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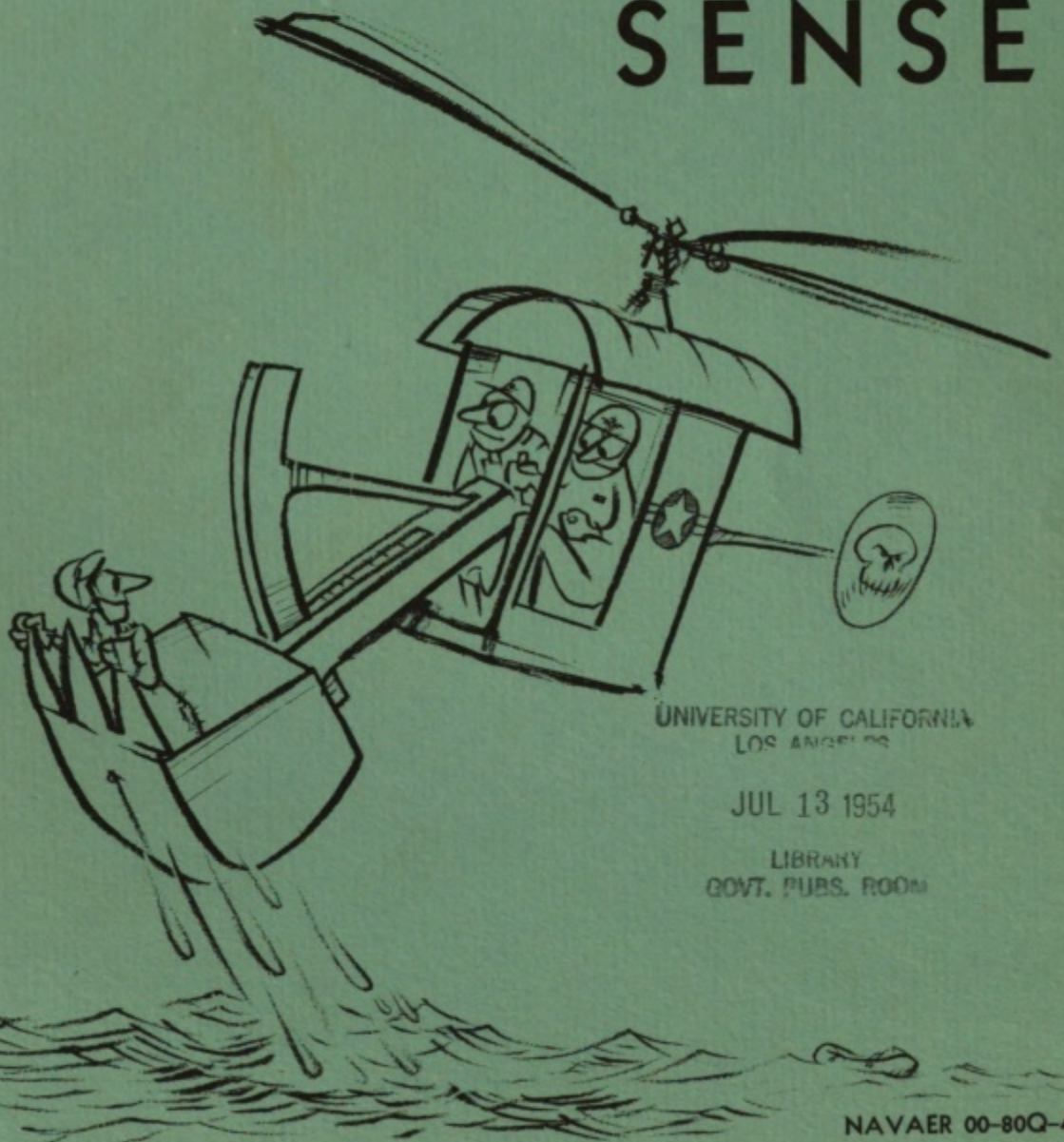
HELICOPTER RESCUE SENSE



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HELICOPTER RESCUE SENSE

ISSUED BY THE AVIATION TRAINING DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
U. S. NAVY · 1954 · NAVAER 00-80Q-42

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As will be shown later, the added weight of the 'chute and harness may be critical in terms of helicopter rescue, not to mention your own ability to swim freely in the water.

The Mark 3 and 4 anti-exposure suits, good as they are, have added a few more complications to ditching. A man with his 'chute leg straps firmly fastened is likely to forget that a fair amount of air can be trapped inside the suit. Recently a Corsair pilot, leg straps still tight and air trapped inside the suit, entered the water after a ditching and found himself floating like a high-diver who can't recover from a jackknife—head under and rear end riding high. He

had to paddle like mad to keep his head up and consequently could not use his hands to loosen the leg straps. Fortunately, a helicopter was on the spot. After much furious swimming, the ditcher was able to get an arm through the sling, although halfway out of the water he lost his grip and fell back in. The second pickup was successful but the poor fellow was almost done for. All this happened in less than 5 minutes. It didn't help matters either that the rescued man was being pulled aboard the helicopter with the added weight of parachute and pararaft.

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may eventually be completed by a helicopter, depends for its success on how good the immediate RESCAP may be.

Anticipate this too: when you see one of your squadron mates go down, your first impulse will be to protect him, no matter what the cost to yourself. That's a good impulse but it must not lead to foolishness. "Eagerness to save a buddy," says the same report, "must not result in fuel exhaustion by other planes." You won't be doing anybody a favor by making several rescues grow where there was only one before. One rescue at a time, please. Help out while you can

and for as long as you can, but make sure you have enough fuel to get home. After all, it's just conceivable that the added bit of information you bring back with you may be the item that will make your friend's ultimate rescue possible.

While you're up there, keep your wits about you. In Korea, our side was up against a ruthless and unscrupulous foe and sometimes—entirely without meaning to—our people played right into their hands. Pilots, flying over a downed countryman and anxious to keep him in sight, came close to delivering him to the enemy by personally serving as markers in the sky behind enemy lines. Making the man the center of the orbit, the RESCAP pilot would fly such a regular pattern around the survivor that it was no trouble at all for him to be located and captured. In the later stages, when we were smartened

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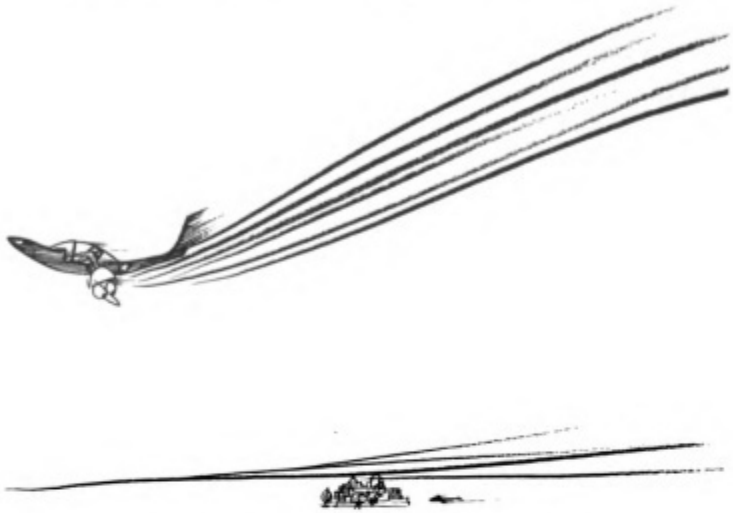
Helicopters being what they are, only the prop and jet lads (what the whirly pilots call the "fixed wing people") will do any searching



for survivors in enemy territory. A helicopter, relatively slow and limited in range, is a hovering duck for small-arms and AA fire from

the deck; so except for very unusual circumstances, the whirly bird is supposed to start out on its rescue mission with a specific objective.

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The lads will tell you that they make their rescues in three ways, suiting the method to the circumstances:

1. *Running.* The survivor grabs the sling hanging below the 'copter as it flies by. Like leaping aboard Papa's old Model–A as it chugs by, this method has its risks but it may be necessary at times.

2. *Hovering.* The survivor gets in the sling and is hoisted into the hovering helicopter. This is the usual method. When needed, a crew member may be lowered to help the survivor.

3. *Landing.* In special cases—when there are wounded survivors, for example—the 'copter may land in small clearings. This is *not* unusual. The whirlybird will not land unless there is no other way to do the job.

As a survivor, *you* must decide where to be and what to do on the basis of the probable method of rescue in your particular situation.

YOU must decide!

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nobody gets rescued, including the new arrivals in the drink. The parachute is also heavy. Even unopened, it can cause trouble because it may mean a critical weight difference. The whirlybird pilot can't tell, from his position, whether or not it's still attached to you. If he hoists you a few feet out of the water and realizes you are too heavy, all he can do is

1. drop you or
2. join you.

This close to being rescued, you can afford to lighten your load. Get rid of the 'chute before you reach for the sling.

So there are the first three ways to cooperate at sea. Make yourself as stationary a target as you can. See that your opened 'chute is out of harm's way and in no danger of fouling the 'copter rotors. Slip out of the 'chute harness before being hoisted so that the lifting strain on the whirly is minimized.

Now we'll assume you're in the water, well clear of 'chute and raft, and the sling is lowered for you. How do you get into the sling?

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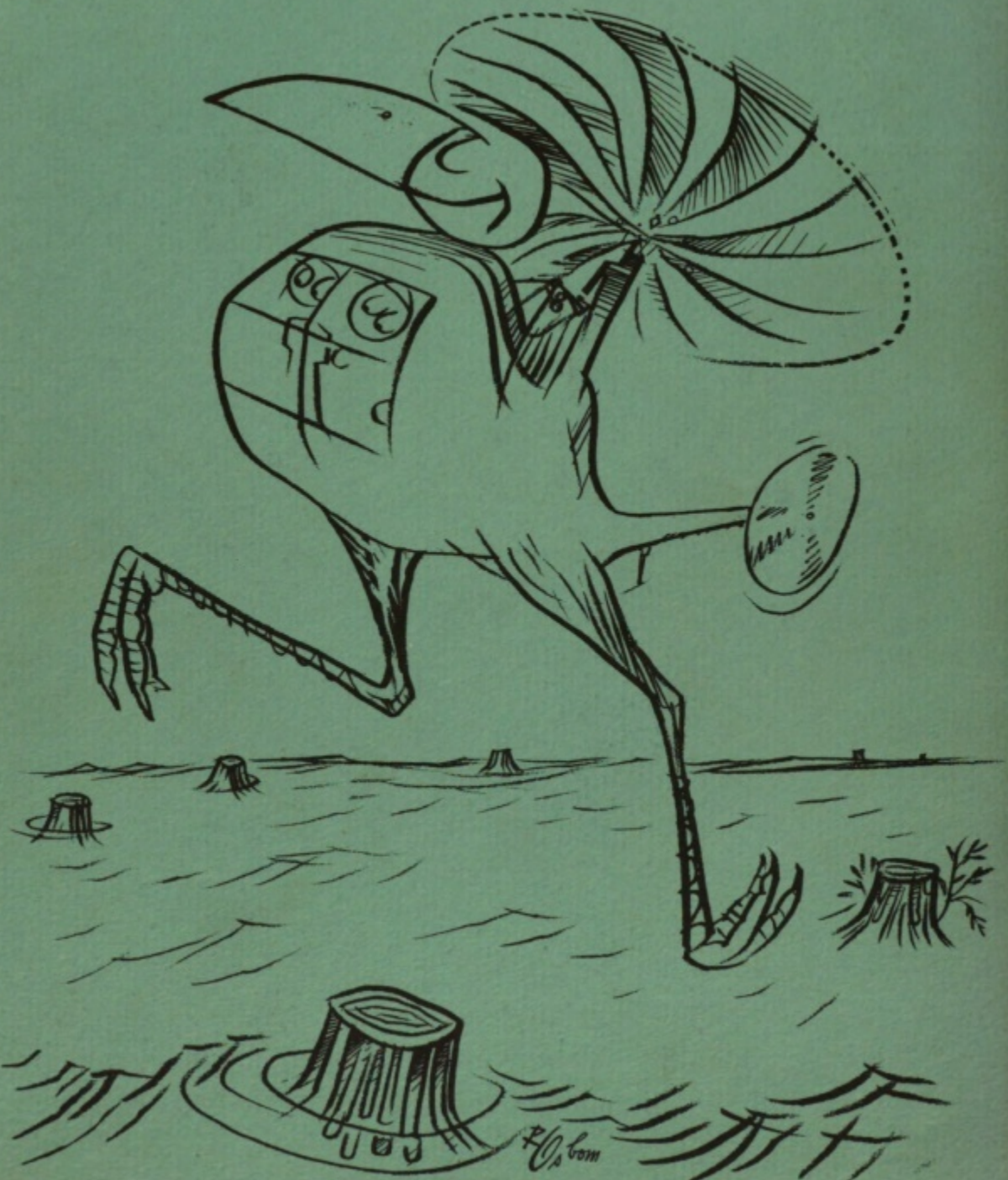

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