



Chopper gives lift of life

By Melissa Martin
Of the Emerald

Seconds after the Life Flight touched the Sacred Heart Hospital heliport Thursday afternoon, Portland nurse Julie Molin jumped from the helicopter, unloaded the stretcher and with the help of interns and med-techs, rushed the heart patient six floors down to the emergency ward.

It was just the lift the heart patient needed. The young woman was transferred to Eugene from a Lebanon hospital after her doctor radioed Emanuel Hospital's Life Flight in Portland.

"It is always in the back of your mind that a few minutes of delay could cost a life," says lead pilot Mark Hohstadt, who lives "close to his ship" in an apartment by the Portland hospital heliport.

The Life Flight helicopter Hohstadt pilots is leased from Evergreen Helicopters and is worth \$800,000, he says.

While Hohstadt was preparing for his return trip to Portland, Eugene rescue pilot Joe Murphy flew over the heliport.

The Life Flight, which employs three pilots and six nurses, is just one of

the helicopter rescue systems that use the Sacred Heart Heliport.

Anyone in viewing distance of the heliport can see the air ambulance land and hear the fiberglass rotor blades beating like the wings of a giant mechanical bird.

But grounded spectators can't catch the excitement Hohstadt says comes with the job.

"One of the greatest feelings in the world is to see a patient that was in critical condition walk into the office," Hohstadt says. He keeps in touch with patients he has transported in the helicopter and often visits them after they recover.

"I'm always ready for an emergency," says Murphy, who has been flying helicopters with Bohemia for fire fighting, construction and logging work in the Eugene area for more than ten years.

Two weeks ago Murphy transported a victim 80 miles from civilization to medical attention at Sacred Heart. "Rocky logging roads are a tough spot to get somebody out," he says.

Such a rescue mission costs the victim about \$475, Murphy says. The Life Flight pilot says he charges a \$300 lift-

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Photos by Bob Baker

Life Flight is one of several helicopter rescue systems that deliver emergency patients to Sacred Heart Hospital.

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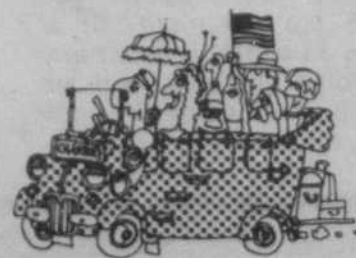
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