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# Medal of Bravery awarded to locals

By Wendy Long

There are very few young men that have had the honor of being presented with a Medal of Bravery by the governor-general of Canada.

Christopher Sallay, 22, of Glen Williams, had the pleasure last weekend. He was officially recognized at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in a distinguished ceremony.

Sallay and six other men helped stabilize a wounded helicopter June 28, 1991, outside a maintenance hangar at Pearson International Airport.

A Hughes 500 helicopter had taken off from the hangar where Sallay, an aircraft maintenance engineer, was working.

"It's like the sports car of helicopters," explained Sallay. "We were used to it coming in and out." On this particular day, the heli-

copter arrived back outside the hangar shortly after it had departed. As Sallay and the other men went to see what happened, a surprising site met them.

The helicopter was dangling precariously, trying to land. "But it was missing its one entire ski, pon-toon it's called," Sallay said.

Apparently, in flight, one of the helicopter's doors had popped open. Investigation into the incident indicated that the pilot, Russell Dawson, had lost control when he released one of the controls to lunge for the open door, Sallay said.

Only two shortened struts were left. If the helicopter had landed with only the one ski, it would have flipped and the blades would have hit the ground, Sallay said.

Not only was the Hughes 500 physically disabled, there was damage to the fuel system. The pilot, who was fine, couldn't shut his engines off.

A headset was passed through a

"gaping hole in the door" to enable communication with the pilot.

Darting rotor blades and trying to avoid searing exhaust fumes on an already hot day, the men tried to create a stand to land and stabilize the craft.

They successfully positioned makeshift stands made from wire mesh, on wheels, under the broken struts.

"The pilot had radioed in that he was going to make an emergency landing," Sallay said. "So emergency services rushed in and were there, including a RCMP officer."

Sallay said the chief firefighter ordered his men back into their trucks because it was too dangerous.

Doug Rock, director of aircraft maintenance at Pearson, managed to shut the helicopter's engines off eventually by using a halon fire extinguisher.

Everyone escaped without harm. Damage to the helicopter was in the

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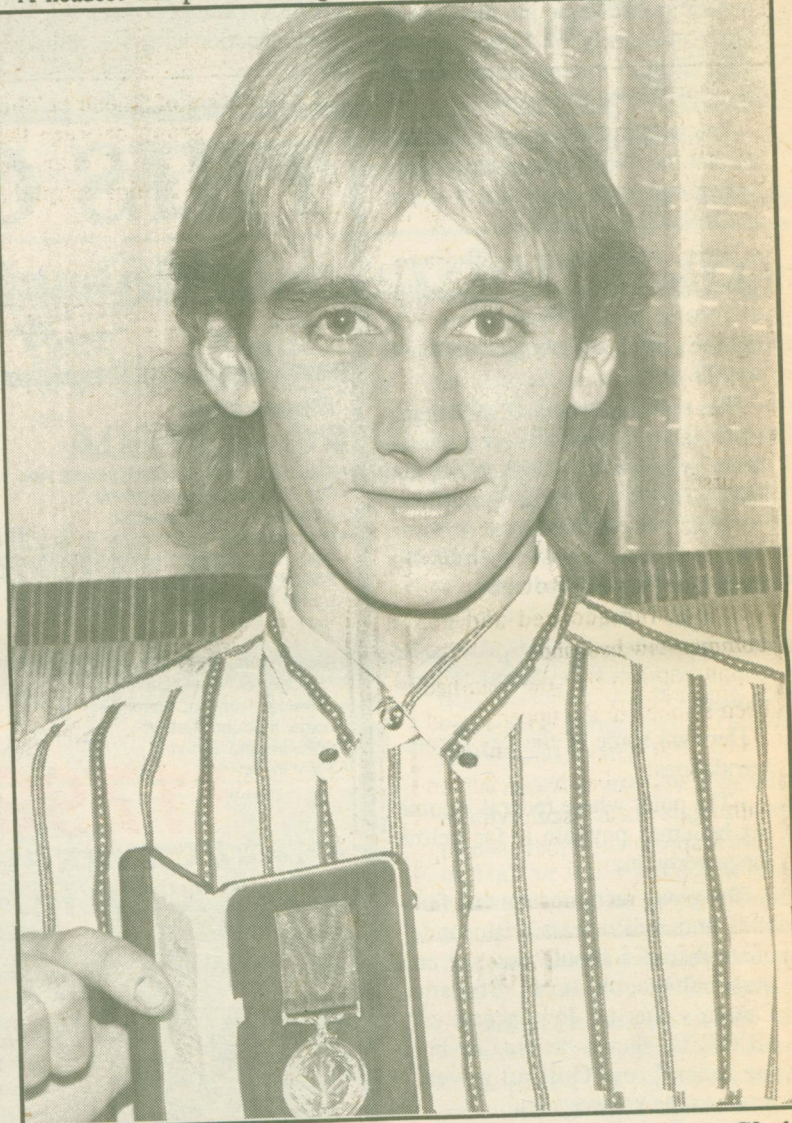
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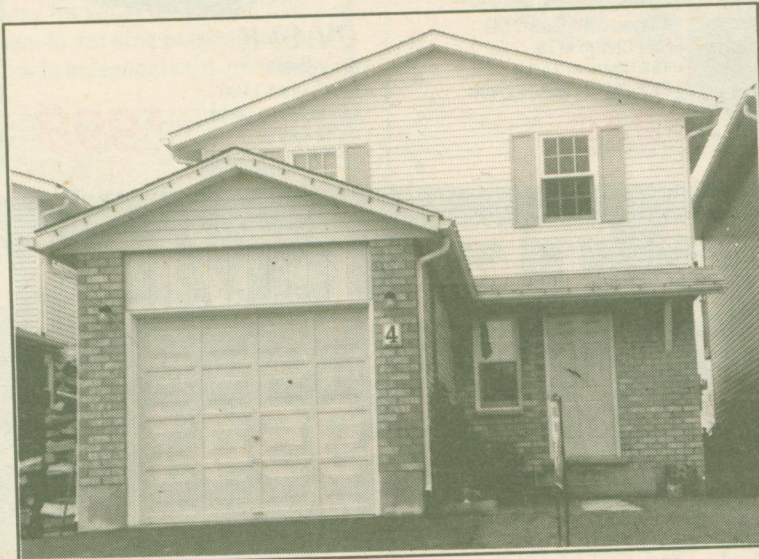
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Glen Williams resident Chris Sallay received a Medal of Bravery in Ottawa last weekend. He and six other men successfully landed a disabled helicopter at Pearson last summer.



*In the tradition of Christmas cheer, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your friendship this past year. May you have a safe and happy holiday!*



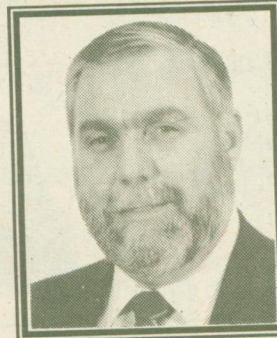
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