



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Again, Again, Again . . .

A young Naval Aviator with approximately 1,000 hours was scheduled for a day field mirror landing practice (FMLP) session in an EKA-3B *Skywarrior*. His crew consisted of an NFO and enlisted aircrewmembers. Following a normal brief, preflight, turnup and taxi, the *Skywarrior* departed for a nearby outlying field for FMLPs.

After an uneventful FMLP period, the EKA-3B departed the outlying field under positive control in VFR conditions. Upon contacting home-field GCA, the flight crew proceeded with the landing checklist to the point where flaps were lowered. At this point, crew checklist procedures were interrupted by the GCA controller who reported the surface winds and asked if they desired a different runway. In view of the wind conditions, the pilot decided to use a different runway and transmitted his intention to the controller. A frequency change to tower was performed and initial contact made. The pilot reported "dirty" (gear and flaps down) and requested clearance direct from present position to the 180-degree position for the runway.

The *Skywarrior* was cleared as requested and directed to report with wheels. The pilot rogered this transmission and proceeded direct to the 180-degree point. But during this time, the crew did not restart or continue the landing checklist because the pilot had already erroneously called the aircraft "dirty" and the crew was also concerned with maintaining a visual lookout as they passed through the traffic area.

At the 190-degree position, the aircraft reported "616, with gear." There was no response from the tower and the *Skywarrior* reported with gear again; however, there was still no response from the tower.

Concerned with a possible lost comm situation, the pilot instructed the NFO to tune in ground control frequency on the alternate radio in case landing clearance was not received from the



tower. The NFO had resumed the landing checklist by calling "flaps" to which the pilot responded flaps and gear were down. The pilot states that he looked at all the indications but misinterpreted "up" indications for the wheels.

At this point in the approach, the

aircraft was turning onto final and the pilot made another transmission to tower reporting the gear. The tower responded, told the pilot to check wheels, reported winds and gave the aircraft landing clearance. The pilot corrected for a slightly high, overshooting start and continued the approach to the runway. After touchdown, he stated he felt a large vibration and thought he had a nose-gear problem, so he lowered the hook and engaged the short field arresting gear. As the aircraft came to a stop, 3,000 feet down the runway, the pilot checked the gear indicators and gear handle and found the *landing gear in the up position*.

The crew exited the aircraft through the upper hatch and stood by as the crash truck arrived and extinguished the smoke coming from the bomb-bay area. The crew was uninjured. The aircraft sustained substantial damage.

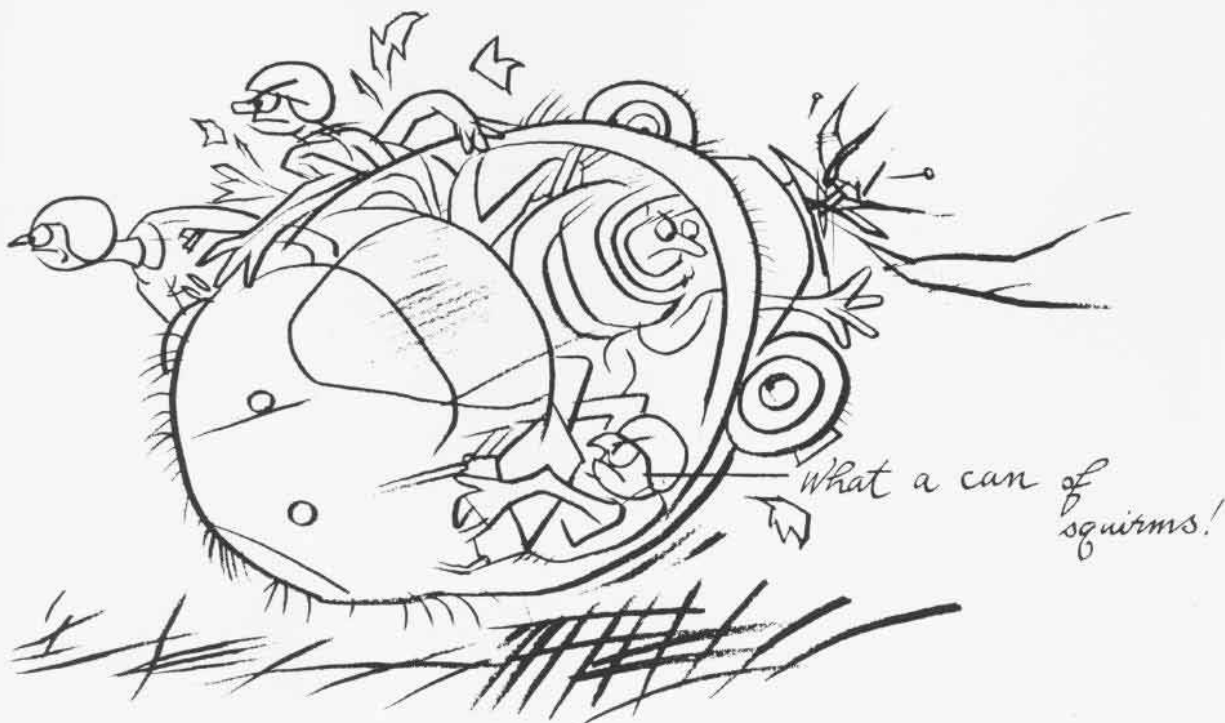


Grampaw Pettibone says:

Not again! Must we continue these Delta Sierra maneuvers? It sure is amazin' when we see all of these



ILLUSTRATED BY *Opson*



“minus-the-rollers” landings that involve all of the same thing — distraction of some kind in the cockpit during completion of the checklist. To top it all off, most wheels-up landings are made by multiseat flyin’ machines. I know this doesn’t make the “many seat” drivers happy, but that’s the facts of life. I can only say one thing — whenever you are in the landing pattern and you are distracted, let that be the *switch* in your mind that you have now entered the area where you are a prime candidate for a minus-the-rollers touchdown. Nuff sed!

Night Autorotation

Two Naval Aviators were scheduled for a two-hour night instrument check in an H-2 *Seasprite*. The aircraft commander, the check pilot, was a lieutenant commander with considerable flying experience. The rest of the crew consisted of a lieutenant junior grade copilot and two enlisted crew members. Preflight was normal, as was engine run-up, and the helicopter became airborne slightly after 2000.

The helo entered a simulated holding pattern for approximately 10 to 12 minutes. During this time, the crew members in the back were out of their seats and had their gunner belts on. Control of the aircraft changed hands several times between the two pilots, since one was studying approach plates.

The lieutenant commander was flying the aircraft on a heading of roughly 090 degrees when he noticed a small change in the vibration rate, which lasted eight to ten seconds. This was followed by a loud bang and a heavy, high frequency and audible vibration which could be felt in the flight controls. The aircraft went out of balanced flight and was partially corrected by the pilot. He informed the crew they were going down and commenced autorotation.

The crew opened the doors on each side of the aircraft, sat down and fastened their lap belts. The aircraft decelerated from about 90 knots to 75 knots. The pilot made a left-hand turn toward the field of intended landing.

The copilot radioed Mayday, the gear was lowered and the landing lights were turned on. At about 1,000 feet, the pilot didn’t think the aircraft would clear the trees surrounding the intended landing site and secured both engines. At treetop level, the pilot had killed off most ground speed and, when he could no longer hold it, he pulled the collective up and held it against his left rib cage.

The rate of descent stopped briefly, then the helo descended through the trees, rolled to the left and impacted the ground on its left side. All crew members remembered noticing the tremendous amount of dust in the air and

the smell of fuel.

One of them exited first after breaking out the window of the right door, which had partially closed during descent through the trees. The other crewman remembers tree branches striking him through the open left-hand door during descent and being suspended by his lap belt after impact. He released himself and exited second.

The copilot’s seat tore loose from the aircraft on impact and he found himself on the left side of the cockpit. He loosened his harness, stood up, knocked out some glass from a window and exited third.

The pilot tried to crawl straight out the top of the aircraft but realized he couldn’t — there was a seat on top of him. He freed himself, threw the seat to the rear and climbed up and out a window. The four men assembled in a field, clear of the aircraft, and checked for injuries. There were no serious injuries. The aircraft was a total loss.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! This was a hairy one — appears that somethin’ went wrong with the tail rotor and it came off!

All I can say is this driver was really cool — did everything just right. A well done to the aircraft commander and his crew.