

A Christmas Story--

Upon Becoming Conscious, the Pleasant Smell of Coffee

By SLIM RANGLES

When the engine began to cough, Ron Jensen pushed the throttle in. The Lycoming engine picked up briefly, but soon lost power again. The plane began losing altitude over a series of swamps, and then the engine seized up.

Jensen, despite his years of flying, was startled by the quiet, losing the reassuring hum of the engine. Like a crippled moth, the plane headed for a large swamp, and Jensen saw that he could make a straight-in approach to the dead-stick landing without trying to turn the plane.

The skis touched the shallow snow and the plane lurched up and bounced as it slowed. Then the right ski hit the hidden log, and Jensen was caught in a maelstrom of swirling snow and tearing canvas. For an eternity Ron moved in slow motion amid the whirling of the wreckage, then it seemed to lift him and drop him, shutting out all the sounds and visions.

When he opened his eyes, he stared at the bottom of an upper bunk bed. The smell of coffee filled the room.

"Well, hello! You have a nasty crack on the head, but otherwise I guess you'll see the holiday season through."

The rough hands helped him sit up and brought him some coffee.

"Thanks. . . hey, thanks a lot . . ."

"No problem. I'm Bill Conrad, this is my wife Dora, and those two are Little Bill and Edie. We live here."

"I'm Ron Jensen. I was flying . . . my plane."

"It's over in the swamp,

Ron. Stacked it up proper, but if you're okay, then everything's all right. Feel like dinner?"

"Yes. For some reason I'm really hungry."

The children giggled.

Dora said, "You should be, you've been here for two days."

"Two days? Why, it must be . . ."

"Christmas Eve, and if you're lucky, the kids'll let you play Santa tonight."

The cabin was warm, the family was even warmer, and for short periods of time that evening he was nearly able to forget the pains of not being with his own family on this special night.

When the children had climbed in their bunks, Bill brought coffee over to Ron's bunk.

"The weather will probably clear by morning, and I suppose they'll come out for you. With any luck," he said with a smile, "you'll be with your own family tomorrow."

"Thanks for sharing yours with me tonight, Bill. You run a trapline?"

"Used to . . . but I guess I wasn't cut out for it. Took a job in town two years ago. Do okay, I guess, but we always make it a point to spend Christmas here. You invest a lot in a place like this. Not in money, or even work . . . I guess you probably know what I mean."

"Yes . . . we have a cabin, too. But we don't spend as much time as we like there."

"A man can sure get that way if he isn't careful. Living in town, it's difficult to put things in the right order. Out here, even for a few days, things seem to fall into place. It wouldn't be Christmas for

us without the cabin."

Jensen leaned back in his bunk, pulled the sleeping bag over him and enjoyed the heat of the stove on his face a few minutes before falling asleep.

The noise of the rotors woke him, and the cold snap of the air hitting his emerging nose was startling. Strong hands lifted him from the bunk and placed him in the wire stretcher.

"I'm Williams, sir," said one of the uniformed men. "There's a doctor here, and we'll be in town very soon."

As they went out the door, Ron Jensen noticed the frost rim on the stove, and saw the door was welded open with

drifting snow.

They strapped him in the chopper and lifted. Through the plexiglass, Ron saw the cabin coldly lying below them in the trees.

"What about Bill and his family?" he asked the airman beside him.

"Bill who, sir?"

"The family in that cabin . . . last night . . ."

"Used to be a family there a couple of years ago, sir, but they moved."

"Yes," he said, smiling and listening to the wop-wop-wop of the rotors, "Except for Christmas. They always come home on Christmas."

Sen. Case urges Kissinger to ask

Soviet Union to stop arms to Angola

Senator Clifford Case urged Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to do his utmost to persuade the Soviet Union to halt its increasingly dangerous flow of weapons into Angola.

The Angola situation should be taken up while Dr. Kissinger is in Moscow this week to discuss SALT negotiations, Senator Case said.

The New Jersey Republican, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said all outside powers should stay out of the Angola conflict and terminate whatever support they might be giving to the various factions.

Senator Case noted that at least one amendment has been introduced in the Senate to require congressional authorization for any aid to the parties in the Angola conflict.

"However the Russians should realize that it will be difficult to persuade other nations to stay out of the situation as long as the Soviet Union is playing such a major role," Senator Case said.

The senator said, "I am deeply concerned by the widespread reports that the Russians have shipped rockets, armored cars, light tanks and perhaps even MIG jet fighter planes to Africa to support

one of the Angolan factions, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola.

Additionally, several thousand Cubans are reported to have entered Angola to help operate the equipment. The shipments appear to represent a major escalation of involvement in Angola by an outside power.

"They also raise serious questions about Moscow's willingness to abide by the non-intervention principles of the Helsinki agreement and the spirit of detente. A major objective for the Soviet Union in entering the essentially tribal-based conflict may be the possibility of obtaining air and sea bases near the South Atlantic sea lanes," Senator Case said.

He added, "As long as the Soviets seem to think the U.S.-Soviet detente does not inhibit them from adventurism in regional conflicts, such as in the Mideast and Africa, Dr. Kissinger should remind the Russians of the growing congressional skepticism about detente plus the recent U.S.-Russian grain deal and other efforts to obtain economic benefits from the U.S."

Senator Case said he expected that the Foreign Relations Committee or its Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, of which he is the ranking member, will hold hearings next year on the Russian grain deal.

He said the press reports in the last few days that the Russians were backing down on allowing American flag vessels to carry one third of the grain raised additional questions about the agreement.

Senator Case recently urged the administration to submit the grain agreement to Congress for scrutiny as a treaty.

VA educ. Benefits

VA educational benefits will terminate May 31, 1976, for all veterans who were discharged from active duty between January 31, 1955, and June 1, 1966. These post-Korean veterans will no longer be able to use any VA benefits for further schooling except for those pursuing flight, apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

The dates of the spring semester for the University of Alaska, Anchorage are January 19 to May 1, 1976. There is time for the post-Korean veterans to enroll in school and receive VA benefits for one more semester.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting the campus Veteran's Affairs Office at 272-5522, ext. 136.

Emp. Center moves

The Fairbanks Employment Center will be moved on Thursday, Dec. 11, and Friday, Dec. 12, 1975, to the New State Office Building, 675 7th Ave., first floor, Stations "C" and "D."

Job Service for applicants will be provided both days. Unemployment Insurance Services will NOT be provided Friday, Dec. 12.

All Employment Center Services will resume on Monday, Dec. 15.


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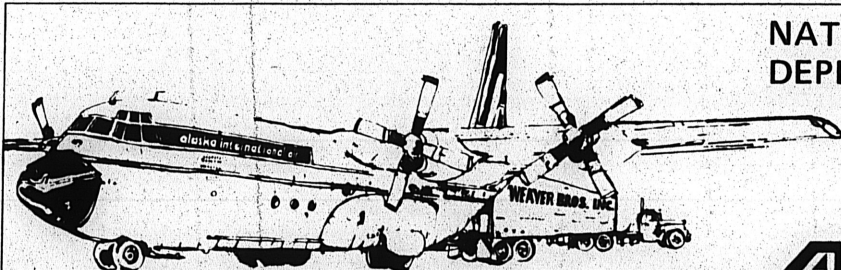
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