendorf, Iowa

8 TIMES DEMOCRAT Wednesday, May 3, 1972
Davenport-Bettendorf, Iowa

Clinton GI's Rescue Role

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three years

Kevin O'Brien, 32, was born without vision in his left eye. He grew up in Chicago's tough West Side and now resides in

him. The two are trying to make ends meet.

—MUSCATINE
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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS, AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SERVICE (MAG)
SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, ILLINOIS 61911



13 July 1972

REF ID: A67111

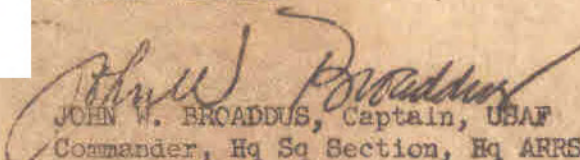
CCS

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

TO: 37th ARRS (OI)
APO 96337

1. We were pleased to receive the attached copy of a letter from Mr & Mrs B. A. Willetts of LeClaire, Iowa. They had sent the letter to the Secretary of the Air Force in the hope that word of their appreciation would reach the men involved in rescuing their son from Quang Tri on 1 May 1972.

2. Our records indicate that Sgt David W. Young and Sgt Robert Lapointe are assigned to your organization. General Everest has requested that the attached letter of appreciation be brought to the attention of Sgt Young and Sgt Lapointe as well as all others involved in the Quang Tri rescue mission.


JOHN W. BROADUS, Captain, USAF
Commander, Hq Sq Section, Hq ARRS

1 Atch

1. Ltr from Mr & Mrs
B. A. Willetts



PRIDE IN THE PAST

FAITH IN THE FUTURE

funds to school districts.

He said federal officials have contacted the office and have warned that the

MARVIN SELDEN, state comptroller, admitted there was a definition problem with the legislature's first bill but said

lose its federal aid," he added.

In comparison to the total \$210 million state aid package, the \$900,000 would

thority to make the change, Smith said.

He said many educators have indicated apprehension about losing federal aid

Q-C Soldier Escapes Quang Tri

Mr. and Mrs. Budd A. Willetts, R.R. 1, Lett Lake, expected to get a good night's sleep Wednesday night for the first time in over two weeks.

The couple received their first hope of finding out whether their son, Army Capt. James F. Willetts, was safe in Vietnam when they read a story Tuesday in the Times-Democrat about the role of a Clinton Iowa army in the rescue of American advisers trapped by the North Vietnamese in Quang Tri City.

"We had not heard about the evacuation of some of the advisers until we read the story," Willetts said Wednesday. "We decided to call Sgt. David Young's mother in Clinton and find out where he was stationed because we thought it might help us locate our son."

SGT. YOUNG, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Warren C. Young, Clinton Iowa, helped rescue 30 Americans from the city just before it was abandoned to the North Vietnamese Monday.

"We hadn't heard from Jim since April 12 and we hadn't gotten a night's sleep worrying about him," Willetts said.

"We were really afraid we might have lost him after we heard about the invasion

"We hadn't heard from Jim since April 12 and we hadn't gotten a night's sleep worrying about him."

during the night," Willetts said. "It was Jim telling us he had made the last rescue chopper out and was now at another base."

"WE ONLY got to talk to him for a minute but we were so thankful and relieved. We were so excited we didn't sleep for the rest of the night. We're certainly going to thank Sgt. Young in person when we get the chance."

Willetts, who is an Army public relations officer at the Rock Island Arsenal, said he thought the Army probably located his son and told him to call home after Willetts had asked for their help.

Capt. Willetts had been an American adviser along the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam since August 1971. He was promoted to acting senior district adviser in the Quang Tri area just before the invasion by North Vietnamese troops started.

Capt. Willetts is a 1965 graduate of Central High School, Davenport, and an honor graduate of both the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Ga., and the Army Intelligence School at Ft. Holmdel, Md. He attended Texas Christian University in Ft. Worth before enlisting in the Army.



Capt. James Willetts

Meanwhile, the killing and dying continued as the North Vietnamese offensive rolled on through April. Among the rescue efforts during that offensive, the evacuation of 132 American and Vietnamese troops from the citadel at Quang Tri stands out as one of the largest rescue operations of the war. At the height of the invasion, four North Vietnamese divisions surrounded Quang Tri City cutting off the American advisors and South Vietnamese troops in the old citadel.⁶⁷

On May 1 four HH-53s from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang took off for Quang Tri. They planned to have three Jolly Green Giants pick up all the survivors while the fourth chopper hovered outside the city, ready to dash in if needed. The North Vietnamese had moved SA-2 surface-to-air missiles south and their area of coverage encompassed Quang Tri City. Consequently the helicopters had to approach the city at tree-top level. At that low altitude they ran the risk of automatic weapons fire which they usually avoided by flying above 3,000 feet.⁶⁸

Over the nearly-demolished outskirts of the city, three Jolly Greens moved into a single file to proceed up a corridor blasted by the A-1s to the walls of the fortress. As the first chopper settled into the citadel, enemy small arms fire increased to an intensity that caused so much confusion that only thirty-seven men managed to climb aboard before the pilot pulled away. Staff Sergeant Robert LaPinte, pararescueman on Jolly 71, remained behind to organize the remaining survivors. With order restored, the next chopper loaded forty-five people and quickly took off.⁶⁹

The third Jolly Green into the fortress loaded fifty people just as quickly as the second helicopter. Its pilot pulled up and headed for safety. When it seemed that the rescue effort had ended, Capt. Donald A. Sutton, commander of the backup helicopter, received a frantic radio message, "Hey, we've got more people down here!" Sutton rushed to the citadel, landed, and lowered his ramp. No one ran to the waiting chopper. Suddenly North Vietnamese troops leaped from the wrecked buildings and opened fire on the sitting Jolly Green. Sutton realized he had been suckered into a trap. As his parajumper blasted everyone in sight with the minigun, the last

Lynner Escapes Quang Tri Assault

While the enemy today swept toward the city of Hue, South Vietnam's third largest city, military sources revealed that a 22-year-old Lynn man was among the last survivors airlifted from the provincial capital of Quang Tri before the city fell Monday.

In those final harrowing hours before the Communist capture of the provincial capital, 22-year-old Air Force Sgt. Paul LaPointe, 63 Tudor St., displayed the same coolness that had earlier won him a hero's commendation.

With North Vietnamese troops

perched on the outskirts of the beleaguered city all efforts were being made to rescue the 80 American military advisers who had been serving with the South Vietnamese legions defending the city against the enemy onslaught.

With time running out Air Force helicopters began their 11th hour rescue operation, all the while braving strong fire from enemy troops.

Sgt. LaPointe was on the first copter to land.

Well trained as a para-rescue specialist, he organized the first loading of advisers aboard the chopper.

In the ensuing confusion, Sgt.

LaPointe found himself shut off from boarding the helicopter which took off amid a fusillade of enemy fire.

The rescue operation was hampered by the aimless scurrying of civilian residents of the city and the remnants of the South Vietnamese army as a full scale retreat from the city got underway.

Sgt. LaPointe, who early last month had received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism in the rescuing of downed U. S. pilots, managed to herd the remaining advisers off into

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● WAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

a corner of the compound, to await the landing of a second rescue helicopter.

Enemy shells were still being dropped on the city and the first of the invading troops had already infiltrated to a dangerously close position.

KEPT HIS COOL

"The only thing to do under the circumstances," said Sgt. LaPointe, "was to keep cool until that second chopper arrived."

That pleasant whirring sound was heard about 20 minutes later and not a moment too soon.

Sgt. LaPointe directed the second loading on the copter but this time he was not about to be left behind.

"I got on the chopper first and helped the others aboard. We didn't have much time to spare but one thing I knew," he said, "I wasn't about to be left behind again."

He expressed surprise that the enemy fire against the copter was less than that had been leveled against the first copter.

But danger still lurked around the next turn for the helicopter and its passengers. No sooner had the craft become airborne than a radio message was received.

Somehow a few of the U.S. advisers had been left behind and they issued a plea for rescue.

As the copter swooped down on the location where the advisers were supposedly hiding, Sgt. LaPointe saw two men clad in dark clothing emerge from an alleyway and begin firing on the copter.

ENEMY TRICK

It had been a clever ruse. The enemy had managed to get the fake message sent over the same frequency used by the U.S. rescue copters.

Sgt. LaPointe manned the copters mini-guns and trained his fire on the two men who soon scurried for the same alleyway from which they had emerged moments earlier.

"We didn't see them again," said now-weary LaPointe.

Describing the scene in the capital city, he said: "It sure was the noisiest place I'd ever been in. Nothing but explosions and small arms fire all over the place."

The mission had been accomplished. The 80 advisers had been safely plucked from amidst the encircling enemy troops.

On April 3, Sgt. LaPointe was aboard another copter that was sent to the rescue of several

downed U.S. pilots near Quang Tri. The lead helicopter on the mission was hit by enemy fire and lost use of its guns. Sgt. LaPointe exposed himself to enemy fire as he manned the copter's mini-guns and went to the rescue of the other helicopter crew which had crash landed nearby.

The Air Force called this a feat which reflected great credit on LaPointe and the Air Force.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul LaPointe, 63 Tudor St., he is a graduate of the former Trade High and has been in the Air Force for two years and in Vietnam less than one year.

JUNE DISCHARGE

Sgt. LaPointe is due for discharge in June. One memory of his service in Vietnam that will be with him, however, will be that risky rescue mission in Quang Tri.

Meanwhile, North Vietnamese troops, fresh from one of their biggest victories of the war moved from two directions toward refugee-swollen Hue, South Vietnam's third largest city and apparently the next major target for the driving communist forces.

North Vietnamese soldiers swept through Quang Tri earlier in the day and took control of the entire northern 30 miles of South Vietnam. They grouped for a possible move against a new South Vietnamese defense line only 15 miles north of Hue, the former imperial capital.

An estimated two North Vietnamese divisions — more than 20,000 men — also pushed toward Hue from the Southwest. They earlier set up huge 130mm artillery at the captured artillery base bastogne about 12 miles from the old capital.

So far there have been no attacks against the U. S. base at Phu Bai, just south of Hue, which houses about 2,000 Americans.

Quang Tri was the first South Vietnamese provincial capital to fall to the North Vietnamese in the war although Communists held parts of Hue for 29 days during the Tet offensive in 1968.

MAJOR DEFEAT

The fall of Quang Tri where the current offensive began was a major setback for the South Vietnamese.

"There is no doubt that the South Vietnamese army suffered a major defeat," a high U.S. military source said. "This is not something that can be papered over."

An estimated 50,000 refugees trekked southward from Quang Tri toward Hue during the day.



Evacuated men are safe now and can sport big grins.

Copters Evacuate 132 From Embattled City

TAN SON NHUT AB, Vietnam (7AF) — Five U.S. Air Force HH-53 helicopters performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict May 1 evening when they airlifted 132 Americans and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri to Da Nang.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and anti-aircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft and A-1 rescue support fighter were shot down.

394 Refugees

... ON ONE PLANE

See Page 30

The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green Gi-

ant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. Pararescue specialist SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe silenced them with his mini-gun.

After his helicopter landed, LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The fourth helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received automatic weapon and sniper fire. PJ Sgt. William J. Thompson, knocked out the automatic and the sniper fire was suppressed by PJ Sgt. Daniel G. Manion.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.