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HELICOPTER AMBULANCE LIFESAVER IN ICEBOUND ISOLATED AREAS IN
NEWFOUNDLAND

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PATIENT STRAPPED IN OUTRIGGER STRETCHER FOR AERIAL AMBULANCE RIDE

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Come-by-Chance, Newfoundland, March 00, 1956.

At Gander International Airport in the heart of Newfoundland a helicopter revs its rotor blades and is airborne. An urgent call has come from an isolated eastern coastal fishing village that a youth is seriously ill with appendicitis.

The village is icebound and the hospital ship would be unable to reach the area. The Newfoundland Government realizing speed is essential in cases of emergency operates a helicopter air ambulance to pick up patients and fly them to the closest cottage hospital. Seventeen cottage hospitals are operated by the Government at key points around the Province serving about 25,000 village and outport families.

Manned by pilots who know every bay and cove of the coastline makes the task of finding the right house not too difficult. The whirlybird is skilfully landed in the closest field. The sight of the copter landing brings out a dozen curious onlookers who have only seen this strange machine in the sky.

A closed box closely resembling a coffin is fitted on landing skis. A stretcher fits neatly in the carrier leaving plenty of room for its occupant. A plexiglass window allows the patient visibility and the pilot can check on his passenger.

At the farm the worried parents have the youth ready for the air ambulance. He is carefully blanketed in the stretcher and bedded down in the carrier. The helicopter takes off on its mercy mission flying over offshore ice floes until it comes in sight of Come-by-Chance Cottage Hospital.

At the hospital doctor and nurses are waiting to receive their patient. The helicopter lands near the entrance of the hospital and the patient is none the worse for his flight. In this air age the helicopter air ambulance saved the life of this youth. This system now in operation for over a year works very well. Scores of seriously ill patients in outlying areas are within hours of good medical care in well-staffed Government operated hospitals.