



Illustrations by *Ted Wilbur*

Scratch One Seahawk

An SH-60F *Seahawk* with two pilots and two aircrewmen on board launched on a night sortie from an aircraft carrier as a secondary plane guard. The aircraft proceeded beyond a five-mile radius of the ship where it conducted search and rescue and navigation training. Later, this helo, with three hours of fuel remaining, was called in by departure control to assume plane guard duty inside the five-mile perimeter. At this point, the helo was at 150 feet altitude with the radar altimeter hold engaged, 13 miles from the ship.

The pilot acknowledged the summons. Maintaining 150 feet, departure control directed the helo to take up a heading of 350 degrees and climb to 500 feet. The crew did not acknowledge this transmission but the *Seahawk* did initiate a climb. At approximately 300 feet, the SH-60F began a descent, apparently unrecognized by the crew. The helo continued downward and crashed into the water at a rate of descent of about 2,500 feet per minute.

The pilots sustained some injuries but egressed safely from the sinking helo; however, the tactical sensor operator and the acoustic sensor operator were lost at sea.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Gol dang it! What happened to instrument scan? What happened to crew coordination?

These fliers musta got temporarily disoriented, which is always bad news when you're in the sky but is especially troublin'

when you're down low without much maneuvering room. At one point, the copilot pushed the cyclic automatic flight control system release button instead of the intended intercom (the buttons look alike and are on the collective), which may have been a factor. It's also quite possible that the *Seahawk* suffered a trim failure, causing loss of altitude hold and the consequent, unanticipated descent.

Still, a sound and consistent



scan pattern is a must in today's high-performance flyin' machines—whether you're high or low, fast or slow, particularly when you're operatin' in the dark.

Divert Debacle

A student Naval Aviator awoke at 0325 for a 0500 course rules brief before a carrier qualification flight in a T-45 *Goshawk* aboard a carrier off the coast. The primary divert field assigned was the naval air station (NAS) from which the flight would depart. The secondary was a Navy field on the coast.

After a flight briefing at 0600, the aircraft departed for the carrier. Due to marginal weather, however, it had to return to the NAS, arriving at 1015. The student later attended an impromptu all officers meeting to discuss safety issues relating to a T-45 mishap that occurred in another squadron. After the meeting and lunch the student briefed for a second launch to the boat, and at 1500 took off once again for the carrier.

The student received a "Charlie" signal on arrival at the carrier and let down into the pattern where he made two touch and goes. Subsequently, he made two hook-down passes, waving off both times. At this point he was at bingo fuel and was directed by the tower to divert to shore and proceed with an emergency bingo divert profile. A lead/safe instructor was assigned to join the student and escort him to a land base.

Because of bad weather and radio and tactical aid to navigation problems, the join-up was

delayed. When they had rendezvoused the instructor assumed the "communications lead" but not the actual flight lead as required by a Chief of Naval Air Training instruction. The instructor told the student to land at the Navy facility on the coast, even though the student had sufficient fuel to safely execute a divert to the NAS launch point with which he was more familiar.

The flight descended and broke out of the weather and into the clear at 2,600 feet, over water, with the runway visible 10 miles in the distance. The instructor reminded the student to drop his gear and flaps at seven miles. The student had failed to perform his feet-dry checks prior to the approach, however, and didn't complete his landing checklist on final. Although he verified that his gear and flaps were down and speed brakes extended, he had omitted the aircraft anti-skid from the checklist and the system was not actuated. Also, the student was surprised to note the field did not have a Fresnel lens for landing.

He touched down nearly 2,000 feet from the approach end and hit the brakes while rolling out at 115 knots. Because anti-skid was deselected, the starboard main landing tire blew. The student was unable to counter the T-45's swerve to the right. The *Goshawk* departed the runway and flipped over. The student struck the instrument panel but suffered only minor lacerations and abrasions from the impact and from the shattered canopy. A physical exam revealed



the student was fatigued, dehydrated and poorly nourished at the time of the accident.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Light a blow torch and sing my whiskers one more time!

What can ole Gramps say about checklists but USE THEM! Blowin' a tire on a fast rollout is absolutely no fun. And it can be disastrous when you're exhausted, hungry and badly need a drink of water. The lead/safe pilot wasn't a lot of help here. "Task saturated" is the term used nowadays to describe a situation

where a flier has too much to do and not enough time to do it. Add the stress factor, lack of sleep, food and water and the recipe produces trouble with a capital T.

Another thing: we all know how students bust their brains and their behinds in the tough pursuit of golden wings. Tellin' them to step down from the flight schedule when they've been up and workin' for a dozen or so hours makes sense some days. This may have been one of those days. If the instructors aren't wary of this, at least the student himself has to be.