



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE



## Helpless Helo

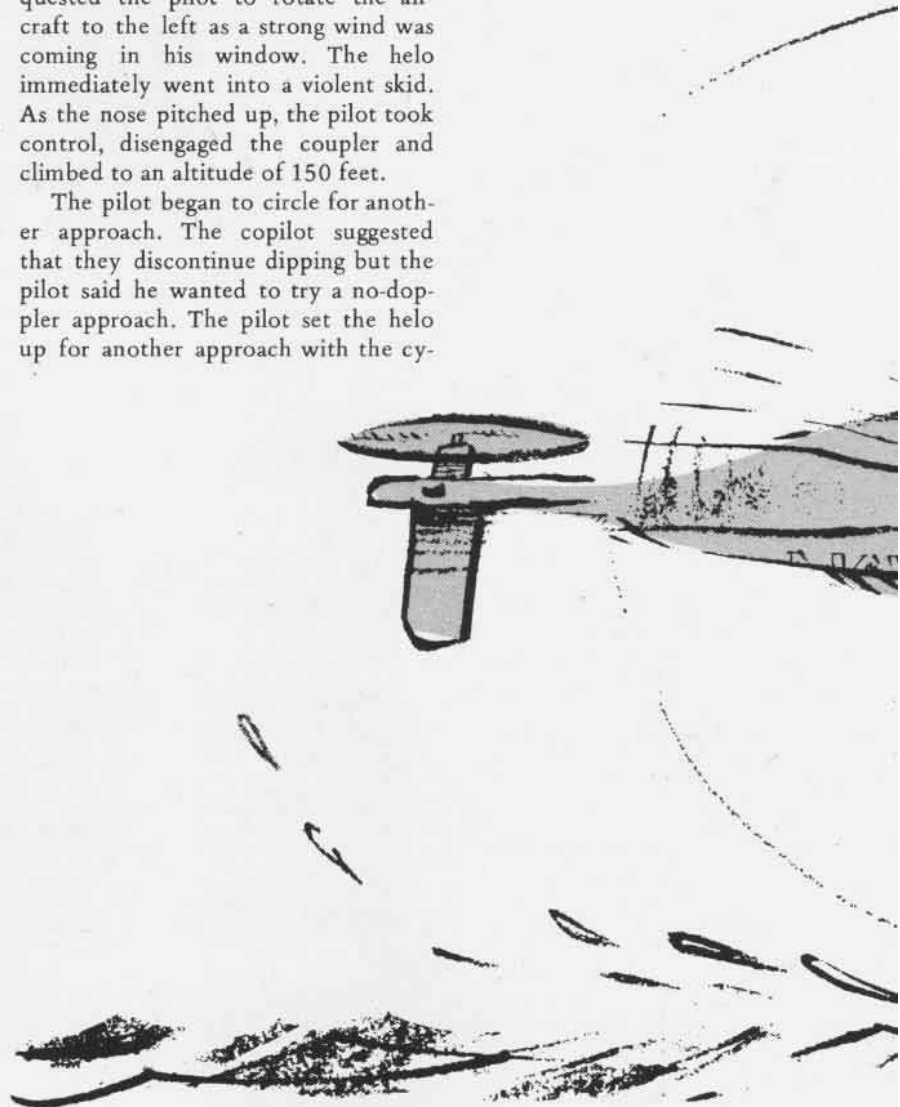
An SH-3A departed a CVS off the East Coast for a routine night ASW mission. Weather at the ship was clear with no moon and the helo proceeded to the datum area at 500 feet and 115 knots. By the time the helicopter reached datum, there was no horizon and an S-2D plane commander who was on station advised the helo pilots that doppler conditions were poor. He recommended that no-doppler approaches be attempted because of a very smooth sea state. He also informed them that one helicopter had already departed the area with possible damage to the sonar dome.

Prior to departing the smoke light for the first dip station, the pilot experienced vertigo. He gave the copilot control of the helo and instructed him to try an automatic doppler approach first. At 150 feet and 75 knots, the coupler was engaged and the helo immediately started to roll

from side to side. At an altitude of 100 feet, the roll became more pronounced. The nose started to move up and down. At 80 feet, control became even more erratic and the copilot informed the pilot that he was going to terminate the approach but the pilot told him to continue and see if it would settle down. At about 50 feet and 40 knots, the copilot requested the pilot to rotate the aircraft to the left as a strong wind was coming in his window. The helo immediately went into a violent skid. As the nose pitched up, the pilot took control, disengaged the coupler and climbed to an altitude of 150 feet.

The pilot began to circle for another approach. The copilot suggested that they discontinue dipping but the pilot said he wanted to try a no-doppler approach. The pilot set the helo up for another approach with the cy-

lic coupler off and instructed the copilot to switch to the doppler mode as they passed through 80 feet. The coupler was engaged at 150 feet and, at 80 feet, the copilot switched to doppler as instructed. Almost immediately, everything became very erratic with the aircraft attaining some weird attitudes. The pilot quickly disen-



gaged the coupler in a desperate attempt to recover.

When the aircraft entered a near-uncontrolled attitude, the copilot said, "I have it," because he thought the pilot had vertigo, but the pilot said he still had it. The collective was in the full-up position during most of the recovery attempt. At one time, the

copilot noted the gyro horizon indicated 20 degrees nose up. Both pilots fought the aircraft for the next few seconds but were unable to regain control. The aircraft contacted the water in a nose-down, right-wing-down attitude, and immediately rolled to the right. The crew abandoned the helo and were rescued by whaleboats

from two destroyers operating in the area. Two of the crewmen suffered from exposure but otherwise were all right.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! These lads worked like beavers to booby-trap themselves and darn near bought the farm doing it.

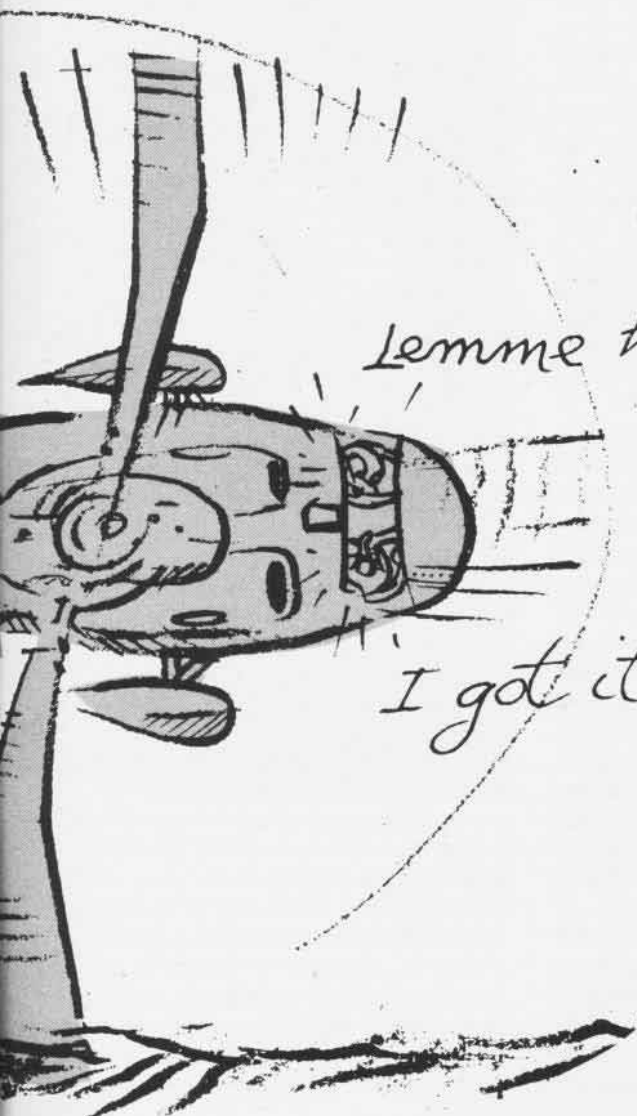
I'll admit a pretty weird set of conditions got together during this fiasco, but a little good judgment based on sound operating procedures could have saved the crew a cold swim and Uncle Sam a costly helo.

When you completely ignore the advice of other pilots in the area and pay no attention to such clues as vertigo, disorientation, haze, poor horizon and the better judgment of your copilot, you're really askin' for it.

After this thing reached a point of no return, both pilots got on the controls and ended up fighting each other until the helpless helo crashed. Cockpit discipline like this will get you nothing but a peck of trouble.

These destroyer boys have fished a lot of birdmen out of the drink. It's mighty comforting to know they're around and eager to lend a helping hand. My hat is off to them any time. This helo crew would have been in real bad shape if the DDs hadn't been around for this one.

(Reprinted from November 1964)



*Lemme have it!*

*I got it!*

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Famous last words—"I can make it. I'll just lean it all the way back."

The world's best safety device is situated slightly above and between your ears—use it.

Follow the rules and give the poor taxpayers a break.

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