

9 October 1976 SAR for hunter PJ Lapointe

On this date while assigned to the 71st Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Squadron based at Elmendorf AFB, Anchorage Alaska, participated in a rescue mission to assist a hunter trapped on a cliff in Resurrection Bay and was unable to climb up or down without risking. We were alerted by phone calls at 8:20 p.m. The alert helicopter could not get to the site due to bad weather. So a ground rescue team was requested by the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center. The team members were:

- TSgt Terry Wetzel
- SSgt Robert LaPointe
- A1C Stephen Buergin
- A1C Robert Owen

The team members gathered medical gear, mountain rescue equipment, field packs and headed to the flight line where a helicopter would transport us to Seward Airport. We departed Elmendorf AFB at 9 p.m. and landed at 9:45 p.m. The local police met us at the airport and put us up for the night at the police station. The only beds they had available were in their jailhouse and we assured them that we had no problems spending the night in their otherwise empty jail. We were informed that a U.S. Coast Guard ship would transport us to the rescue area early the next morning. We also learned that the distressed hunter was part of a three man hunting party. One member of that group of hunters had walked back to their boat and used the boat to get to Seward and notify authorities that two other hunters were still in the mountains and one of those two needed to be rescued. The one not needing to be rescued remained on scene to assist the trapped man if he fell down to the bottom of the cliff. Fishing boats passing by the area of the trapped hunter after dark reported flashlight signaling and distress shots.



Before sunrise we loaded up the Coast Guard ship and they landed us near the cliff at 8 a.m. on October 10th. From the ship, we could see some sort of signal flag. We started to hike to the base of the mountain where the signal was seen and found the hunter who did not need to be rescued. He informed us that he had left a red handkerchief at the top of the cliff the trapped hunter was on. We continued to hike up the hillside and

on the top we found the handkerchief. From the top of the cliff Airman Owens spotted a blue jacket. Two rappel ropes were set up and SSgt LaPointe and Airman Owens rappelled downward where the man was found covered in blood. The medical examination revealed that the man had died of his injuries. We yelled this information to the cliff top where TSgt Wetzel radioed a report in to the police and asked them to notify the RCC that we needed a helo to extract the remains of the deceased hunter. SSgt LaPointe descended to set up the helicopter landing zone. A1C Buergin, TSgt Wetzel and A1C Owens remained at the incident site and gathered the victims personal items and waited for the helo. HH-3 helicopter arrived and dropped a body bag. PJ's placed the body into the bag and used the HH-3 hoist to recover the body. Team climbed down and boarded the helicopter. Flew first to Seward Airport where the State Police asked us to transport the body to Anchorage. Helicopter then took off for Elmendorf and landed at the hospital helo pad. Remains were transferred to the hospital staff. Helicopter then returned to rescue ramp at Elmendorf AFB.

PARARESCUE MISSION REPORT									
ART ONE: OPERATIONAL									
1. ORGANIZATION/LOCATION 1ARRS Elmendorf AFB, AK		2. MISSION NO. AAC/RCC #220		3. AIRCRAFT 695806					
NOTIFICATION		5. RESPONSE		DATE		TIME		6. MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT	
TIME 2020		DEPARTURE		9OCT		2100		PATIENT/SURVIVOR CONTACT	
DATE 9 Oct 76		ARRIVAL AT SCENE		"		2145		EXTRACTION OF PATIENT/SURVIVOR	
METHOD Radio Beeper		DEPLOYMENT		10OCT		0745		DELIVERY OF PT. TO DEFINITIVE CARE	
SPECIAL ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT									
Requested additional assistance from other PJ's. Original 4 man team organized with additional PJ's for backup team. Stokes litter, ropes, field packs and other mountain hardware was obtained.									
9. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN DEPLOYMENT									
Lack of daylight, poor weather conditions and rough adverse terrain made chopper landing impossible. HC-130 couldn't give flare support due to low ceiling. Coast Guard ship transported us to area at first daylight.									
10. EQUIPMENT									
RADIO									
STROBE/FLARE									
JUMP KIT									
BACKUP KIT									
OXYGEN									
MA-1									
1. SUMMARY OF POST DEPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES									
Chopper dropped us off at Seward Airfield. Police put us up in jail house. We pooled and sorted all necessary gear and discussed the search & recovery plan of 2 men on the mountain side. We met with the 3rd person from the original party of 3. He had gone for help and was recovered by the Coast Guard. We discussed the location and history of the other 2. Made arrangements for Coast Guard to deploy us at the site by lay break.									
2. SUMMARY OF MEANS OF EVACUATION									
Coast Guard ship had us on shore by 0800. Started hike to base of mountain where signal was spotted. Coast Guard radioed to us that they'd found 1 of the members. He stated that other member had fallen off a cliff and he left a red handkerchief at base of mountain where he thought he was located. Spotted handkerchief, split up and made a parallel search of the mountain side. A1C Owens first spotted a blue jacket, then a hat, then a large quantity of blood, a .338 rifle. Owens started his descent and both he &									
3. REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS									
SSgt LaPointe spotted the victim. Immediately radioed RCC for chopper assistance. SSgt LaPointe descended to set up LZ. A1C Buergin, TSgt Wetzel and A1C Owens remained at scene and gathered victim's personal items & waited for chopper. Chopper flew over accident site and dropped body bag. PJ's placed body, packed remains, etc. in bag. Aircraft AC and PJ's decided to make recovery by hoist. We moved bag to ledge as chopper made hoist recovery. Team climbed down and boarded hel. Flew to Seward Airfield then to AAFB released deceased to Elmendorf Hospital.									
PART TWO: MEDICAL (Attach separate ARRS form 2, Part 2, for each individual patient)									
4. TEAM				15. MEDICAL SITUATION ORIGINALLY REPORTED					
NAME				RANK					
OUTY TITLE				No actual medical situation was reported. It was unknown what the problem was except that there were 2 people stranded on a mountain side with distress shots fired and flashlight signalling.					
Stephen B. Buergin				A1C Pararescue Spec					
Robert L. LaPointe				SSgt Pararescue Tech					
Terry Wetzel				TSgt Pararescue Tech					
Robert Owens				A1C Pararescue Spec					
6. MEDICAL HISTORY									
N/A									

PARARESCUE MISSION REPORT

ART ONE: OPERATIONAL

1. ORGANIZATION/LOCATION 1ARRS Elmendorf AFB, AK		2. MISSION NO. AAC/RCC #220			3. AIRCRAFT 695806				
4. NOTIFICATION		5. RESPONSE		DATE	TIME	6. MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT		DATE	TIME
TIME	2020	DEPARTURE		9OCT	2100	PATIENT/SURVIVOR CONTACT		10OCT	1100
DATE	9 Oct 76	ARRIVAL AT SCENE		"	2145	EXTRACTION OF PATIENT/SURVIVOR		"	1500
METHOD	Radio Beeper	DEPLOYMENT		10OCT	0745	DELIVERY OF PT. TO DEFINITIVE CARE		"	1630

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT
Requested additional assistance from other PJ's. Original 4 man team organized with additional PJ's for backup team. Stokes litter, ropes, field packs and other mountain hardware was obtained.

DEPLOYMENT	9. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN DEPLOYMENT	10. EQUIPMENT	Avail	Used		Avail	Used
ACFT LANDING	Lack of daylight, poor weather conditions and rough adverse terrain made chopper landing impossible. HC-130 couldn't give flare support due to low ceiling. Coast Guard ship transported us to area at first daylight.	RADIO			MOUNTAIN		
PARACHUTE		STROBE/FLARE			HOUSEKEEPING		
HOIST		JUMP KIT			LITTER(TYPE)		
OTHER:		BACKUP KIT			OTHER:		
		OXYGEN					
		MA-1					

1. SUMMARY OF POST DEPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES Chopper dropped us off at Seward Airfield. Police put us up in jail house. We pooled and sorted all necessary gear and discussed the search & recovery plan of 2 men on the mountain side. We met with the 3rd person from the original party of 3. He had gone for help and was recovered by the Coast Guard. We discussed the location and history of the other 2. Made arrangements for Coast Guard to deploy us at the site by day break.

2. SUMMARY OF MEANS OF EVACUATION Coast Guard ship had us on shore by 0800. Started hike to base of mountain where signal was spotted. Coast Guard radioed to us that they'd found 1 of the members. He stated that other member had fallen off a cliff and he left a red handkerchief at base of mountain where he thought he was located. Spotted handkerchief, split up and made a parallel search of the mountain side. ALC Owens first spotted a blue jacket, then a hat, then a large quantity of blood, a .338 rifle. Owens started his descent and both he &

3. REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SSgt LaPointe spotted the victim. Immediately radioed RCC for chopper assistance. SSgt LaPointe descended to set up LZ. ALC Buergin, TSgt Wetzel and ALC Owens remained at scene and gathered victim's personal items & waited for chopper. Chopper flew over accident site and dropped body bag. PJ's placed body, packed remains, etc. in bag. Aircraft AC and PJ's decided to make recovery by hoist. We moved bag to ledge as chopper made hoist recovery. Team climbed down and boarded hel. Flew to Seward Airfield then to EAFB released deceased to Elmendorf Hospital.

PART TWO: MEDICAL (Attach separate ARRS Form 2, Part 2, for each individual patient)

4. TEAM			15. MEDICAL SITUATION ORIGINALLY REPORTED
NAME	RANK	DUTY TITLE	No actual medical situation was reported. It was unknown what the problem was except that there were 2 people stranded on a mountain side with distress shots fired and flashlight signalling.
Stephen B. Buergin	ALC	Pararescue Spec	
Robert L. LaPonte	SSgt	Pararescue Tech	
Ferry Wetzel	TSgt	Pararescue Tech	
Robert Owens	ALC	Pararescue Spec	

6. MEDICAL HISTORY

N/A

8. PROGRESS NOTES

9. MEDICAL SUPPLIES UTILIZED0. REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS75-34380