

PJs ...

'a peculiar breed'

What is a "PJ?"

Ask a guy sitting in the dining hall and he might mumble something about "cocky b - - - - - s who come in here wearing their bloused fatigues and their cute little maroon berets."

To the crew of the Eastern Diamond, a Panamanian freighter, they are daredevils and saviors, worthy of the captain's cabin, the best food, the highest admiration. Of course, anyone could make an impression by parachuting into a tropical storm, slitting a shipmate's throat to save his life, and then up and away on the biggest, noisiest Jolley Green space vehicle ever to blow a sailor's mind.

Although it's tough to generalize, pararescuemen could be said to fit both the above descriptions. They are professionally competent in four major disciplines — precision parachuting, SCUBA diving, paramedics and survival. PJs exhibit the same psychological behavior quirks common to cops, fire fighters, football pros and other men who deal in fast and dangerous action.

Only about 40 per cent of the volunteers who start Army jump school at Fort Benning leave Hill AFB "finishing school" 10 months later as PJs, according to MSgt. James W. Watson, training NCOIC for the 76th ARRS PJs. Navy SCUBA training at San Diego drowns out a lot of hopefuls, while emergency medical training at Sheppard AFB and survival school at Fairchild AFB weed out the squeamish, and those who flunk mental and physical toughness.

The guys who make it to rescue units like the 76th, and special units like 6594th Test are selected peculiar type individuals who "... are so well motivated that if we don't make up things (exercises) for them to do, they climb the walls," explained Watson.

Their exercises just don't have the convivial atmosphere that you and I remember in laughing our way through basic training first aid class. These guys get sweaty serious when an exercise victim, covered with gory rubber wounds from the Clinic's moulage kit, casually hands them a symptoms card. In fact, evaluators like MSgt. Billy R. Davidson, who will head up the PJs at Test when the 76th folds later this year, will occasionally, crack a little humor to lighten up the PJ's mind, get him to see the big picture again. PJs are required to make one water and one land jump per quarter. The section averages an exercise a week with the moulage kit, and lectures on emergency medical procedures. Two PJs are

emergency clinical training. Each PJ must pass a physical test every six months, including distance running, swimming, push-ups, chin-ups etc. with repetition and time requirements.

A PJ's lot is a contrast in mind dulling inactivity, and bursts of dangerous, exhausting action. He may pull 24 hour alert for months without catching a rescue mission. Or, as when the 76th was primary rescue agency for Skylab (the Navy took over for actual splashdown), the PJs may brief for a mission at 3 p.m. and not return to Hickam until the next morning.

The type of work sometimes causes tempers to flare around the shop, and wives and families to endure an irritable Old Man.

Sometimes a young PJ displays the cop's

syndrome, so involved with life and death emergencies that everyday family problems don't get enough attention. And sometimes a wife sees a change in her husband turned PJ.

"I used to be pretty squeamish as a kid, but now we'll see something violent on tv, or maybe an accident, and Marsha will say 'what's the matter with you'." notes Sgt. Edmond W. Hooven.

"Bud" Hooven admits that there are some guys in pararescue who "are in for the hat" — the prestige of the maroon beret — and whos' egos are hard to swallow sometimes.

"But you know it's funny — you take even these macho guys out on a mission or an exercise and they transform into super team players. It's the team concept that's been ingrained into us from earliest PJ training."

Hawaiian Falcon, Feb. 7, 1975

PJs practice. for land and
sea rescues, including
backup to Apollo and Skylab
splashdowns.



MSgt. Billy R. Davidson, flight examiner, grills SSgt. Larry E. Kimball, exercise team leader, in the procedures he has followed in caring for five patients.

1975 Hawaii PJ's

