



United States Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

**ICE BREAKER SECTION LAW ENFORCEMENT DETACHMENT
ONE**

ALASKA PATROL OCT-NOV 1972

USCGC JARVIS (WHEC 725)

LT J. R. (Ron) HUDDLESTON

LT W. P. (Bill) WOLFE

AD1 E.M. HAWES

AT1 R.C. LAWSON

AD2 R.A. PAGE

AM2 C.E. HICKS

AE2 D.B. ROBERTSON

HH-52A - 1383

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In January of 1969, my wife of one month Margarita and I, LT Ron Huddleston, reported to CGAS [Coast Guard Air Station] Chicago. We had all our belongings in the trunk and backseat of our car. The Air Station had not been commissioned yet and the only personnel onboard were the Captain, Will Shaw, and a YN2 [Yeoman, Second Class]. I reported in to the CO [Commanding Officer] and he asked if I had my flight gear with me. I answered in the affirmative and he said "...good, I need you to fly commercial to New York City and then drive to the Sikorsky Aircraft Plant and join up with LCDR Montali who is already there and needs a copilot to pick up our new helicopter." I said that my wife and I had just returned from our honeymoon and that she was waiting in the car and that we had no place to stay and did not know anyone in the area. He told me to bring her in to the office and he explained to her that he was very sorry for sending her husband off so abruptly but he had no choice but to send me as I was the only pilot available at the time. He then introduced us to the YN2 and told her that he would be available to assist her in locating a place to stay and moving in while I was gone for three or four days.

We found a motel nearby and I left the next day for New York and discovered that all of my flight gear and luggage was missing/stolen. I called my new bride and told her what had happened and that I had no idea when I would return. She said she would look around the area for a place to rent while I was away. She found a nice apartment and sent for some furniture that we had purchased while visiting with my parents in Indiana. The delivery was scheduled and she called the YN2 for assistance in moving the furniture into our new apartment. The YN2 was on leave. That was her welcome to the Coast Guard. I had serious doubts that she would still be there when I returned and was overjoyed that she had stayed and waited for me. We picked up HH-52A 1466, the last HH-52A

manufactured by Sikorsky, and returned to CGAS Chicago where I had a rather chilly reception from my wife.

After two winters of flying in the windy city, we received orders to the Coast Guard Aviation Training Center Ice-Breaker Section in Mobile, Alabama. So, a pregnant Margarita and I sold both of our year-old sedans and purchased a huge new Ford station wagon and headed to the sunny south. Our baby girl arrived in September and I completed my shipboard helicopter training and departed for the Coast Guard Icebreaker NORTHWIND (WAGB-282), home-ported in Seattle, Washington, in November of 1971. The two helicopter detachments landed aboard NORTHWIND and departed for Operation Deep Freeze in Antarctica. During the deployment, we encountered rolls of up to 60-degrees, seas--high enough to take off the door to the crow's nest on top of the mast, and winds over 100 knots.

In the spring of 1972 I had returned from a 7-month cruise on board the NORTHWIND. It was a million dollar experience that I really did not want to repeat as I had to leave my wife and new baby girl back in Mobile when she was just 2.5 months old and our baby did not know her Daddy when I returned. When asked about my choice for my next deployment, I requested that my next shipboard assignment be less than six months if possible. To my great surprise and delight, I was offered the chance to be the Senior Aviator of the first three AVTRACEN [Aviation Training Center] IBSEC (Ice-Breaker Section) Alaska Law Enforcement Detachments deployed aboard 378' Hero [Hamilton] Class Coast Guard cutters during Alaska Patrol 1972.

The "Alaska Patrol" was a multi-purpose operation. It combined the enforcement of United States laws concerning the territorial sea, its

contiguous fisheries zone, and its various international treaties and agreements with surveillance functions, scientific research collection and SAR included. The aviation detachment was used to assist CGC JARVIS in the accomplishment of her missions. The patrol was divided into two phases to coincide with the presence of the assigned National Marine Fisheries Service's [NMFS] agents.

IBSEC Law Enforcement Detachment # 1 was formed using IBSEC personnel and an HH-52A helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Annette, and logistic support from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak. HH-52A 1383 was assigned and ferried by Annette personnel to Kodiak where it was placed in temporary storage status pending the arrival of detachment personnel. A helo support kit for a single helo was assembled and shipped to CGAS Kodiak from CGAVTRACEN on 14 September 1972. All pre-deployment administrative preparations were completed and my crew, consisting of AD1 Hawes, AT1 Lawson, AD2 Page, AM2 Hicks and AE2 Robertson, departed for CGAS Kodiak on 24 September where they were to prepare the helo for sea. LT Ron Huddleston and Lt Bill Wolfe arrived in Kodiak on 2 October and flew a test flight of 1383 with no discrepancies noted. We finished acquiring all our necessary navigational pubs and Aleutian Chain briefings from Kodiak pilots and awaited the arrival of USCG Cutter JARVIS.

JARVIS, home ported in Hawaii, was commissioned in August of 1972 and was on her first Alaska Law Enforcement Patrol when she arrived and moored at Woman's Bay, Kodiak, Alaska on 6 October 1972. On 8 October, HH-52A 1383 was landed aboard JARVIS and LAWENF DET 1 became the ship's first Aviation Detachment. Departure for the patrol area was delayed until the 11th due to ship's main propulsion problems.

I was thinking how lucky I was to be aboard a brand-new ship on a patrol in Alaskan waters that could not possibly be as rough as the roaring 60's off Antarctica.

The patrol was divided into two phases to coincide with the presence of assigned National Marine Fisheries Service agents. Flights commenced with the arrival of our first NMFS agent and one observer. We flew familiarization flights for the agents to include hoisting them to and from cutter JARVIS as we would occasionally hoist the agent down to suspect fishing vessels in order to inspect vessel documents and type of catch in the hold and in the cook's freezer in the event they were feeding their crew with banned species that were to be returned to the sea as incidental catch. I was greatly impressed with the expertise and courage of NMFS agents as I would have been hesitant to go aboard some of those fishing vessels if they were moored at the dock. We also were tasked to identify the various species of marine mammals and birds within the assigned area. The majority of our flight operations were conducted in the vicinity of Shumagin, Fox and Pribilof Islands, plus portions of the Southern Bristol Bay.

On the 14th of November, a large storm was approaching from the north and seas and winds were rapidly increasing so the Captain decided to put into nearby Dutch Harbor to find some shelter from the storm. We anchored in the harbor at 1145 in light wind and intermittent rain and snow showers. After sunset around 1900, the wind was increasing and the barometer was dropping. The Captain made some adjustments to the length and direction of the anchor chain and again around 2300 as the winds were up 30-40 knots with gusts to 50. He then placed the main diesel engines on five-minute standby and instructed the officer of the deck [OOD] to call him if conditions changed appreciably and made it

clear that he was concerned about the possibility of the anchor dragging. Early on the morning of the 15th around 0200, the winds increased to gusts of 60 to 70 knots and radar operators in CIC [Combat Information Center] informed the OOD that the ship had moved north 200yds with the wind. The QM3 [Quartermaster, Third Class] told CIC that the bridge did not concur. The Ensign on the bridge obtained additional radar data and confirmed the ship was moving around 0230. He then called the Captain who was asleep in his cabin fully clothed. About that time, I was awakened in my below deck cabin by the sound of the engines and the anchor windlass. At 0317, I heard a loud grinding noise scraping along the hull on the starboard side for what seemed to be an extensive period of time. Soon thereafter, the emergency klaxon went off and all hands were to report to their Emergency Stations: "THIS IS NO DRILL" was announced which came as no real surprise based upon the noise of the uncharted pinnacle scraping along the starboard side.

I went to the aviation detachment emergency station which was the aerology office forward of the flight deck. I mustered my crew and then went to find out what was happening. I went first to the Damage Control Central [DCC] and asked one of the assistant engineers what our status was and he offered to escort me to the engine room where the DC [Damage Control] crew were trying to plug a leak on the starboard side near the bottom of the hull, and water was shooting up to the top of the engine room.

The Engineering Officer was on emergency leave and the Assistant Engineer, a senior LTJG, and a CWO were in charge of damage control and they thought that they could plug the 4-by-6-inch L-shaped hole without much difficulty. The hole was actually an 11-by-12 L-shaped hole. During the rest of the night, the plug was installed and the flooding was

mostly controlled. Sometime after day light, the Operations Officer told me that the plan was for the ship to return to Hawaii for repairs. I mustered my detachment and told them the plan and explained that I would rather fly our helicopter and crew back to Kodiak. Bill and the crew all agreed then I went to the bridge and expressed our desire to fly the helicopter back to Kodiak. I also asked the Captain if two of my crewmen who were licensed scuba divers could inspect the starboard side of the underwater hull as we all suspected that there may have been extensive damage due to the length of time that the hull scraped along the pinnacle. The Captain informed me that he also had recreational divers in his crew but that none of them were Coast Guard certified so he could not use them. He really did not want the helicopter on his deck in the kind of weather he knew he would be transiting and agreed that my detachment could return to Kodiak if the 17th District would approve. A message asking approval was sent and the District would not approve as it was too hazardous to fly a single-engine helicopter that distance back to Kodiak without an escort as there were large expanses of open water to be transited. So Alaska Patrol Detachment # 1 was going to Hawaii.

At 1400 on 15 November 1972, USCGC JARVIS departed Dutch Harbor, Alaska for Hawaii. We immediately encountered heavy seas and high winds outside the Harbor entrance. South of the Akutan Pass, the “zipper” along the starboard side of the hull began to open up and heavy flooding began in earnest. The klaxon sounded again and all hands went to Emergency Stations. Thinking that we would return to Dutch Harbor, I was not overly worried. I mustered my crew again and then went to Damage Control Central and jokingly asked one of the Assistant Engineers “How high is the water, Duggie?” and he became visibly and vocally upset. That was when I realized that the beautiful brand new ship and everyone on it were truly in an extremely dangerous situation.

There was a TV remote in DC central and Doug was keeping track of the flooding in the engine room with grease pencil lines on the TV screen and the water was rising very fast. Attempts were made to control the flooding with ship's pumps but the pumps could not keep up with the flooding. The ship's crew fought valiantly risking life limb and their health in the freezing Alaska flood water trying to save the ship. I returned to my aviation detachment and told them that the ship may actually sink and we had better think about the probability of abandoning ship. Then I said that we had the best life boat on the ship and we ought to think about the possibility of launching the helo if it came to actually abandoning the ship.

We had experienced 40 degree rolls and 50 knot winds with the aircraft tied to the Deck but we certainly did not work on it in those conditions. Unfolding the blades manually in conditions like that seemed impossible, but AD1 Hawes and AT1 Lawson thought they could do it if we waited for a lull and timed the blade unfolding between gusts. So, I told them to brainstorm it and, if they could do it safely, Bill and I would fly it off the deck.

Around 1900, the engine room containing all main propulsion, dewatering pumps and main circuit breaker panels was completely flooded and we lost all mechanical and electric power; JARVIS was adrift without power in heavy to mountainous seas of up to thirty feet, winds gusting in excess of sixty knots, blowing snow and freezing temperatures.

A GE-T58 jet turbine engine--the same type of engine that powered our HH-52A helicopter--installed above the main deck provided emergency

electrical power to the ship; enough at least to provide power for the ship's radios, bridge and flight deck lighting. A Mayday signal was broadcast. I was ordered to report to the Bridge and told by the XO [Executive Officer] that preparations for abandoning ship were already underway and that the combined effects of the sea height, large sail area of the ship, and the attached helicopter caught the wind effects of the heavy weather resulted in heavy rolling. The situation spelled imminent danger for all hands. He also said that the only pumping capability left on the ship were the two gasoline powered dewatering pumps from my helicopter and ones that the ship carried aboard for dewatering smaller vessels in distress. Gasoline for the pumps was in need of replenishment and a CG C-130 airplane was enroute from CGAS Kodiak to drop emergency equipment, including barrels of gasoline, to the ship. The plan was to push my helicopter over the side to lessen weight and to clear the area for parachute drops.

I returned to the flight deck where my crew were waiting and told them of the plan to ditch our helicopter. Bill and the rest of the crew were united in attempting to launch the helo. At 2110, I went to the bridge accompanied by Lt Bill Wolfe. I asked The CO and XO for permission to launch the helicopter intending to improve ship's stability and to ferry as many of the ship's 170 man crew to dry land as possible when it became necessary. I planned to fly to Akutan Island and try to find an area with enough beach available to land and drop off three of my crewmen so they could light a large fire as a beacon to use for evacuating the ship. The CO was extremely reluctant to consider such an operation due to the hazardous conditions. After weighing all factors and discussing our plan to launch, the CO gave us permission to launch at my discretion cautioning that if, in my opinion, it became too risky we were to abort. The XO took charge of the flight deck as the Helicopter Control

Officer to ensure the best possible aircraft launch. He then handed me the ship's roster and told me that he would have the young single crewmen first in line for evacuation as they had not experienced much in their lives yet and they deserved to get more of a chance to live.

Flight Quarters were set and when we got back to the flight deck AD1 Hawes, AT1 Lawson, AD2 Page, AM 2 Hicks and AE 2 Robertson had already removed the protective cover from the aircraft and were preparing to unfold the main rotor blades. Lt Bill Wolfe directed the unfolding of each blade. The Aleutian weather gods were kind to us as we did not have to wait long for a brief lull in the winds. Two men were on the rotor head with safety harness attached while our first class petty officers were manning the blade crutch. The first blade was nearly in position to insert the bolt joining the blade cuff to the rotor head hub when a gust took the rotor blade out of the crutch and it flew up then back down to the flight deck. AT1 Lawson, a big man, caught it as it drove him to his knees and the blade spar contacted the deck edge combing. AD1 Hawes and I inspected the rotor blade pressure indicator and the spar as it had a noticeable ding in it; then he smoothed it out with an emery cloth and declared it safe for flight. The other two main rotor blades were then unfolded without further difficulties.

I told Bill to take the right seat as he was an ex-Army helicopter pilot with at least three more years of stick time than I had and I wanted to make sure that the tie down removal and launch timing were optimized. We then explained to the helicopter control officer how we wanted the launch to proceed a bit differently than normal. All tie downs were left on for engine start and rotor engagement. After engagement, detachment personnel removed the secondary chain tie downs then they all boarded the aircraft for takeoff. The flight deck was cleared of all

personnel with the exception of the ship's tie down crew and the LSO [Landing Signal Officer]. Then, when we were certain about the timing of the major swells, I would signal for removal of the main tie downs to coincide with our approaching the top of a swell; then we would launch into the air like a startled bird. It did not work quite that well.

When we completed our check lists, I signaled for removal of the main wheel tie downs. The deck crew removed the starboard tie down swiftly but the young man on the port side could not remove his tie down and the helo skidded slightly to port and stopped. I immediately told Bill to stay on the deck and signaled for the main wheel tie downs to be reinstalled. Then I motioned for the tie down crew to come over to my cockpit window and told them in a loud voice that if the helicopter flips over on the deck we might all die including all the folks on the flight deck. Then I said let's do it again and remove the tie downs together this time. After my heart rate subsided, we read the take off check list again and told Bill I would try to time lift off again to coincide with the peak of the main swell and as soon as we got two tie down removal confirmation to take off. The second try was the charm, our aviation detachment helicopter wanted to leave the ship as much as our crew did.

Soon after getting airborne, we heard this wonderful voice on the radio "Is that you Bill? Did you guys really take off from the ship?" It was a CG C-130 pilot who had been stationed with Bill Wolfe previously at CGAS San Francisco. They informed us they were really glad we got off the flight deck as they were concerned about dropping a barrel of gasoline on the flight deck with a helo tied to it. The procedure was to parachute the barrels down with a trail line tied to each barrel hoping to drag the trail line across the deck so the ship's crew could retrieve the barrel from the water with the trail line. It was fortunate for us that we

did get airborne as the only barrel of gasoline recovered by JARVIS actually landed on the flight deck. I then asked the C-130 pilot for a vector to the nearest suitable landing site on Akutan Island and then informed him that we were going to land and set up a place to drop off ship evacuees. He gave us a compass heading and told us to follow him to Broad Bight on Akutan Island. Once we got our compass tracking correctly, he told us to stay on that heading for about 20 miles then he began to set up for the supply drop to JARVIS.

We headed north into the wind with our hover lights and steerable nose light on trying to maintain visual contact with the seas, but with the blowing snow, heavy winds and seas I elected to fly on instruments at 140 feet with the hover lights off and nose light on thinking that if our single engine iced up we would have a second or two more to put it down safely than at 40 feet. Eventually we encountered the surf line then the rocky coast line. I took control of the aircraft and Bill steered the nose light as we visually followed the rocks to the east until we found Broad Bight, a sandy beach large enough to land on. We then dropped off three of our crewmen with some pallets, gasoline and a PRC-63 survival handheld radio then informed JARVIS and the C-130 of our three crew members' location. We then departed Broad Bight to return to JARVIS to begin evacuating as many ships crew as fuel allowed.

While enroute, JARVIS informed us that personnel evacuation would not be necessary as a Japanese Fishing Vessel "Koyo Maru # 3" was on scene and attempting to pass a tow line to JARVIS. I was the directed to return to pick up my crewmen from the beach at Broad Bight then to fly to Akutan Village on the north side of the island and land there to spend the night. We returned to Broad Bight and were able to see the fire that my crew had started, landed, picked them up and, using our nose light again,

began slowly heading east along the rocky coast to the end of the island. When we tried to turn the corner to the north, we ran into the full force of the storm with horizontal wind-blown snow causing us to lose visibility and start to ice up and, having difficulty simply making forward progress, [we] decided to abort and return to Broad Bight to land and spend the night. We informed JARVIS and began the trip Back with Bill piloting and me controlling the nose light. We landed and secured for the night after informing C-130 CGNR 1453 of our position and intentions of maintaining a radio guard on 243MHZ with our PRC-63 survival radio. We were extremely happy to be sitting in a cold helicopter on a beach in Alaska on a dark and snowy freezing night. Unfortunately, we only carried four emergency sleeping bags aboard the helo; so, the Pilots volunteered to stay in our cockpit seats to sleep and left the four sleeping bags for the crews' enjoyment. Two of my crewmembers decided to sleep on the ground under the helo until I told them that they would make nice snacks for Kodiak bears. They then decided to sleep in the helo. Bill and I had no idea how cold you could get wearing a wet suit if you were inactive. It did not take long for the sweat generated during our flight to turn icy cold. I could hardly wait for sun up so I could start the engine and turn on the heater.

Three or four hours later, the grayish blue Aleutian sun rose and we began to prepare for our departure. It was still blowing snow but the wind had slackened a bit we checked that our fire was out and began our preflight and before start checklists. After engine start, we contacted JARVIS and asked their position. JARVIS replied that she was anchored in Beaver Inlet on Unalaska Island and that we should proceed to Dutch Harbor and standby to assist as necessary. Dutch Harbor was about 30 nautical miles SW from our position as the crow flies, but we were unable to fly over the mountains due to blowing snow and probable icing

conditions, so we followed the coast line to the west and landed at Dutch Harbor Airport after a half hour flight. Reported to JARVIS that we were on deck Dutch Harbor and that I would inform the airport manager of the USCGC JARVIS situation and ask for his material and communications support for Coast Guard repair and relief operations. He readily agreed and I told him that I would be responsible as the Coast Guard representative for assuring that he would be reimbursed for all expenses that occurred during relief operations.

While the air crew were inspecting and servicing the aircraft, the pilots were in the airport tower trying to make arrangements for our crew and our fuel, parking and maintenance needs. Around 1400 hours, CGC JARVIS requested gasoline for her portable dewatering pumps, as their remaining supply was running critically low.

We did not have an external cargo sling available, so my aircrew jury-rigged a sling to hang from our external hoist with ropes. A 55gal barrel of gasoline weighs in the neighborhood of 400 lbs, and the external hoist was stressed for around 600 lbs, so we decided to take two full barrels at a time, one in the cabin and one on the hook. We completed two sorties prior to darkness and delivered 220 gallons to JARVIS. On taxiing in from the last sortie, Petty Officer Hawes got aboard the aircraft and got on the intercom and said that parking out in the weather was not going to be good for the helo or the aircrew and he wondered what I thought about taxiing into an old abandoned WWII hangar next to the runway. Part of the roof on one half of the hangar had collapsed or been bombed. The other half was clear of snow and offered good protection for our helo. It looked to be sturdy and Hawes said that we could taxi in and turn to face the exit if careful. So the crew deplaned and Bill Wolfe checked it out also. Then I followed the taxi directions of P.O. Hawes into the hangar

and made a 180 degree turn facing the hangar opening then shut down the aircraft. From the 16th through the 18th of November, additional sorties were made delivering more fuel, food, blankets, District and headquarters Damage Control experts, diving gear, divers and cement brought to Dutch Harbor Airport by CG C-130 aircraft. On return trips, we evacuated sick and injured ship crewmembers and treated them to barbecued hamburgers, hot dogs and beer delivered by C-130 aircraft from CGAS Kodiak. CGC JARVIS crew were then flown to area hospitals for treatment of their various ailments. On 19 November 1972, AVTRACEN ALPAT Detachment One was relieved of duty by CG HH-3F 1481 from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, Alaska. LCDR Jack Denninger was the HH-3F Aircraft Commander. From then on my detachment was on crew rest until 23 November 1972 when we departed Dutch Harbor with an HH-3 escort to Cold Bay, Alaska where we were delayed by bad weather until the 27th when we were escorted by C-130 to Port Heiden, Alaska. On the 28th, we were escorted by an HH-3F to CGAS Kodiak. On the 29th, my crew, with the assistance of Kodiak aircrew, dismantled HH-52A 1383 for transportation to AR&SC Elizabeth City via C-130. HH-52A 1383 was loaded aboard a C-130 bound for CGAVTRACEN Mobile and then to AR&SC Elizabeth City. Passengers included a Coast Guard admiral and his party and my Helo Detachment. There were no seats available for my crew, so we had ride inside the cabin of HH-52A 1383 all the way to Mobile, Ala. On arrival at Mobile, I departed the C-130 and told P.O. Hawes to tell everyone to get their gear and take liberty. While hugging my beautiful wife and baby, Bill Wolfe told me that the C.O. wanted us to attend a reception in the wardroom. Assuming the reception was for the 17th District Admiral and his party who I was certain would not notice my absence, I told Bill I was going home and that I would see him tomorrow at IBSEC spaces. I found out later that the reception was for our detachment. Very embarrassing--should have remembered what Jerry

Mohlenbrok told me: “that to assume means making an ass of you and me.”

Ron Huddleston, Coast Guard Aviator 1194

