

"RESCUE DOCTOR"

by Edith Goodman

"Are you Dr. Trett?" were the first words of Mrs. George Newell, injured passenger of a light plane which had crashed near Mount Si, east of Seattle in late December.

Dr. Otto Trett of Seattle has been on so many mountain rescues in this state that the victims knew who he is when he comes. He is no stranger to the Nolexa North Bend Hospital.

Mrs. Newell and her pilot, Larry Clarke, crash-landed on a mountain slope northeast of Mount Si. Navy copters from Sand Point on flying to the scene spotted a still-burning tail light just before dark Tuesday, December 29. They lowered two paramedics about 3/4 of a mile away. Unfortunately, the men were disoriented in blizzard conditions and darkness, and with four feet of snow and no snowshoes, they were unable to reach the wreckage. One of them injured his hand, and at midnight they were rescued by ground parties of Navy men and Mountain Rescue Council members, who had travelled from North Bend over 20 miles of snow-covered logging roads in 4-wheel drive vehicles. Tacoma had seven Rescue Unit members there. The ground teams, traveling on snowshoes, fanned out to search the main valley, but had to retreat in blizzard conditions to their vehicles to await daylight.

Just before daylight, search teams assembled and were sent out to comb the high valleys radiating from the roadhead. The Navy choppers in marginal weather - fog, wind and snow - located the plane wreckage and lifted out the two flyers, who had spent some 21 hours, much of it unconscious, with severe facial and head injuries, and fractures. Clarke had struggled outside and brushed snow off their crumpled craft, so that it could be seen. It was painted white! The two were ill prepared for their mis-adventure, wearing only light clothing. Temperatures probably ranged from 15 to 25° F.

Dr. Trett was flown from the road to the crash scene and gave first aid before the victims were flown to North Bend. Leading Rescue members were taken nearly to the scene by a Bell Telephone snow tractor which had been waiting ~~outside~~ the night to be of any possible service. Dr. Trett was especially troubled by the light clothing

wern by the two, and felt that light plane crews, like military craft, should be prepared with warm clothing and survival gear aboard.

The Explorer Scouts, who had been the only ambitious tent setter-uppers and sleeping-bag-sleepers, did such a good job of sleeping that it was not until the Navy choppers were flying away the victims that they woke up!

On the ride down the road after the operation was over, two TV reporters were encountered wading through the snow, a hundred yards above their mired car. They were clad only in light overcoats, low street shoes, no hats nor gloves, yet were determined to get to the crash scene for pictures. A rescue member wearily pointed out that they had six more miles of slogging, so they better turn back. They did.