



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Cleared to Land

Following briefing, two lieutenants and two petty officer aircrewmembers — an SH-3D crew — assembled on the flight deck of the attack carrier to preflight their *Sea King*. They were to deliver four passengers to one of the other ships in the force and then make a parcel pickup on still another ship.

On the way to deliver the passengers, the crew spotted the ship on which it was to make the parcel pickup and decided to stop there first. Unable to establish radio contact with the ship, the crew signaled its intent to land by opening and closing the cargo door and pointing to the hoist. The ship understood the signal and began lowering antennas and clearing the deck.

The helicopter made one gear-up pass to look at the deck and, on the second approach, the landing checklist was followed, gear was down and the helicopter came in for a landing. The landing signal enlisted (LSE) signaled "go-around" as the ship was not yet ready for the landing. The helicopter discontinued the approach, raised the gear and came around again.

The pilot and copilot began going through the landing checklist again. As they turned on final at about 80 feet and ¼ mile, heavy white smoke came from the ship's stack, obscuring the pilot's view. As a result, the pilot and copilot discontinued the checklist and concentrated on making a proper final approach through the smoke. The helicopter flew through the heavy smoke for about 10-15 seconds, coming out about 30 feet above and just to the rear of the ship. The interrupted checklist was never completed and the landing gear was never lowered.

Because of the small landing area, one aircrewman was looking out the cargo door to check for rear wheel clearance. The other aircrewman was checking to ensure that the passengers were in their seats and strapped in. Neither aircrewman checked the gear position.

The pilot brought the helicopter to

*Am down to weight!
I've quit smoking!
& it's Spring!*



a hover over the landing area and the LSE gave three distinct signals: come forward, hover and land. The pilot lowered the helicopter but felt the plane was too low to not have touched the deck. As he pulled up the collective, the ship pitched and a collision occurred. Both pilot and copilot felt the impact but both were of the opinion that the damage, if any, was slight. The plane came around, again, and, this time, after going completely through the checklist—with the wheels down—made a normal landing.

One aircrewman checked the damage and reported a broken rotating beacon and a bent UHF/ADF antenna. No structural damage was visible. Because of the apparent minimal damage, the parcel pickup was made and the rest of the mission completed.



Gram paw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times, anytime you have a break in habit pattern, double check everything. How in the world can a man be

a landing signal director and not notice the wheels up?! I think it's time to check this ship's training program for qualifying LSE's — if one exists! I might say the same thing for the crew members on the helo. Of course, the man in the cockpit is the most responsible, but he sure didn't get any help from his crew or the ship. With the LAMPS program near upon us, it's time for us all to take a mighty close look at our operating and training procedures—ships and squadrons!

One final word, anytime you have a distraction, particularly during landing phase, let a switch in the brain say **double check everything.**

All Claws—No Brains

Student training was secured shortly after morning quarters because of poor weather. Four of the formation instructor pilots made a verbal request to the training office to do some local proficiency flying, "to practice approaches and landings." The request was approved, and the four were assigned two T-28B *Trojans*. Aircraft 201 was manned by a lieutenant junior grade in the cockpit and a lieutenant in the rear seat; aircraft 202 was identically manned. They filed a local area VFR flight plan by telephone. The lieutenant in 202 was designated pilot-in-command. The flight was briefed to include tail chase formation followed by breakup and individual practice of landings and approaches.

Preflight, start, taxi, turn-up and takeoff were uneventful. At altitude, both aircraft began a series of tail chase maneuvers and the lieutenant junior grade in 201 demonstrated high/low air combat maneuvers (ACM's). During this initial portion of the flight, the T-28's were controlled primarily by the JG's in the front seats.

The aircraft climbed, in formation, back to approximately 9,500 where the second series of tail chase tracking maneuvers were performed down to approximately 4,000 feet. Investigation indicates that now the rear cockpit pilots were at the controls. During this second series of yo-yo's (ACM's),

202 changed lead, making 201 the lead aircraft. Both aircraft then climbed to approximately 7,000 feet from where a third series of ACM's were performed.

It is believed the lieutenant in the rear seat was at the controls of 201 during the third series and that the other lieutenant was at the controls of 202. At or near 3,000 feet, 202 maneuvered to a position of about 500 feet above and 1,000 feet behind 201 and maintained a wings-level position for approximately one minute. The pilots of aircraft 202 then observed 201 make what appeared to be two or three shallow angle-of-bank turns of about five degrees heading change, roll to about 45 degrees angle of bank, 20 to 30 degrees nose down, and then accelerate.

Aircraft 202 started to follow 201 but turned left when 201 appeared to dive below the clouds. *Trojan* 202 commenced a climb, leveled off at 9,500 feet, and then attempted visual and radio contact with 201—with negative results. After about ten min-

utes, 202 descended below the cloud layer and searched for its playmate in the approximate area where it was last seen. Two zero two then proceeded to a nearby airport, hoping to find 201.

The pilots of 202 attempted radio contact on tactical frequencies and guard channel. Aircraft 202 contacted the tower to see whether 201 had checked in; the tower reported that it had no contact with 201 and instructed 202 to remain on tower frequency. Then 202 headed back to the original area to search for the missing T-28. Following the search, 202 climbed above the clouds and headed toward home field to land after the tower had asked about its expected landing time.

Ground witnesses reported seeing an aircraft (201) in a steep diving turn coming through the cloud layer, heading approximately south, followed by an attempted pullout. During the pullout and prior to the impact, all airfoil parts, with the exception of the lower half of the vertical stabilizer, separated from the aircraft. And both pilots suffered fatal injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Pass me another aspirin. I get so dad-blasted mad when I read about needless loss of lives and flying machines. There's a very fine line between aggressiveness and sheer stupidity—these gents didn't know the difference. Can you imagin' a coupla young buck JG's who have never had a fleet tour showin' a couple of lieutenants with fleet tours (even though they were not in the fighter/attack community) how to do air combat maneuvering and, most of all, these lieutenants "standin' for it?" One of these young fellas had a so-called "pure jet" attitude or thought that jet pilots were "tiger aviators." I must agree that the majority of Naval Aviators are "tigers" but they are *professional tigers*. These gents were tiger aviators all right—all claws and no brains. The rules violated, let alone the lack of common sense indicated, are too numerous to list.

I'd like to leave one thought with you young fellas who may be inclined towards a little unscheduled and unbriefed hasslin'—DON'T.

