

A&M student aids in rescue

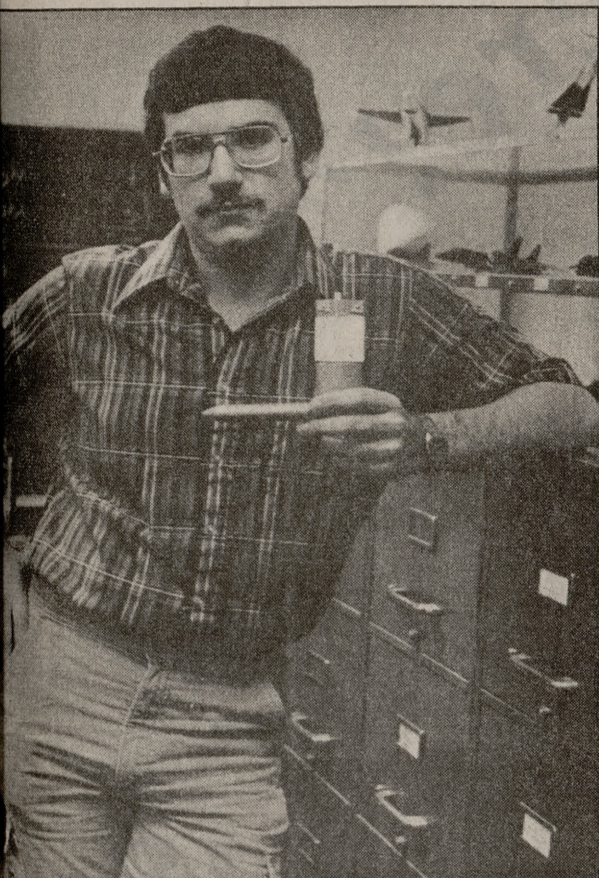


photo by Michele Rowland

by Laura Williams
Battalion Staff

The FAA is still trying to determine the cause of a Dec. 28 plane crash in which two men, one a student at Texas A&M University, saved three others in below-freezing weather.

The five Dallas men survived the crash that resulted when the engine of their Cessna 210 failed four miles from the Gunnison Airport in Colorado.

One of the two quick-thinking men, Mike Goodfriend, has returned to Texas A&M as a graduate bio-engineering student.

Kirk Fichtner, who is in a body cast, has returned to Texas Tech University. His brother Mark, a senior at the University of Texas at Dallas, is wearing a back brace and their father Jay is wearing a pelvic, back and halo brace.

"The FAA is still working to find out what happened," Goodfriend said. "We don't know if it was a fuel line or what, but we do know we had plenty of fuel."

Pilot Jay Fichtner, a Dallas lawyer, was the most seriously injured of the group with a broken back, neck, pelvic bone and ribs. Fichtner, 55, was flying Mark, Kirk and friends Kevin McKool and Goodfriend, to Crested Butte, Colo., for a ski trip.

"We had time to radio in that we were going down," Goodfriend said. "He (Fichtner) told us to fasten ourselves in and that he was going to try to land the plane on a road somewhere. We were on our final approach, but he couldn't just glide it down."

Goodfriend said after the pilot failed to find a road, he tried to set the plane down on the slope of a mountain.

"The left wing was tipped and caught the hill before the rest of the plane, and that's why we crashed," he said.

Surprisingly, everyone was calm because they thought Fichtner's landing would be successful, he said.

When Goodfriend regained consciousness, McKool, 23, was outside the plane. "We just sat about 10 feet from the plane, trying to get ourselves together," Goodfriend said. "About 30 minutes after we were down, Kevin decided to go for help."

McKool later told Goodfriend that he had climbed a small mountain and crossed a stream in the below-freezing weather to get to a house where he found a woman who took him to the airport.

Goodfriend said he took a safety course at the University that helped him take quick action. "I knew to look for blood first, and I didn't see any," he said. "I also knew to watch for hypothermia, so for the first half hour I was putting on gloves and getting jackets on everyone."

Goodfriend carefully pulled the injured Fichtners from the wreckage. "I couldn't get Mark out of the plane after he regained consciousness because his leg was caught in one of the shoulder straps," Goodfriend said. "He said it hurt when I pulled him, and I didn't want to aggravate the injury."

Two hours after the crash, Dick Arnold of Aspen, Colo., located the upside-down wreckage. Arnold had been preparing to search for a cross-county skier and was diverted to the sight, along with an Army helicopter.

The helicopter lifted the men out about 2:30 p.m. McKool had not been heard from. Goodfriend said McKool was waiting for them when they arrived at the Gunnison County Hospital.

"The neurosurgeon told me that had Mike not handled them as carefully as he did, my husband and the others could have suffered irreparable spinal damage," Rae Ann Fichtner, wife of the pilot, said. Fichtner is expected to be in braces for three to six months.

Fichtner has been flying for about 35 years, she said. "The National Transportation Accident Board is still investigating it, but we know it wasn't a pilot error," she said.

The pilot tube, which measures air speed, is Mike Goodfriend's souvenir from a plane crash Dec. 28. Goodfriend and four other men were en route to a fun-filled skiing trip when the Cessna 210 lost its engine and the plane was forced to go down about four miles from Gunnison Airport in Colorado. All five men survived.

Vietnam memorial planned

United Press International
DALLAS — A committee has begun raising funds to build a non-political memorial commemorating the 500,000 Texans who served in the Vietnam

July 1980, has engaged the architectural firm of Myrick Newman Dahlberg and Partners

of Dallas for planning and design. Alman said the monument

would be dedicated during the 1982 state fair and completion was projected for Nov. 11, 1983.

John Alman, vice president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund of Texas, said the memorial, projected for dedication on the State Fair grounds this fall, would not commemorate the war itself, but the Texans who served in it.

"We'd like the memorial to be a symbol of life," Alman said Monday. "It's trying to say that the Vietnam veteran is a significant, productive member of the community."

The war began for the United States in 1957 and ended with the collapse of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975. It cost the lives of 57,000 Americans, including 300 Texans.

Controversy surrounding American involvement caused deep divisions in domestic politics from the 1960s until the withdrawal of combat troops in 1973, and drew widespread, local disapproval to those 2.9 million who had served.

"This is a non-political memorial," Alman said. "This is a statement about the Vietnam veteran, who lived through the war. In a sense, we are all veterans of Vietnam."

Alman said the city of Dallas, which owns the State Fair grounds, has donated a site between the Cotton Bowl and the park lagoon. He said donations were being solicited from corporate sponsors and from individuals.

"In our naivete, we're looking for \$500,000 to \$1 million," Alman said. "But rather than concentrate on figures, we're just looking at building a proper, dignified memorial."

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