



Rescuers fight knee-deep drifts to remove a sick woman from the Chicago Fire Department helicopter during the 1967 snow storm.

Chicago Fire-Police Combine For Airborne Civic Protection

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ROTOR & WING*

By KEN JAEGER

THE sleek business plane routinely secured take off clearance and hurtled down the runway at Chicago's busy Meigs Field.

Faltering suddenly, the aircraft attempted to brake only to slide sideways off the runway into an adjoining 15-foot yacht channel of Lake Michigan.

John Kerechek, a helicopter pilot for the Chicago Fire Dept., was watching the plane take off from the control tower. Sensing it was in trouble, he dashed downstairs and sprinted to the Dept.'s Bell 47G-4A helicopter which was warming up near its hangar. Within seconds, he

and his firefighter copilot, Phil Hondur, were hovering over the downed aircraft.

Seeing survivors floundering in the 46-degree waters, Kerechek maneuvered the whirlybird within a few feet of them. Suddenly, one of the swimmers sank beneath the waves.

Quickly the helicopter dropped its pontoons near the submerged person. When the victim's head reappeared, Hondur, who now was riding on the pontoon, grabbed the struggling man, and with the survivor holding safely onto the aircraft, Hondur inflated a six-man life