



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Sea King – Sea Food

“Helo plane guard is airborne,” called the air boss as the SH-3 *Sea King* entered a starboard delta pattern and assumed the day plane guard position. Little did this crew realize that a series of occurrences would later test their knowledge and skills to the point of survival.

The first event occurred 30 minutes after launch with a runaway lateral beeper trim. The helicopter aircraft commander (HAC) took control of the aircraft, analyzed the problem, secured the beeper trim, passed control back to the copilot and the mission continued. Minutes later the #1 fuel boost pump warning light illuminated. The HAC secured the #1 boost pump and activated the #2 boost pump. The #2 warning light also came on but extinguished when the HAC turned the #1 pump back on. With both warning lights now out, the mission continued.

After one hour of flight, 1,000 pounds of fuel had been consumed. Ten minutes later, however, the fuel gauges showed 2,000 pounds of fuel depleted. A crew member reported that he smelled fumes and the HAC ordered a search for leaks. Looking out the cargo hatch, a crewman observed fuel streaming from the tail of the aircraft. Seconds later, the #1 engine flamed out. The HAC again took control of the aircraft, transmitted an emergency call to the ship, and was cleared for an immediate landing. Several aircraft were spotted for launch on the CV fantail, forcing the HAC to plan for a run-on-landing on the angle, crossing the deck in the direction of #2 catapult. Passing the stern of the carrier, the SH-3 was at 150 feet, with air speed at 70-80 knots and rotor speed (NR) established at 98 percent. At one-quarter nm final,



the aircraft was at 100 feet, airspeed 70 knots, with NR at 90. Abeam the Fresnel lens, the helo had descended to flight deck level, airspeed now 50 knots with sink rate increasing. The pilot then executed a waveoff to the left. Now below flight deck level with sink rate continuing, the HAC instructed the copilot to dump fuel, jettison sonobuoys and bring on manual throttle. All efforts to regain NR and decrease sink rate were ineffective. Passing through 40 feet with NR at 85, the pilot flared the helo and slowed to 20 knots prior to hitting the water. Upon impact, the nose tucked and a large swell engulfed the aircraft's forward section. The helo rapidly rolled left and flipped inverted.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

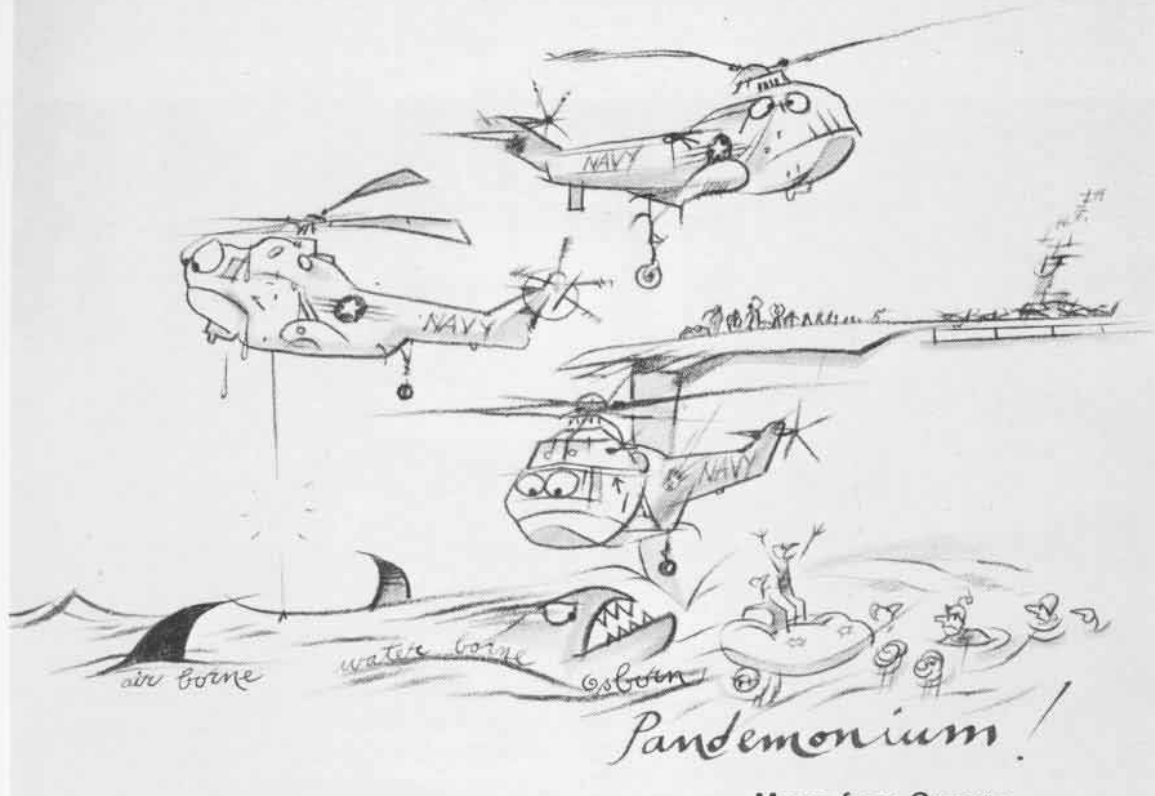
Great sufferin' *Sea Kings*! If this doesn't leave you with a sinking feeling, then you're all wet!

The primary cause of this mishap

was attributed to material failure. Unfortunately, the exact cause cannot be determined since the aircraft was not recovered. It is suspected that failure of the starboard fuel filter assembly resulted in sufficient fuel flow interruption to cause engine flameout.

A contributing cause was listed as pilot error in that the HAC took physical control of the aircraft too hastily, attempted an immediate landing without exercising other options, and did not adequately establish maximum single-engine performance parameters. It was felt that the copilot had the aircraft safely under control and that the HAC should have involved himself more in developing a plan that would have conserved sufficient energy (i.e., dump fuel, sonobuoys, etc.) prior to attempting a left-seat, no-hover, roll-on landing. Some doubt exists as to the proper execution of the single-engine emergency checklist, since both the HAC and the copilot reached for the speed controls but each thought the other had or would move them. The copilot did not – the HAC couldn't remember. The SH-3 has rather decent single-engine qualities and does not demand extreme urgency in getting it on deck.

The rescue of this crew proved to be most interesting. A second SAR SH-3 hovered over the sinking helo as soon as the spray of the rotors striking the water subsided. No survivors were visible. Several seconds later, five crewmen appeared on the surface, three of whom were hoisted into the helo. A raft was lowered to the remaining two (copilot and passenger crewman) and the helo returned to the carrier for more fuel. While it was refueling, a third SH-3 was launched to retrieve the other two survivors. This helo was in a down status for SAR to replace



the rescue hoist cable with no hook attached. The crew effected a quick-splice attachment and checked it for slippage by suspending a heavyweight troubleshooter. SAR helo #3 flew beyond the passenger, who was in the raft, and began a hover to rescue the copilot. A wetcrewman entered the water to assist. The co-pilot and wetcrewman hooked up and were hoisted upward. As they reached the cargo door, the hoist cable separated, plunging the two back into the water, 20-25 feet. A raft was lowered from the helpless, hookless helo and the carrier was notified. SAR helo #2, now airborne following refueling, was hovering to rescue the passenger crewman on the raft when SAR helo #3 asked #2 to hurry as sharks had been spotted 50 yards away. They were heading toward their two unaware intended victims who were struggling to get into the raft. Helo #2 rescued the raft passenger and quickly air-taxied over to pick up the copilot and wetcrewman. The second of the two tumbled into the raft just as Old John Jaws made a lip-smacking pass by the raft. Sea King #2 retrieved the two and returned them to the carrier unharmed.

All in a day in the life of a copilot . . . and so to bed.

Memo from Gramps

While digging through some of my earlier flight material, I happened across some copy that you young tigers might enjoy. I cannot vouch for its authenticity, but there's lots of good words here for one short page, particularly paragraph #5, which still applies.

Instructions Issued with the 1911 Glenn Curtiss "Pusher"

First Known Airplane Flight Manual Rules Governing The Use Of Aeronautical Apparatus

The Aeronaut Should seat himself in the apparatus, and secure himself firmly to the chair by means of the strap provided. On the attendant crying "Contact," the aeronaut should close the switch which supplies electrical current to the motor, thus enabling the attendant to set the same in motion.

Opening The Control valve of the motor, the aeronaut should at the same time firmly grasp the vertical stick or control pole which is to be found directly before the chair. The power from the motor will cause the device to roll gently forward and the aeronaut should govern its direction of motion by use of the rudder bars.

When The Mechanism is facing into the wind, the aeronaut should open the control valve of the motor to its fullest extent, at the same time pulling the control pole gently toward his middle anatomy.

When Sufficient Speed has been attained the device will leave the ground and assume the position of aeronautical ascent.

Should The Aeronaut decide to return to terra firma, he should close the control valve of the motor. This will cause the apparatus to assume what is known as the gliding position, except in the case of those flying machines which are inherently unstable. These latter will assume the position known as involuntary spin and will return to earth without further action on the part of the aeronaut.

On Approaching Closely to the chosen field or terrain, the aeronaut should move the control pole gently toward himself, thus causing the mechanism to alight more or less gently on terra firma.