

That day, though, the National Guard Mohawk did venture out for another attempt at fixing the aircraft's location. The pilot was able to narrow down the location to somewhere off the west face of the North Sister.

During his flight, the pilot reported his plane was flipped over by an updraft caused by a combination of the high winds and steep slopes.

Finally, on Monday the 10th, the weather cleared. A Redmond resident with a view of the mountain saw the blue sky, jumped in his plane and located the crashsite.

Tuesday, six EMR climbers were flown to Four-In-One Cone on the mountain. There, they traversed across Collier Glacier which leads to both the North and Middle Sister.

Three of the climbers, Moon, Blanchard and John Rich went the rest of the way to the plane site. Half the party was left behind because of extremely high avalanche danger, particularly on the large snowfield which lies just below the twin peaks of the North Sister.

The climbers found the aircraft. It was sitting just below a rocky protrusion out of the mountain. The fact that no one could have survived the crash remained unspoken. The climbers knew that a dangerous and major rescue operation would not have to be mounted that day.

They secured the plane with rope to stop it from sliding further down the mountainside. Blanchard cleared snow off the tail of the plane to read the call number — it was the missing plane.

Following a quick inventory of the plane and the drawing of a rough map of the location, the three rejoined their friends and camped out for the night.

It would be two weeks before the weather would allow recovery of the victim's bodies and the plane's instruments.

Sept. 26 found 12 climbers camped out on Cul, the saddle of ice that lies between the North and Middle Sister.

The gregarious group spent a lively evening trading jokes before their hard day's work the next morning.

The evening meal included noodles parmesan, salami and cheese. Jiffy Pop was saved for dessert.

They retired for sleep in the deadening silence at 9,000 feet and broke camp at 5 a.m. the next morning. There was no leader of the group that hiked to the crash site. All were capable of performing each of the tasks that lay before them.

On reaching the plane, two from the team stood watch for falling rocks. Gracefully, the temperature dipped below 22 degrees and less rocks would fall on the climbers heads.

The body of the pilot was located some 200 feet from the airplane wreckage, where the craft had first hit the mountain. The other three were still in the plane.

The first task was to remove the plane's instruments as evidence for the FAA. The area was legally a crime scene and the climbers had to record whose hands the evidence passed through.

"Rock" echoed through the thin air many times as the group worked expertly. As you ducked, said one of the climbers, the small boulders instantaneously bounced near you.

The bodies of the victims were recovered and an Aerostatale Gazelle helicopter flew in for the first of three pickups.

The guard's Hueys could not fly at the elevation of the crash and the sheriff's office had requested the Gazelle from Bohemia Lumber Co.

Bohemia pilot Joe Murphy expertly guided his craft in. His tail was within 20 feet of the steep rocky slope: A sudden gust of wind would not have been welcome.

In two hours, Murphy completed his work. He was later awarded the National Helicopter Pilot Association's annual public service award.

That night, 12 tired climbers were in their homes in Eugene.

By Jack Condliffe. Cover photo by Bert Ewing.

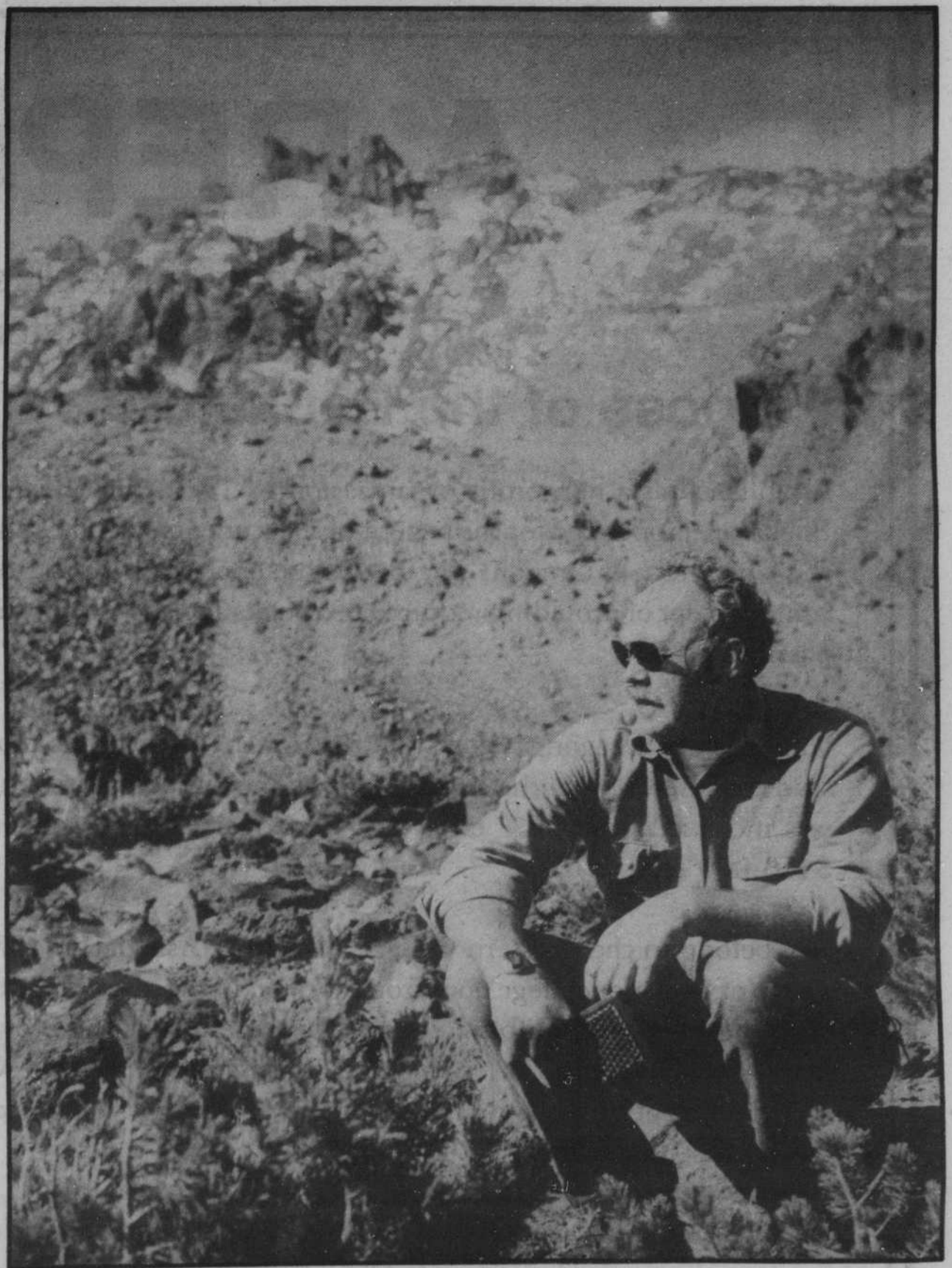


Photo by Bert Ewing

Lane County Sheriff's Deputy Lonnie Henderson coordinated the five day search, and the later body recovery, by Eugene Mountain Rescue of the light plane which crashed on the North Sister.

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