

SURVIVORS RECALL HOURS IN SEA

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responsible for saving the life of pilot George Hubschman.

Hubschman — the only person badly injured in the crash — suffered a double compound leg fracture, broken ankle and numerous other injuries.

"When we landed, Fred said, 'Jose (Manuel Velazquez) got a firm hold on the captain and stayed with him and helped him swim toward Culebrita.'"

Hubschman was reported to be in satisfactory condition Saturday at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station where all the survivors were taken after being rescued Friday night.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard called off its search late Saturday for the remaining two passengers who were assumed to have gone down with the Grumman "Goose."

The two victims were identified as Julio Ortiz Vazquez and Hipolito Castro — both of Humacao.

The twin-engine aircraft, according to a Coast Guard spokesman, plunged into the ocean after "both engines failed." The cause of engine failure has not as yet been determined.

Survivors were in the water

for about three hours before helicopters arrived to rescue them.

Patt said that survivors were concerned that night would come before any rescue planes arrived. "A number of small planes passed overhead without seeing us," he said.

The search for survivors was launched at about 5 p.m. when the airline notified the Coast Guard of the delayed plane. "A small plane finally located us before dark and made a figure eight as he continually flew above us. Not long after, the helicopter arrive," Patt related.

Three of the nine survivors plucked from the ocean by Navy and Coast Guard helicopters were released during the morning from the hospital at Roosevelt road naval Station, where all spent the night.

Patt and his wife, were released from the hospital Saturday afternoon after being interviewed by a team of inspectors from the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Agency, who had just arrived from Miami.

The 25-year-old physician from Boston said, "Everything was going smoothly when we heard a sound not heard before. Then, the engines sputtered a first time, and again a second time."

The pilot according to Patt, "grabbed at a throttle and got the engines going again. Shortly, they began sputtering again and the pilot turned to us and shouted 'Put on your life vests.'"

Shortly after 4 p.m., 10 seconds after the pilot's only warning, the seaplane plunged into rough waters not far from Culebra.

"We hit the water the first time rather easy. We bounced up and came back into the water which seemed like a cement wall," Patt related.

At impact the plane split in two and Patt said he flew out of the wreckage while still seated and holding on to his life vest as well as the majority

"It was like being ejected," he added. In the rough waters Patt found his wife and helped her on with her life vest. Other survivors did the same. In the distance was the tiny island of Culebrita and the nine surviving passengers and pilot began heading slowly for that point.

It was three hours before the first Coast Guard helicopter arrived to effect the rescue.

An Antilles Airboats official said Saturday that apparently Hubschman tried to send a distress call, but it was blocked and never got through. He noted that airline officials were first to note that the plane was overdue, "and failure of the distress call to get on their air is the apparent cause for the delay in picking up passengers."

Airline pilot Henry Lillyback was flying from St. Thomas to Fajardo—the same route which the ill-fated plane was flying—10 minutes ahead of Hubschman. "The last call I heard him make was to the Navy to find out about naval air operations. It must have been right after that he went down," Lillyback said.

NTSB and FAA investigators were waiting to speak with the pilot, who was reported in satisfactory condition but unable to talk as yet.

Other survivors include Marlene Kaufman, from Brooklyn, N.Y.; Sidney and Tinker Steiner of New Orleans, La. and Basilio Cabelleno Montez; a resident of Humacao.

A Navy spokesman said that the delay in arriving at the scene of the crash was due to "an oil slick spotted about 10 miles north of the actual impact area." He said that search aircraft thought that this was the site. However, shortly after that the survivors were spotted.

The Coast Guard picked up six of the survivors and left them in Culebra. A Navy helicopter from the Roosevelt Roads picked up the injured captain and two others and brought them to the Navy Hospital.