



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Poor Planning

TWO RA-5C's with a replacement pilot (RP) and reconnaissance attack navigator (RAN) in one aircraft and an instructor pilot (IP) and RAN in the other departed home base one morning for a photo reconnaissance training flight. The IP briefed the replacement crew the afternoon before the flight, so just prior to manning their aircraft, the crews again reviewed the flight as briefed the day before.

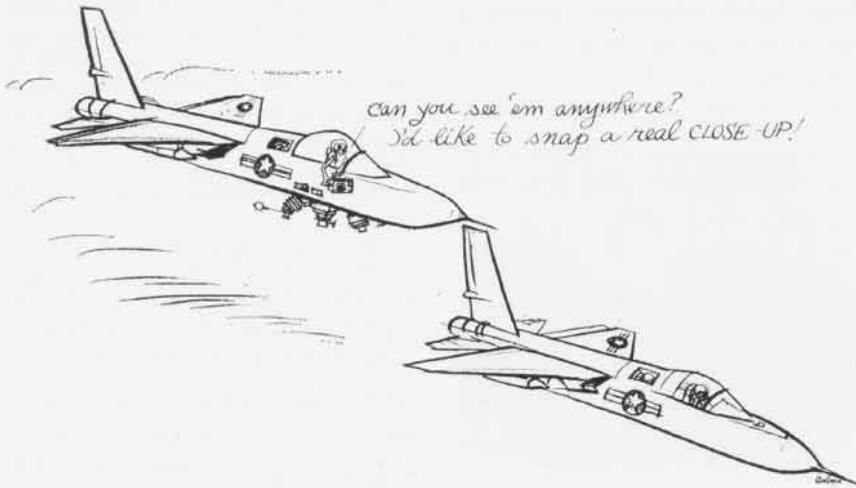
The two aircraft were to rendezvous while climbing to 15,000 feet then level off and conduct air-to-air photography, including both obliques and verticals. The replacement crew was then to conduct air-to-ground photography for the remainder of the flight and the chase pilot was to depart for a separate mission.

Preflight, taxi and take-off were normal in all respects and the aircraft made a running rendezvous as planned. The replacement pilot took a position approximately one-half mile astern and after establishing radio contact with the instructor pilot informed him that he would move into position for some oblique camera work. After 15 or 20 oblique exposures from



a position of 1,000 to 1,800 feet abeam, the RP informed the IP that he was ready to commence taking verticals and would maintain 15,000 feet.

The IP moved in behind the RP and positioned himself at 14,500 feet for a pass. The IP then established a slow closure rate on the other aircraft and advised the RP to start his cameras. Both pilots concentrated on holding their heading and altitude, but in a few seconds the IP heard the transmission, "You're too close," followed by a slight bump.



Just after this transmission, the RP saw the vertical stabilizer of the other aircraft rising rapidly on the right side of his cockpit only a few feet away. He immediately made an attempt to avoid the collision by pulling up to the left, but could only reduce the rate of closure. Simultaneously with the collision the RP saw debris fly and felt a loud blast. He immediately initiated ejection by the face curtain. The RAN who had made the radio transmission, "You're too close," reached for the face curtain when he heard the bang and felt the shock, but was pilot-ejected before he could eject himself.

The instructor pilot tried to raise the other aircraft by radio, then saw the *Vigilante* off to the starboard in an inverted nose-down attitude. He radioed for the crew to eject, then broadcast a Mayday. Shortly thereafter he saw two chutes descending through about 5,000 feet.

The aircraft crashed in an unpopulated area and neither the RP nor the RAN was injured during the ejection sequence and landing.

The IP orbited the crash scene and informed SAR units of the position. An A-5A pilot in the area joined on the IP and inspected his aircraft for damage. The RA-5C did not appear to be damaged and, after performing a slow flight check at 8,000 feet, the IP returned to home base for an uneventful landing. The IP's aircraft had sustained only limited damage in the collision.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great heavenly days! If a stunt like this don't wilt the lily nothin' will. When two experienced pilots booby-trap themselves into such a mess, you want to sit right down and cry.

One of the pilots involved in this fiasco said he thought the accident could have been avoided if they had cross checked altimeters prior to the air-to-air runs. Now that's what I call 20-20 hindsight. Just wonder what happened to adequate briefing, super

vision, sound judgment and the good old professional approach. Each one of these pilots lost sight of the other, but neither one made an effort to break off. They got exactly what they were askin' for—trouble and plenty of it.

There is nothin', absolutely nothin', to replace *planning* and *headwork*.

Get-Home-itis

A couple of pilots and two passengers departed an East Coast NAS about 0930 one morning in a trusty TC-45 for a short trip to another NAS, approximately 400 N.M. south. Shortly after takeoff, they encountered actual instrument conditions and, by the time they arrived at their destination, the weather was close to GCA minimums. According to the copilot's statement, the pilot leveled off slightly high. The landing was a little rough but better than a lot of landings he had "shuddered through" in the "Beech."

The aircraft was parked at the transient line. The pilots and passengers departed the area for a couple of hours while the aircraft was serviced.

The pilots had previously agreed to switch seats for the return trip. When the "first pilot" returned to the aircraft, his copilot and passengers were aboard getting strapped in for the flight.

During the pre-flight inspection, the "first pilot" noticed that the port prop tips had been scraped and ground off. Both pilots agreed that the props could have been damaged prior to their trip. They further agreed that the damage could not have occurred during the previous landing.

The pilot who was to fly the return leg of the flight decided that both tips were ground down about the same amount so the prop would still be reasonably well balanced. Without further delay, the pilots and passengers manned the Beechcraft. After two and one-half hours of instrument time, they landed at their home base.

The pilot noted the damage to the port prop on the yellow sheet but *did not* ground the aircraft. He left it in an UP status because it flew so smoothly.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Oh, brother! "I'll not only fly this bird with a damaged prop,

I'll leave it in an UP status for a 'friend' of mine." With a friend like this, who needs enemies?

The Reporting Custodian put it this way: The unprofessional approach exhibited by the pilots involved in this incident could well have ended tragically for themselves and their passengers. It is unknown whether ignorance, complacency, or "get-home-itis" dictated the decision to proceed with the return flight with known propeller damage, but that decision was insupportable by either technical directives or common sense. GREB 139D requires specific checks of shaft alignment and strainers prior to placing the aircraft in an UP status. Further compounding the situation, ceilings and visibilities en route were less than ideal for single engine operation or landing.

Now that's really hittin' the nail on the head. It'd be mighty hard for Ol' Gramps to improve on that endorsement.

Sad Situation

A pilot, copilot and two crewmen departed an East Coast MCAS late one afternoon in a UH-2A for an NAS approximately 225 miles north. After

agency landing. After securing all switches, the crew evacuated the aircraft uninjured. A farmer who lived nearby arrived at the scene and drove the pilots to a telephone where they notified their squadron Duty Officer and the nearest military base of the forced landing.

The crew logically expected assistance to arrive in a short time, but it was 1500 the following day (20 hours after landing) before help arrived. The pilots and crewmen spent the night in a lean-to they constructed.

The pilots and crewmen assisted the crash crew in loading the UH-2A on a truck. The crewmen, after having gone without sleep or food for almost 36 hours, were asked to accompany the aircraft to the base. Going was slow and they traveled only five miles before darkness forced them to stop. The crewmen attempted to get transportation from the military base but were informed none would be available until the following morning. The crewmen were so tired by this time they spent the night in a motel and arrived at the base with the aircraft



being airborne nearly an hour, the pilot experienced a nose-down pitch in the aircraft but quickly corrected it. He then checked to see if the Automatic Stabilization Equipment (ASE) had disengaged and it had not. A few seconds later the aircraft began oscillating around the longitudinal and lateral axis. At this point the pilot noted a one-per-revolution vibration and as the control problems continued, he decided on an emergency landing.

Luckily, there was a full moon and an open field was clearly visible. During the approach, the pilot experienced increased control problems but was able to make a reasonably good emer-

the following morning, approximately 40 hours after the forced landing.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! I don't see anything wrong with the way this pilot handled his emergency, but the salvage and rescue operation is just about as sad as I've ever read. It's downright disgustin' for a crew to be treated this way and shakes me no end to know that a thing like this can happen.

I hope the commanding officer of the helo crew brought this to the attention of the base commander. If he did, I'll bet my last chip things were changed—but fast.