



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

No Light—No Taxi

The crew of a C-1A (TF) filed a combination VFR/IFR round robin cross country flight plan with a five-minute passenger stop at an Air Force base. The flight to the en route stop to drop a passenger was conducted on the VFR portion of the flight with the intention of proceeding IFR for the remainder of the flight.

The copilot contacted the AF tower for taxi instruction after the passenger departed. He was told to taxi back the same direction from which he had entered the parking ramp.

During the time the aircraft was parked in front of operations, it started to rain. This reduced visibility on the black ramp. The pilot picked up the yellow nose wheel line and taxiway lights on his left and proceeded toward what he thought was the throat to the parallel taxiway for the duty runway. A short time later the yellow line and taxiway markers disappeared, so the pilot requested further instructions from the tower. He understood the tower to say "continue straight ahead with a left turn at the blue lights." The tower controller changed the left



turn to a right turn and told the pilot to taxi south to the duty runway.

After a few hundred feet, the aircraft entered an unevenly paved area. At this point, the pilot started to apply brakes and reached for the taxi light. Before he could stop the aircraft or get the taxi light on, the nose wheel dropped into a concrete drainage ditch with the starboard prop contacting the edge of the ditch. The aircraft con-

tinued into the ditch, sustaining substantial damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! Our BuWeps friends in the hardware business obligated several hard-to-come-by bucks to put a taxi light and windshield wipers on this machine. To have a pilot utterly refuse to use them is downright disgustin'.

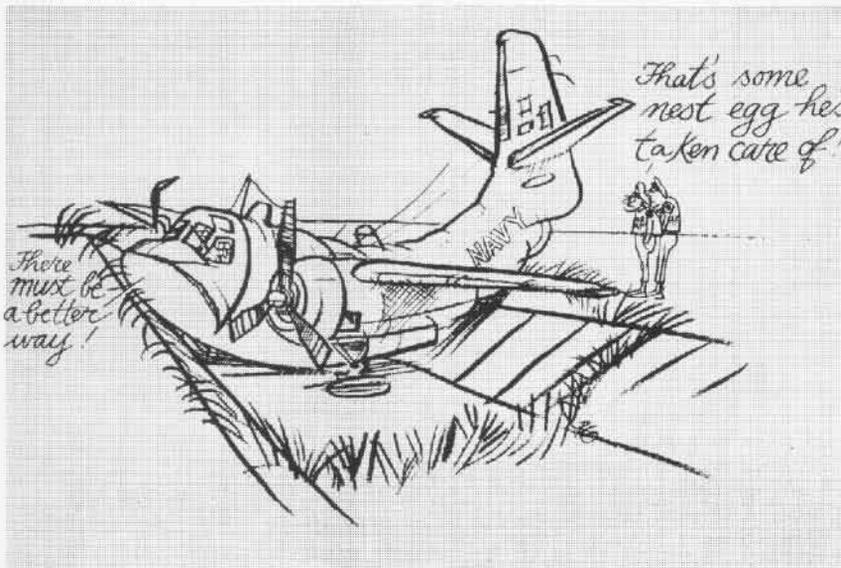
It'd be awfully easy to hold the tower operator partly responsible for the damage to this nice little bird, but there's just no way to take the monkey off the pilot's back. To go wanderin' around in an aircraft on a strange field or into an unlighted area just ain't smart. What's wrong with asking for a follow-me or, if necessary, shut the thing down and get towed in.

Thought for the day on this one, "When in doubt—don't!"

Close Shave

A flight of four AF-1E's departed MCAS CHERRY POINT on a cross country to Pensacola via NAS CECIL FIELD. Upon arrival at Cecil, the flight broke into two sections for penetration and GCA to landing. The wingman was instructed to take a chase position at five o'clock, stepped up, with a 500-foot interval on final approach.

The wingman planned to fly his chase position to minimums, then wave off and enter the pattern for a normal landing, but changed his mind at about the two-mile position on final. The flight leader requested that he land on this pass and the chase pilot, realizing that he was too close, began trying to set up a landing interval by reducing power. As he attained the desired 17.5 units (angle of attack) and a fair interval, he suddenly realized that the flight leader had landed in the center of the runway and he had reduced power to the point that an excessive sink rate was established. About this time, jet wash had him in more trouble than he bargained for and the aircraft contacted the ground on the right wing tip and main mount, about 400 feet short of the runway.



The nose gear sheared. The aircraft skidded 1500 feet down the runway.

This little saga should end here but, to continue in the same vein as exhibited during the approach, the pilot encountered more trouble when he tried to abandon the aircraft. He had trouble disconnecting his oxygen and radio leads, then unfastened the rocket jet fittings. After releasing the shoulder fittings, he attempted to stand, but soon realized he hadn't released his lap fitting. Again he attempted to stand, but found the leg fittings were still intact. He sat down for the third time and released them, then leaped from the aircraft and parted the emergency oxygen line as he did so.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! What was the great hurry to get on the ground? There is really nothin' against takin' it around and gettin' squared away for a comfortable approach and landing. This flight leader certainly helped a lot —after telling his wingman to land with him, he puts his bird smack dab in the middle of the runway. That's taking care of your buddy, but good.

One of the Board's recommendations was that in view of the difficulty and confusion experienced by the pilot in his egress from the aircraft, the squadron immediately institute a comprehensive training program concerning the equipment used and procedures for ditching, ejection, and egress from the aircraft in emergencies. Amen!

Low Lead—Wet Wingman

A flight of four A-1H's set out from a carrier in WestPac on a routine instrument hop briefed by the flight leader to perform section ADF approaches to the ship. The second section leader requested permission to make simulated instrument approaches to a field in southern Japan, but was told the field was too far away. He was

to practice basic instruments within a 25-mile radius of the ship if ADF approaches were not available.

Individual section leaders continued the briefing for the flight and the second section leader briefed his wingman that they would proceed to the beach and practice approaches to the field. The wingman was also briefed that should ADF approaches not be available at the field, they would fly north along the east coast to observe the coast line in preparation for a planned navigation flight.

The four A-1H's (AD's) rendezvoused and after being informed that ADF approaches to the ship were not available, the leader broke the flight into sections to fly basic instruments as briefed.

The second section proceeded toward the beach at an altitude of 6500 feet. As they approached the beach, the leader put the section in a tactical formation, descended to 200 feet and proceeded north along the east coast of Japan. The flight progressed normally for the next few minutes with the wingman flying to the left side of the lead aircraft.

The section leader entered a slight left turn to go between two coastal islands and the wingman crossed over. As he started down to his original wing position, he felt a slight jolt and in a few seconds the aircraft entered a nose-down 30° left bank. The pilot felt as though the autopilot had engaged and immediately pulled the emergency release. Stick pressures were difficult to overcome and the aircraft descended to an altitude of 25 feet before the pilot could regain level flight.

After a few seconds in level flight, the aircraft suddenly pitched nose up. Then the pilot saw fire coming from the wing fold area.

Level flight was extremely difficult to maintain, and as the fire was observed to be progressing rapidly through the wing, the pilot decided to get the aircraft into the water as soon as possible. He lowered the flaps and hook, opened the canopy and checked his shoulder harness before hitting the water in a wings-level attitude at approximately 100 knots.

After the aircraft came to a rather abrupt stop, the cockpit filled with water and the forward part of the aircraft quickly sank four or five feet below the surface. The pilot released his lap belt and pulled himself to the surface. When he looked back, the tail of the plane was the only part above the water and it disappeared in a matter of seconds. He immediately inflated his Mae West and ignited a smoke flare to let his section leader know he was O.K. In approximately 10 or 15 minutes, he was rescued by the crew of a Japanese fishing boat.

The pilot was unaware that he had severed two 6000-volt power lines running between the mainland and an island until after the accident.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Shades of Walter Mitty! This daring section leader really led his unsuspecting wingman into a booby trap. Witnesses observed the "Able Dogs" to be flying at an altitude of 50 to 75 feet. During the investigation it was established that the power cables were 60 feet above the water.

The division leader briefed the flight to practice basic instruments in the vicinity of the ship, but evidently the second section leader didn't think too much of that idea and decided to do a little aerial exploring on his own. There is nothing against a properly briefed syllabus type low-level navigation flight, but it's just plain poor headwork to pull a stunt like this.

