

McPhee Saves Wife in Plane Crash

A Torrance businessman who walked, stumbled, and rolled 11 miles through hip-deep mountain snow is credited with saving the life of his wife and a pilot in the crash of their plane in Payson, Utah, two weeks ago.

James McPhee, 40, president of Mr. Bartender Products,

inc., Torrance, returned to the city this week bearing only a scar on his forehead to mark the ordeal, but his wife, Florence, 40, was moved to Riviera Hospital encased in a cast from her waist down. She has a badly dislocated hip.

Plane Crashes The McPhees, and Ralph

Couser, 44, were flying from Long Beach to British Columbia to visit McPhee's brother when they were caught in a freak snowstorm high in the Utah mountains. Couser, the pilot, saw that they were about to crash and stalled the motor, crash landing in a relatively open spot. Mrs. McPhee's leg was badly hurt and Couser had back injuries.

After making sure that his wife and Couser were comfortable, McPhee set out to get help, moving in the direction of light he saw in the distance. He moved cautiously down the mountain, avoiding the hip-deep snow whenever he could. In some spots he found it easier to roll down the mountain.

Gets Help Nearly 12 hours later, bloody and with clothes badly torn, he arrived at Utah Highway 36,

which he followed for a half hour before he was picked up by a passing motorist who took him to Payson to get help.

Meanwhile, back at the plane, Couser and Mrs. McPhee had improvised a stove by burning out the center of a tree stump and placing a suitcase over it. One by one, they burned the contents of their suitcases to keep themselves warm.

Fortunately, Mrs. McPhee, who had left Southern Cali-

fornia in Southern California clothing, had become cold en route to Sacramento and had changed to "heavy woolies."

Steps Retraced Help didn't arrive until noon of the next day, when searchers had retraced her husband's trail, since he didn't know exactly where the crash occurred. Then, the two injured persons

were removed by helicopter. "That was the longest and coldest time of my life," Mrs. McPhee recalls.

Until late last week, Mrs. McPhee was confined to the Payson Hospital, but was re-

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moved to Torrance by train. "The good Lord must have been with us," the McPhees believe.

McPhee will recount his experiences on Art Linkletter's House Party on television tomorrow. Residents of Palos Verdes, they have three small sons.



BACK — SAFE AND SOUND . . . Mr. and Mrs. James McPhee look over Salt Lake City newspaper accounts of their experiences when their plane crashed near Payson, Utah. McPhee walked 11 miles through mountain snow to get help for his wife, now confined in Riviera Hospital, and the pilot, Ralph Couser. (Herald Photo)

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