

Two Plane Survivors Saved in Snowstorm

Forestry Men and Soldiers Rescue Pair

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Hampered by a lashing snowstorm, scores of Army troops and forestry rangers last night fought their way into an isolated section of Wildcat Canyon, eight miles north of Angeles Crest Highway near Strawberry Peak, to rescue two survivors of the Saturday night crash of a military transport plane which brought death to 11 others, including an Army nurse.

The two survivors, identified by the Army as Pharmacist's Mate 3rd Class Buford Chism and Cpl. Kenneth Bedford, were

brought out of the rugged canyon over a jeep-wide road through a blinding snowstorm and removed to the Pasadena Area Army Hospital.

Chism, hero of the plane crash, was less seriously injured than Bedford, who was given a blood plasma transfusion at the scene. The swirling blizzard halted search until today for seven of the 11 victims.

The rescue, described by Army and veteran forestry officials as one of "the most heart-breaking" ever attempted, was made almost impossible by the wind-whipped rains and snow.

Form Rescue Crew

Rescuers were formed from officers and enlisted men of the 6th Ferrying Group of the Air Transport Command at Long Beach and 4th Air Force troops from Grand Central Airport.

En route to Los Angeles Municipal Airport from St. Joseph, Mo., the C-47 transport, operated by the 6th Ferrying Group, crashed shortly after 8 p.m. Saturday. It was last heard by radio from Bakersfield a short time earlier.

The plane crashed in the remote section of Wildcat Canyon on the north slope near Big Tujunga Canyon. Wreckage was strewn over a wide area.

Pilot Sights Wreck

It was not until late Sunday afternoon that a pilot from the 4th Air Force, flying in a heavy storm, sighted the wreckage. He reported seeing one of the survivors, later identified as Chism, waving to him from beside a small fire.

Chism, Army officials said, saved the life of Cpl. Bedford, a colored soldier, by wrapping him with warm blankets and protecting him from the lashing storm.

Rescue parties were organized immediately and a party of forest rangers headed by Arthur Mills of Chilao Forestry Camp reached the scene of the wreck shortly after 8 a.m. yesterday. Radio communications from

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the scene were set up by Forest Ranger Harold (Tex) Strange of Red Box Canyon station, who communicated through a Sheriff's receiving set operated by Capt. Charles Ellerson and Lt. S. F. Griggers, head of the Sheriff's aero detail.

Army ambulances and jeeps were sent eight miles down the canyon over a tortuous road to reach the emergency field hospital established two miles from the scene by Capt. C. H. Barnes, medical officer of the 4th Air Force.

Just before dusk stretcher parties, composed of officers and enlisted men alike—with from six to eight men to each litter—had carried four bodies out to the trail, where they were loaded into ambulances.

As the rescuers ministered to the two survivors it was possible to piece together a poignant story of suffering, endurance and heroism.

Hear Man in Canyon

The plane, flying west in the blinding rainstorm, crashed into Wildcat Canyon, disintegrated as it fell into a precipitous cleft in the almost inaccessible terrain. Bodies were thrown along the rock and brush-covered slopes for a quarter mile.

Death was not instantaneous to the 11 who died, it was learned.

"We heard one man, somewhere down there in the canyon, crying for help off and on until last night," Chism related. "We tried to locate him and help him out but in our condition we couldn't get down there. We heard him dying sometime last night."

Officers related that Chism apparently had disregarded his own wounds and his safety to minister to Bedford, who was critically injured in the crash.

When the first rescuers appeared, Bedford had been warmly covered with Army coats, and Chism was watching over him.

Among the dead, which Army officers declined to name pending notification of next of kin, were three majors and several naval personnel, in addition to the nurse.

Heading the Ferrying Group rescue contingent were Maj. Charles Longacre and Maj. Warren L. Starrett. They were assisted by rangers and deputy sheriffs.

Rescuers were equipped with walkie talkies but the swirling storm that arose yesterday made communication almost impossible even with such equipment.

Evacuation of the seven remaining dead victims will be made early today, Army officials announced last night.