

'Jollies' Scoop-Up Downed Marine In Vietnam

by SSgt. David B. Drachlis

"I saw a glint and felt a thump ... Then there was fire and smoke and the plane went out of control. Everything was dark ..." recalled Marine 1st Lt. Darrell Borders, reflecting on the seconds just before he recently ejected from his stricken F-4 Phantom.

Three hours later amid a barrage of enemy fire, aircraft of the Air Force's 56th Special Operations Wing and 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron combined forces to pluck him from the mountainous North Vietnam jungle.

"It seemed like it took forever coming down," remembered the pilot. "I was drifting to-

ward a river and enemy village, so I pulled on one riser of the parachute which brought me down a lot faster."

The pilot landed in some bamboo near a ridge on a rugged mountain and his parachute hung up on some small trees. He stepped out of the chute and headed for cover.

Lieutenant Borders who is from Pering Ill., worked his way over the top of the slippery muddy ridge to find a better hiding place.

"I kept thinking that I was leaving a trail as wide as a four-lane highway," he remembered.

Hours later, while propeller-driven Air Force A-1 Sky-raidiers from the 1st Special

Operations Squadron suppressed enemy small-arms fire, the first HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopter began its approach. As the crew attempted to pinpoint the survivor's location, their chopper was heavily damaged by enemy fire and one crewmember was wounded, forcing them to pass rescue attempts to a nearby "Jolly Green."

As the second "Jolly" began hovering over the survivor, the enemy again opened fire. The helicopter pilot called for support, and the A-1 Sandys rolled in blanketing the area with ordnance.

"They laid -down just about everything they had," remembered Capt. Mike Swager, pilot of the rescue helicopter. But the intense barrage continued to pepper his aircraft.

"From the angle we were taking hits, it appeared that the enemy was very close to the downed pilot," he continued.

The flight engineer, SSgt. Herschel E. Fannin, was directing the pilot over the survivor and lowering the rescue seat when an enemy round severed his intercom line.

Realizing the problem, Sgt. Jim Cockerill, a photographer with the 601st Photo Squadron's Detachment 12, jumped to his feet and went forward to help. Sticking his arm into the cockpit, he relayed the flight engineer's directions to the pilot by hand signals until voice communications could be restored.

"I was watching out the window to maintain a stable hover and reading hand signals to my left at the same time," explained the pilot.

Meanwhile, the penetrator cable had tangled in some



(US Air Force Photo by SSgt. Jim (Cockerill)

1st Lt. Darrell Borders

bamboo. As the crew freed the rescue seat and prepared to lower it again for the pick-up, the flight engineer noticed that the survivor was already on it, and they quickly reeled him aboard.

"It was almost like going fishing," commented Captain Swager.

When the survivor saw the penetrator come down, he crawled toward the seat, slipping and sliding in the mud.

"I grabbed onto some bamboo and pulled up to it," he explained. "I hooked on and they pulled me up through the trees."

As the helicopter departed the area, it was discovered that the fuel transfer system had been damaged, but a rendezvous with an Air Force tanker an hour later helped that problem

and the Jolly headed home with the happy Marine hitch-hiker.

Other crewmembers on the rescue chopper were Capt. Stephen O. Boydd, co-pilot; TSgt. Michael L. Walker, and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid II, both pararescuemen.

On the first helicopter were Capt. Thomas J. Laut, pilot; 1st Lt. Gilbert A. Rovito, co-pilot, MSgt. David V. McLeod Jr., flight engineer; SSgt. Daniel T. Nungesser, and AIC Charles B. Kinser, both pararescuemen; and TSgt. Don Looper, photographer.

A-1 Skyraider pilots supporting the mission were Maj. George A. Batte, Capt. Ross M. Buchanan, Terry McCammon, Lance D. Shotwell; and 1st Lts. Richard E. Brown III, Thomas S. Brady, and Robe-