Grampaw Pettibone

From the Mailbag

Gramps received the following note from an interested reader, Ltjg. Frank Giblin, assistant safety officer, ComMAtVAQWingPac, concerning the comment Gramps made in the October 1980 issue relative to the F-14 chock walker injury. His request follows:

"As an integrity watch officer, it was my understanding that the proper A/C tie-down required chains to have hook points "up" vice "down" to prevent a momentarily slack chain from disengaging the padeye. Did the tire blow because it was punctured by the hook, or some other reason? Please clarify. If this is dangerous, then the integrity watch instructions used aboard USS *Coral Sea* (November 79-June 80 cruise) should be changed to reflect the hazard."

Grampaw Pettibone says:

The proper position for tie-down hook points is "up" as stated in your IWO instructions. For further information, a write-up with photos on tie-down procedures appeared in the summer 1980 issue of *Mech* magazine, page 38. They are also described in NavAirSysCom Tech Manual (17-1-537) for Operations and Service Procedure For Aircraft Handling and Securing Equipment.

The important point in this feature was that the safety petty officer pointed out the hook hazard, was ordered off the deck, and aircraft movement continued. The aircraft rolled over the "up" hook point, causing the tire to explode and seriously injured the chock walker. The action speaks for itself! It was just plain dumb!

Many thanks for the interest and inquiry.

The Uncollected Collective

BRAAAAAAH! BRAAAAAAH! Rang the klaxon, then the crank phone sounded. The crew quickly ran outside the hangar to observe one of our SH-3 helos returning to home plate with flight control difficulties.

As the airframes work center supervisor joined the gathering crowd of observers, he shouted, "What's that aircraft doing in the air anyway? I told maintenance control that helo was down! I guess my 16 years of experience doesn't mean a thing, 'cause it looks like somebody decided it was up."

His words rang in my ears and I watched anxiously as the helo executed an emergency landing and shutdown. Shortly after takeoff, the pilot of this ill-fated helo reported a slight stiffness in the collective which he diagnosed as interference from the co-pilot's hand or knee. The stiffness went away and nothing more was thought of it until 10 minutes later.

In attempting to level off from a climb, the pilot discovered that he could not lower the collective. After some experimenting, the crew noted that they could climb but not descend.

ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

Realizing the seriousness of the situation, the pilot declared an emergency and hastily retreated to home field.

Once over the field, the crew determined that something was binding the collective linkage. Both pilots grasped the collective and exerted sufficient force to bend the aluminum feedback control arm which had become fouled on the helo's drip pan. They were then able to lower the collective and descend safely.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! This pair of collected cohorts was able to foil the Grim Reaper only through their collective efforts and to avoid the catastrophe so carelessly concocted in this colossal case of collective incommunicado. The investigation revealed the helo had just returned from a two-week det with a barometer altitude (BarAlt) discrepancy. It was inducted into phase C inspection after the BarAlt was removed and sent to the AIMD for repair. Maintenance control was notified that the BarAlt controller had been removed, and made an appropriate notation on the VIDS aircraft visual status board. The petty officer who wrote up the BarAlt removal then departed for 10 days of well earned leave. Heard this before?

During phase C, no inspection of the BarAlt controller is called for. It was assumed that the part would be replaced before the aircraft came out of phase C. It was not. The loose collective arm was neither tagged nor noted in maintenance control. The aircraft exited phase C with only an UP discrepancy. During the plane captain's inspection following phase C, he found the feedback arm resting on the drip pan. On his way to maintenance control, he stopped in the airframes shop and asked a metalsmith to take a look at the problem. The metalsmith agreed that it didn't look right but advised that the problem belonged to work center 220 not 120. The plane captain then led an electrician from work center 220 out to take a look. He commented, "No problem. You don't need a BarAlt to have an UP airplane. You only need it for IFR or night flight.".

The tenacious plane captain continued on to maintenance control to write up the gripe, only to be met by the same cocky petty officer in maintenance control who assured him it wasn't necessary because there was already an outstanding discrepancy on the BarAlt and even a grease pencil note on the VIDS board, "BarAlt removed."

Well, you guessed it. The next day the aircraft was issued to this unsuspecting flight crew for a routine training mission. How many times have you heard Old Singed Whiskers' sermon on this sort of sinful neglect. Well, I'll spare the words this time, but break out the "collection plate" gang, 'cause a lot of folks owe some dues on this one.