

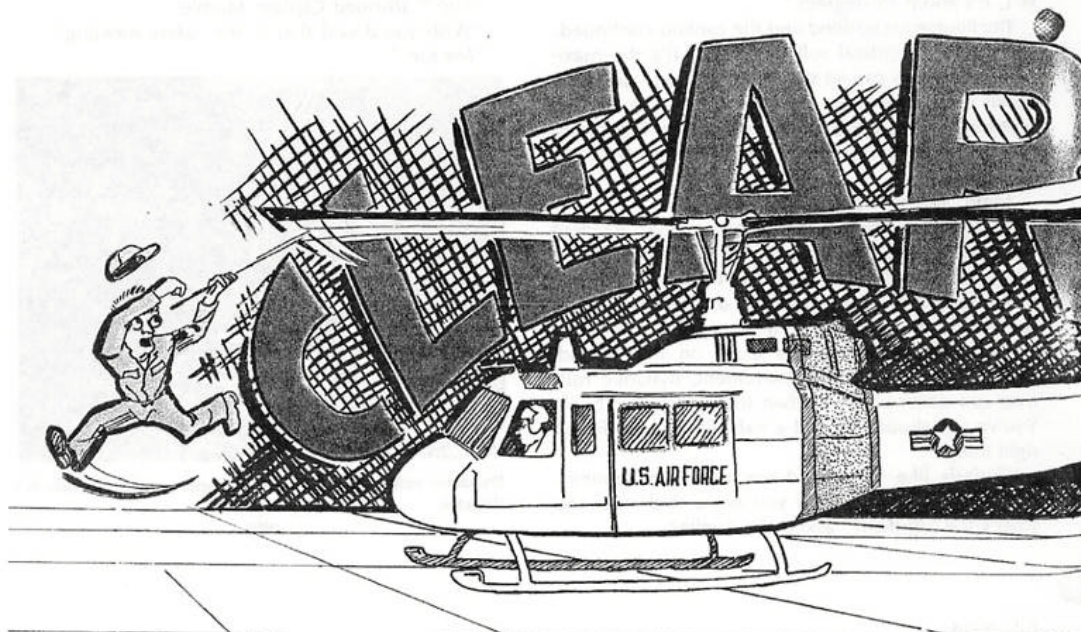
The Swinging Crew Chief

The stirring saga of two happy-go-lucky Huey jocks, Wonder Woman, and the fire guard who wasn't there.

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Certainly I always use the checklist! Good old challenge and response—it's been drilled into me so much these few years in MAC that my wife has begun to make snide little comments about our love life. But that's another story. This story is about one fateful day in that swell Bell, the Huey.

It started off as a typical day at the office. In at 0700 (duty day starts at 0730 but my boss says seven is good OER material). A little paperwork before briefing for a flight at eight, then into the air on a combat SAR training mission. (Ahhh—there's nothing like flinging your body across the treetops at a breathtaking 100 knots—or .15 Mach for you angle-of-attacking jet jocks who don't remember what a knot is.) Then out for a late lunch after a marathon debriefing in accordance with MAC Reg umpty-ump. After lunch, into the air again, but this time only for a short FCF and another marathon de-



briefing with maintenance.

A little more paperwork and it was five o'clock (duty day ends at four-thirty but my boss says five is even better OER material). Just as I finished arranging all the work I hadn't done today in the proper sequence for not doing it tomorrow, the SOF walked in. It turned out that, since everyone had left half an hour ago, one other eager beaver and myself were the only ones available for an engine run that Maintenance said just had to be done today. I did the requisite amount of griping (17 minutes for an after-hours engine run) and headed out to the aircraft, hoping to get it over with before Wonder Woman showed up on the tube.

I was copilot on this one so I got out my checklist and got ready to preflight. The AC, who was busy with the forms, suggested I go ahead; he'd

join me presently. This seemed like a good idea (remember Wonder Woman), so I began. "Crew and pax—briefed, cabin interior—checked," I mumbled, challenging and responding myself. On it went until the AC joined me at about the before-starting-engines checklist. By then, I'd gotten so used to responding to myself that sometimes I'd respond and sometimes the AC would. Things probably sounded a little haphazard to the crew chief, but we knew that everything was under control. After all, we were both experienced pilots who knew the checklist almost from memory. We thought.

"Rotors—clear and clean tip," I challenged and responded.

"Clear right," the AC remarked—even though he couldn't actually see the rotor blade because it was a little further aft than normal and the bulkhead was in the way.

"Fire guard—posted," I responded for the crew chief—who wasn't actually posted, but had walked back to remove the tiedown which the AC hadn't been able to see dangling from the rotor tip.

"Engine—turning one," the AC said. The engine did, indeed, begin turning. So did the rotor blade. And so did the crew chief, who was hanging onto the still-attached tiedown. We decided to abort the start as he passed the front of the aircraft, screaming obscenities. He managed to get the tiedown off before it could tangle in the tail rotor, thereby saving three rear ends—one belonging to the aircraft and the other two to the pilots.

They say experience is the best teacher, and this one certainly taught us a thing or two. And just in case you think this kind of thing only happens to new guys, consider this: the AC was a standardization type with umpty thousand flying hours.

All accident-free, of course.

