

COMMANDING OFFICER
NAVAL AIR STATION MEMPHIS 84
MILLINGTON, TENNESSEE 38054

8/11/86

Dear Joe,
Enclosed is a copy of a speech I gave at the first HC-8 Change of Command in June. Since a lot of it is about you, I thought you would be interested in reading it.

Needless to say, we are concerned for you and you are constantly in our thoughts and prayers. I am especially hopeful that you will recover soon enough to visit us over the Thanksgiving holidays. We are saving a couple of places at the table. In any case, I hope you are planning to be at NHA this ^{next} year. It is scheduled for early May in Norfolk. (6-9 May I think).

Please let us know how you are and take care of yourself.

Vertically Yours,
Mike

HC-8 CHANGE OF COMMAND 12 JUN 86
NAS NORFOLK

ADMIRAL _____, COMMODORE PRESNELL, CDR JOYCE, CDR PONZO,
MEN AND WOMEN OF HC-8, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.



IT IS ALWAYS AN HONOR TO BE INVITED TO SPEAK AT A CHANGE OF COMMAND. FOR ME, HOWEVER, THIS IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. AS YOU KNOW FROM MY MOST GENEROUS INTRODUCTION, I HAVE AN EARLY AND CONTINUING ASSOCIATION WITH THE MISSION OF THIS COMMAND. HOWEVER, THE DEMANDS OF MY DUTIES SUBSEQUENT TO MY TOUR AS A SQUADRON COMMANDING OFFICER HAVE KEPT ME FROM BEING DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE VERT-REP COMMUNITY. THIS OCCASION OFFERS ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET BACK IN TOUCH.

I HAVE MISSED THE AIRCRAFT, THE MISSION, AND ESPECIALLY THE SQUADRON LIFE. SO, NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS QUITE EXCITED AND GRATEFUL TO CDR JOYCE FOR ASKING ME HERE TODAY.

OF COURSE, AS I SAT DOWN TO THE TASK OF COMING UP WITH SOMETHING TO SAY, SOME OF MY EXCITEMENT DIMMED. BUT, AS I THOUGHT ABOUT SEEING OLD SQUADRON MATES LIKE JIM JOYCE AND HEARING THE FAMILIAR SOUND OF THE H-46, I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT MY NAVY EXPERIENCE HAS PROVIDED ME WITH A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SHORT HISTORY OF THE VERT-REP COMMUNITY AND THIS SPEECH WOULD GIVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT THE MEN AND WOMEN OF HC-8--WHICH IS THE NEWEST VERT-REP SQUADRON--WITH THE OLDEST WHERE I STARTED. WHAT I HAVE TO SAY MAY GIVE YOU SOME SMALL INSIGHT AS TO WHY YOU ARE THE WAY YOU ARE, BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. I THINK IT MAY ALSO INTEREST YOU AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GOOD LEADERSHIP AND OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE CAN

BE PERPETUATED AND HOW VERY IMPORTANT TO A JOURNEY A GOOD START CAN BE.



A LITTLE MORE THAN 21 YEARS AGO -- THE WINTER OF 1964 TO BE MORE EXACT -- ON ALMOST THIS VERY SPOT, I AND 5 OTHER OFFICERS, 17 ENLISTED AND A BOEING TECH REP - ALL ASSIGNED TO WHAT WAS THEN HU-4, DET NORFOLK, AND 3 YEARS LATER WOULD BECOME HC-6 - LINED UP IN FRONT OF THE FIRST TWO H-46's DELIVERED TO THE NAVY AND HAD OUR PICTURE TAKEN. WE WERE THE NAVY'S FIRST H-46 VERT-REP DETACHMENT.

WITHIN A SHORT TIME A SIMILAR EVENT OCCURRED AT HU-1, REAM FIELD, NAS IMPERIAL BEACH, CALIFORNIA WHEN A DETACHMENT-WHICH WOULD LATER BECOME HC-3-WAS FORMED. BY THE WAY, COMMODORE PRESNELL WAS AMONG THE EARLIEST MEMBERS OF THAT DETACHMENT.

FROM THAT BEGINNING OF TWO DETACHMENTS CONSISTING OF A TOTAL OF 12 OFFICERS, 40 MEN AND 4 AIRCRAFT, THE H-46 COMMUNITY HAS GROWN INTO A FORCE OF MORE THAN 300 OFFICERS, 1500 ENLISTED AND OVER 90 AIRCRAFT ORGANIZED INTO FIVE FLEET SQUADRONS - WHO DEPLOY DETACHMENTS TO VIRTUALLY EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE ON DOZENS OF SHIPS.

FROM THE BEGINNING AND THROUGHOUT THE PAST 20 ODD YEARS, THE VERT-REP COMMUNITY HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY IMAGINATION, TEAMWORK, INNOVATION, AND DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP. IT HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE THE LEADING COMMUNITY IN NAVAL AVIATION IN AREAS OF RETENTION, SAFETY, OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND UNIT PRIDE -- AND THE DRAGON WHALES OF HC-8 ARE THE LATEST SQUADRON TO FOLLOW IN THAT TRADITION.

THAT RECORD OF PERFORMANCE HAS NOT BEEN BY ACCIDENT OR CHANCE. WE HAVE HAD OUTSTANDING PEOPLE WHO MADE ALL THESE THINGS HAPPEN ALL ALONG THE WAY - BUT I BELIEVE THEY WERE HELPED BY SOME UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES.



WHEN I AM FINISHED YOU MAY DISAGREE WITH SOME OR EVEN MOST OF WHAT I AM GOING TO SAY, BUT IT SHOULD GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

FIRST, YOU HAVE TO GIVE A LOT OF CREDIT TO THE H-46. IT IS IDEALLY SUITED TO ITS MISSION. SO MUCH SO, IN FACT, THAT IT IS THE ONLY AIRCRAFT/MISSION COMBINATION THAT I CAN THINK OF WHOSE SERVICES ARE SO OFTEN LIMITED BY THE CUSTOMER'S ABILITY TO RECEIVE THEM. TROOPS ALWAYS NEED MORE AIR SUPPORT, THERE ARE ALWAYS MORE BOMBS NEEDED ON THE TARGET, ALWAYS A NEED FOR A FASTER MORE NIMBLE FIGHTER, A MORE CAPABLE CARGO PLANE, MORE POWERFUL SONAR, A LARGER COMPUTER OR MORE SONOBUOYS. BUT TEAM UP A GOOD AFS, AOE OR OTHER MLSF SHIP WITH AN H-46 DET AND THERE ARE FEW SHIPS THAT CAN KEEP UP WITH THE INBOUND LOADS - REGARDLESS OF THE RELATIVE WIND AND SEA STATES.

THEN THERE IS THE MISSION ITSELF. EACH SHIP, EACH LOAD, EACH RELATIVE POSITION, EACH DISTANCE, EACH ROTOR CLEARANCE, EACH DROP ZONE IS UNIQUE AND CONSTANTLY CHANGING. AND I DON'T CARE HOW EXCITING TOP GUN IS - "THE LAST OF THE SCARF IN THE WIND AVIATION" IS VERT-REP. YOU HAVEN'T LIVED UNTIL YOU HAVE SLIPPED 2 TONS OF CARGO ON AN 8 x 10' CIRCLE BETWEEN AN ANTENNA AND A GUN MOUNT ON A ROLLING DECK. THE NEED FOR THE MISSION EXISTS IN WAR OR PEACE, ON THE GUN LINE OR THE OFF-LOAD IN HOMEPORT.



IT'S AN AVIATION MISSION, ACCOMPLISHED FROM A SURFACE SHIP
IN SUPPORT OF THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF THE SEAGOING NAVY.

BECAUSE THE MISSION IS DONE BY SMALL, LARGELY INDEPENDENT
DETACHMENTS, STRONG LEADERSHIP BY RELATIVELY JUNIOR PEOPLE IS A
BASIC REQUIREMENT. IN NO OTHER SCENERIO IN NAVAL AVIATION IS THERE
THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SO MANY TO HAVE SO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY SO EARLY --
FROM AIRMAN TO OFFICER IN CHARGE.

IF MEASURED BY THEIR TRAINING AND MISSION EXPERIENCE, PERHAPS
NO OTHER NAVY COMMUNITY - IN OR OUT OF AVIATION - WITH THE POSSIBLE
EXCEPTION OF LAMPS - PROVIDES ITS MEMBERS WITH A BROADER EXPOSURE
AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOTAL NAVY MISSION.

AND OF COURSE THERE IS THE TEAM WORK REQUIRED. NOW ALMOST ALL
NAVY MISSIONS REQUIRE GOOD TEAM WORK. BUT IN AVIATION I DOUBT THERE
IS ANY MISSION THAT REQUIRES A CLOSER MORE COOPERATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN
PILOT AND CREW. THE FEELING OF SATISFACTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT
A VERT-REP CREW GETS FROM A MISSION WELL DONE CAN ONLY BE EQUALLED
- NEVER EXCEEDED - AND IT COMES BECAUSE EACH MEMBER KNOWS THAT HIS
PART WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THAT OF THE OTHERS.

SO WE ARE WHAT WE ARE TO SOME DEGREE BY VIRTUE OF THE AIRCRAFT
WE FLY AND THE MISSION WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO DO.

THE AIRCRAFT WAS LUCK -- AHH, BUT THE MISSION. THE MISSION WAS
CREATED! AND WHILE NO ONE PERSON CREATED IT, THERE WAS ONE MAN WHO

HAD MORE TO DO WITH IT THAN ANY OTHER. HIS NAME IS JOE GARDNER AND HE WAS THE OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF THE FIRST DETACHMENT WHICH HAD ITS PICTURE TAKEN HERE ON THAT COLD WINTER MORNING IN 1964.



AS ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED BY THE PLANNERS, VERT-REP WOULD PROVIDE THE ABILITY TO REPLENISH UNDERWAY SURFACE UNITS WITH A LIMITED AMOUNT OF CRITICAL OR HIGH VALUE MATERIAL WHILE THEY WERE WIDELY DISPERSED AND THEREFORE LESS VULNERABLE TO ATTACK. IT WAS FIRST TRIED IN THE MED IN THE LATE 50'S - USING 1 HELO DETACHMENTS OF RECIPROCATING ENGINE UH-34's. THE H-34 HAD A MAXIMUM CARGO CAPACITY OF ABOUT 1,000 POUNDS UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS AND IF IT WAS HOT AND FULL OF FUEL, YOU STARTED WITH 500 POUNDS. BESIDES VERT-REP WAS ALMOST A SECONDARY MISSION - FALLING BEHIND PERSONNEL TRANSFER AND MAIL DELIVERY. HOWEVER, USING H-34's UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS, THEY ACHIEVED TRANSFER RATES OF UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 10 TONS AN HOUR. LCDR JOE GARDNER WAS ONE OF THOSE EARLY VERT-REP PILOTS.

HAVING PROVED THE CONCEPT, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN MOBILE LOGISTICS FORCE SHIPS SUCH AS THE AFS AND AOE - AND THE H-46 - FOLLOWED SOON AFTER. IT WAS A GREAT MATCH OF SHIP AND AIRCRAFT, AND IT WAS ENVISIONED THAT WITH THE 2 TON PER LOAD CAPACITY OF THE H-46, UP TO 40-PERHAPS 50-TONS PER HOUR TRANSFER RATES WERE POSSIBLE. AND IN FACT THAT'S JUST ABOUT WHAT THE FIRST WEST COAST DETACHMENT ON THE USS MARS ACHIEVED ON THEIR FIRST DEPLOYMENT. (YOU HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT VERT-REP HAD NEVER BEEN DONE ON THE WEST COAST, YET THEY ACHIEVED THE GOALS ESTABLISHED FOR THEM WITH ALMOST NO SUPPORTING EQUIPMENT, AND WHAT CAME TO BE LATER UNDERSTOOD AS POORLY DESIGNED SHIPBOARD CARGO SYSTEMS.)

BUT WHEN JOE GARDNER GOT HIS GIFTED HANDS ON AN H-46 HE KNEW WHAT THE PLANNERS COULD NEVER HAVE ANTICIPATED. HE SET OUT TO MAKE HIS CONCEPT REALITY AND HE HAD THE TOTAL SUPPORT OF THE FIRST C.O. OF THE USS SYLVANIA, CAPT LIONHARD, IN DOING IT.



SYLVANIA ARRIVED IN NORFOLK IN LATE 1964. BY THE TIME SHE MADE HER FIRST OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT TO THE MED IN APRIL OF 1965, QUITE A FEW CHANGES HAD BEEN MADE. FOR INSTANCE:

- A TOWER HAD BEEN INSTALLED OVER THE HANGAR
- THE DECK PAD EYES HAD BEEN REDESIGNED AND CHANGED. (ON THE ORIGINAL ONES THE CROSSBARS DIDN'T MEET IN THE MIDDLE AND SNAGGED THE NETS)
- FLIGHT DECK RAILS - ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BE USED TO MOVE PALLETS OF CARGO FROM THE ELEVATORS TO PICK-UP AREAS ON THE FLIGHT DECK- HAD BEEN REMOVED
- MAJOR CHANGES IN CARGO HANDLING AREAS BELOW THE FLIGHT DECK HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED
- AND MOST SIGNIFICANT OF ALL, THE CARGO ELEVATORS HAD BEEN REDESIGNED FROM THE ORIGINAL 4 SMALL ONES TO THE PRESENT TWO LARGE ONES.

MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL CARGO HANDLING EQUIPMENT HAD ALSO BEEN CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY. THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE BEING A SWITCH FROM THE ORIGINAL STEEL CABLE LIFTING PENDANTS TO THE CURRENT DACRON/NYLON ONES-WHICH WERE DESIGNED BY JOE GARDNER, YOURS TRULY, THE TECH REP AND THE NYLON ROPE SALESMAN WE LOOKED UP IN THE PHONE BOOK. THE HOOKS CAME FROM THE SAME HARDWARE STORE WHERE WE BOUGHT THE PLASTIC CONDUIT WE USED TO STIFFEN THE UPPER PORTION OF THE PENDANT. WE EVEN REDESIGNED THE CARGO HOOK FOR THE AIRCRAFT.

BUT ABOVE AND BEYOND ALL OF THAT, THE BASIC FLYING TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF OPERATION WHICH ARE NOW STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES IN VERT-REP WERE ALL DEVELOPED OUT AT FENTRESS FIELD UNDER THE RELENTLESS TRAINING OF JOE GARDNER. THE NOW BASIC CONCEPT OF FLYING DIRECTLY FROM SHIP TO SHIP WITHOUT THE STANDARD BASE LEG AND LONG APPROACH UP THE STERN WAS A NEW CONCEPT THEN. THE FIRST TIME WE DID A BUTTON HOOK APPROACH TO A CARRIER, THE C.O. THREATENED TO THROW US OFF HIS FLIGHT DECK AND CANCEL THE VERT-REP. EVEN OUR FELLOW HELO PILOTS WERE CONVINCED WE WERE OPERATING IN THE "DEAD MAN'S CURVE!"

AFTER WE BEGAN TO OPERATE, WE SOON REALIZED THAT NOW THAT WE KNEW WHAT TO DO, WE HAD TO TRAIN THE FLEET. FOR A PERIOD OF YEARS WE WOULD TRANSFER OUR DET PERSONNEL TO THE RECEIVING SHIP TO DIRECT THE DROPS, HANDLE RETROGRADE AND PASS ON IDEAS FOR MOVING CARGO ON DECK AND STOWING IT BELOW.

THE RESULTS WERE DRAMATIC. THE PLANNERS HAD HOPED TO BE ABLE TO OPERATE EACH AIRCRAFT ABOUT 35 HOURS PER MONTH AND ACHIEVE TRANSFER RATES OF 50 TONS PER HOUR - WHICH HAD BEEN ACHIEVED BY USS MARS AND HER DET ON THE WEST COAST.

(NOTE: ALTHOUGH NOT ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO DO SO, MARS DEPLOYED FIRST BECAUSE OF THE IMPENDING BUILDUP IN VIETNAM AND HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT ANY CHANGES.)

IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE SYLVANIA'S DEPLOYMENT TO THE MED, WE WERE GETTING OVERALL TRANSFER RATES EXCEEDING 100 TONS PER HOUR AND AT ONE POINT ACHIEVED A RATE OF 130 TONS PER HOUR OVER A TWO-HOUR PERIOD - AND WE WERE FLYING 50 HOURS PER AIRCRAFT PER MONTH.



NATURALLY WITH RESULTS LIKE THAT, THE MATERIAL CHANGES WERE IMPLEMENTED ON MARS AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY AND INCORPORATED IN FOLLOW ON VERT-REP CAPABLE MLSF SHIPS. NOW, 130 TONS AN HOUR IS ROUTINE AND MANY DETS ARE OPERATING AT A RATE APPROACHING AND SOMETIMES EXCEEDING 200 AIRCRAFT HOURS PER MONTH. BUT JOE GARDNER WAS NOT THROUGH EXERTING HIS INFLUENCE.

FROM DET NORFOLK HE EVENTUALLY BECAME THE FIRST EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF HC-3 ^{on the west coast} AND REMAINED IN THAT POSITION THROUGH TWO C.O.'S (REMEMBER, NO ONE SENIOR ENOUGH TO BE A C.O. HAD EVEN SEEN VERT-REP, LET ALONE FLOWN THE H-46.)

HE THEN TOOK THE FIRST VERT-REP DETACHMENT TO HC-7 IN JAPAN AND FINALLY RETIRED FROM THE NAVY AT HC-7 IN 1970. HE STILL FLIES FOR A LIVING AND THOSE ICE BLUE EYES STILL FLASH WITH EXCITEMENT AS HE TALKS ABOUT THE EARLY DAYS.

AS A RESULT OF HIS LEADERSHIP, IMAGINATION AND CONSUMMATE SKILL AS A PILOT, THE VERT-REP COMMUNITY HAS ACHIEVED AND MAINTAINED A LEVEL OF CONTINUITY AND CONSISTENCY THAT FEW OTHER MISSIONS ENJOY. THE ALL TOO FAMILIAR, "WE DIDN'T DO IT THAT WAY IN WEST PAC," IS SELDOM HEARD IN OUR COMMUNITY. THE STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE IS CONSISTENT AROUND THE WORLD. INSTEAD OF A SUPPLEMENT TO CONNECTED REPLENISHMENT, FOR HIGH VALUE OR PERISHABLE CARGO, VERT-REP IS NOW A MAINSTAY OF UNDERWAY LOGISTICS, VITAL TO MODERN FLEET OPERATIONS.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, ONE EXCEPTION TO THE CONCEPT OF TECHNIQUE CONSISTENCY THAT IS OF INTEREST. IT HAS NO EFFECT ON THE MISSION BUT IT ILLUSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START BECAUSE IT SHOWS HOW HARD IT IS TO CHANGE SOMETHING ONCE IT'S ESTABLISHED.



AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, THE EARLIEST USE OF VERT-REP INVOLVED THE UH-34 WHICH HAD NO CARGO DOOR IN THE FLOOR OF THE AIRCRAFT. THE HOOK WAS SUSPENDED BELOW THE HELO BY 4 CABLES AND THE HOOK-UP REQUIRED THE MAN ON THE GROUND TO PLACE THE PENDANT LOOP ON THE HOOK WHILE THE CREWMAN LEANED OVER THE EDGE OF THE SIDE CARGO HATCH AND GAVE DIRECTIONS TO THE PILOT. WE TRANSFERRED THAT BASIC TECHNIQUE TO H-46 OPERATIONS, NEVER ALLOWING THE CREWMAN TO TOUCH THE CARGO PENDANT. THAT POLICY REMAINS IN FORCE TODAY IN EAST COAST VERT-REP SQUADRONS.

WHEN THE WEST COAST BEGAN, THEY HAD NO PRE-ESTABLISHED TECHNIQUES AND, BECAUSE IT SEEMED EASIER TO HAVE THE HOOK-UP MAN HAND THE PENDANT LOOP TO AN AIRCREWMAN WHO COULD MOVE HIS HAND, GRAB THE PENDANT AND PLACE IT ON THE HOOK; THAT'S WHAT THEY DID. A GOOD GROUND HOOK-UP MAN REQUIRES A LOT OF TRAINING AND SKILL IF HE IS EXPECTED TO SNAG THE HOOK ON A MOVING HELICOPTER- AND IT SEEMED REASONABLE THAT BY HAVING THE AIRCREWMAN INVOLVED, PROBLEMS COULD BE AVOIDED. THE WEST COAST UNITS OPERATE THAT WAY TO THIS DAY.



AND DESPITE THE CONTINUED MOVEMENT OF PILOTS AND CREW OVER THE YEARS FROM COAST TO COAST, THAT DIFFERENCE REMAINS AND PROBABLY ALWAYS WILL. IT HAS NO EFFECT ON THE MISSION ONE WAY OR THE OTHER THAT I CAN SEE -- IT IS JUST A DIFFERENCE THAT EVEN JOE GARDNER DID NOT INFLUENCE.

YOU MIGHT SAY IT'S A TRADITION! AND TRADITIONS ARE HARD TO CHANGE.

WE ARE ALL INHERITORS OF TRADITION - SOME GOOD AND SOME BAD. IN THE CASE OF HC-8 YOU ARE INHERITORS OF A TRADITION OF CONSISTENT EXCELLENCE, INNOVATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE LEADERSHIP, ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL AND A SENSE OF TEAMWORK THAT WOULD MAKE THE BOSTON CELTICS ENVIOUS. CDR JOYCE AND CDR PONZO ARE PART OF THAT TRADITION AND YOUR PERFORMANCE AS A SQUADRON HAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE FLEET THAT YOU SERVE, THAT HC-8 IS A LEADER -- THAT HAS USED THOSE TRADITIONS AS A STARTING POINT AND NOT A RESTING PLACE, AND YOU ARE ON THE MOVE.

I AM PROUD OF YOU. YOUR PERFORMANCE AND REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE HAVE MADE ME PROUD TO BE CALLED A VERT-REP PILOT AND I THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME HERE TODAY. I JUST WISH THAT ONE MORE TIME I COULD HEAR THE CLIPPED, CALM VOICE OF THE CREWMAN CALLING OUT THE DISTANCE TO THE LOAD--HEAR THE TELL-TALE "CLINK" IN MY HEAD SET AND THE CREWMAN CALLING "UP, UP, UP - CLEAR TO GO!"