





I have always maintained a policy of never charging for any dual I give. It is a personal thing with me, but I'm human enough to know I can get too interested in the money and make excuses for not doing my work. I've always found though that many insist on giving something. So??? It all helps to cut down the expense.

This is how it has worked for me. A Club-working on ratings-giving rides-dual instruction-buying into a cheap plane which eventually enabled me to move up to a  $\frac{1}{2}$  interest in a good IFR Mooney. I guess it takes some effort and some finagling, but the prices can be kept down.

If anyone has any other suggestions, let me know and we'll pass them on via the newsletter.

---

Frank Weidinger



1st Vice-President

Francis Weidinger was born March 17, 1917 in Ballantine, Montana (near Billings) in the middle of 9 children. He attended local public schools until he went to Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After college, Frank went into St. Edward's Seminary (now named St. Thomas) in 1941 and was ordained in 1944 after a speed-up program of World War II. His first assignment as assistant was at St. Ann's Cathedral, Great Falls. Then 2 years later to his first parish-Our Lady of Lourdes, Poplar, Montana. It was here he learned to fly. Some farmers and business men wanted more members in their flying club so they could get 2 planes. Frank had some missions that were hard to get to by road so the club sounded like a good idea. He soloed in January, 1947 and got his first plane in 1949-a Piper PA-12 that he flew for 12 years. Then he purchased his present plane-Cessna 170, 1952 vintage. He has 1,400 hours to date and private ticket only. His most ambitious flight was to Washington, D.C. in 1952 in the PA-12 with no radio or navigation aides. Father Weidinger is presently pastor of St. Gabriel's Church in Chinook, Montana. He has been with the parish for 20 years.

Dick Skriba



Secretary

Dick Skriba, born Dec. 30, 1923 in Chicago. Educated at Quigley Prep Seminary and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary; received MA in 1946 and ordained in 1949. Assigned to 3 parishes in Chicago, taught high school at Mendel High for boys. Joined NAPP in 1965, became National Secretary in 1967. At present, CAP Chaplain and chairman of Slovak Catholic Charities in Chicago. Completed 6500 mile flight with Father O'Connor, W.F. from London to Zaubia, Africa. Interests: movie making and music and obviously flying.

Cia  
Rich Ciurej



Trea  
Treasurer  
Trea

Richard Ciurej was born in Omaha, Nebraska on August 13, 1928. He attended St. Stanislaus Parish School for 8 years and then Conception Seminary, Conception, Missouri from 1942-48. He took his first year of Philosophy 1948-49 at St. Louis Prep, St. Louis, Mo. and finished his Philosophy and 4 years Theology at St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. from 1949-54. He was ordained in Omaha, Nebraska on June 5, 1954 for Archdiocese of Omaha. He was assistant at St. Rose-Omaha from 1954-56; temporary Administrator of St. Francis in Omaha in 1956 and assistant at St. Stanislaus in Omaha 1956-57 and assistant at Sacred Heart in Norfolk 1957-61 and Pastor of St. Stanislaus, Duncan since January, 1961.

Rich took up flying in Norfolk in late August of 1957 and soloed Sept. 25, 1957. He got his private ticket on Feb. 3, 1958 and Commercial on Aug. 17, 1962, and Instrument ticket on May 26, 1966. He is an AOPA'er since June of 1958 and a NAPP'er since the beginning in Carrolton, Kentucky. He has made all the National Meetings and hosted the 2nd (constitutional Convention) in Columbus in 1965. He did belong to a 172 flying club but it has dissolved. At present he rents--usually a Commander 100. Rich has been NAPP Treasurer since 1965. His hobbies are many--lately, travel to Europe and Middle East. In June he will take his 4th trip to Europe. Rich says he has enjoyed working with Brother Priests in NAPP and during the last 5 years, he feels he got to know all of them--if not personally then through the mail.

He, also, has been involved in G.A.P. since February of 1966 and at present is Chaplain of Columbus Composite Squadron with rank of Major.

## Briefs from here and there...

Msgr. Ben Bauer writes from Sioux City, Iowa that he got his commercial license the end of October. Three of his partners in the Bonanza Ben flies want to sell so he is busy looking for new partners now.

-----  
Fr. Dick Skriba, Chicago, made a trip to Zambia, Africa last year with Fr. O'Connor ferrying his Helio-Courier there. Dick has put together a full length sound movie of the trip and has been showing it in the Chicago area. The free will offerings he has received he is sending to Fr. O'Connor to help pay off some of the debt he has on the plane.

Dick has sent a long "epistle" describing the journey and we'll try to share at least part of that with you in the future.

-----  
Capt. Carl Kulo arrived in Viet Nam November 14 where he is assigned the American Advisory Team for the Armed Forces. There are 216 units to cover and most of his travel is by helicopter. He is located at Bien Hoa about 25 miles East of Saigon.

-----  
Fr. Albert Nevins, M.M., has moved from Maryknoll Seminary to Huntington, Ind. where he has taken over editorship of Our Sunday Visitor.



Fr. Frank Nemmers of Willey, Iowa flew his over-loaded Cessna 172 with a "O" time engine to the Bahamas for some camping and fishing in January. A local dentist and his wife and Frank's sister made the journey while we suffered through 20° below weather here.

Frank says they ended up on the shoreline of Sandy Point, Abaco for 3 days. While the girls went shopping later in Nassau, the men flew the Eleuthera and Exuma chain. Only problem-some IFR weather in Kentucky.

-----  
One of our newest members is Fr. William Bevington of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He found out about NAPP because he had to forward Fr. Phil Thone's newsletter to Okinawa. Bill says he started to fly while a student at Notre Dame in 1944 but quit after 1 year. He resumed flying last July in Murfreesboro and got his ticket in December. He belongs to the Mid-Tenn Flying Club which has its origin at the University. Presently there are thirty members and two planes, a Piper Colt and Cherokee 180C. Plans are to buy a third plane-a small trainer.  
(Bill, the coach that we mutually know is Ollie Keller and I'll extend your greetings next time I see him.)

-----  
Fr. John Bellon, now of Clinton, Iowa, stopped in the other day while passing through town. He's joining a Club there that has a Cherokee 180. Fifteen in the Club and only 7 fly. Of these 7, only 2 or 3 fly a great deal. John says it's the best deal he's run across and is looking forward to getting in alot of time and places.

-----  
Fr. Jack Murphy is working on his degree in Communications at Temple University. He spent 6 weeks at the University of London last summer where he picked up six graduate credits in Mass Communications. All Fall, he worked on a weekly newspaper in New Jersey to fulfill some of the requirements for his degree. Weekends were spent helping in a Jersey parish. The thesis he was working on fell through and he is now considering a thesis to analyze the press reports on collison between general aviation and commercial aviation, as related to the final findings of C.A.B. and N.T.S.B. on what happened.

As of this semester the newspaper job is ended so Jack has time to fly. He made a trip to Middleburg, Va. last June and ran into thunderstorms on the return trip. He made a forced landing on an old polo field in grass up to his ears. The next morning they made a swath through the grass and he flew home safe and sound.

Jack is a great horseman and the field he landed in was directly across the road from Bolton Square Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. So he had a chance to meet some of the people who operate on such horses as Native Dancer.

-----  
In the month of December I took the liberty as a citizen of Iowa and as President of NAPP to write to our two Senators-Hughes and Miller-to protest the proposed legislation taxing private planes and the gas we buy. From what I have read, most of this money is to be earmarked for the Airlines' benefit and I registered my protest on behalf of all of us.

I received a reply from Senator Miller which gave me a whole page of reasons why the bill should be passed. Senator Hughes, on the other hand, indicated that his mind was not made up and was deeply appreciative of the feelings of private pilots.

## Midwest Region Will Meet

The Midwest Region of NAPP will hold their Spring meeting in Muskogee, Oklahoma April 26th and 27th. Mark that date down NOW.

Rich Ciurej

Frank Weidinger



Dick Skriba

Mel Hemann

## Board of Directors

The NAPP Board of Directors met in Ames, Iowa on January 28th. Present were Frank Weidinger, Dick Skriba and Rich Ciurej. John Bellon, C.S.S.R., recently assigned to their Retreat House in Clinton, Iowa was giving a Mission in Wisconsin and so was unable to attend.

The agenda consisted of the following items:

1. We checked over the directory for errors, etc. You will find enclosed the latest--most up-to-date list of NAPP members. (The way priests move, it should be out of date already. However, we will print new addresses in succeeding newsletters so that you can make corrections and keep current.)
2. A great deal of time was spent on the information brochure Dick Skriba is preparing. He is now trying to get a few pictures that depict a cross section of NAPP members at work with the plane. Once he gets those he will send it to me and I will prevail upon a few of our people to offer professional advice. Hopefully we can send you copies of these with the next newsletter.
3. We decided on the format of the dues notice to be sent out. You will find it enclosed. Please return it immediately - if not sooner. (For the record: the Board of Directors set a good example by paying at the meeting).
4. We discussed the newsletter. Reports seem very favorable which is encouraging to hear on this end. We will continue the present program of putting one out every other month.
5. No student has appeared on the scene as of this date to do the NAPP scholarship project. However, the project is important--no doubt the most important thing we will do for a long time--so we'll make haste slowly.
6. Rich gave a financial report as of January 25, 1970:

Set aside in the Scholarship Fund	\$1,400.00
Net Assets in Savings and Checking Account	<u>3,569.49</u>
TOTAL	\$4,969.49

The meeting adjourned by 5:00. I celebrated the 5:10 Mass, we had dinner and Rich and Frank drove to Omaha. I flew Dick to Des Moines to catch his plane to Chicago. We left early so I got in about an hour of simulated IFR. Gave me a chance to try out the new Geneva transponder we installed in Mooney 6070Q.



1970 Convention  
Ames, Iowa  
**July 14-16**

MARK THE DATE!!! RESERVATION  
SHEETS COME OUT WITH NEXT  
NEWSLETTER!!! PLAN NOW TO  
SPEND YOUR VACATION IN  
TORNADO ALLEY WITH US!!!



Send all news items and words  
of praise to →

Rev. Mel Hemann  
NATE ASSOC. PRIEST PILOTS  
2210 Lincoln Way  
Ames, Iowa 50010

(All unfavorable comments should be  
sent to the Devil c/o Hell.)

# The Hand Of God

IT DROPPED FATHER EMIL SASGES ON A WINDSWEPT MEADOW IN THE CARIBOO MOUNTAINS—  
BUT AS HE HUDDLED IN THE SHELTER OF HIS WRECKED PLANE HE SAW IT AS THE WORKINGS  
OF PROVIDENCE. AND AS HE WORRIED ABOUT THE SAVING OF HIS LIFE HE BEGAN TO UNDER-  
STAND THE SAVING OF HIS SOUL. THIS IS MORE THAN A STORY OF SURVIVAL; IT IS A  
DOCUMENT OF FAITH

(The story of Fr. Emil Sasges from the Winnipeg Free Press Weekend Magazine was  
sent to us by Fr. Barry Desmond who took part in the search. Barry and Fr. Emil's  
nephew, Jerry Sasges, took off in a Cessna 150 from the same strip Emil had but  
the combination of altitude, weight, adverse wind and rugged terrain got the  
best of them. Four miles out they clipped a tree-top on a ridge. In the ensuing  
"landing" the left wing was torn off by another tree and the plane came to rest  
nose in the ground, tail straight up in the air. They both sustained fractured  
jaws and spent a week in the hospital.)

(The pages that follow are pictures taken of the two-part news magazine, hence  
the difference in print, etc. We felt the story was so good it should be print-  
ed in its entirety.)

AS A PRIEST, I'm challenged to be in close communion with God. I came to grips with his reality in a more profound way on a remote British Columbia mountain peak in September. My wrecked plane lay twisted on Black Stuart Mountain.

I crashed at 6.30 PM, Sept. 12 on a mountain meadow that I knew was somewhere in the Cariboo Mountains. The rain pelted the hillside and the winds howled all night. I could not foresee the total misery and agony in store for me, nor could I see how much of an instrument of prayer, peace and joy I would become during the next three weeks.

I had recently been through some of the most marvellous weeks of my life in my missions in the Fraser River Valley, and I had experienced the joys of God, His love and His graces with His people to a degree that I rarely saw before.

Now, stranded on top of Black Stuart, I was about to undergo total deprivation, no more than 50 miles west of the Fraser River Valley, nestled between the Canadian Rockies and the Cariboo. My seven missions are spaced out in that valley — Blue River, Valemount, Avola, Vavenby, Birch Island, the prison camp at Upper Clearwater, and Red Pass, near the Alberta border.

My rescue on Oct. 4 was providential. The 600 letters I have since received have shown me how much people were concerned. On the hill, I was aware of a real strength of prayer and concern on the part of many people, but I never realized how many.

It is hard to say what I first felt at the time of the crash. I was deeply convinced however, that right from the beginning, it was providential; providential in the sense that God's hand was there. He was doing something about which I had no positive clue. He had something very definite in mind. It was no mere accident.

As a priest, I am obliged and dedicated to preach the ideal — to challenge people to strive for that ideal. I've been a priest for 12 years now and I worked hard in the last five years along my 200 miles of missions preaching the ideal. In many cases I had seen obvious signs of personal response and success in my work.

The price for this feeling, this sense of accomplishment, was a certain restlessness. There was a definite feeling of dissatisfaction, although I have many things in my life for which there is only God to thank. But it is unsettling to realize there is a gap between preaching and practising.

I had spoken of my problems with my superior, Bishop M. A. Harrington, of Kamloops, BC. I told him that I felt the best way for me to remedy my problems was for me to go away and spend a considerable

amount of time in study and observation.

I think the gap between preaching and practising presents many problems to priests concerned with the question of renewal of faith.

This same gap may be at the root of the problems of those who leave the priesthood. The awareness of this gap comes largely to the very sensitive souls, the very idealistic. It hits those who are most aware of how far we have to go to reach the idealism in the person of Christ and his message of love.

So, in this setting, Sister Sheila Daniels and I worked to prepare for what we called Celebration Week. We were soon joined by Anglican, United and Mormon leaders and ministers. We hoped to reach the whole community of Valemount with a simple message: If we let ourselves come close to God, then He brings depth and joy into our lives. He brings confidence and assurance strong enough to help us in the face of extreme difficulty. How well I was soon to be tested in my faith in this!

A few weeks after Celebration Week, my close friend Dave Sweeney and I headed out for a three-day camping and canoe trip on the famed Bowron Lakes. Dave was one of several young men who donated his time and talents to the work of the missions, and was called a lay apostle.

We returned from our canoe trip Friday afternoon to the little grass landing strip adjacent to the lodge on the head of Bowron Lake. The weather was not too good, and I figured it would be hopeless to try to fly Dave into Quesnel.

But I then made my first of many mistakes and said: "What the heck, let's go anyway." A few moments after we left I could see an ugly-looking front coming in from the west. Quesnel was a good 70 miles west of Bowron Lake, but the airstrip at Wells-Barkerville was only a few miles from the lake, so I decided to drop Dave off there and continue home to Valemount.

Within minutes after we landed, Dave hitched a ride into Quesnel. I gave him my verbal flight plan, reporting my intended and alternate routes. Then I took off towards the southeast.

I had intended to fly down the Fraser River to my home. The whole flight shouldn't have taken more than one hour.

Flying at 9,000 feet, I had real hopes of reaching the Fraser Valley, but I found I couldn't see my way through. I did not want to get down too low because I was unfamiliar with the terrain. So I swung to the right, heading south and east, looking for a possible opening through to the valley.

There was none and I could see that I could not get back to Wells either. I headed northwest, or so I thought, looking for an emergency landing meadow or something along the way to Prince George. I could not get through there either, and I came back again searching for landing sites. Finally I came to a grassy meadow that looked ideal for landing.

It was a steep incline, perhaps 50 degrees, but I

*Continued*

*Father Sasges (top and on cover) used what was left of his Jodell D-11 (L) to build a shelter. Ted Beaudoin examines wreckage of plane which stalled in midair as Sasges attempted to land.*



## The Hand Of God

*Continued*

could have stopped within 200 feet easily. Since I still had a considerable amount of gas left in the spare tank, I made at least 10 practice approaches. On looking up in my final approach I was surprised to see heavy cumulus thunderheads coming in. The winds were turbulent. When I came low to the ground, about 20 feet from my proposed touchdown point, I lost altitude.

With full power on, the plane stalled, making it hit heavily, shearing off the left wheel. It veered over, hitting the left wing, which broke off at the spar. The right undercarriage collapsed, and the right wing bit into the ground.

The plane nosed in and flipped over. It wound up on its left side with the tail pointing uphill. I jumped out of the already-opened cockpit. The rains and winds hit me within 30 seconds, so I got my jack-knife and slashed open the underside of the right wing so I could push down the canvas covering and crawl under the wing for protection. Even in the short time it took for me to cut the fabric, I was soaked right through.

It was hearbreaking to see my plane, a Jodell D-11, lying there with both wings broken off and the undercarriage gone. Yet I accepted it as God's will. I saw that He had something important to say to me through this although I didn't know what it was.

I only had the basic navigation panel aboard. I didn't have my radio because it's a liability for the most part in this country. There's nobody to talk to.

I had forgotten to bring any flares, and my food supplies were meagre: a half-pound of powdered milk; three-quarters of a pound of sugar; some oat-meal that provided six of my breakfasts on the hill; two packages of cheese and macaroni dinner; some bread buns; a little chocolate mix; two packages of soup mix and three packages of orange-pineapple drink, and half of a 40-cent chocolate bar.

I also had my home-built first-aid kit, which included vitamin pills and a needle and thread — but no thimble, which I later regretted.

I only had on my jeans, a summer shirt and my Sunday Oxfords when I crashed. Stored in the back of the plane were an extra pair of socks, my suit, and extra summer jacket and a heavy eiderdown jacket which saved my life.

After I had rigged up a shelter under the wing, the long first night began.

The weather was still bad on Saturday morning, and I spent the whole day praying hard and working on my shelter. I rationed my food supplies so they would last me for a couple of weeks.

It was Saturday that I thought of making a bunsen burner out of oil quarts. They would also provide handy fuel for a signal fire for any planes that might fly overhead. I punched a hole in one of the cans, and shoved in some of the linen sheet-rags I found in my first-aid kit. Then I tried to light a match.

Unfortunately, most of them were old. Only about one in 10 would flare up, but once I lit one match I was able to dry out some other matches which had become wet the previous day on Bowron Lake.

Then I prepared the only cooking utensil I had, a little candy tin. I used it above the bunsen burner to melt the snow for drinking and warm my porridge for my first warm breakfast Sunday morning.

Right from the start, I ate only a small quantity of

food each day. I rationed out the food to give me three meals a day: a small handful of porridge and a bun for breakfast; a cup of cocoa at noon for lunch, and mashed potatoes, mixed with soup, for supper.

I also had some Mass wine with me. In order to be able to say Mass every day, I rationed this out to a few drops a day. I also had my Mass hosts and a small chalice.

It snowed heavily that night, dropping almost a foot of snow on the mountain by Sunday morning. But Sunday turned out to be a nice day.

To keep busy, I stripped the cockpit of its insulation and began working on the linen sheet portions. My plan was to make a large blanket, with the insulation sewn in between the sheets. The weather was really warm, and I was able to get thoroughly dry for the first time since Friday night.

Sunday was also the first day that I spotted a search plane.

I saw it a few minutes after I heard its motor. I thought it was a Beaver RCMP search plane — which it was, I found out later. I also heard sounds of other airplanes.

But, at one point, I thought the Beaver would come in close enough to see the little fire that I had started with the oil can and spruce boughs. At first, I got a quick, thick, heavy smoke, but the fire soon died out. Aside from the oil rags, the pine needles were the only things that would burn. The wood was too green. I hoped the pilot would swing left and come my way but he continued northeast.

However, my hopes soared as I continued to hear planes all day long.

The weather was still pleasant when I woke up Monday morning, ready to resume work on my insulation blanket. I decided early in the day to make an SOS signal in the snow, using my aluminum shovel. The signals lasted until Tuesday, when heavy rains cleared away the snow.

During the day I prayed and worked more on my shelter. I even prepared for the notion of trying to walk out of there. The rain was quickly melting the snows — there had been about 18 inches of snow on Monday, and most of it was starting to melt now.

By mid-afternoon, the clouds had cleared and I could see the horizon for some distance. I set off for a walk to the peak behind Black Stuart to assess my position.

When I got to the top, all I could see for miles around were mountain peaks. I had the impression I was further north than I later learned I was. I thought I was close to the Bowron River, which I could have followed north into the Fraser River and into Prince George. But, for mile after mile, there were snow-capped mountains. It made me shudder.

It would have been a different story had I known that I was exactly four miles east of the Cariboo River and only 12 miles northeast of the hunting lodge to which I was later taken after my rescue.

The whole trip to the peak and back took an hour. That's when I realized how hunger can quickly weaken a person. In climbing that slippery hill, I found my old strength had just disappeared, only four days after the crash. I had headaches and nose-bleeds, in those first seven days.

Despite my precautions, the wind almost blew my shelter apart Tuesday night. From Tuesday on, it was just a story of long, gloomy days. There was the odd lessening of the wind from then on, but it was really sad because the weather prevented search



planes from getting near me — almost.

The winds continued to howl all day Wednesday and through that night. I was exhausted and continued to weaken. I decided to strip the rest of the canvas from the wing on Wednesday. It was so drafty in the shelter that even my little blanket failed to keep me warm. I cut off a 10-by-14 foot patch of fabric, laid it out on the ground, to use as a flag if any search planes came by. My plan was to pick it up, hang on to it and let it flutter in the wind behind me as I ran.

Then I wrote another entry in the plane's log book, which I was using as a diary: "Mere concern for survival has taken all my attention. Intend to say Mass, crouched low under the wing, until my meagre Mass wine fails. Should the search fail, then I shall have the joy of being directly with God and His chosen. This thought is mixed with sorrow now at the possibility of being unable to work for and with the people I so dearly love. I place myself in God's providence, who can bring great things out of this tragedy I have brought upon myself."

When I woke up Thursday morning the fabric was gone. I crawled out of my shelter on all fours to look for the fabric. In my imagination, I could see it blowing over the top of the hill, into a bowl another 1,000 feet below the crest.

The weather was bad all day Thursday, and I overdid myself in the search for the missing fabric. I looked from 11 AM to 3 PM.

As I was walking back into my shelter I heard an Albatross. Amazed at this sound — I didn't think they'd be searching in such miserable weather — I grabbed my aluminum cowling, which I had removed from the engine some time before, and my shaving mirror and ran uphill to attract attention.

It was only a matter of moments before the plane appeared in front of me, about 200 feet above the ground. It came low over the ridge from the north and headed straight for me. It even had a nose-down altitude.

I was certain the pilot had seen me but there was a heavy cumulus thunderhead directly south and I'm

certain now the pilot didn't see me because he was intent on avoiding it. He had his eyes glued on the cloud — which would have bounced the plane like a flimsy plaything — and banked steeply to the right. Everybody aboard missed seeing me.

Banking, the Albatross was directly overhead. If I had had a rock, I could have thrown it right up and hit the plane. It was so close and so heartbreaking to have seen it and not be seen.

Despite this, I really had hopes the pilot had seen me, and Friday turned out to be an anxious day while I waited for the helicopter rescue that I was certain would come. But the next seven days were spent in waiting, waiting in agony for a rescue that never came.

What happened to me on Black Stuart was far, far more precious than any spiritual retreat or any time of study, prayer and meditation. Putting it briefly, I have no more need, no more hunger for taking time to deepen my commitment. This is one reason why I felt it so important to outline the challenge of Celebration Week.

Up on Black Stuart, I found our message of Celebration Week most valid, even under these new circumstances in isolation and deprivation.

There was no longer a gap between what I preached during the Celebration Week and what I then felt within me. For the first time in my life, I deeply appreciated the importance of penance and suffering. We preach Christ crucified, Christ suffering and Christ dying. Never before had I experienced how closely my suffering is related to that of Christ's.

There is a danger here that I have given a false impression — that on the mountain my ultimate joy and trust in God precluded all anxiety. This is not true.

There was great disappointment after the Albatross came so close and the helicopter almost found me the following Monday. I was even tempted to eat a good portion of my remaining food in the excitement and anticipation of rescue. Then, I became very, very depressed when it became obvious I hadn't been spotted.

However, peace and joy always returned after I was able to make an absolute act of commitment to God's will. The abiding assurance returned that God can and will provide what is best so long as I trust and do my very best according to my ability.

At regular intervals during my stay on Black Stuart, those were only some of the thoughts that lingered in my mind. That Friday morning, I was certain, was nothing more than the start of another long, bleary day.

Then I found the fabric.

It was an accidental discovery. I went for a walk uphill that afternoon and happened to glance towards some shrubs. My first impression was that not all the snow had melted, because I could see this patch some 200 feet away. Continuing my walk towards the shrubs, it dawned on me that this was not a patch of snow. Slightly mystified as to what it was, in the next second my heart leapt for joy when I realized it was my missing fabric. I picked it up and returned to the shelter ready to make some sort of comforter or blanket out of it. The rain stopped for the rest of the afternoon and I began putting the comforter together. It was a blessing to be able to sit there in the sun sewing busily. It was the first time, however, that I'd done any extensive sewing, and I learned the hard way how valuable a thimble can be. I had a lot of trouble trying to get that needle through the fabric.



began to take form on Sunday. The weather was at its worst on Sunday, and I worked more on my comforter, particularly the lower part which I made into a sort of half sleeping bag to cut down on the draft on my feet at night.

I wrote in my diary: "I pray that I'll be able to return to my work enriched by this experience. One is absolutely dependent. I have found great consolation in prayer and in the songs we learned with the children in Valemount during our Celebration Week. How they so often express my feelings . . ."

It was becoming more and more obvious to me that any rescue would be almost miraculous.

Early Monday morning, I resumed work on the comforter, now resolved to make it into a full sleeping bag.

In the midst of sewing, I couldn't believe my ears!

There was another sound of a motor, almost overhead. It was very unusual — a sort of choppy sound. Then I knew that it was the search helicopter I had been waiting for. I hurried out of the shelter, scooped up my shaving mirror and the aluminum cowling. I heard the noise coming from the west, above the fog. In a few more moments, the helicopter appeared. The cloud was no more than 50 feet over my head then, and I was certain the pilot was headed straight for me.

The red and blue helicopter was coming up the ravine from the southwest. It's impossible to describe the excitement I felt surging through me then. I could see it was definitely coming right to me.

All kinds of thoughts raced through my mind. I began waving the aluminum cowling and mirror so somebody would see me. I dashed down about 20 feet from the plane so I could be seen, figuring even if they couldn't see me, they'd at least see the flashing mirror or cowling.

My heart sank immediately as the helicopter nosed down about 300 feet down and perhaps 1,000 feet away from me instead of continuing up the bowl towards me. It then nosed up a bit and began searching the bowl, cutting off to the right. It went southeast and possibly up another draw. I thought then that the clouds were too low for them to come up as high as my plane. I heard the helicopter looking around, maybe looking for a way out of the other draw, when it came back in sight, this time to the west. The helicopter came out on the far side of a knoll, about half a mile away. Again, it swung up my way slightly, then dropped out to the west through the same low overcast ravine by which it entered.

It was heartbreaking.

**Next week: Father Sasges describes how he was rescued while on the verge of starvation.**

*After his plane crashed on Sept. 12, Father Emil Sasges spent 12 days on Black Stuart Mountain 50 miles west of the Fraser River Valley. On Sept. 24 he started a 10-day walk which ended Oct. 4 with his rescue by Bob Conn, a hunting lodge operator. Father Sasges described his ordeal to Ted Beaudoin.*

**TWICE DURING** the 12 days I waited on Black Stuart Mountain beside the plane in which I had crashed, search parties flying overhead failed to sight me. I realized my chances of rescue were pretty slim if I remained on the mountain, so I decided to try to walk to safety.

Having made up my mind to go, I began constructing a packboard on Tuesday, Sept. 23 from the plane's right stabilizer, which I had sawed off the first week. I screwed the seat belts from the cockpit onto the frame and used some linen ties from the internal wing structure, and, in a very short time, I had a neat, portable packboard.

On Wednesday I added another piece of fabric to use as a tent or sail for the raft I was planning. I was certain that if I walked long enough and far enough, I would get to some navigable river, hopefully the Bowron, which would lead me to the Fraser River and safety.

I carefully packed my glasses — one of the lenses had broken in the landing. I took the missions collections, my bank book and a few other personal papers with me. I packed in the screws, clamps, and first-aid equipment.

I also stashed away into one of the pouches of the bag my remaining food supplies: the rest of the powdered milk, sugar and powdered chocolate into the milk container; a half package of chicken-rice soup mix; the remaining half loaf of bread; the half-piece of chocolate bar that I never touched; the remaining package and a half of powdered orange drink, my hosts and my vitamin pills. At 3 PM, I said a few prayers and set off.



During my early days on Black Stuart, I kept hearing what sounded like a logging operation. It was so clear from time to time, that I at first thought it was an echo of the search planes.

As the days went by, the sounds became more consistent and remained in one spot so definitely that I was certain they came from a nearby logging operation and I decided to move in that direction. I picked my way slowly and made about two miles before I decided to make my first camp. I found an excellent location a few feet from a game trail where a deer had spent the night. I rolled out my sleeping bag, got a few boughs and tried to make my bed more comfortable than its previous owner had left it, and went to sleep after munching a mouthful of potatoes.

The next day I opted to follow a game trail and spent an hour and a half on it until it cut rapidly down to the river bank, and then obviously crossed the river.

I decided to try to cross the water. I walked back and forth along its west bank and could not find an alternate trail. I had no choice. The river looked like it might be rough to cross, so I decided to make myself a pole and cut one with the sawblade I had taken with me from the plane. It took every ounce of energy and an absolute act of faith in God to cross that rocky river. It wasn't more than three feet deep at most places, but at some points, it was deeper than my waist.

That's where I got into my first real trouble. The current began to sweep me along. Fortunately, the deep parts were on the far side, and as the current swept me to the slower and deeper currents, I was able to grab one of the branches.

At this stage, I removed my jacket and suitcoat from my waist and slung them around my neck so they could stay dry. I had to sit down when I crossed to the other side. My strength was just sapped — I had nothing left.

Later, I found myself in the worst drain I've ever seen. It was an absolute maze and mess of jackpine. I

don't think I made more than half a mile after crossing the river. It was now about 6 PM, and I stopped to make camp for the night.

I woke occasionally during the night, and discovered this was one of the best nights for hearing yet. Now I was positive there was a dual logging operation nearby. I was equally certain they were logging on the west side of the river, the side I was on; but the baffling thing was that other sounds made me just as positive the logging was being conducted on the other side. I was so certain of that, that I was sorry I had crossed that river.

After a little breakfast Saturday morning, I set out and worked my way down through a couple of shoulders until I came to another river. Only, it wasn't another river — it was the same one I crossed Friday. It looked more difficult to cross here.

I put into practice one lesson I learned from crossing the river the first time — don't use the thick end of a pole for a guide when crossing a river. When I cut my new balancing pole, I put the thin end in the water first. It was easier to handle that way and less susceptible to being swept away with the current.

After I crossed, I found the game trail once again. But soon the trail turned south to the river again. This meant a third crossing of the same river within two days. I sat down and

tried to make the right decision: go over the ridge on my right, or cross again? That ridge was about 2,000 feet higher than I was, and I had little ambition left to climb again. I set out to cross the river.

It took a real act of faith and courage just to put my foot into the river. Every time I got into that water, it got colder and so did I. The pole helped me again, but the river was so wide that I just collapsed on the other side. I was exhausted and could scarcely regain my breath. But I made it.

It was about 8.30 AM now, and I had managed to somehow make about 20 miles of walking, stumbling, crashing, zig-zagging and prodding since I left the plane Thursday. But I know now I made less than three linear miles by Saturday morning.

Suddenly I was in a swamp, with huge fallen trees slicked with moss on all sides of me. Soon I spotted forestry markers — little bright-red plastic markers with numbers on them. But there was no real pathway any more. If I made one-tenth of a mile that first half hour, I was making good mileage and was lucky.

I came to a creek — again. I soon realized the creek led to the river, and because it was such tough going, I set about trying to make a raft. After shopping around for good looking trees, I found a number of them that were from six to eight inches in diam-

eter — not too large for my blade to handle. I cut the logs and brought them down to the pond, where I cut them into smaller raft-sized logs. I also found saplings — aspen, possibly — and cut cross pieces that were two to three inches in diameter. Then I began to tie the raft together, looping my cables around every second log.

I took my time rising Sunday morning, preparing to say Mass — which I hadn't done since I left the shelter. I only had a small portion of wine left, and I had intended, if the chance occurred again, to say Mass one more time.

The opportunity never did come until after my rescue. I lost my wine and my altar breads — hosts — turned into a soggy dough later that afternoon.

I rigged a 10-foot long pole that would serve as the mast for my sail and also a long, kayak-type paddle that served as a rudder when I needed it.

Shortly after 2 PM, I began the struggle to get the raft into the river. At times, I was waist-deep in water, trying to duck under snags that I had to clear away before I could push the raft into the river current. Then, I was winging along at top speed — about 12 miles an hour. I had jumped onto the raft south of a bend where the current was rushing through.



I hadn't gone more than half a mile when a snag swung my raft around from the front end. Seconds later, I was going downstream backwards and soon I was swung onto a gravel bar with the raft. This gave me a much-needed chance to rest as I had very little energy left. I only had enough to hang on to the rope and pole. I had one arm looped around the packboard strap, but I couldn't pull it up with me. I wanted it back on the raft, but it was so heavy I couldn't manage it. It was unbelievably heavy.

I began to worry that I could not get it aboard the raft. I knew that if I didn't have it on my back where it belonged that I'd certainly lose it. But I just could not budge it. The only possible solution was to roll it onto the raft and hold on to it.

I launched the raft again but there were a couple of sharp bends in the river and it was a struggle to keep the raft from heading to shore every time the river took a turn. Then the river started to go around a sharp loop bend and I knew when I saw this that I would not be able to navigate the corner.

Seconds later, I was again swamped. And the pack was in the water with me, drifting along with the current. I tried desperately to hang on to the raft with one hand and the packboard with the other. It was no good. I was in danger of losing the packboard if I continued to hang on to the raft, and vice versa. I decided to let the raft go — reluctantly — and watched it drift around the corner.

I swam with all my strength to get to the packboard and when I did, I just hung on to it, letting the current carry me. The pack and I were swept around the corner, and onto another gravel bar.

I collapsed on the bank after I dragged the packboard from the water. It was an agonizing thing. My lungs didn't have any capacity for holding air. My whole body cried out for oxygen and immediate relief. I was in a complete state of shock.

I realized, however, that if I didn't keep on moving, and keep my blood circulating, I was going to be in serious trouble. I kept moving up and down that gravel bar, stumbling, beating myself with my arms and hands, trying to regain my circulation and my breath.

I thought how easy it would be to just kneel down and die.

I had lost my best food rations in the river — the powdered milk, sugar and chocolate mixture that I used daily as breakfast, which was my main energy source.

It didn't take too much to convince me I could never carry the packboard again — it was too heavy.

I ripped the zipper bag's shoulder strap from its screwed position on the packboard, put my remaining food into one of the pouches and headed back into the bush.

At about 6 o'clock I thought I'd try

my matches and make camp and a fire for the night. I searched for some dry wood. I eventually found some birch with fairly dry bark but the matches didn't work.

There was only one possibility left, and that was to continue on the trail until dark. I kept thinking that the only way for me to keep alive was to keep climbing uphill all the time. I continued my uphill struggle until about 11:30 PM, and dropped out of sheer exhaustion onto a log. I lay there dazed and managed to get about an hour's worth of sleep. I woke up very chilled and decided to keep right on going or freeze to death. I went for another two-and-a-half hours until 2 AM when I fell from exhaustion again.

In the morning the sun came out a couple of times and things looked a little brighter around me. I was still confident that now that I was on the summit, the logging operation was nearby.

I walked and walked. Then I picked up another game trail and this led to a river. The same one that almost killed me; the same one which I had already crossed three times on foot and which cost me my food, raft and precious packboard!

I had made my second complete circle — only this time to my right. I wound up going north and doubled back by the southeast to a point above the spot where I was twice swamped.

This was the second real blow to my enthusiasm, to my hope that I had made any progress at all. From early Saturday morning to Monday night, I had made a total of perhaps two miles downstream on that blasted river, and in the process, it had destroyed any hopes I had of reaching civilization

and safety.

I went to bed discouraged and depressed, but I committed myself to God once again and hoped and prayed for a break on the following day.

I was amazed at how well I was able to carry on Tuesday morning. I easily picked up the game trail as I headed down river but by evening my strength was ebbing and I knew I just couldn't climb any more. I made camp finally on the shoulder of a knoll that overlooked the draw where I thought the logging equipment was operating from.

I was still happily surprised at the fact that my feet hadn't completely given out yet. What caused me the greatest anxiety was my inability to walk more than a dozen feet without hearing an enormous roar pound in my ears. Breathing in an upright position, I could hear nothing else but this immense roar, similar to the sound heard when the ears are submerged in water and the breath is exhaled.

I had to stop and stoop near the ground, or lie down, whenever I wanted to try and get a sound bearing on the logging equipment. It was a process of going a few feet then dropping on my knees to regain my breath, rest and listen.

As long as my feet held out, I could continue. The last time I had taken my shoes off was Sunday. Because it took me nearly 45 minutes to get them back on — due to the swelling of both feet — I decided to leave them on at all times.

Wednesday morning I hit the swamp.

I spent the whole day there, possibly going in a variety of crazy circles. Towards evening, I spotted some high ground, and very discouraged, made camp. This was a time of intensive testing in my own conversation with God.

I spent all day Thursday plodding through that swamp. It was definitely one of my bluest days so far. Plowing through hip-deep swamp mud was a constant drain on my remaining resources.

By mid-afternoon, my entire body had broken out into a rash infection from the Devil's Club. There were huge growths of this brush around on Wednesday and Thursday. I could not avoid rubbing against them, even though the needle-like spikes caused instant pain and infection. Every branch that touched me touched another agony.

There were two or three occasions when I was tripped by branches, and fell flat on my face in the brush. I hardly had the energy to pick myself

up again and I heard, crystal-clear, the words of Christ: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

With those words, I found the strength to rise and carry on. Then about five hours after I'd rested on that log, I found a game trail.

I followed it right to a footprint — mine.

There were more footprints and they matched my feet notch for notch. This was around 4 PM and I realized I had made my third full circling motion.

I found a spot under two trees to make camp and dragged myself over on all fours, where I plopped down, and with prayer and fatigue, passed into oblivion.



I don't think I made more than two miles Friday. I came to a huge river but remembering the earlier shocks the river waters give off, I decided to save my energy to try and cross the river on Saturday after a good night's rest.

The next morning my muscles wouldn't react to any order from my brain until about 15 to 20 minutes had elapsed. I felt lethargic for the first time as a feeling of non-response took over me completely. It was a sort of lazy, non-action type of feeling, hard to describe.

Anyway, I remember finally getting up, and glancing at my watch again, noted it was 10 AM. I made the last 100 yards to the river bank. What an agony it was to walk!

This was the first morning that my feet and legs were just stumps. Wooden stumps, from halfway below my knees to the tips of my toes, I had a dead, irresponsive feeling of nothingness. I just stumbled that last 100

up again and I heard, crystal-clear, the words of Christ: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

With those words, I found the strength to rise and carry on. Then about five hours after I'd rested on that log, I found a game trail.

I followed it right to a footprint —

There were more footprints and they matched my feet notch for notch. This was around 4 PM and I realized I had made my third full circling motion.

I found a spot under two trees to make camp and dragged myself over on all fours, where I plopped down, and with prayer and fatigue, passed into oblivion.

I don't think I made more than two miles Friday. I came to a huge river but remembering the earlier shocks the river waters give off, I decided to save my energy to try and cross the river on Saturday after a good night's rest.

The next morning my muscles wouldn't react to any order from my brain until about 15 to 20 minutes had elapsed. I felt lethargic for the first time as a feeling of non-response took over me completely. It was a sort of lazy, non-action type of feeling, hard to describe.

Anyway, I remember finally getting up, and glancing at my watch again, noted it was 10 AM. I made the last 100 yards to the river bank. What an agony it was to walk!

This was the first morning that my feet and legs were just stumps. Wooden stumps, from halfway below my knees to the tips of my toes, I had a dead, irresponsive feeling of nothingness. I just stumbled that last 100

yards, and crumpled on the edge of the bank.

The next instant, I heard the roar of the motor.

A second later, the large motor launch appeared around the bend in the river.

I found the energy to slip farther down to the river bank and wave my hand, trying to shout. My voice had gone, presumably overnight. I ripped off my jacket and waved it. Within 30 seconds I knew they had seen me.

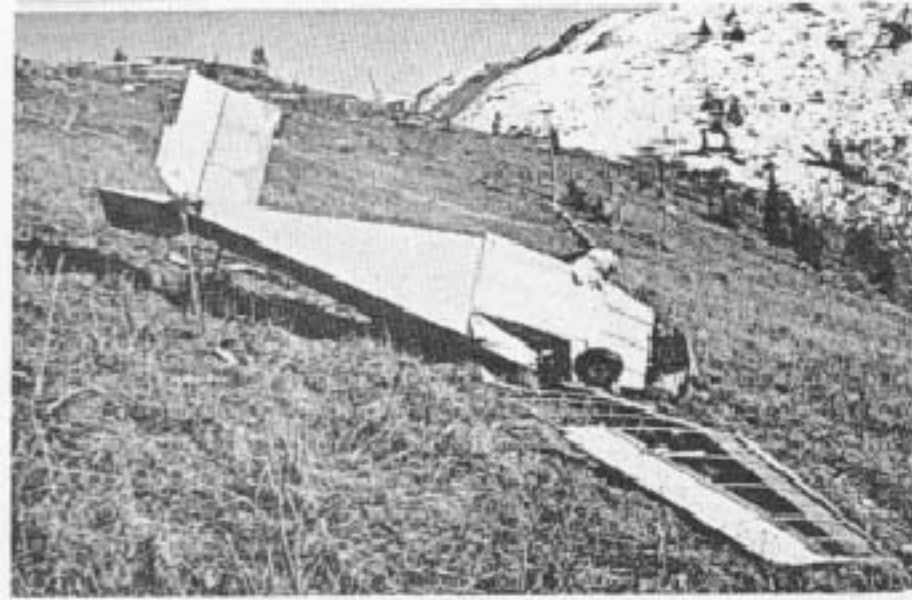
Bob Conn, operator of Cariboo Lake Lodge, and his four hunting companions made their way to me. I slumped on the sandbar on my knees and thanked God for His miracle.

Just as I arrived at the bank, moments before I heard the motor, I had the overpowering feeling that if anything was going to happen, that if I was going to get out of this, it would have to be an absolute miracle from God. I was overcome by the power of it all: If I had struggled a little longer, if I had gotten to the river bank sooner and crossed, and many more ifs . . .

This was another instance of where He obviously allowed me to go to the extreme end of my endurance, and when I could no longer handle the situation, He produced Bob Conn.

I was at his lodge less than an hour later, awaiting the Albatross rescue plane. I realized the news was out. The fact that people would no longer be anxious about me was a source of joy.

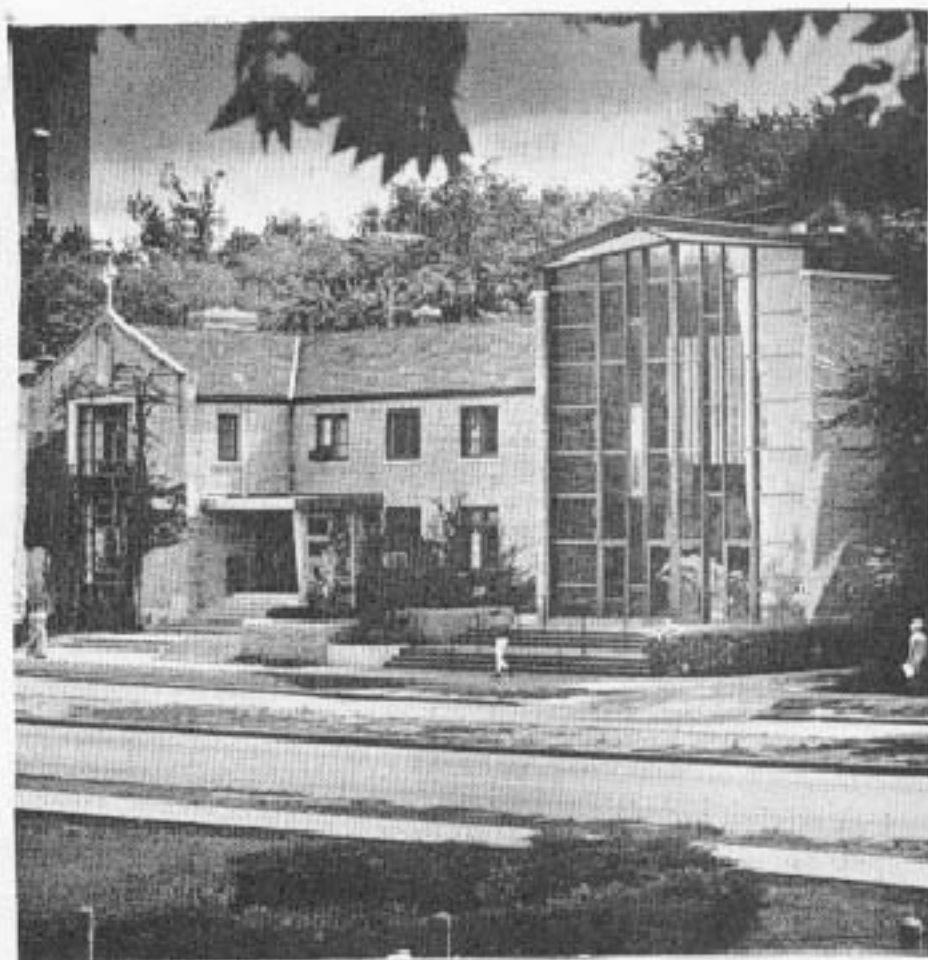
Hours later in Prince George Hospital — where I was given royal treatment — I spotted a plate of spaghetti and meatballs. The plate was cold but I savored every mouthful of the cold food.



Clean-shaven and recovering in hospital bed, Father Sasges chatted with three of the men who took part in the attempts to rescue him (L to R): his nephew, Gerry Sasges, Father Gerry Desmond and Father Barry Desmond. ◀



# 1970 Convention Site

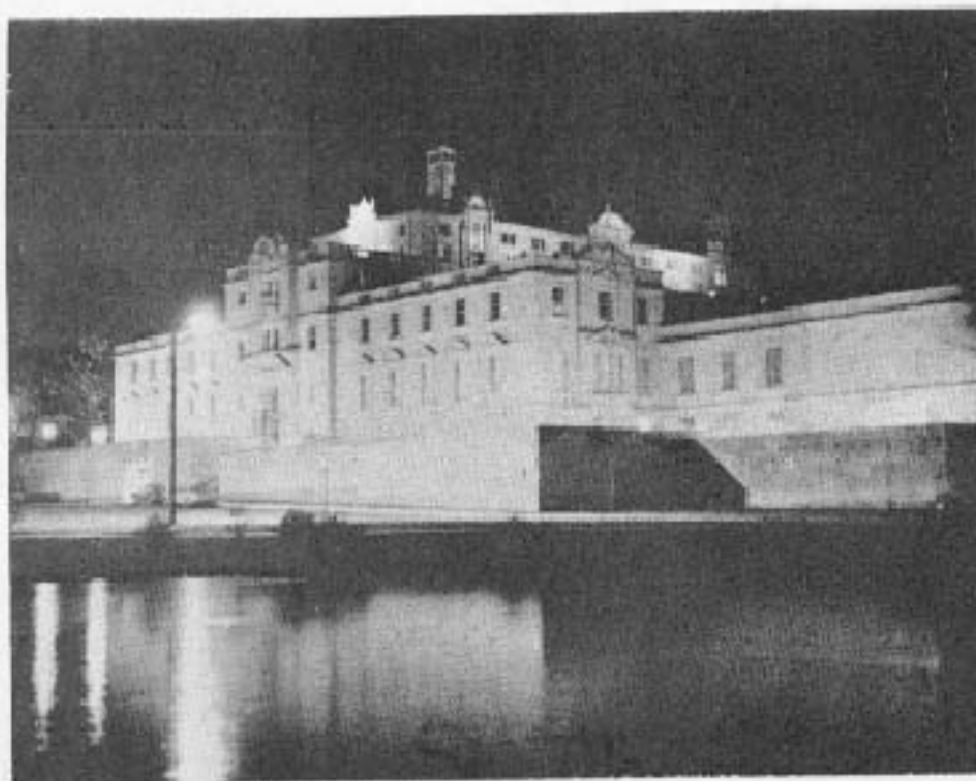


St. Thomas  
Aquinas  
Church

Ames, Iowa

Rooms across the street...

Iowa State  
University  
Memorial Union



July 14-16, 1970