

STATEMENT OF
EDWIN E. RUST, ADJ3
SECOND CREWMAN/ANGEL 007/149724

On the afternoon of Sunday, 23 April 1972, I was flying as second crewman in a HELSUPPRON ONE, DET ONE SH-3G. We were on the last leg of a logistics run and had just lifted off the deck of the USS OKLAHOMA CITY, when we noticed a large smoke at about our three O'clock. After requesting information on the smoke from the OKLAHOMA CITY, with negative results, we were instructed by the USS STERETT to head towards the smoke and investigate it, closer and visually. Luckily we had very little mail and only one passenger left on board the aircraft. As we were flying closer we heard a beeper on guard plus radio transactions on guard which indicated a crash. At this time I reported over the I.C.S. that I was unstrapping to get into my swim gear, a slightly longer than normal job as I wear full flight gear instead of swim gear while on logistics runs. During this time I was unhooked from radios and I.C.S., therefore I could not be sure exactly what was going on.

When I was fully outfitted for the rescue I came up on ICS and was informed that there were one or more men in the water. As the STERETT and one of the downed pilots vectored us in, it was apparent that if the downed pilot could see us we must be close, therefore I unplugged from ICS again, got rid of my helmet, and put on my swim mask and fins so as to be ready for an immediate water entry.

At this time first crewman John MASAVEG had sighted the survivor and began talking the pilot over the survivor, who looked to be in good shape, sitting in his raft. John tapped me on the shoulder three times as a signal for me to jump. I landed in the water about five yards away from the survivor who had slid out of his raft. As I approached the survivor, I asked him if he was alright. He replied, "yes", I'm fine and awful happy to see you!" Next I swam under and around the survivor and found him free of all lines. After I was confident he was not attached to anything and had no apparent injuries, I found an "O" ring on the right front side of his torso-harness which looked secure and sturdy enough to use in the hoisting operation. It was then I became aware that he was an Air Force pilot because of the difference in his harness and flotation device. The survivor assured me that the O-ring I was holding was good and strong so I fastened the hook on my swimmers harness to it and gave thumbs up signal to the first crewman in the helo to let him know I was ready and everything was alright. When the helo came back overhead and the hoist was lowered down I hooked my D-ring into the large hook on the hoist and gave another thumbs up. As the survivor and myself were being