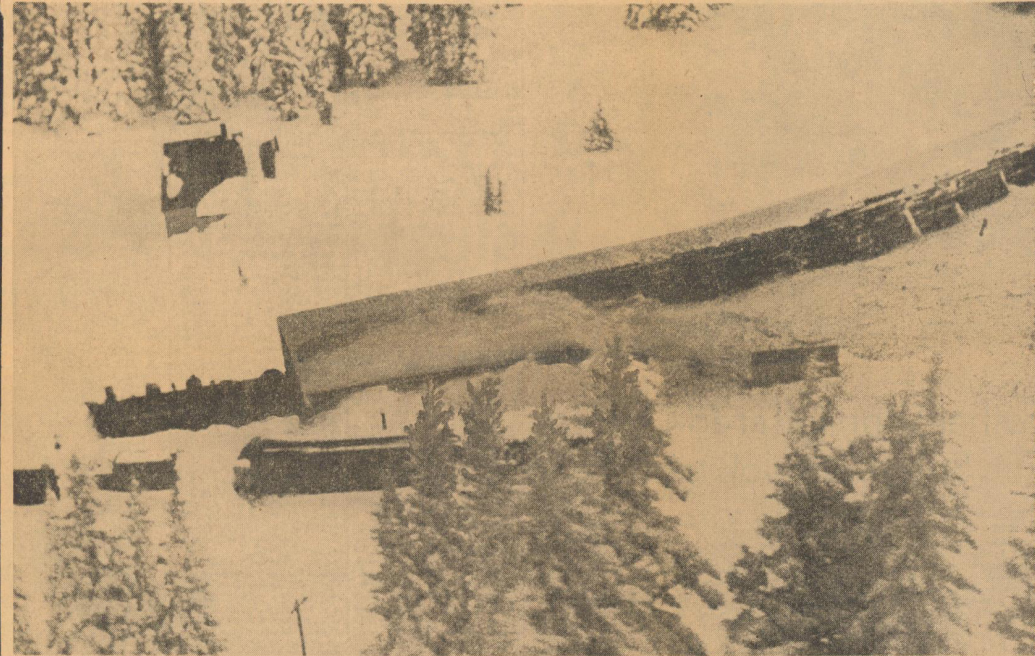


# Where Mountain Blizzard Stranded 40 Railroad Men



AERIAL PHOTO OF COXO SIDING, WHERE 40 RAILROAD MEN WERE BEING RESCUED THURSDAY. ENGINE OF STALLED TRAIN POKES FROM SNOW SHED.

## It's Chicken Instead of Beans as 2 Weasels Arrive at Coxo

**Denver Post Special**  
CHAMA, N. M., Jan. 31.—When two army weasels arrived at Coxo Wednesday afternoon carrying a load of chicken, the diet of 35 men stranded there took a turn for the better.

Up to then they were low on food and were existing on a diet of beans, according to one of the company, Marion Riffle of Durango, a brakeman on one of the snowbound trains, who was brought into Chama Thursday morning.

Riffle said he was one of the three men who made regular telephone calls out of Coxo, and that the calls were made on a portable phone tapped into tele-

phone lines owned by the company.

He said it was necessary to make a round trip of one mile on snowshoes each time a call was made, and that they always traveled in parties of three in case of an emergency.

The two army weasels came to an unsuccessful try to reach the Coxo group Tuesday. Turned back by impassable drifts, they set out again Wednesday at 5 a. m. and reached Coxo by 3 p. m. Treatment here said the route taken by the weasels is one of narrow ledges, dangerous overhangs of snow, and drifts 45 feet deep in places.

The snow is 22 feet deep on

the level. The Associated Press termed it the heaviest snow ever recorded on the pass.

**TRAIN "TIES UP"**

A work train which left Alamosa Wednesday got as far as Sublette, Colo., 55 miles by rail to the southwest, and "tied up" at 9 a. m., Oliver said.

"It's slow going," he said. At Sublette the snow rises higher than the train and the snowplow is literally tunneling through. It was estimated that another 12 to 15 miles toward the summit would be made Thursday.

Another work train will start toward the pass from Chama Thursday, with at least one bull-

dozer. Others are en route here and will be taken if they arrive.

The first six men taken off Thursday morning were selected for their youth and fitness, an official said, because it was expected they would have to do "trail breaking" during the first trip down.

Each of the weasels will haul and with that capacity all the men can climb in for the ride 2,150 feet down and 13 miles away to Chama.

But if they can't make a helicopter—"We'll just have to hover," Major Epsaro said.

That would mean the big bird would have a thin layer of air between it and the actual summit and the men on top would have to scramble in as she floats there.

"We'll do our darndest," the major said.

With him are Capt. Robert Knowles, 1st Lt. Donald Banks, and two mechanics.

The officer was not blind to the dangers of the trip.

"I've been flying the continental divide for 2½ years," he said, "and it's still tricky."

Two of the army's most experienced cold weather experts are in charge of the weasel operation. They are M. Sgt. George H. Wolcott of Ludlow, Vt., and SFC Dale O. Snell of Rock Island, Ill.

Drivers are two specialists third class, Joseph Mustonen of Seattle, Wash., and Robert "Buck" Anderson of Powell, Wyo. A photographer, PFC James D. Stricklett of Alexandria, Ind., is with the party.



THIS WORK ENGINE TRIED A RESCUE TRIP, BUT BOGGED DOWN ITSELF

## Airlift Cheers Stranded Men With Breakfast of Ham, Eggs

**Denver Post Special**  
ALAMOSA, Colo., Jan. 31.—The 20 trainmen snowbound atop 10,022-foot Cumbres pass had ham and eggs for breakfast Thursday.

The traditional cheerful American meal was provided by airlift from Alamosa, with Norman Kramer of that city at the controls.

Kramer made the airlift in a Beech Bonanza accompanied by William J. Holtman of Denver, assistant to the chief engineer of the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad.

They dropped six sacks of food first at Osler, 12.5 miles east of the summit. Then they dropped 26 sacks of food—including the ham and eggs—to the marooned men on the summit.

From there they flew west to Coxo, waved to the remainder of 40 men who had been trapped there, a mile from the pass summit, and went on to watch the struggles of two weasels, inching down toward Chama, with six men from the Coxo contingent.

He said the flight over the summit to drop groceries was made about 8:30 a. m.—an hour and a half after two weasels left Coxo with an army crew and six of the stranded railroaders.

**BREAKING TRAIL**

"They were only 2½ to 3 miles from the train (at Coxo)," Kramer said. "I could see men breaking trail, up to their bellies in powder snow. The snow was soft—up to the headlamps of the weasels."

"They were backing and ramming, back and forth. It was hard going. We could see it all very plainly—we were just over their heads. About 50 feet, I'd say."

The hard-working crews finally made their way to Chama, safe but tired, at 10:30 a. m.

Kramer said many of the men marooned on the summit evidently are veterans of a previous snow-in in 1951.

"They knew exactly what to do," he said.

They used snowshoes to stamp-

out a square in the snow to serve as a target.

As Kramer flew, Holtman threw a sack of provisions out each time Kramer made a circle.

"The baggage door was off," Kramer said. "I'd come over about 50 feet up, and when we were at the right position the men on the ground would signal and Holtman would shove out a sack. We made 20 passes to drop the 26 sacks."

The drop trip followed an earlier trip at 7:15 a. m., but the lack of visibility made drops impossible.

"Not one sack lit outside the square," Kramer said proudly.

There was a soap shortage on pass, so soap was among the articles included in the drop. There was medicine for one man who complained of a bad cold, towels and other articles of comfort.

Breakable items were heavily cushioned with paper inside the sacks.

"I'm sure the eggs made it okay," Kramer said.

**'Copter Lift Sought For Marooned Men**

**Denver Post Special**  
ALAMOSA, Colo., Jan. 31.—A helicopter rescue team from the army's mountain and cold weather training command set out from here Thursday in a "whirly-bird" mission to rescue 20 men snowbound on top of Cumbres pass.

The assignment: Land on or hover over the 10,022-foot pass on the Colorado-New Mexico border, pick up the stranded railroad men, and airlift them to safety at Chama, N. M.

"We're going to try to get them out of there—quick," Major Austin F. Epsaro of Stroudsburg, Pa., and Camp Hale, Colo., said.

Major Epsaro and his daring crew planned to take an H-19 helicopter to the top of the pass, then drop snowshoes to the marooned men, so they can pack down the snow.

"We're going to try to get a heliport made," he said.

"This mean a hardened patch of

snow large enough to let the whirly-bird land, about the size of a livingroom.

If this can be made, the helicopter will touch down and the men can climb in for the ride 2,150 feet down and 13 miles away to Chama.

But if they can't make a heliport—"We'll just have to hover," Major Epsaro said.

That would mean the big bird would have a thin layer of air between it and the actual summit and the men on top would have to scramble in as she floats there.

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## Guard Blast Deployed By Steve

Governor McNichols issued a statement Thursday deploring recent attacks of Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson on the national guard.

McNichols said the statements of Wilson to the effect that the guard was "a sort of scandal" during the Korean conflict and used by young men to dodge the draft "are as deeply disturbing to me as they are to the members of the Colorado national guard and their relatives and friends."

"During the Korean war," McNichols said, "60 pct. of our Colorado ground and air guard units were called to active duty. Several of our army battalions were called out immediately in 1950, and all of our air guard was called in March, 1951."

"The total number of army and air national guardsmen who left Colorado for active duty during this period was more than 2,200 officers and enlisted men. Many of the 'High Times'; the 'Tatler' of Pueblo Catholic High; 'The Hor-of-our' of Pueblo County High; 'The Marylin' of Pueblo Central School; and 'Tom-Tom' of Keat-and many were decorated."

McNichols said that as to training, about 70 pct. of Colorado's air national guard officers and airmen have some type of active duty and about 50 pct. of the Colorado ground officers and men have had active duty.

"I think the record of our Colorado national guard speaks for itself."

## Palisade, Pueblo Papers Win School Press Contest Awards

The Palisade High School newspaper, "School Daze," and the Pueblo Freed Junior High School newspaper, "Rampage," won top honors in the 1956 Colorado Tuberculosis Assn. school press contest, it was announced Thursday.

Editors of the newspapers will be guests of honor at the association's annual meeting in Denver March 21-22.

Awards were given on the content and originality of treatment in news stories, and articles on "What is Needed to Defeat TB" and "Careers in Public Health."

Fruita High School's "Wildcat's Beat" was second, and "The Orange & Black" of Grand Junction High School placed third in high school competition.

The Corwin Junior High "Talewind" of Pueblo was second in the junior high division.

Honorable mention awards went

to Colorado Springs High School's "The Lever"; St. Mary's High School's "The Marylin" in Colorado Springs; the Pueblo Central "High Times"; the "Tatler" of Pueblo Catholic High; "The Hor-of-our" of Pueblo County High; "The Marylin" of Pueblo Central School; and "Tom-Tom" of Keat-and many were decorated.

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## 2 Children Rally From Gas Fumes

Two children overcame gas fumes in their home about 10 miles southeast of Brighton early Wednesday morning were recovering Thursday in Colorado General hospital.

They are Steven Lee Wofford, 2½, and Andrea Wofford, 3½, children of Mr. and Mrs. William R. Wofford.

A third Wofford child, Roger Wofford, 2½, died Wednesday when a faulty stove connection filled the home with deadly fumes.

## 3 Old-Timers Quit Jobs at Stockyards

Three men with long service at Denver's stockyards retired on Thursday. They have had an aggregate of 142 years of livestock experience.

They are J. Duncan McKee, cattle salesman; Branch Curtis, cattle buyer, and Russell McKee, commission solicitor.

Duncan McKee has been active in the livestock business 53 years; Curtis, 50 years; Russell McKee, 41 years.

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