

*From the White Falcon, February 6, 1959, Keflavik AFB, Iceland*

# RESCUE MISSION

## H-4 Accident Calls Out Low flying Aircraft Help

Wind, rain, snow and ice didn't halt the mercy mission to H-4 last Sunday, but they did have their hampering effects. An emergency call early Sunday morning sent an L-20 from Keflavik Airport to the remote radar site at the northwest tip of the island. The mission: to rescue a 64-year-old Icelandic electrician named Jon Albertsson, who had fractured his skull falling from an upper bunk.

Take-off shortly after noon was hampered by a 22 knot wind. After a quick flight to the 934th AC&W site, pilots Captain I. B. Hughes and Captain H. E. Nelson found the 1400-foot landing strip swept with winds up to 35 knots at 90 degrees. Landing was accomplished.

When the plane was safely on the ground, parked facing into the wind to keep it right side up, another portion of the battle against the weather began. Crews from the 934th AC&W Squadron started a two-hour process of clearing the road and bringing the Icelandic Prime Contractor employee 1400 feet down to the strip in a Snow Cat.

An Icelandic doctor and his assistant from Isafjordur, a north coast town, and the patient were put aboard the small craft. With an 800-foot ceiling, rain showers and turbulence, the L-20 climbed off the landing strip to 500 feet and trekked on to Isafjordur.

Captain Hughs made three passes over the town's landing strip, which turned out to be a water-covered, 800-foot pasture. The ground under the water was frozen, and the plane splashed safely in. Patient, doctor and assistant were off-loaded into a waiting ambulance and whisked to the hospital.

Patient delivered, Captain Hughs and Captain Nelson set out for Keflavik, with a storm brewing ahead of them. A climb to 8000 feet topped the stormy area, but head winds held the small craft to 50 miles in an hour and a half. Finally the clouds broke up a little, and Captain Hughs brought the plane down out of the strong winds. At 6 p.m. the L-20 touched down at

**Keflavik, with ten minutes of fuel left aboard. They had not taken on fuel at H-4 because of weight and weather conditions.**

**Throughout the mission, the L-20 had a "guardian angel" in the form of an SC-47 flying cover, piloted by Lt. Col. Thayer C. Harper, Operations Group commander.**

**Later, word came in that the patient had died at the Isafjordur hospital.**

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