



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

FOD

A senior lieutenant commander climbed aboard an A-4F *Skyhawk* at 1130 for a routine flight from home field to another Pacific Coast naval air station for weapons training. Since the tempo of his recent flying hours had been rather slow, he made a particularly thorough preflight of the aircraft (all of three minutes). As part of this routine, he carefully checked the intakes for foreign objects.

Turn-up, taxi and takeoff were normal, and climbout was begun at 250 knots airspeed. Due east of the field at 8,000 feet, there was a severe thud in the engine, followed immediately by a flameout. The pilot retarded the throttle and advised the tower. There was no fire warning light and no other indication of fire. He switched to manual fuel and made a relight attempt. The engine started normally and ran smoothly but with an abnormally high exhaust gas temperature.

At this time, the *Skyhawk* was at a high 180-degree position for the duty runway, and the pilot decided to intercept a low precautionary approach profile and land the aircraft. He was slightly high at the 45° position, so he extended his speed brakes. After several minor compressor stalls, the engine flamed out again. There was still no fire warning light and no advice from the tower of a fire; however, the pilot could now see flames coming from the aft section of the fuselage.

Although he had sufficient altitude for a safe ejection, the lieutenant commander noticed that he was headed directly for the fuel farm and hangars, so he elected to stay with the aircraft long enough to clear the structures. He lowered the nose to maintain 180 knots and continued the approach. The *Skyhawk* picked up a high rate of descent, and the pilot now felt that he might be outside the safe ejection envelope. It looked as if he could still reach the runway or overrun area. He elected to stick it out.

Touchdown was slightly hard. The



burning machine rolled for a ways; then the main landing gear collapsed. By using the rudder, the pilot was able to keep the A-4 on the runway; it engaged the mid-field arresting gear and slid to a stop. The pilot quickly climbed over the side as the flames completely engulfed the aircraft.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

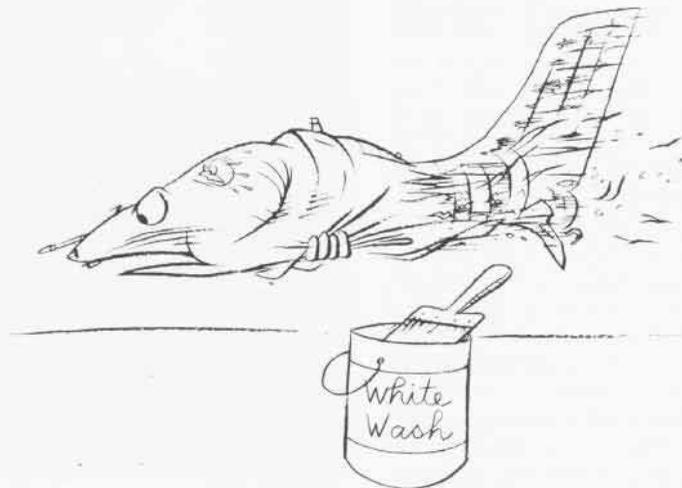
A gol darn cool cookie in a red hot oven. He had us sweatin' him out for a while there. Too bad there was

so little left of that *Skyhawk* after he risked his neck to bring it back. The squadron launched a very thorough investigation, including a formal Judge Advocate General's inquiry to determine the cause and to take appropriate action. The plane captain was designated a "party" in order to protect his rights.

A partially destroyed pair of diagonal pliers was found in the engine by the maintenance officer who duly presented it to the investigating officer as "Exhibit A."

The plane had flown the previous afternoon with no damage; so, it was concluded that the pliers had been introduced by person or persons unknown between 1630 on the day before and 1120 on the day of the accident. All persons who worked on the aircraft were duly sworn and testified; however, nothing could be proved. The plane captain *did* conduct a thorough preflight inspection of the airplane. The pilot *did* look for FOD in the intake. The only recommendation of the investigating officer was that an improved method of tool accountability and control be instituted to prevent a recurrence.

What's missing? Why weren't the maintenance chief petty officer and the maintenance officer designated parties? Or even the C.O.? Procedures within the squadron were so lax that the plane captain was not even designated as prescribed in appropriate directives. Existing instructions on



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tool accountability and FOD prevention were not being complied with in the remotest sense. The fleet air commander and others pointed this out only too carefully in their endorsements to the investigative report, but no one even suggested that any form of disciplinary action be instituted against those responsible for allowing these conditions to exist. C'est la vie.

Cross-Country

From: Lt. P. D. Que, 1310/USN
 To: Commanding Officer, Observation Squadron One
 Subj: Leave, Request for
 1. It is respectfully requested that I be granted 10 days' leave.
 2. If granted, my address will be:
 200 Elm Street
 Podunk, Pennsylvania
 3. It is further requested that I be detailed aircraft NO-1 #4820 which is assigned to this squadron. It will be used for the purpose of practicing cross-country flying from here to Podunk and return.

Very respectfully,
 /s/ P. D. Que

Because it was a normal request, it was approved and leave was granted. P.D. drew a cross-country pack from operations and proceeded with his mission. In due course, he returned from leave refreshed and with a beautiful tan.

Sometime later, the skipper called Lt. Que into his office for some explanations. The aircraft log book and a pile of fuel chits were on his desk. [The log was up to date and the chits were all properly completed.] The C.O. looked up at him and said, "Seriously, Lieutenant, there are some things here that I would like explained. What is this Charlie's gas pump at Podunk, Pa.?"

"Well, Sir, you see," the lieutenant explained, "Podunk doesn't have a landing field, so I landed in a cow pasture on the edge of town. It belongs to a friend, and he said I could use it. He agreed that when I flew over his house, he'd go out and chase all the cows into one corner of the field while I landed. [Good forethought and planning.] Charlie's gas pump is just down the road a piece and, since the sheriff is my uncle, it was easily arranged to taxi down and fill up."

"I see," the skipper said, "but why



all these practice flights every day?"

The lieutenant had the answer to that one too. "You see, Sir, Podunk is way inland, and they don't know much about the Navy or that we even have airplanes in the Navy; so I not only kept up my flying skills while on leave, but also flew over town to let them read the U.S. Navy on the side of the airplane. It was all good public relations for the Navy." [Two birds with one stone.]

With this the C.O. reached under his desk and pulled out a crumpled cardboard sign. "What about this sign that was found in the baggage compartment of your plane?" Crudely hand lettered thereon were the words:

SEE PODUNK FROM THE AIR
 \$5.00 A HOP
 ZOOM YOUR HOUSE
 \$2.00 EXTRA

The barn door was closed the next day with the posting of the following order:

From: Commanding Officer, Observation Squadron One
 To: All Pilots
 Subj: Flying regulations, Publication of

1. Hereafter, pilots taking Navy planes on leave will not, repeat, not take up passengers for hire.

W. T. DOOR



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well, singe my ol' gray whiskers! Don't think this didn't really happen, cuz it really did, albeit a few years back.

Things like that don't happen anymore, you say. Oh, but they do. Well,

not exactly, but how about the Marine warrant officer who took his aged family relatives for a short air taxi in his H-53? Wiped out the *Sea Stallion* when he backed into another helicopter. Luckily, his family suffered only minor injuries.

Or, how 'bout the Marine Captain who just recently buzzed his uncle's farm in the Middle West in his OV-10 *Bronco*? He bought that farm when his wing tip hit a tree.

What about the Navy lieutenant who practiced his own one-man air show to the amusement of the many? He flew wing on airliners, made low passes under power lines, performed aerobatics in the traffic pattern, etc., violating practically every good rule in the book — with no one making any effort whatsoever to bring such escapades to a halt until one day he failed to complete a dirty roll immediately after takeoff in his A-4.

'n I only hear about the ones that end tragically. Gol darn immature little kids, that's what they are. There are two approaches to bringing such things under control. The reasonable one of appealing to each pilot's sense of responsibility, his pride of professionalism, his patriotism in not needlessly jeopardizing the taxpayers' dollars, his personal concern for his family in not recklessly risking his own life to cause them suffering. This approach has been, and is being used, with only partial success today. The other approach is the "big brother" one, the "two-man rule" — constant, continuous, personal command supervision over all flight activities from takeoff to landing. It is coming, and it may be the answer. Our country cannot afford the carnage of one life, \$1,000,000, and one aircraft destroyed every day of the year in the Navy and Marine Corps. Highly preventable accidents account for one third of this total.