

BRAVO Zulu



VT-3

Capt. Robert Noonan



Air Force Capt. Robert Noonan, attached to Training Air Wing Five at NAS Whiting Field, was flying solo in a T-34C as pilot-in-command of Maintenance 511. The flight was a post-maintenance, functional-check flight after an engine change. The profile called for several checks to be performed within dead-engine glide distance of a suitable landing site, followed by point runs at 10,000, 15,000, and 20,000 feet. Capt. Noonan set up for his checks three miles east of the Brewton, Ala., Municipal Airport, for which the Navy has a joint-use agreement.

Upon arriving in the working area, Capt. Noonan noticed the engine was not responding to power-control-lever movement. The engine was at 850 foot-pounds of torque, too high to land. Capt. Noonan completed the uncontrollable, high-power checklist, which called for maneuvering the aircraft to a suitable field and then rapidly securing the engine.

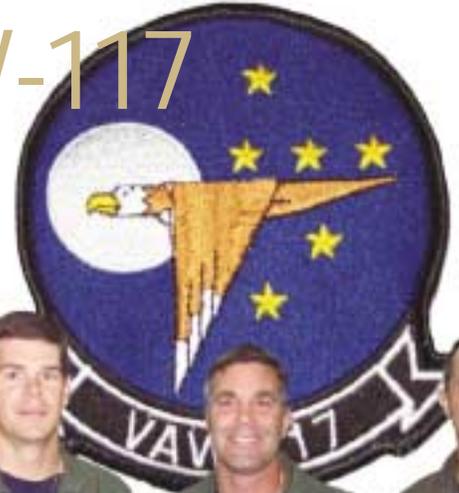
Capt. Noonan then executed a flawless dead-engine glide to a landing at Brewton. The engine was replaced. A subsequent engineering investigation found that the uncontrollable high power was caused by an assembly problem with the engine at the factory. The engine was returned to Pratt and Whitney for warranty replacement.

To prepare for a WestPac 2001 deployment, the crew of Banger 600 was conducting FCLPs at NAS Point Mugu, Calif. Cdr. Rick Pawlowski, the skipper of the Wallbangers, was the aircraft commander and the copilot. Lt. Mike France was the pilot at the controls. Lt. Mark Kempf and Ltjg. Paul Flores were in the CIC compartment waiting for their turns in the pattern. On Lt. France's third pass, at the 45, the aircraft had a sudden, continuous, forceful, nose-down pressure because of a failed elevator bungee. Lt. France added power, pulled back the yoke, regained control of the aircraft and executed a waveoff. Cdr. Pawlowski recognized the severity of the nose-down pressure and assisted Lt. France with the controls. He pushed the autopilot and trim buttons on the yoke to deactivate those features.

Relying on the crew-coordination brief, Lt. France and Cdr. Pawlowski maintained the aircraft direction along the runway to have an option for a long field arrestment. They notified the crew in the CIC compartment and coordinated with the tower and the LSOs. With both pilots exerting backpressure on the controls, they completed all emergency and normal checklists, entered a right downwind, and made an arrested landing on the centerline. The crew later estimated it had required greater than 65 pounds of backpressure on the yoke to compensate for the nose-down pressure.

The material failure of the rudder bungee resulted in full nose-down deflection of the elevator-trim actuator. The crew landed without the primary or the standby trim system. This aircraft malfunction, close to the ground at the end of a flight, required coordination among the crew, ground controllers and paddles to land the aircraft.

VAW-117



Ltjg. Paul Flores, Lt. Mike France, Cdr. Rick Pawlowski, Lt. Mark Kempf

HMH-462

During a functional-check flight out of MCAS Miramar, four miles from the Pacific coast, the aerial observer of Thunder 13, LCpl. Tim Hale, noticed a man in the water waving his arms. LCpl. Hale alerted the crew. The HAC, Capt. Brian Fanning, directed the crew chief, LCpl. Wesley Franklin, and LCpl. Hale to watch the victim as he assumed on-scene-commander duties. The crew saw the victim had on a wetsuit and appeared healthy. The pilot at the controls, 1stLt. Randy Roden, circled the victim at 500 feet and 70 knots. Capt. Fanning radioed Southern California approach, who in turn relayed the information to the Coast Guard. Thunder 13 remained on scene until a Coast Guard SAR aircraft arrived to make the rescue. The victim had been jet skiing when the ski had mechanical trouble and sank. The man had not been reported missing and had been in the water more than 24 hours.

LCpl. Wesley Franklin, LCpl. Tim Hale,
1stLt. Randy Roden, Capt. Brian Fanning

