

The following is the narrative of the mission on which I was credited for saving Gen Charles Lindbergh's life on Easter Sunday, 1972.



(General Charles Lindbergh & Major Bruce Ware)

HH-3E, tail number 66-13289 (Jolly 36 or AF Rescue 289) lifted off Clark AB, Republic of Philippines at 0320 Hrs. on Easter Sunday morning, 1972. The mission was to fly over 600 miles south to Southern Mindanao, and attempt to recover General Charles A. Lindbergh from the Tasaday mountain range.

Gen. Lindbergh had been airlifted into the position, along with an American news team, to document and add credence to a research being conducted of a group of 25 natives found living in 3 caves. They had been dubbed the "Tasaday", since they were discovered in the Tasaday range. It was at first believed that they were original "stone age people".

The research team had been airlifted into the area via a French Allouette helicopter being flown by a retired Filipino AF helicopter pilot. Three Filipinos had trekked into the area and built a platform in the top of an 80 foot tree, over which the helicopter hovered and the personnel then jumped from the helicopter to the 10 x 10 pad, and climbed down the tree. The team had set up a camp approximately 100 yards beneath the three caves the Tasaday were living in.

The research team had been in the area for about three weeks, being supplied by the helicopter, when Gen. Lindbergh and the news team were inserted. They, too, were taken to the pad in the 80 foot tree. Two days after they arrived, the helicopter developed a bad blade and could not be flown. At that point, the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines, Mr. James Byroade, was notified. He called the 31st Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Squadron, at Clark AB, on Saturday before Easter, requesting assistance in recovering Gen. Lindbergh and the research team.

The Commander, Lt. Col. "Bud" Green, called the HH-3E crew, Aircraft Commander - Major Bruce Ware; Copilot - Lt. Col. Dick Smith; Flight Engineer - SSgt Bob Baldwin; and Pararescueman - A1C Kim Robinson. The situation that existed was that the recovery was to be made from an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet MSL elevation and the temperatures could get up to 35 degrees, centigrade, during the day. The plan was to takeoff as early as possible, so as to arrive in the area prior to the heat of the day, therefore a weather check was to be made at 0100 Hrs, with takeoff as soon as possible thereafter, depending on the weather, to fly the 600 miles to the recovery area. An HC-130N was to take off an hour later to provide aerial refueling and navigation assistance to the HH-3E. The HC-130 crew consisted of Aircraft Commander - Capt. "Kent" Tatum; Co-pilot - Lt. "Rick" Johnstone; Navigator - Capt. Mark Sherrill; Radio Operator -

MSgt Taylor; Flight Engineers - TSgt Walden & TSgt Wilbur; Loadmasters TSgt Dodson & SSgt Robinson; and Pararescueman A1C Zarnowski & A1C Smith.

All went well for the helicopter crew for the first 30 minutes or so, when one of the fuel quantity gauges failed. A call was made back to the squadron, and a replacement gauge was loaded onto the HC-130, prior to its departure. The exchange of the fuel gauge with the helicopter took place at a small airport on the northern coast of Mindanao.

The HH-3E arrived at the Allah Valley airport, in the valley close to the recovery area, at approximately 1000 Hrs. The entire supply of survival gear and parachutes were off loaded, so as to reduce the helicopter's weight to the minimum. The Filipino helicopter pilot was taken aboard, to assist in locating the area.

Immediately upon departure, the research team was contacted via HF radio and queried as to whether or not there was a helipad upon which the HH-3E could land. The researchers became so excited they started speaking "Tagalog", the native Filipino language. We had the Filipino put on the copilot's helmet to ask about the helipad. "Yes" there was one - 20 meters long and 3 meters wide, hardly big enough to land the big HH-3E.

The group had earlier begun to prepare the helipad for the Allouette helicopter, by locating a level area on a "finger ridge". They removed the trees on the level portion of the ridge, but left one foot high stumps, then took the tops off the trees on both sides of the ridge, thereby forming a large "notch in the tree line" on the top of the ridge. The elevation was approximately 2800 feet MSL, and the temperature was up to 26 degrees C.

Upon locating the "helipad", I flew several "site evaluation" passes by passing along the main ridge, then turning down the finger ridge to commence an approach to a spot adjacent to the helipad. We elected to "dump" some fuel, so as to again reduce the helicopter's weight and thus have some "power reserve" should it be required. The HH-3E was brought to an "out of ground effect" hover adjacent to the helipad, then turned 90 degrees and moved forward so the nose gear was on one side of the ridge and the main gear was on the other, with the 3 step aluminum "door" ladder just inches above the "cleared" helipad.

A1C Robinson was put onto the ground to control how many of the research team passengers were loaded at one time. The first load consisted of 5 of the female "interpreters". To takeoff, I lifted the helicopter enough for the nose gear to clear the ridge, then backed out and made a descending takeoff into the valley below. Lt. Col. Smith had noted an "open area" about 3 miles away at a lower elevation, and recommended we set the girls down there, then go back after Gen. Lindbergh. The second load off the ridgeline included the General, and 3 or four of the news team. Another load was removed from the ridgeline, with five or six passengers.

Since fuel had been dumped at the beginning of the operation, it was becoming a strong concern. Therefore the passengers from the "open area" were retrieved for return to their base camp. Immediately upon departure from the "open area", the HC-130 was called to get into position to refuel the HH-3E as soon as we reached the main valley. After refueling, the occupants were off-loaded at the base camp, and the helicopter returned for the remainder of the research team.

The total recovery required eight trips off the ridge and since the weather was starting to diminish, only three trips were

required from the "open area". In all, 46 personnel were recovered from the ridge. Though the main base camp was only about 20 minutes flying time from the research camp, it was a hard three-day walk

Gen. Lindbergh and three of the research team were taken aboard for the return. The Filipino was returned to the Allah Valley airport, where the survival gear etc., were recovered for the flight home.

Though the helicopter had been partially refueled twice during the "ridge line operation", fuel was again low; in fact the "low fuel" light was shining at the crew upon departure from the Allah Valley airport. As the HC-130 pulled into position for refueling, we noted the left fuel hose (normal refueling side) was not recycling properly. The HH-3E was cleared to cross over to the other side and immediately refueled off the right hose. Gen. Lindbergh stated that though he had helped develop air refueling, he had never been in a helicopter for the operation, nor had he been on the receiving end.

We landed at Mactan AB, on the Island of Cebu at 1540 Hrs. 12 hours and 20 minutes after takeoff and 11 hours and 30 minutes of flying. I basically rested in the pilot's seat for several minutes after landing and Gen. Lindbergh was hesitant to disembark, until I had done so. Of course there were several photographers waiting for him to step out of the helicopter, which may have been why he was hesitant. Gen. Lindbergh told me that he was certain he would not have been able to walk the "hard" three-day trip back to civilization. At the time he was 70 years old.

Gen. Lindbergh and the other passengers were loaded onto the HC-130 and flown to Manila. We stayed overnight in Cebu City and returned to Clark AB the following day.

The goal of all "Rescue" missions is to "save" lives. For this mission the crews were given credit for saving the entire the research team, in addition to that of Gen. Lindbergh and the news crew - **46** in all.

The following Saturday, we attended an Awards Ceremony in which the following medals were presented:

Maj. Bruce Ware - Distinguished Flying Cross

Lt. Col. Dick Smith - Air Medal

Capt. "Kent" Tatum - Air Medal

Capt. Mark Sherrill - Air Medal

1/Lt. "Rick" Johnstone - Air Medal

MSgt Taylor - Air Medal

TSgt. Walden - Air Medal

TSgt. Dodson - Air Medal

TSgt. Wilbur - Air Medal

SSgt. Robert Baldwin - Air Medal

SSgt. Robinson - Air Medal

A1C Kim Robinson - Air Medal

A1C Smith - Air Medal

A1C Zarnowski - Air Medal

The "Tasaday" portion of this is documented in the August 1972 issue of National Geographic, and in a book entitled "The Gentle Tasaday", written by John Nance, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. The book refers to the AF helicopter operation as an Army "Chinook". John Nance was an American journalist who had accompanied the research team and was one of the people we airlifted from the jungle. A picture of the two crews with Gen. Lindbergh, taken beneath the tail of the HC-130, is included in the book, "The C-130 Hercules".