



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

ILLUSTRATED BY *Osborn*

## To the Rescue

After receiving a call from the operations duty officer, the UH-1N Huey returned to base to refuel and launch on a SAR mission. During refueling, the pilot and crew were briefed on the proposed rescue — to recover a woman suffering from shock and exposure at the 13,000-foot level of a nearby mountain. The crew was to stop en route and embark a Park Ranger to assist in locating the victim.

Due to the altitude of the proposed site, the helicopter was stripped of all unnecessary equipment. As the precise physical condition of the victim was unknown, it was decided to include a medical officer in the crew, which is not normal in a routine rescue mission. Because of this added weight, the pilot's ability and experience, and the demonstrated capability of the aircraft, it was decided not to use a copilot.

The helicopter was turned up and all conditions for flight were normal. The helo launched at 1051. Upon arrival at the first pickup point, two crewmen were disembarked to decrease weight and the Ranger was taken aboard. He was placed in the left front seat in order to direct the pilot to the rescue site. Upon arrival at the rescue site (elevation approximately 13,800 feet MSL), two passes were made to check terrain clearance, power available and wind. It was determined that the terrain at the rescue site required a 75 to 100-foot hoist operation to effect the rescue.

The pilot elected to land elsewhere first and let off one more crewman to

further reduce weight. He selected a meadow near a lake about two miles from the rescue site.

He made several passes at the meadow to again check for wind and power available. It should be noted here that the meadow was in a valley running east and west, with higher terrain to the east. These trial passes were made from west to east. The pilot then attempted to land using the same route of approach as he had previously. Transition to hover was without difficulty with all instruments normal.

At this point, the first crewman



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reported miscellaneous camping equipment from a nearby camp being blown about by the rotor wash. The pilot made a slight right turn (less than 45) in an attempt to observe the hazard. Failing to locate it, he elected not to land. He commenced transition to forward flight, turned back to the original heading, east, and proceeded along the edge of the lake. After 50 to 100 yards of forward movement, the low RPM warning light and audio tone came on. The pilot noted 92 percent rotor RPM at this time. He immediately selected max beep (maximum available rotor rpm), lowered the nose and noted the airspeed at 45 knots.

Somewhere in this time frame, the pilot reported to the crew that they were in trouble. The RPM appeared to hang at 93 percent for a moment and then continued to decay. The helo momentarily maintained constant altitude above the ground. It was now apparent that it was going to hit the ground. The pilot raised the nose and pulled in full collective. Meanwhile, the Park Ranger, sensing danger, broadcast a Mayday.

Touchdown was at ten knots or less on a rocky slope with the nose pointing up slope.

After touchdown, the helicopter turned about 90 to the right, at which time, the rotor blades contacted the rocks and fractured. Following impact, witnesses reported puffs of smoke coming from the aircraft but saw no fire. The pilot and crew expeditiously exited the aircraft.

Two minor injuries were incurred in the clamber over rocks during the rapid egress from the scene. The air-

craft was a total loss.

A second UH-1N was dispatched from home base. It completed the original SAR mission and recovered the crew.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

This lad made so many errors, I needed an addin' machine to keep track! His choice of landing zone was poor. He didn't perform a power check or compute his power availability. And then he proceeded to compound his predicament by reacting to low RPM by moving his cyclic forward, further aggravating his rotor RPM decay. I kinda figger this lad never "engaged his brain" before this flight

started. It's a very humanitarian thing to "run off to the reseue" but extremely unpopular to crash while in the process!

### Super FOD

The ground crew had finished installing a drop tank on the right wing of an F-4J *Phantom* and was preparing to turn up and inspect the functioning of the connections on the new tank. A sergeant conducted the preflight and, since there were no intake screens on hand, sent a corporal to get the screens.

Meanwhile, the ground power unit was connected and after the preflight

checklist was completed, an attempt was made to start the right engine. When the right engine would not start, the left engine was started. At this point, the corporal returned but, since the screens could no longer be installed, he joined two other members of the ground crew in the area of the right drop tank.

The pilot, a captain type who planned to fly the *Phantom* the next day, had joined the group and was standing on the left wing above the intake. The corporal, who was operating the power unit, thinking that both engines were started and not realizing that the left engine was operating at 80 percent, moved toward the cockpit to inquire why there was no signal to disconnect the ground power sources. As he climbed in front of the left intake, he was sucked in. The captain motioned to the sergeant to cut power.

The sergeant cut the power seconds after the corporal went in. The corporal was found to be conscious at the very rear of the intake channel with his right arm wedged into the circular rim in front of the engine blades. It was from this position that he was extricated and transferred to the hospital by the crash crew. His injuries were multiple abrasions and contusions of both knees, right hip and back.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sonofagun! I figured this lad was a goner. I can't believe so-called "experienced" personnel, like the sergeant and the captain, just stood around and watched this whole mess. No one ordered — that's right, I said ordered — the engine stopped and the screens installed. The senior man who stands around and watches a dangerous practice is more guilty than the man who does it! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! Reason and judgment are the practices of a leader. There were no leaders near this accident.

