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After illustrious lifetime

Popular Pedro put to pasture



"No. 60-0263," stands gleaming on the flight-line at Scott AFB, Ill. The aircraft recently underwent a facelifting prior to flying to the museum. In its lifetime it broke numerous records including an 888-mile one-way trip without landing to refuel. (Air Force photo by Sgt. Ted Brieding)

By A1C Al Larsen

A man's lifetime consists of many firsts. One rarely forgets the first real date or first turn behind the wheel of dad's car.

Recently here at Scott AFB, this reporter experienced another interesting and exciting first—a rescue helicopter.

Although reading and writing about all the various kinds of Air Rescue equipment for several months, the introduction to the record breaking HH-43B No. 60-0263 "Pedro" was something else.

No 60-0263 stopped here while enroute from Kirtland AFB, N.M., to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. I felt

sad, when I learned that this was its last flight ever. No. 60-0263's future was tagged. It would be placed to rest at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson to serve as a memory vase for some and an education for others.

Piloting the aircraft on the three-day, 1,200-mile trip was Maj. Alex Lupenski, commander, Det. 3, 42nd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, based at Kirtland. The two crew members were Capt. Marvin D. McLaughlin and Crew Chief, SSgt. Donald L. Layberger.

Watching these men prepare for the upcoming leg of the trip, it was obvious how much pride and care

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they had for the bird.

Now climbing atop, now wiping the propeller blades and next the windshield, the men worked diligently.

"Now comes the paper work," said Sergeant Layberger, "I don't like it much, but it's part of the job."

Watching him work, pencil in hand, it was easy to see that he had done it thousands of times. Each section, each box, however, was carefully checked and filled in.

Remembering the aircraft to be a record-breaker, a question as to its titles seemed appropriate. After the initial inquiry, I was directed to a plaque mounted neatly beneath the door opening. Here all its records were proudly displayed.

Most of the records which No. 60-0263 broke were in 1961 when it was a year old. They included: climbing to an altitude of 26,369 feet with a 2,204-pound payload, 32,840 feet

without a payload, 9,842 feet in 2.7 minutes, 19,684 feet in 6.8 minutes and 29,526 feet in 14.5 minutes. In 1962, two more records were broken when the helicopter flew an 888-mile one-way trip without landing to refuel, and a 655-mile trip without landing and refueling.

With more than 2,000 flying hours chalked up on the Pedro's record, it has been used since August 1971 by Kirtland's Det. 3. While there, it was used in seven missions ranging from rescuing crashed civilian pilots and lost and injured people in the mountains, to delivering food to snowbound Indian families in New Mexico.

"No. 60-0263" recently underwent a face-lifting and now stands gleaming proudly with ARRS strategically written on its torso—a memorial to those who served and rescued, and an education for those to come.



Maj. Alex Lupenske, left, aircraft commander, checks clearance around "No. 0263" while Capt. Marvin D. McLaughlin looks on.
U.S. Air Force photo



Crew Chief SSgt. Donald L. Layberger, left, and Captain McLaughlin secure one of the Pedro's rotor blades. (Air Force photo by Sgt. Ted Brieding)