ARBiT
it happens here...

Earth's Rotation Day

January 8 is observed as Earth's Rotation Day every year to commemorate French physicist Leon Foucault's demonstration in 1851 that the Earth rotates on its axis. The rotation of the earth is a phenomenon we all know about. It takes place when our planet rotates on a vertical axis around the sun. This takes place every 24 hours. It is celebrated as Earth Rotation Day discovered many years ago.

राष्ट्रदूत
SATURDAY
8 January 2022
A-B

#EVENT

Photography & Art Exhibits

With most of the other events for January getting cancelled or re-scheduled owing to surge in Covid-19 cases, it'll be a good idea to visit these art and photography shows at JKK before the mundane 'Work from Home' and Netflix on weekends routine kicks in. Don't forget to mask on, maintain social distancing and sanitize your hands while you soak in the artistic strokes and hues at these exhibitions.

Tusharika Singh
Freelancer writer and city blogger

For the art lovers and shutterbugs of the Pink City, the new year has kick-started with two well curated photography and art shows at Jaipur's multi-arts center, Jawahar Kala Kendra (JKK). While the Jaipur Photographers' Club (JPC) is hosting their 9th annual photography exhibition from 6th January to 9th January, a group art exhibition 'Advita' by Five-Finger Art Studio will be on from 7th January to 12th January.

9th Photographers' Club Exhibition

The Chaturdik Art Gallery of JKK has on display a whopping 150 selected photographs of as many as 100 photographers of the country and abroad. The exhibition also includes the work of 6 foreign photographers. The photographs showcase diverse subjects including landscapes, nature, wildlife, street, portraits as well as fine art and architecture, among others.

Telling more about the exhibition, the Founder of Jaipur Photographers' Club, Anil Khubani shared that around 2000 entries were received for the exhibition not only from different cities of the country but also abroad. The jury selected 150 photographs out of these entries, which are currently being displayed at JKK.

Expressing his happiness on being a part of the exhibition, one of the participants from Indore, Col Amit Kanwar shared: "I have been associated with JPC for the past five years and the progress they have made is commendable. JPC Photo Exhibition has attained great prestige not only in India but the world over. It's a matter of pride and honour for me that my work has been shortlisted for the exhibition. Despite the challenges thrown at everyone by the pandemic, it is great to see the event taking place."

"The exhibition, its quality of participants and the evocative collection of pictures that it puts up each year has drawn me towards it in past years. I can conveniently say that JPC has converted by part-time hobby of photography into a full-time passion!" Remarked another participant from Jodhpur, Pavnesh Arora.

Date: January 6 – January 9.
Time: 11 am to 7 pm
Venue: Chaturdik Art Gallery, Jawahar Kala Kendra

'Advita': A Group Art Exhibition

The Surekh Art Gallery, on the other hand, has on display a group art exhibition entitled 'Advita'. The exhibition has been organized by The Five-Finger Art Studio, which is promoted by artist Rajula Loona. "Curated by artist Lakhan Singh Jat, the exhibition has on display art works made by artists during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objective of this exhibition is to promote and motivate young artists and give a platform to their work," shares Rajula Loona, whose own artwork is also on display at the gallery.

The exhibition is showcasing around 45 art works of 9 artists from Jaipur. These have been made using mediums like acrylic, watercolour etc. and depict myriad themes like nature, childhood memories and still life, among others. The other painters whose paintings are on display include Abhilasha Haver, Dr Asha Kasliwal, Devesh Prajapati, Jitendra Verma, Jyotsna Shukla, Nikhil Singh, Vandana Pandey and Vikas Meena.

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Date: January 7 – January 12
Time: 1 am to 7 pm
Venue: Surekh Art Gallery, Jawahar Kala Kendra

One passenger and I survived the crash. How or why we survived is a mystery. There is absolutely no explanation - just pure luck! For a long time after the accident, I used to ask myself, "why were the other passengers not lucky?" I guess nobody can answer that question. When the helicopter wreckage was retrieved from the sea the British aircraft accident investigating investigator met me and wondered how I could have possibly survived the crash. I not only survived the crash, I came out with very minor injuries.

The Deadliest Helicopter Accident of Recent Times

Maj Chandrakant Singh VrC *(Retd)*
Military Historian

On 8th December, the news of the fatal helicopter crash involving the CDS Gen Rawat and his wife Madhulika Singh along with the other crew and passengers of the MIG17 helicopter came as a great shock to the entire nation. To me it was a triple whammy, Bipin and Madhulika were not only friends but family too, and I greatly respected his professionalism and integrity. On 10th December, that is only a couple of days later Bipin was scheduled to release my book 'MEGHNA - RIVER OF VICTORY'. The book is a detailed account by commanders of all levels and all arms and services of the most significant battle of the Bangladesh Liberation War.

In the book there is an account of this operation by Sqn Ldr Pushp Vaid VrC, who was one of the heroic band of heroic helicopter pilots who carried me and my troops across the Meghna. Pushp was my contemporary at the NDA as were many others, who were at the bayonet end of Sagat's IV Corps advancement to Dacca. Pushp was the pilot of the first helicopter with me and my troops inside to cross the Meghna.

Pushp took early retirement from the IAF and moved to the UK where he took up a job with the British Airways flying Chinook helicopters in support of the oil rigs in the North Sea. On 6 November 1886, while returning to base his helicopter crashed into the sea just two minutes before landing, killing 43 persons. Pushp Vaid, who was the pilot and one passenger were the only ones to survive. This was the deadliest helicopter crash in civil aviation history.

The Deadliest Crash

This is a blow by blow, split second by split second account of the final moments of that accident by the pilot himself. It gives the reader an idea of the hazards and challenges of aviation and what it feels to look at death in the face.

I survived the deadliest helicopter crash in European history on the 6th of November 1986, at 1132 hours, I was the captain of a chinook helicopter that crashed just two miles short of its destination, the Sumburgh airport in the Shetland islands, 150 nautical miles north of the mainland of the United Kingdom. At the time it was the worst ever civilian helicopter crash, taking the lives of 45 out of the 47 people on board.

One passenger and I survived the crash. How or why we survived is still a mystery. There is absolutely no explanation - just pure luck! For a long time after the accident, I used to ask myself, "why were the other passengers not lucky?" I guess nobody can answer that question. When the helicopter wreckage was retrieved from the sea, the British aircraft accident investigating investigator met me and wondered how I could have possibly survived the crash. I not only survived the crash, I came out with very minor injuries.

Pushp at Agartala

#COMING BACK

I joined British Airways Helicopters in 1975, after leaving the Indian Air Force. In 1982, I converted on to Chinooks, the Boeing Vertol BV-234, the biggest civilian helicopter in the world. By 1986, I had already flown over 2500 hours on the chinooks and loved every minute of it.

I have flown helicopters for over 45 years. In spite of the accident, I would say that the chinook is the best helicopter I have ever flown, because of the tremendous amount of power it has and with full fuel we had six hours of endurance. We were always able to carry the full capacity of passengers with full fuel tank. We had six Chinooks in the company. One of our Chinooks had the flight routed to Sumburgh, Shetland Islands, on Monday morning and operate out of Sumburgh for five days, returning to Aberdeen on Friday evening. I had taken G-BWFC, a Chinook helicopter, to Sumburgh for the week on November 3, 1986. We had two sets of crews: one did the morning two flights to the East Shetland basin (just over 100nm northeast of Sumbrugh Airport) and the second came in at 1300 hours and did one flight in the afternoon.

First Officer Neville Nixon, my co-pilot, who was 43, had left Bristow Helicopters a few years earlier and had given up flying to help his wife to set up a chemist shop in York, England. After three years the shop was doing very well and he found that Pauline could manage the shop by herself. He loved flying and decided to come back to flying.

He joined British Airways Helicopters in the summer of 1986. Since Neville hadn't flown for nearly three years, he was very keen to fly as much as possible. On the 6th of November, he was roistered to do the afternoon shift. Since morning shift did two flights and the afternoon shift with first officer Mike Stanley. Sadly for him, this change of shift caused him his life.

Thursday, the 6th of November 1986, was a beautiful day at Sumburgh. The wind was light and it didn't feel cold I expected good flying conditions. Neville was already in the operations doing planning for our flight by the time I arrived that morning. After finishing the planning he rang up his home. That was the last time he spoke to his wife.

Mike Walton, our cabin attendant, arrived about 0730 and went to do his checks on the helicopter. Checks included making sure that cabin was clean and all the safety equipment was on board.

Our original plan was to land at Brent Bravo and Brent Delta. At the last minute we were given a load to drop at Brent Alpha also. This added about ten minutes to our trip. These ten minutes became very important when we were returning to base and we crashed just two miles short about two minutes before touchdown) of our destination. Destiny! Yes!

We taxied across from our hanger at Virkie to Wilsness passenger terminal, on the other side of the runway, to pick up our passengers. After doing the onboard briefing, we taxied at 0900 for our flight to the Brent field.

I was handling pilot on the way out and my co-pilot was looking after all the radios and other admin duties, like load sheets. The flight was uneventful and after landing at Brent Alpha, Charlie and Delta we set our course back to Sumburgh at 1043. We had full complement of 44 passengers and three crew members on board. Neville was the handling pilot and I was doing all the paperwork and the radio calls.

We climbed to 2500 feet and our route back to Sumburgh was via track Mike. We flew in and out of the clouds, but the weather was nice and we had a pleasant flight. We talked about all sorts of things to pass the time. Neville told me about his brother who had been to India and had loved it there.

And all the time our bevel ring gear in the front gear box was breaking up and we had no way of knowing of the looming disaster. I discovered this when listened to the cockpit voice recorder at the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board's workshop. I could hear the noise of the gear breaking up for the entire 30 minutes of the tape HUMS would have been a great help. At 10nm we changed from Sumburgh approach. We started a slow descent to 500 feet. When we were just over two minutes to land, I contacted my company and gave them the routine two minutes to landing call.

In the Bristow hanger, Captain Gordon Mitchell and the rest of the coast guard crew were getting ready to do the search and rescue training that morning. They had the helicopter fueled and ready. They were just waiting for one of the crews to return from an errand; otherwise they would have been airborne earlier. It was a coincidence that they got airborne after 1129, just when we were on finals for landing. The control tower advised the coast guard helicopter, "Oscar Charlie" to look out for the Chinook which was on finals.

Bout 3.5nm from the runway, we started hearing a whining noise and seemed to be getting louder. The noise did not sound dangerous. Just then our cabin attendant, Mike Walton came through the door and told us that he had checked the cabin and that the passengers were all strapped in and ready for landing. He heard us discussing the noise, so he told us the noise was coming from the front gearbox, which was just above his head, behind the cockpit. He also didn't seem alarmed by the noise. Landing approximately 250-300 feet above the surface of the water, in the descent, our speed reducing below 100 knots. We decided that on landing we would inform the engineers to sort out the noise before we went for our next flight. I informed that "Foxtrot Charlie" was on finals and we were cleared to land. On finals, I

saw the Coast Guard Sikorsky S-61 take off for their training.

Death Do Not Be Proud

After informing us the passengers were all ready for landing, our cabin attendant had opened the door and closed it behind him. I don't think he had a chance to sit down and strap himself in. A fraction of a second after he closed the door, at 1132 to be exact, we heard a very loud bang. Suddenly, the helicopter pitched up and was pointing vertically up - I could see the sky ahead of me. I had no time to give a 'May-Day' call. But of course we were towards the North Sea. The helicopter which was travelling at about 100 knots, had come to a sudden stop. Sadly, the whiplash effect killed at least half of the passengers.

My co-pilot probably died at the moment. Being the handling pilot, he was sitting without his back touching the backrest, with the result that the whiplash effect broke his neck. I being the non-handling pilot, had my back resting at the backrest. The whiplash effect on me was not that great, though thinking about it or writing about it, like right now, I start feeling the pain in my back.

What happened? I found out later that the whining noise we had been hearing was actually our front gear (spiral bevel ring gear) breaking up. Once the gear split, it was a matter of 20-30 seconds before the two counter rotating blades hit each other and that was the loud bang we had heard. The rear rotor blades were shaking so much that they along with the gearbox parted company from the helicopter and splashed into the water about a mile away from us.

One gentleman standing about five miles away on top of a hill, near Sumburgh airport, saw our helicopter falling towards the sea and he actually pointed out to the salvage team where to look for the rear rotor blades. No, he did not have a video camera.

Now there was no rear rotor. Nothing was holding the back end of the helicopter up. So the back fell and the nose was pointing to the sky straight in front of me. I got the feeling we were going straight up. Instinctively, I grabbed the cyclic control and pushed it all the way forward to level the helicopter to level the helicopter. It appeared I had done an outside loop. I felt a negative G force when the helicopter seemed to move from pointing vertically up to pointing vertically down. Now I could see the sea in front of me. It appeared the helicopter was rushing nose down, vertically towards the sea.

What actually happened was that, with the break away of the rear set of rotor blades and gear box from the helicopter, the whole body of the helicopter had become weak and had started breaking up. When I pushed the cyclic stick all the way forward, the front rotor blades, which were still responding to the controls, flipped the cockpit section of the helicopter over. Now only the floor of the cockpit was attached to the main part of the helicopter.

What Saved The Two

My action of moving the cyclic stick forward was perhaps responsible for saving the two who survived. The whole helicopter was falling backward towards the sea. The cockpit which had tipped over was still attached to the cabin floor, seemed to be going straight towards the sea. That also meant that there was a huge hole at the top of the cabin, where the cockpit had been. The hole is the one through which Eric Morrans, the other survivor was thrown, when he was unconscious under water.

While we were falling, I was aware that everything around me was breaking up. I was thinking double time to see if anything I could do to save the helicopter and all of us in it. To me it felt as if I was on a roller coaster ride and I was wishfully thinking/hoping that the helicopter would roll out, we would land on the water, and everybody would come out. Strange - not for a moment did I think that anybody was going to die.

Later, I discovered that the front rotor blade had chopped off the part of windscreen in front of the co-pilot. Broken bits from the windscreen were flying in and some were hitting me on the left side of my face cutting into the flesh and my nose was broken too. I discovered this when I was in hospital.

Amazingly and luckily nothing hit my eyes.

When we hit the water, the rear end of the helicopter took all the impact. Nearly twenty feet of the rear end of the helicopter was completely smashed. All the seats came off their moorings. Only my seat looked like a seat after the accident. I discovered this when the cockpit had been salvaged.

Subsequently, I discovered that the cockpit broke off from the main cabin on impact, and seemed to splash in the water from a height of about 30-40 feet. The rest of the passengers and our cabin attendant died on impact. No one drowned. Only one passenger survived.

The North Sea is pretty cold. The water temperature that day must have been around -7 degree Celsius. The cockpit with me still in it, seemed to keep going down and down under in the water. It must have gone down at least 3 feet below the surface, before it stopped moving. I could see the sunlight and I knew which way to swim. However when I left the cockpit and started to move I discovered hat I was going the wrong way. It was getting darker. I turned around and headed towards sunlight. I passed through the emergency window, which had blown away on impact, I think, and started to swim towards the surface.

I discovered in my hustle that I had not even unbuckled my belt. When the cockpit was salvaged, we discovered that one strap had broken but the other three were still locked in their position. I have no idea how I came out of those straps.

Being Alive

It was a beautiful sunshine which met me when I reached the surface. I was feeling cold and breathing very fast and hard. I saw what looked like a big bowl. I think it was a part of the fuel tank cover. I managed to climb into it. But two seconds later a small wave tipped me over and I was back in the water. I wasn't worried; in the back of my mind I knew the rescue helicopter would be overhead in a few minutes. I was just waiting for them to come and pick me up.

Then a body popped up next to me and then another, and another. There must have been at least seven bodies floating close to me. They were not moving or doing anything. That was the first time it occurred to me that perhaps some people were dead. Then there was a lot of hydraulic fluid and broken pieces of the helicopter that were floating around in the sea around me. I could see broken pieces everywhere.

When the coast Guard helicopter turned to go to his training area, he asked where the Chinook was. The controller looked up and couldn't see the Chinook on finals and was amazed because he had seen us just thirty seconds earlier and had given us permission to land.

The Coast Guard crew saw somethings floating in the sea and headed towards that area. As soon as I saw coast guard helicopter, I waved. The helicopter came overhead of me, the winch man came down, put a strap around me and hauled me up. My shoes were coming off but for some reason I kept hanging on to them. However I never saw my shoes again.

Only one 20 year old passenger, Eric Morrans, survived the crash with me. He was sitting in the front row seats, which faced backward. He was facing the 42 passengers and saw the fear of death in their faces, when the helicopter was plunging vertically backwards into the sea. He could make out that all of them knew that they were going to die. In fact some of the passengers had already died because of the whiplash, when the rear set of rotor blades parted company from the helicopter.

Eric was just plain lucky - like me instinctively he had zipped up his survival suit when he heard the big bang. There were a lot of broken pieces flying around in the cabin and he was injured and became unconscious. When the helicopter plunged into the water he went with it. However when he was thirty feet, his survival suit, which was full of air, acted like a football under water, and threw him out through the hole behind him and towards the surface of the water.

When he reached the surface, one wave came over his face and woke him up. Luckily for him, just as his eyes opened a dinghy inflated just next to him. He quickly got hold of it and tied his hand with the roe from the dinghy and passed out again. Then he heard the helicopter overhead and saw me being winched up. He got worried that he might be left behind, so started waving frantically.

He was winched up after me. We were now both in the coast guard helicopter. My suit was full of cold water, so even though I was out of the sea I was still in cold water. Every time the crew came to see me I made a hand signal, requesting him to cut the survival suit so that the water could go out. With all the helicopter noise he couldn't understand me, however ten minutes later he realized what I was trying to tell him and he cut my suit and the water came out. My eyes were closing now. When the crew realized that both of us were closing our eyes, he went and told the captain to take us to the hospital. By this time other helicopters were on the scene and a rescue ship was on the way.

When we arrived my body temperature was around 33 degrees Celsius. They cut pen all my clothes and wrapped me up in a piece of a space blanket. It is like aluminum foil; the idea was that I would warm my own self up. My eyes were still closed, but suddenly I heard the doctor talking to me in Hindi, my native language. Then I knew I was alive. They don't speak Hindi in heaven or hell. Or maybe they did.

The Odds

The mechanical failure that caused the gearbox break was one in a million chance. That it resulted in in so many fatalities was a terrible orchestration of events. The Chinook was withdrawn from civil operation, though it still operates with the military. Friends advised me not to go back to flying. After all the company would pension me off comfortably. But I knew money wouldn't fill the hours. Flying was all I wanted to do. By February, I was ready to fly again. The company insisted on psychiatric tests, however, so I resumed flying in April.

I was 45 when the accident happened and flew for another twenty years before retiring.

writetoarbit@rashtradoot.com

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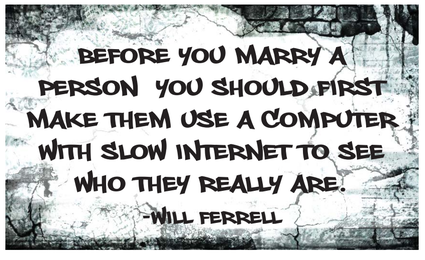
THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman