

# **MINIMUM and MAXIMUM**

The story of the first Wilderness Helicopter Rescue

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Edited by  
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We can find no written documentation about the heroic efforts of a crew from Coast Guard Air Station Brooklyn, New York in rescuing eleven (11) stranded Royal Canadian Air Force crew members from a downed aircraft and their downed fixed wing rescuers in northern Labrador in 1945.

This is a story of getting the MAXIMUM from the MINIMUM. The effort was a maximum effort all the way, but the early HNS helicopter was one of minimum performance. Later in the story you will see the effect of these performance limitations.

A Royal Canadian Air Force plane crashed in a remote area of Labrador. Two ski-equipped aircraft tried to rescue the nine survivors; however, one crashed on landing and the other was trapped on the ground by the snow after having successfully flown out two survivors. The only way to rescue the remaining men was by helicopter. A Coast Guard HNS-1 was disassembled at Brooklyn Air Station, loaded into a C-54 transport and airlifted to Goose Bay, Labrador. There, LT August Kleisch flew it 150 miles to a staging station and then on 35 miles more to the crash site. Obstacles such as a frozen engine and skis that would freeze solid to the ground were overcome and all were rescued.

This story is mostly an annotation of photos from the event of the crash and the efforts to provide a helicopter for the rescue from very remote and forbidding terrain.

After attempts were made to rescue the downed airmen by traditional fixed wing aircraft, the Coast Guard was asked to attempt a helicopter rescue. With cooperation with the U.S. Military Air Transport Command, a transport aircraft was sent to CGAS Brooklyn for loading of a disassembled HNS-1 and delivery to Goose Bay, Labrador.





Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Forest Giles, USCG checks the load while in flight to Labrador.

Upon arrival at Goose Bay, the HNS is unloaded and placed in a hangar for reassembly.

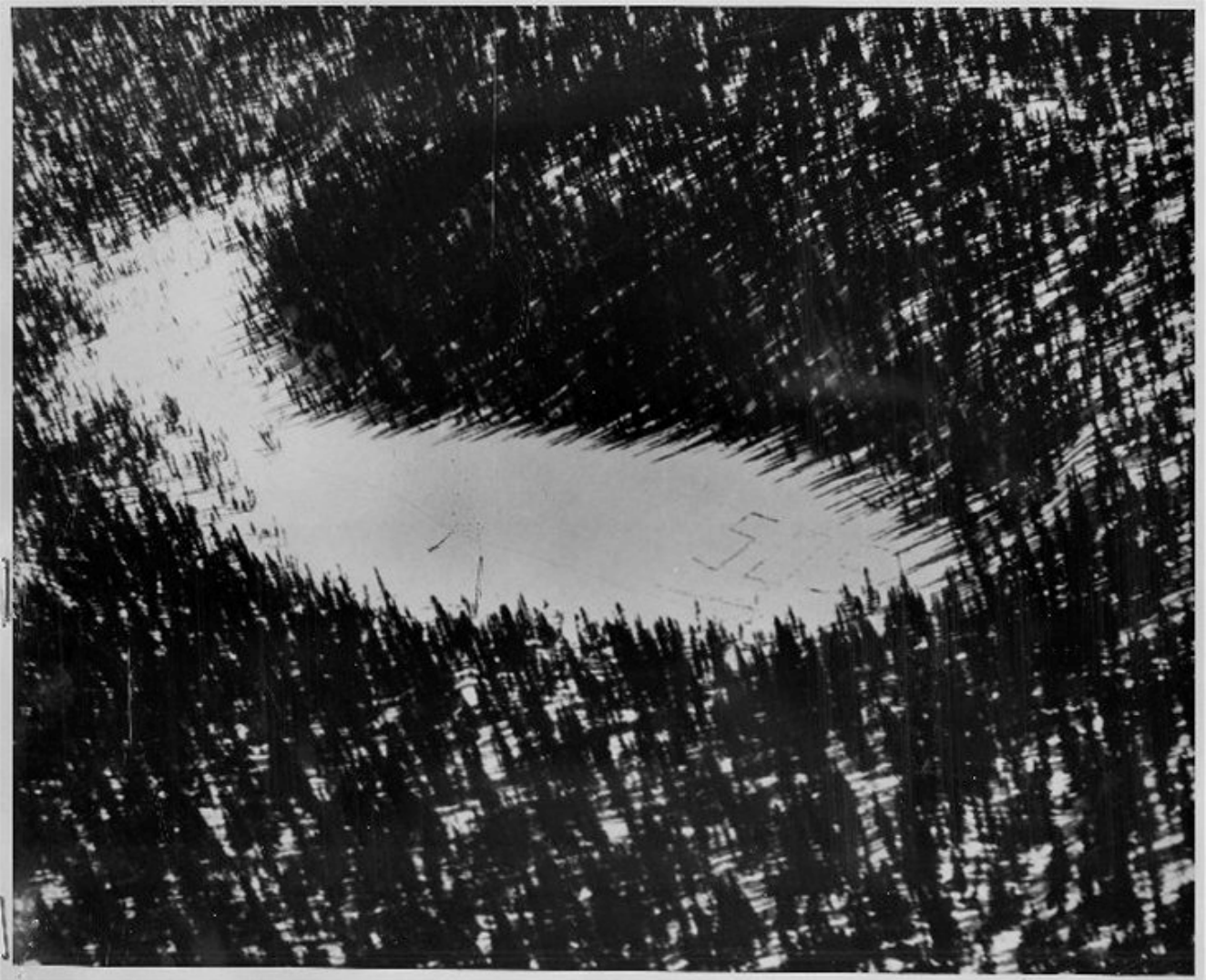


The Coast Guard crew reassembles the HNS in the hangar. Chief Forest Giles, AM1 Irv Eifferblatt and AM1 Gus Jablonski maneuver the front assembly into position to mate with the gearbox and tail assemblies.



AM1 Irv Zifferblatt installs the tailrotor gearbox on the HNS.





The crash site from the air where SOS is spelled out in the snow. Supplies had been air dropped to the survivors so the task was removal to avoid the effects of the weather.



The front and back sides of the camp site.



One of the shelters.



Shelter, supplies and the laundry!



Flight Officer E. W. Lambert (l) and Flight Leader Dave Todd prepare some food.



The survivors dug through 12 feet of snow to make this kitchen.



Squadron Leader F. H. Smith removes food from the improvised refrigerator.



The last survivor to be removed from the site writes a last entry in the log kept by the survivors.



The HNS was flight tested and then flown 150 miles to a radio weather station some 32 miles from the crash site.

Fuel cans were strapped to the floats and carried in the cabin to allow the return flight with a survivor. Only one survivor could be flown out at a time with a single pilot due to weight limitations.



Takeoff from the site for the 32 mile flight to the radio weather station.

AM1 Gus Jablonski services the helo for the next flight while the pilot waits in the cockpit.



The survivors pose at the site with the helo flown by Lt. August "Gus" Kleisch.



From left to right the Canadian fliers are: Flight Officer A. C. Smith, Squadron Leader F. H. Smith, Flight Officer E. W. Lambert, Flight Officer W. R. Taillefer, Flight Leader Dave Todd and Flight Officer R. Sugden.



The heros of the rescue were (l to r):

AM1 Gus Jablonski, Chief Forrest Giles, Lt Gus Kleisch (Pilot),  
Lcdr Alvin Fisher (Operations Commander) AM1 Irv Zifferblatt

Lt Kleisch received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Canadian Air Force Cross and the Chevalier(Knight) of the Order of Leopold and the others were to received the Air Medal, but we have no records of that award. We did receive a citation for Gus Jablonski from his son. The USCG Aviation History Web Site desires to have and display their citations in The Roll of Valor.

If anyone has a copy, please send it to us so we can honor these special heros.