



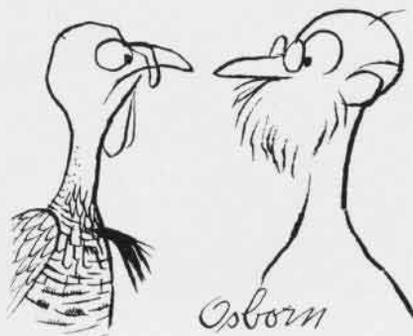
GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Up and Locked

A Pacific Fleet CVA departed for two days of intensive flight operations after spending 48 hours in port where all hands took maximum advantage of the time ashore. The ship got underway at 0800 for the operating area and began flight operations at 1000 with almost all of the Air Group scheduled to fly between then and midnight.

During the course of events that morning, an A-4 pilot was grounded with a blocked ear. A pilot who originally had not been scheduled for a flight volunteered to replace him. After a series of delays and mission changes, he launched at 1700 as part of a flight of A-4's on a weapon delivery flight to the beach. The flight landed ashore at 1845 where they ate dinner while training weapons were being unloaded from the aircraft.

Knowing the pilots had spent the better part of the inport period on liberty and had either been flying or waiting to fly since early that morning, the Executive Officer of the squadron asked them how they felt. Were they too tired to fly back to the ship? One pilot told the X.O. he felt rather tired and he was immediately told to remain over night and to come out



to the ship the following morning.

The lad who had volunteered to replace the pilot with the blocked ear took off at 2220 and rendezvoused with his section leader for the short flight back to the ship. The flight out was routine in all respects. After receiving marshal information, the section made a normal break for a CCA landing. The section leader made a CCA to final but was waved off owing to a foul deck. On downwind leg to a second CCA, he was instructed to clean up, take angels 2.5 and expect a 15-minute delay.

The wingman, who was approxi-

mately one minute behind the section leader, was instructed to "dirty up" by the CCA controller at the 10-mile gate. He promptly acknowledged the transmission. The LSO picked the aircraft up visually about two miles out but saw no approach light, so he immediately asked the pilot for a gear and hook check. The LSO received a prompt reply of "gear down, hook down but no indexer light."

A few seconds later the pilot called the ball and continued the approach in a rather clean configuration, on-speed-on glide slope to touchdown where the aircraft engaged the #2 cross deck pendant near centerline with the landing gear up. The pilot at first thought his nose gear had collapsed and knew things seemed a little odd when the deck crew ran out and looked down in the cockpit at him. But he quickly realized his problem when he saw the status of all three gear indicators and the landing gear handle in the UP position.

A somewhat embarrassed but uninjured pilot climbed from the cockpit. The deck crew quickly hoisted the aircraft, lowered the gear and towed it to the elevator.

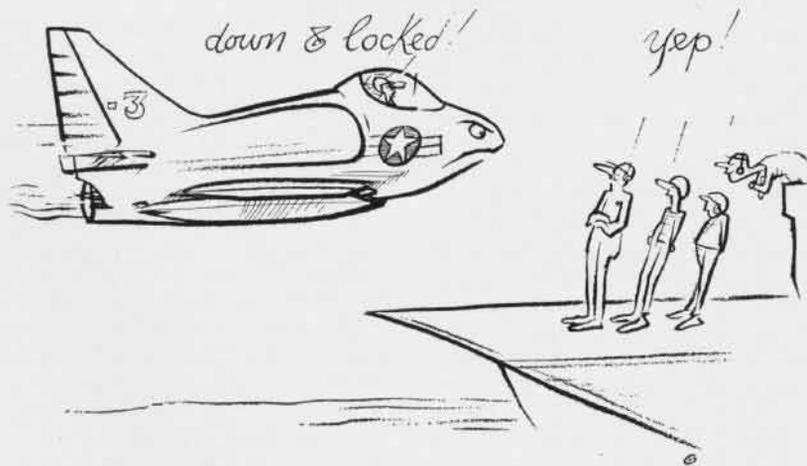


Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well, singe my old gray whiskers and fetch me a few more aspirin tablets!

This is the second one of these we've had in the past six months. There's really no sense in complicatin' a case of pure and simple pilot error, but I'm just wonderin' why it took so long for this lad's bad habits to catch up with him. Even after bein' asked twice for a gear and hook check because of no approach light, he didn't even touch the gear handle to be sure it was down. He did recycle his hook, but it never dawned on him that he wouldn't have a light if either the gear or hook was not down.

The LSO isn't the cleanest guy in the world and I'll bet he never spoke any truer words than those he put in his statement; "In the future, I will insist on a visual check for no-



approach light regardless of what the pilot says."

The Pri-Fly observer also had a hand in this one as he saw the aircraft approaching with no approach light. He heard the chatter between the LSO and pilot, but, after hearing the lad state his gear was down, he let him come on in. I just imagine they took a hard look at the procedures in Pri-Fly and the next time that approach light isn't showing the gent up there will, real quick like, foul that deck.

Somethin' like this is a little hard to take from a "tiger" with nearly 500 hours in the bird, but I really don't think he was the sharpest lad in the Fleet that night. He had been ashore 31 out of the 48 hours the ship was in port and only had a few hours sleep the night before.

Bein' a "tiger" is great, but there's a big difference in tigers. A *Tiger* that's a *Professional* pilot is the only one that makes out in this business.

Helpless Helo

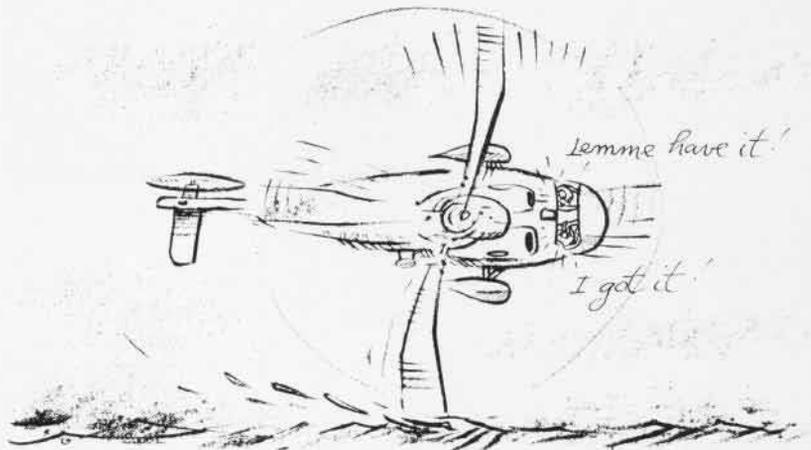
An SH-3A departed a CVS off the East Coast for a routine night ASW mission. Weather at the ship was clear with no moon and the helo proceeded to the datum area at 500 feet—115 knots. By the time the helicopter reached datum, there was no horizon and an S-2D plane commander who was on station advised the helo pilots that dipping conditions were poor. He recommended that no Doppler approaches be attempted because of a very smooth sea state. He also informed them that one helicopter had already departed the area with possible damage to the sonar dome.

Prior to departing the smoke light for the first dip station, the pilot experienced vertigo and gave the copilot control of the helo and instructed him to try an automatic Doppler approach first. At 150 feet and 75 knots, the coupler was engaged and the helo immediately started to roll from side to side. At an altitude of 100 feet, the roll became more pronounced. The nose started to move up and down. At 80 feet, control became even more erratic and the co-

pilot informed the pilot that he was going to pickle off, but the pilot told him to continue and see if it would settle down. At about 50 feet and 40 knots, the copilot requested the pilot to rotate the aircraft to the left as a strong wind was coming in his window. The helo immediately went into a violent skid. As the nose pitched up, the pilot took control, disengaged the coupler and climbed to an altitude of 150 feet.

The pilot began to circle for another

attempt. At one time, the copilot noted the gyro horizon indicated 20° nose up. Both pilots fought the aircraft for the next few seconds but were unable to regain control. The aircraft contacted the water in a nose down, right wing down attitude, and immediately rolled to the right. The crew abandoned the helo and were rescued by whaleboats from two destroyers operating in the area. Two of the crewmen were suffering from exposure but otherwise they were all right.



er approach. The copilot suggested that they discontinue dipping but the pilot said he wanted to try a no-Doppler approach. The pilot set the helo up for another approach with the cyclic coupler off and instructed the copilot to switch to Doppler as they passed through 80 feet. The coupler was engaged at 150 feet and, at 80 feet, the copilot switched to Doppler as instructed. Almost immediately everything became very erratic with the aircraft attaining some weird attitudes. The pilot quickly disengaged the coupler in a desperate attempt to recover.

When the aircraft entered a near-uncontrolled attitude, the copilot said, "I have it" as he thought the pilot had vertigo, but the pilot said he still had it. The collective was in the full-up position during most of the recovery.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehosaphat! These lads worked like beavers to booby-trap themselves and darn near bought the farm doin' it.

I'll admit a pretty weird set of conditions got together during this fiasco, but a little good judgment based on sound operating procedures could have saved the crew a cold swim and Uncle Sam a costly helo.

When you completely ignore the advice of other pilots in the area and pay no attention to such clues as vertigo, disorientation, haze, poor horizon and the better judgment of your copilot, you're really askin' for it.

After this thing reached a point of no return, both pilots got on the controls and ended up fightin' each other until the helpless helo crashed. Cockpit discipline like this will get you nothin' but a peck of trouble.

These destroyer boys have fished a lot of birdmen out of the drink; it's mighty comfortin' to know they're around and eager to lend a helpin' hand. My hat is off to them any time. This helo crew would have been in real bad shape if the DD's hadn't been around for this one.

★ Famous last words—"I can make it. I'll just lean it all the way back." ★

★ The world's best safety device is situated slightly above and between your ears—use it. ★

★ Follow the rules and give the poor taxpayers a break. ★