

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Illustrations by *Ted Wilbur*

Salty Phrog

Two H-46Ds were conducting VERTREP on the first full day of a deployment. The weather was rainy with winds steady at 20 knots and waves around four feet. Aircraft start up was uneventful except that the copilot's torque gauge was inoperative. The aircraft commander decided the copilot could reference the pilot's gauge during the flight. (It is standard procedure for the nonflying pilot to monitor the torque during external transfers.)

Before starting the actual VERTREP, the HAC noted the torque/T5 relationship in a hover to establish a baseline for engine performance. After transferring 25 loads, the aircraft refueled on the deck of the ship that was receiving the pallets. As they refueled, a maintenance crew attempted to fix the torque gauge problem, but they were unsuccessful. Although the aircraft had taken some salt spray during the first VERTREP evolution, the HAC elected not to have a fresh water engine rinse due to the fact that the aircraft had been flying in rain. (H-46



NATOPS states, "Flight through rain may also be beneficial in reducing salt buildup, thereby improving stall margin.")

After 23 minutes on deck, the aircraft continued with the second VERTREP period. A half hour into the second period, the aircraft picked up a load and hovered perpendicular to the ship's heading, 50 feet over the receiving ship's flight deck, waiting for the other H-46 to pick up its load on the other ship. After 20 seconds in the hover, the HAC sensed a loss of power. He announced that the aircraft had lost an engine, but he was unsure which engine it was. The crew chief instantly jettisoned the load and closed the hellhole door. While the HAC armed manual trim and "mashed

the beeps" the copilot raised the collective in an attempt to stop the aircraft's rate of descent. The copilot also pushed the left pedal to align the H-46 with the ship's heading.

The HAC looked up from arming the trim to see that the aircraft had slid aft with the read rotor blades aft of the ship. The pilots were unsure whether the aircraft could fit on the deck due to the way the pallets were staged. The HAC attempted a landing anyway.

The aircraft was too far aft and the chin bubble rested against the safety net across the stern before the forward rotor blade struck the flight deck. The pilots jettisoned their doors before the H-46 rolled inverted and hit the water aft of the ship. Both pilots egressed through their respective cockpit doors. The crew chief tried unsuccessfully to push out a window, so he egressed through the side hatch. The final crewman found a window but couldn't locate the emergency pull tab, so he followed his gunner's belt back to the front of the cabin and egressed through the cockpit.

The mishap board determined that the engine had stalled due to salt encrustation. The board also assessed that flying through rain was no substitute for a thorough engine wash. The H-46 NATOPS was changed as a result of the board's findings and recommendation.





... A NON-TRADITIONAL LANDING!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Lucky this change to the Blue Pill didn't come with any loss of life. All the same, even if they did follow NATOPS, I'm sure this crew looked back and wished they'd had an engine wash before that second VERTREP period. Remember that eternal NATOPS caveat (and I'm going from memory here): "Nothing in this here book takes the place of good headwork." The bottom line is when in doubt err on the side of safety.

And I'm also sure this crew was happy for their swim/phys training. The next time you bellyache about the helo dunker, think about this mishap.

Fatal Distraction

An instructor and his student were conducting simulated high altitude/low altitude power loss training in a T-34C. While waving off following a low altitude power loss simulation over an unprepared surface, the aircraft's generator caution light illuminated. Both crew

members were distracted by the light enough to allow the T-34 to descend below the minimum waveoff altitude of 500 feet. Shortly thereafter the instructor realized the low altitude situation, and responded by abruptly programming the stick aft at a rate that put the aircraft into an accelerated stall. With insufficient altitude to recover, the T-34 crashed into the ground. Both crew members were killed.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Flying the air machine is always the first priority. And here's something you brownshoes can bank on: You are going to get a warning light at the worst possible time—during a cat shot, on short final, or in a low hover. Aviate, navigate, and communicate. (Not doing the last two will seldom get you killed, either.)

And you fledglings need to take notice here, too. Just 'cause you ain't wearing Wings of Gold yet don't mean you shouldn't maintain good SA when you're sitting between the canopy rails.