

DOC RIPPERT HELPS KOREAN

HM1 Rippert was dangling from an H-33A helicopter above eight feet seas on Friday the thirteenth somewhere in the Bermuda Triangle when the rope broke. "It scared the heck out of me," he said, and then explained. "We were in Bermuda and we had lost one of our main engines. Then we got a call from rescue control center about an injured man on a Korean fishing boat about 400 miles east of Bermuda, without medical supplies or anybody that spoke English. It took about 30 hours to get within 100 miles of the boat, and then we sent our helos. This was about four in the morning on February 13 in a really heavy storm. When we got there, one of the helos shined a searchlight while the other tried to lower me to the boat. But there were cables and fishing lines strung out all over the boat, making it difficult to drop me to the boat.

"The Koreans were running around, trying to figure a way to get me down. They started putting a raft over the side for me to drop into if all else failed. I was hanging from the helo from a rope with a sling that goes under your arms. It's not very secure and the helos was pitching because of the winds.

"We threw another rope, attached to the line holding me, to the Koreans, hoping they would have the sense to pull me to the boat. Instead of pulling me to the boat, they tied the rope to a cleat. They didn't understand English, so it didn't do any good shouting at them. The helo started moving away from the boat and the rope tied to the boat was pulling me into the water. I was about five feet from the water when the rope finally broke and the helo was able to lift me away. It really scared me. We tried again and managed to get onto the boat." Once on the boat, the rescue went smoothly.

"The Korean had gotten his arm caught in fishing lines or cables as near as we could figure, and almost three-quarters of his arm was almost amputated. All the Koreans had done was to put a dirty piece of rubber tubing around his arm, which was literally hanging off, to serve as a kind of tourniquet. The arm was stiff, cold, and it appeared that gangrene had set in. The Koreans were hard to deal with, because they didn't understand any English except 'Okay'. We managed to get the man into a litter and up into the helo and back to the ship."

Once back aboard the ship, the Korean was given sedatives, treated for shock, and then flown by helo to a civilian hospital in Bermuda. Rippert still doesn't know what happened to the Korean at the hospital.



Edward D. Huestker Mdt-Pa-2



HM1 Richard L. Rippert