



Trouble-Plagued Flight Ends Short of Disaster

CAN THO, Vietnam (Special) —A pilot on his first combat mission, and an observer on his last, battled gravity in a stricken twin-engine Mohawk airplane 200 feet over the enemy-infested U Minh Forest and came out alive 100 feet from the end of a short runway under construction.

CWO Gary Gagnon, the pilot, and Spec. 5 Kenneth Force, his cameraman observer, were doing some low-level map work in the Mekong Delta for the Vietnamese Army when their left engine quit.

Gagnon transferred all power to the remaining engine, then while he was trying to restart the dead engine the generator burned out.

This left Gagnon and Force dangling over the wild U Minh by one engine and with no radio contact, no electrical instruments, and the closest airstrip 10 miles away. And then when they got to the airstrip they saw that one end of it was under construction. It was almost impossible, Gagnon said he thought, but "it'll have to do."

With that in mind, he hit the landing gear switch, but nothing happened. Then slowly an electric motor droned the landing gear into place, and slowly Gagnon eased the old Mohawk down, delicately braking it to a stop a scant 100 feet from construction workers at the end of the runway.

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Was In Stars & Stripes April 1970
was sent to me after I came home

