



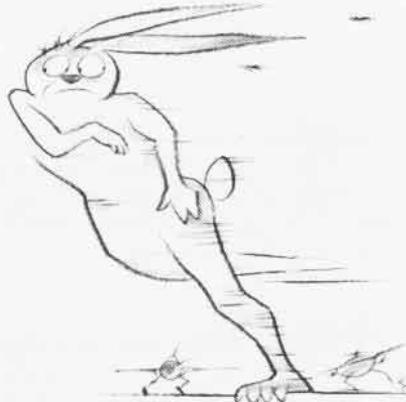
GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Blade Connection

Two CH-53Ds and one CH-46 were to engage in an external lift of hulk vehicles to and from a confined area pickup zone. Helicopter aircraft commander (HAC) of helo Dash 1 briefed the flight to proceed as three individual units under his control as mission commander. Each HAC then conducted individual crew briefs. Taxi and takeoff sequence were not briefed. Dash 1 HAC was delayed in operations for a last-minute brief and tasked his copilot to brief the crew and preflight the aircraft. The Dash 1 copilot complied. He also instructed the crew chief to re-spot the CH-53 for more rotor blade clearance during the turn-up. When the HAC arrived at the aircraft, he performed a cursory inspection and decided that the re-spot was unnecessary.

After engine start and pre-taxi checks were completed, a mechanic on a nearby helicopter anticipated Dash 1's need for a taxi director and positioned himself accordingly. After receiving taxi clearance, Dash 1 began rolling forward under control of the taxi director, increasing its speed once established on the taxi line. The taxi director saw that he was no longer needed and, in fact, was being forced to run backward to avoid being run over by the aircraft. He rendered an informal salute to indicate termination of his taxi direction. Dash 1 HAC acknowledged the salute.

The direction of taxi placed the sun at the pilot's 11 o'clock position, 10 to 15 degrees above the horizon. Dash 2 was parked facing in the same direction, with rotors turning, in the center of a painted H-2 ramp parking circle located 64 feet right and 150 feet ahead of Dash 1's taxi line. The Dash 1 HAC taxied to the left of this



*"In snowy-blurry
March... runs the
MAD March hare"
Pilots... Beware!
gramps*

line as he approached Dash 2, to provide what he considered a margin of safety. No taxi director was present. The crew chief was occupied with preparing the cargo pendant in the aft section of the cargo compartment. The first mechanic was looking out the left gunner's window. The copilot noted that the blade tip clearance was going to be close, but made no

comment to the HAC who was talking on the radio. As Dash 1 passed abeam Dash 2, the main rotors of the two helos suddenly intermeshed. Both aircraft immediately began to oscillate violently, knocking the crew about, as flying blade fragments sprayed the area. All aircraft were immediately shut down and the aircrews egressed without serious injury.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy rotatin' razors. This close a shave gives old Singed Whiskers a real rash!

In addition to plain old pilot error, Gramps smells a little contributory negligence in this, along with some supervisory error thrown in just for luck (all bad).

The fact that the copilot did not issue a warning, the crew chief was busy in the cabin, the taxi director released the aircraft while in a congested area, and the pilot's primary concern was with a radio transmission instead of his aircraft, indicates not only poor crew coordination but general incompetence.

Facts concerning the marginal



ILLUSTRATED BY *Osborn*

performance of this pilot as a HAC were well known to squadron supervisory personnel for some time but, due to a shortage of aircraft commanders, he was kept on the job. Gramps totally agrees with one endorser who stated: "When your HAC cannot hack it, it's high time his qualification be reevaluated!" Additionally, a copilot who sits idly by and allows his pilot to taxi into a parked helo without speaking up — even though he had just been reprovved for antagonistically challenging the pilot over alterations to the pre-start checklist — is more kindergarten than professional.

This deviation from Natops and good sense directives, to engage in a childish act of kiddie bumper cars, resulted in needless, but significant, damage to two CH-53Ds, four CH-46Fs and minor injury to two crew members.

You can rest assured that this "Blade Connection" is no novel by Moore. It ain't novel at all!

And Now for My Next Act

A young but experienced Naval

Aviator and an observer were scheduled for a practice naval gunfire spotting mission in an OV-10A *Bronco*. The mission was properly briefed and a thorough preflight was conducted by the pilot. The takeoff, climbout and flight en route to the target area were normal and uneventful in all respects. When they arrived in the operating area, the ship was weighing anchor to position herself for practice firing.

The pilot had the observer request permission to make a recognition pass and this was approved. A roll-in was commenced at about 3,700 feet. A pullout was initiated, followed by a climbing left-hand turn. On reaching altitude, a second run was commenced. On this pass, the dive was continued to 50 or 60 feet and a pullout was initiated, followed by another left-hand turn. The pilot then directed his observer to get permission to fire the machine guns to demonstrate a practice firing run. On receipt of clearance, a third run was commenced from an altitude of approximately 2,000 feet, using a shallow dive angle. At an altitude of 400 to 500 feet and an airspeed of 150 to 160 knots, a pull-up was commenced. With the nose of the

aircraft about five degrees above the horizon, airspeed about 130 knots and an altitude of 700 to 800 feet, a roll was performed.

As the pilot completed the roll, the aircraft rapidly lost altitude. In a level attitude, but still descending, it struck the water and pitched sharply nose down and to the right. Just prior to impact, the observer ejected. The pilot received fatal injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! What a show! Yes sir, must be really great to show those shipboard fellas a really great air show with a lot of professionalism!?? Bet there were a coupla fellas on board who even *had* considered flight training — at one time!

Just about every time I think I've seen the last of this type of Delta Sierra maneuver, I see it again.

Young aviators readin' this article, lend me your ears. No matter how great the temptation to "show off" — DON'T. If you survive the maneuver (and most haven't), you'll face the long green table . . . believe me.

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