



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Feet Wet

After a careful preflight and warm-up of his HRS-3, an experienced helo pilot lifted off the flight deck of his ship and checked his power setting in a hover. He was a little concerned, for in addition to pilot, copilot, and crewman, they had a fuel load of 450 pounds, three passengers, and a 115-pound box of electronic gear aboard. His power setting for hover was 36" at 2400 RPM, well within limits, so he lifted off, turned left into the relative wind and departed the ship.

Just as he cleared, an immediate power loss was felt. The pilot dropped the nose, hit full power (RPM) and flew close to the water for approximately one minute as he attempted to regain the lost RPM. As the helicopter lost altitude, it was necessary to come to a hover to keep from colliding with the water. Using 40 to 44" MP but getting only 2000 RPM, the HRS hovered with its landing gear in the water! The crewman called out on ICS that he was "going to lighten the load," and before the pilot could reply, he and the three passengers were gone, diving out head first thru the crew compartment door into the water! Immediately the stricken helicopter raised about a foot out of the water. The pilot eased off to the right to clear the men but still was unable to



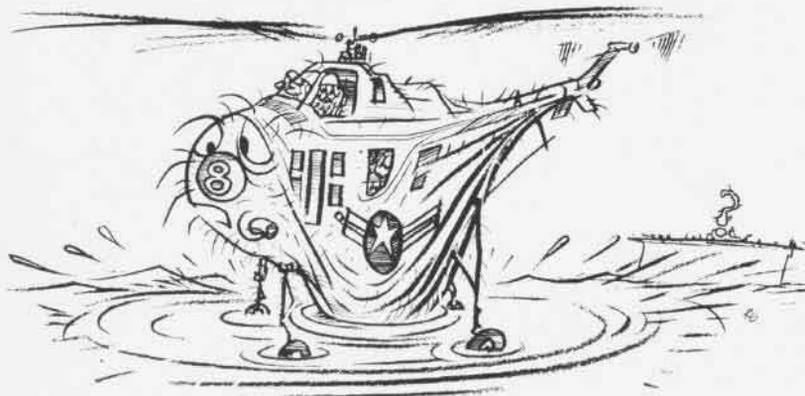
regain the engine power he had lost.

As the helo settled again, the tail rotor struck the water, directional control was lost and he cut the power. The helo settled in, rolled to the left and sank. The cockpit rapidly filled with water, but both pilots made underwater escapes and swam clear of the partially floating whirlybird. A crash boat from the ship was already on the way and picked up all hands within two or three minutes.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! This was a doozy! Lightening ship wasn't a bad idea under the circumstances, but a



mighty hazardous step to take. If the helo had settled on in right there, the fellers in the water woulda been chopped up more than a little by the rotor blades. 'Course, the crewman hadn't intended to have 'em ALL go, but he'd given the passengers a real thorough briefing on ditching procedures, instructed 'em to leave only when he said so. When he dove out they figured "this was it," and followed him out the door!

Best thing to do in a helicopter ditching is strap in TIGHT and ride it in. You'll stay in the catin', drinkin', breathin' group longer that way.

Cool

An experienced aviator was cruising his AD-5 at 11,000 feet IFR, but above a solid cloud deck and in the clear. Suddenly the magnetic oil sump plug warning light came on, and the oil pressure rapidly dropped to zero. He declared an emergency and let down through the undercast, breaking clear at 3000 feet directly over a highway. Trees and telephone poles made a safe landing on the roadway a slim chance and since the engine was still running, though cutting out intermittently, he continued up the road. There were a number of light aircraft in the vicinity so his eyes were peeled for an airfield. Suddenly he spotted a small airport and made a straight in landing on the first available runway, gear and flaps down.

His touchdown was right on the end of the 2100-foot runway at 90 knots and although he had a 10 kt downwind component, he successfully braked to a stop. An engine change was required to put the AD back in the blue since investigation revealed a massive oil leak and only two gallons of oil remaining after shutdown.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Cool, man, cool! You've gotta be pretty sure of the terrain under you to let down through an overcast with an ailing engine, also have some of the cast iron guts that seem to be standard issue in the Marine Corps.

Just in case some of the younger and less experienced lads try this, a sign I saw years ago in the training command comes to mind. "Thou shalt not let thy confidence exceed thy ability, for broad is the way to destruction."

Head Cracker

After a normal arrested landing aboard a big CVA, the pilot of an FJ-3M was ordered by the taxi director to raise his hook prior to taxiing him forward out of the gear. After several unsuccessful attempts to comply, two hook runners were motioned in to manually raise the hook. As they were struggling with it, the hook suddenly snapped to the UP position, catching one man's jaw between the hook and the fuselage! He'll live, and he's lucky, even though he had a compound fracture and will spend a long time eating through a straw.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Goshamighty, he coulda been kilt! This lad had a purty narrow squeak. He was trying hard to do a good job and look sharp as befits a member of a smooth runnin' outfit, but no one has to COMMIT SUICIDE to accomplish the job! Guys have been caught in stuck wheel well doors, sucked in intakes while checking nose gear pins, run over while running alongside as chockmen, blown clear off the deck by jet blast, and been hit by a drop tank lost on a "cat" shot, to name a few instances. Don't let familiarity with your job or the aircraft breed contempt for the hazards around you. Remember, the life you save may be your own.

Fire, Man, Fire

A couple of F4D's roared down the runway of their West Coast base on a section take-off. It was a FAM 2 hop for the flight leader and his wingman was the assigned chase pilot. After 1000 feet of roll, they both went into afterburner. Immediately the tail section of the wingman burst into flames! The runway duty officer, who was observing the take-off and posted there to monitor the FAM stage landings, saw the fire but was unable to advise the pilot because of an inoperative radio. As they went by the GCA unit, the outside observer spotted the fire, notified the tower, who in turn called the flight leader to say "Your wingman has a fire!"

Meanwhile the two F4D's had become

Just call me Phoenix!



airborne and were climbing out. They both came out of burner, and the wingman turned away from his leader, and went into a steep climbing right turn as he tried to get to a safe ejection altitude. He eased the power back to idle, noted he had a fire warning light but had all engine instruments reading normal. A quick decision was made to try a straight-in approach to another runway 90° out of the wind. He blew off his drop tanks as he continued his turn, sending them crashing down into an orange grove, and dropped his landing gear on a short final approach to the runway, trailing smoke all the way.

A glance at the gear indicator showed an unsafe condition, so he pulled the emergency handle, but with negative results, so he added power and waved off at 100 feet, calling the tower for a gear check as he went by! The tower gave him a "Looks O.K." on the gear and warned him he was burning on the underside of the fuselage in the vicinity of the tail bumper.

The pilot made a rapid sharp climbing left turn to 2000 feet altitude, ready for possible ejection, and at the 180° position flamed out the engine. This caused the fire warning light to go out, so he turned base leg deadstick!

By the time he got to the 90° position, it was obvious he didn't have enough airspeed and altitude to complete the approach so he attempted a relight on the engine. Relight was successful and he continued the approach. When he figured he had the runway made, he shut down the engine, flared, and set it down for a good landing.

Roll-out was uneventful and he dropped the hook and picked up the arresting gear successfully. The F4D came to a stop, still burning fiercely around the outside of the tail pipe and underside near the tail bumpers.

As the crash crew was pouring foam on the fire, the pilot coolly checked all switches off and climbed out of the aircraft.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Burn my britches, if he wasn't a cool one!! The average fighter pilot hears that clarion call of "FIRE" and he pulls the curtain just about as fast as a rattler striking. 'Course, the main thing is to be sure they mean YOU! The wave-off for unsafe gear was O.K. by me 'cause that "Ford" sure comes in cocked up, and a hard smack on the runway could really have made a bonfire out of that machine, already burning brightly as it was. I'd have pulled her up, pointed her at a clear area, and figuring I'd tried, kissed her goodbye. Nobody, but nobody, would have criticized him even one little bit.

His fire was caused by a broken tube connecting an afterburner fuel nozzle to the burner fuel manifold. This allowed free fuel to pool and ignite, and to continue to burn even after cutting the burner off. This area needs careful checking at every opportunity by the maintenance crew. There's plenty of heat and stress on these fittings.

A runway duty officer without the radio gear operative just becomes an interested spectator. If his gear had been workin', he could have advised an abort. Lots of "IFS" here, but isn't it always that way when you look back?