

LTJG DOUGLAS H. SNIDER
CO-PILOT'S STATEMENT
ANGEL 004 SH-3G/149735

While flying as co-pilot in a SH-3G in plane guard for the USS KITTY HAWK in the Tonkin Gulf, on the night of 19 March 1972, I was involved in the rescue of LT Fred KNEE of VA-192. The account follows:

The crew became aware of something out of the ordinary when we were informed to take up a heading of 180 away from the ship and switch to Button 7 for vectors. As I turned the Helicopter Aircraft Commander (HAC) switched radios, received vectors of 193/15 and took control of the aircraft. Power was brought up as the airspeed increased and instructions were issued to the crew by the HAC for our impending rescue. Once in the general area the first crewman came forward to aid me in my look out, for due to poor visibility I was backing the HAC up on the gauges. Our first sighting of lights turned out to be one of the small fishing boats, in the area, but once away from his light the first crewman spotted a light at our 9 O'clock. While turning to this light I re-set the pots for a coupler hover (the pre-dip check list was done on the way) and attempted to use the ADF to home in on the survivor's beeper.

At this time we noticed a .38 caliber flare coming from our 11 O'clock. The aircraft was turned to the vicinity of the flare, and the crewman went aft. As the aircraft was lowered to 150 feet and slowed to 70 knots, a Mark 13 day-night flare became visible, and the aircraft was positioned for an approach into the wind. A manual approach was decided on to expedite reaching the survivor.

I monitored the gauges as the approach commenced and kept the HAC informed of altitude and air speed until we reached our desired 80 foot hover over the survivor. The first crewman verified that the man was in his flotation gear and the aircraft was moved ahead to put a matrix lamp into the water to be used as a hover reference. Once back over the man the aircraft was lowered to 40 foot hover, coupler was engaged and I continued to back the HAC up on the gauges. Due to the coupler's early tendency to be a little sloppy and a slight down load in the collective, it was required that I monitor the collective and radar altimeter. The swimmer was lowered into the water and after the first crewman rogered his thumbs up he talked the HAC aft and left to keep both men in sight. The lack of any horizon coupled with both a matrix light bouncing around the choppy water and a coupler hover that took time to steady out, only complicated matters for the crew. When the swimmer had the survivor ready, the first crewman talked us overhead and a pick-up was made. Once in the aircraft the crewmen verified that the survivor was in good shape, and an uneventful return to the USS KITTY HAWK was made.