

ANOTHER KIND OF JUMPMASER

From Jim Regan

While serving with the Ranger Company of the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam, there were times when we had to Insert or Extract Teams using Rappelling ropes/ McGuire Rigs. We would "Rig" the Slicks with tie-down straps, running the straps thru four of the floor rings. Attach our Rappelling Ropes or the McGuire Rigs with snap links. For a McGuire extraction, a sandbag was tied to the 15' loop of a cargo strap. The Ranger on the ground would step into the loop, snap in with his own snaplink which attached to the 12' Survival rope tied around his chest. The Bird would then lift him straight up,... most times, and exit the area til it was safe to touch down and recover the Rangers to the bird.

On one such extraction, there was a five man Team from the other Platoon who had made contact but could not get to a Pick up Zone (PZ). We normally lifted no more than three Rangers per bird/Huey using the McGuire Rigs. Me and the other Plt. Sgt, another seasoned Veteran of the 101st, rigged our birds and he went in to get the first two Rangers. The Team Leader (TL) Radio Telephone Operator (RTO) and one other Ranger remained and waited for me to drop my ropes. The Pilot hovered over the very small open spot in the canopy and we dropped the ropes. The RTO relayed the progress of the Team as far as getting into their rigs and getting secured on the ropes. The Pilot got really goosey and started to move off, straight ahead. I slapped him on the helmet and told him to take the Bird UP! Two of the three Rangers hung on for dear life as they were dragged thru the tree branches. The third Ranger was torn loose from his securing snaplink, lost most of his gear, and ended up dangling upside down hanging on with his legs. As I watched in horror, the Pilot thought it would be a good time to gain some more altitude, WRONG!!! I slapped him again and told him to slow down as the Rangers began to oscillate under the bird. I prayed, cussed, and fussed. I convinced the Pilot to slow down and we spotted an open area. The two upright Rangers were not able to grab or help the precariously hanging Ranger. The Pilot hovered the bird and slowly descended. He did well on this part and the Ranger bumped his head and came bounding up to his feet. We set the other Rangers down, I dragged ropes into the bird with the help of the Crew Chief. Door Gunner was on alert as were the Gunships escorting us. The Rangers sprang aboard and we took off like the proverbial Big Bird. Scared, relieved, happy, mad, joking, scratched up, beat up, tearful, all at the same time! McGuire extractions could be hairy! Even when all the folks are briefed, trained in the method (actually practicing at our airfield,) there is still lots of room for MISTER MURPHY!!!

Another memorable Jumpmaster experience was a night rappel for a Team of Rangers, led by the Company Commander, on a downed and burning UH-1C helicopter gunship. Once again, on full auto mode, doing those things that we rehearsed in quieter times. Rigged the Bird, checked the Rangers for their equipment, final coordination off we go. Over the site, Rappelers/Rangers on the skids, "ON RAPPEL!" Thru the canopy they go. One on the ground, two on the ground, and three on the ground. Fourth guy is "hung up" and can't get loose from his rope! Pilot gets goosey, starts to lift bird! Tension on the rope is tremendous! The RTO on the ground tells me the Ranger is hung up/entangled, near the ground! I slap the pilot, "HOLD ON!!!" I grab my "K" Bar, (great utility knife,) and slash the remaining rope. The Bird literally shoots upward. All Rangers on the ground safely and most of the Scary Nite is ended for me. I always wondered about the amount of faith the Jumpers and the Rangers had in me. Perhaps they did as I did; relied on all their training, counted on their buddies, and even prayed once in a while! It still amazes me how many emotions a person can experience in just a few short minutes!

RLTW Jim