

Boy Saves Pilot's Life—

Eskimo Boy Saves Man Then Dies

A sick and frightened Eskimo boy, unable to take care of himself without help, nevertheless saved his pilot's life, the man told press members in a conference last week.

Martin Hartwell, the 46-year-old pilot lost in the Canadian Arctic for 32 days, was the only survivor of a plane crash that took the lives of his three passengers. The aircraft, a twin-engine Beechcraft 18, was on a mercy flight to Yellowknife, N.W.T. from Cambridge Bay when it crashed into a thick forest of evergreens.

Killed in the crash was 27-year-old Judith Hill, a Northern Health Services nurse. Miss Hill had emigrated to Canada three years ago from Kingsbridge, England. Neemee Nulliyok, an Eskimo woman in premature labor, died about five hours later.

The boy, 14-year-old David Kootook of Spence Bay, N.W.T., died 60 miles south of Great Bear Lake 23 days after the crash. Hartwell told reporters that Kootook was inept at survival techniques but still saved his life.

Suffering from two broken ankles and a fractured knee, Hartwell said that Kootook served as his arms and legs when he was unable to move. The pilot was flown Monday night to Edmonton for treatment of his injuries.

"He was my assistant and the saver of my life. Without him, I couldn't have done anything."

But Hartwell said of the boy, "He was very, very scared. He could not do anything. I had to tell him everything. He couldn't handle an axe, he couldn't make a fire. He didn't know where to find dry wood."

With Hartwell's instructions and Kootook's actions, they managed to create a tent from cut logs and two canvas aircraft engine covers. It, plus sleeping bags, warm clothes and survival gear kept them alive. But the food, strictly rationed, ran out after 16 days.

Hartwell said he then sent the boy to a lake for ice fishing, but that he didn't make it. Returning after three days, he "decided to die," said the pilot.

He died three days later,

talking about his brothers and sisters. There was no indication from Hartwell that the youth died of the appendicitis he was suspected of having.

Hartwell, who was off course and not expecting to be rescued, quickly ran out of fire wood after the youth died. When rescued Sunday, he had been without a fire for three days. Temperatures dropped to at least 20 degrees below zero, frostbiting his fingers and preventing him from finishing letters he had started.

Two Canadian Forces parachutists and a Voyageur helicopter arrived almost together for the rescue. Hartwell described it as "like a movie, like a dream."

Ministry of Transport investigators and RCMP troopers flew to the crash site Monday. The bodies were flown out to Edmonton while investigators stayed overnight to continue their examination.