



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Octafloogaron

The veteran lieutenant commander launched from a CVA for a three-plane, A-7 strike-ex mission against a target complex on the West Coast. His *Corsair II* was loaded with triple ejector racks on stations 1 and 8, three MK 82 bombs on each rack. He also had an MK 4 gun pod on station 6.

When he reached the target, he made three 45-degree toss bombing runs, then set up for a 45-degree strafing run using his internal guns and the gun pod. With his sight on the bull's-eye, he fired two quick bursts, then pulled out at about 4,000 feet and started a right jinx.

Suddenly there was a loud bang, the plane rolled right for 360 degrees and the nose fell through the horizon. The lieutenant commander thought the plane had departed as it continued a snazzy octafloogaron. He quickly punched off the control augmentation, let go of the stick and deliberately placed both hands on the consoles. The *Corsair* recovered itself about 70° nose high, rolling right. The MK 4 gun pod was hanging by just the rear lug, almost 90° to the windstream, tail outboard. The pilot kicked in full left rudder and aileron, and the aircraft came over the top at 190 knots.

He headed for the coast, and informed his flight leader that he had a slight problem. It took full left trim to keep the plane in level flight; however, it still flew in a right skid. A short time later, the bottom of the pod shifted to the left jamming itself against the starboard main gear doors with its nose against the leading edge flap. It was still about 70° to the wind, but there was considerably less drag.

Once out over the water, the pilot's main concern was to get the pod off the airplane without taking the unit horizontal tail with it. He proceeded to push the nose over from 8,000 feet, picked up 200 knots and pulled 2 G's in a starboard turn, then hit the jettison switch for station 6 — hoping to throw



the pod away from the aircraft. Nothing happened. The flight leader joined up and they took another look at it. It was still resting against the leading edge flap! He then tried to shake it loose by rocking the *Corsair*, zooming, with G's, etc. — in general, he handled the aircraft pretty rough. The pod still didn't budge. He tried the salvo-jettison circuit next. It fired properly and got rid of both triple ejector racks, but

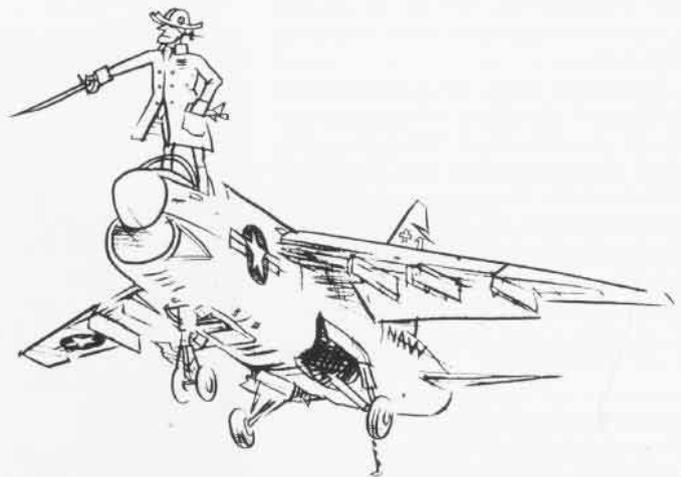
the pod was just as solid as ever.

The plane was now much more flyable, and he headed for a divert field nearby. At about 6,000 feet and 14 miles from the base, out over the water, he extended the speed brake to slow to 180 knots. The speed brake traveled only about one foot and the pod came loose. There were a series of thuds and the stick slapped out of his hand. The master caution light came on, followed by other hydraulic system failure lights. At nine miles off the runway, he blew the gear and flaps down, switched to tower frequency, declared an emergency and proceeded straight in to the runway. The long field arrested landing was completed without further difficulty. After coming to a stop, the lieutenant commander shut down his engine and proceeded to examine the holes and other damage.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**Whew! How about that perfect professional performance by a real cool Aviator. Saved the Navy a mighty valuable airplane, he did. Could every**



*Nelson in command of his ship was never cooler!*

other birdman have done as well? Very doubtful. Knowledge of the machine, its systems and performance characteristics, practice and careful planning and preparation for flight — all add up to mastery of almost any situation which a pilot might have to face.

### A Rose is a Rose is a Rose

The Marine captain was on a routine close air support mission, in his A-4E *Skyhawk*. He had been airborne about 25 minutes in a scheduled one-hour mission that afternoon and had rolled in on one of his last bomb runs. Just prior to the pickle point, there was a sudden thump and the airplane jerked violently. He immediately attempted to drop his ordnance and pull out but felt no control response whatsoever. The plane continued the run and bounced off the ground, then started a roll to the left.

His wingman and the forward air controller (airborne) saw the aircraft on fire on the pull-off from target, and the FAC called, "Eject! Eject!" The pilot initiated ejection while the *Skyhawk* was inverted. The seat left the aircraft after it had completed its roll and was upright. The plane continued to roll and hit the ground. The lucky pilot landed nearby with only minor injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

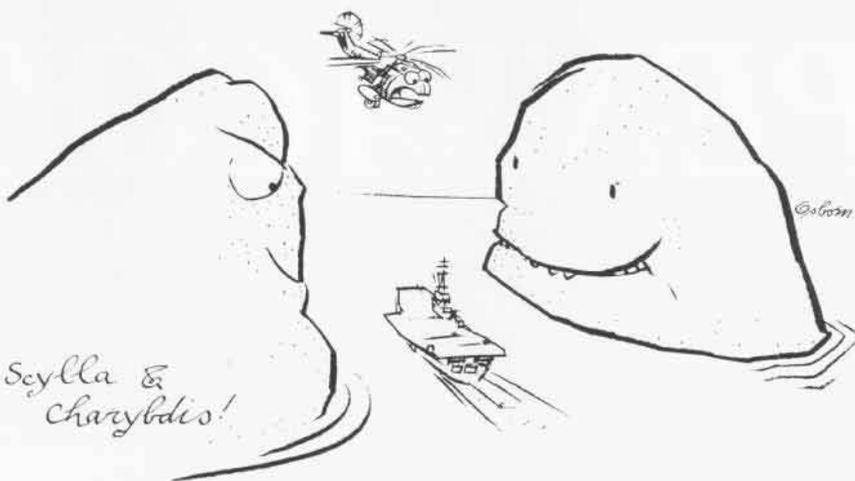
You talk about smellin' like a rose! This lad sure must'a been thinkin' pure thoughts all week. Don't know what he did right, but it was probably everything. I've seen many an outstanding aviator meet his maker in just such a situation. It's gratifyin' to see one make it back to tell about it.

### Ghosts in the Night

An SH-3D *Sea King* was launched as plane guard for a five-and-a-half-hour, fixed-wing, night carrier qualification period from a West Coast CVS. It was the first extensive night operation for the ship, which had just completed yard conversion from a CVA.

The weather was marginal, ceiling 800 feet overcast, with five miles visibility in haze and fog patches. There was no visible horizon, so flight was mostly on instruments.

Everything was normal for the first five hours. Then, as they turned outbound from the ship in the starboard delta/plane-guard pattern, the copilot noticed large breakers below, like those



at most ocean beaches. The pilots also saw two white lights ahead (one a flashing beacon) at an undetermined distance. Suspecting an island close by, they called the ship to determine the closest land. A "Roger" was received but no reply. Starting outbound for the second time, with the same visual circumstances, they again called for nearest land, this time demanding a response in a tone that indicated something was amiss. Again, no information was received. (Half an hour earlier there had been word that the nearest land was passing about 17 miles on the starboard quarter.) On their next outbound turn, they were given a Charlie, to follow the last fixed wing aircraft, which was on final. The copilot confirmed that he could make out a land formation a few miles away. Two other helos, returning directly from training, were given immediate Charlies, and all three landed without incident.

Prior to shutdown on the flight deck, the aircraft commander again called and was still told that the nearest land was some 20 miles distant. Too much! Going directly from his aircraft to the air operations center where he found several senior representatives, he asked for an official answer on the location of the nearest land. "Twenty or more miles," was the immediate reply! A review of the circumstances followed. After much discussion, including radar's confirmation that there was no surface contact visible on radar, a visual review of the ship's track was made. Much to the astonishment of all present, this proved that the ship had indeed passed abeam of an island a few miles to starboard. It turned out to be a large natural mass rising 634 feet

above the surface. The only explanation was, "Sorry about that, but we just didn't see it on the ship's radar."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great gallopin' ghosts! Wouldn't that curdle the cream in your coffee on a cold morning. Gramps received the above story from an anonymous fan. It just had to be printed. Wonder if they knew about that ghost island up on the bridge? Could the ship have run aground? Some communications lacking somewhere.

Sure an' it would'a been pilot error if some poor soul had flown into the mountain. It's comfortin' though to know that an occurrence like this is viewed with alarm by all concerned and procedures are changed to prevent a recurrence.

### G.P. Eats Prairie Chicken

Ol' Gramps has been wrong more'n once and, when the real experts take exception, it's back to the books for more exact dope.

Referring to "Decision Point" in the June 1970 issue of *NA News*, there are at least a couple of acknowledged experts in the A-6 who disagree that the *Intruder* "would've easily flown away on one engine" after ingesting a prairie chicken at liftoff. Depending on the exact point of engine failure and gross weight and temperature, the craft could probably have flown out on one engine, though not with ease.

Gramps didn't intend to fault the pilot at all. He made sound decisions all around. Things just didn't turn out very well, and different decisions may well have changed the situation. There are certainly more desirable alternatives than ending up in a fire on your back, caught in the cockpit.