

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE



ILLUSTRATED BY *Colborn*

Weightology

A fleet replacement pilot was scheduled for day carrier qualification operations in a KA-3B *Skywarrior*. Ready room briefing followed by preflight and start-up was uneventful. The aircraft proceeded to the ship and the RP commenced his qualifications. Following a number of landings, he trapped, taxied to the catapult and Rogered for his aircraft weight. The catapult shot appeared normal; however, the *Skywarrior* settled to within 20 feet of the water before establishing a climb!

Following a number of non-arrested approaches and landings, the KA-3B once again trapped on board. It was refueled, directed toward the catapult and again the pilot Rogered what he believed to be his current aircraft weight. The aircraft was launched off the catapult for a second time and again the *Skywarrior* settled dangerously close to the water before the pilot could recover and establish a climbing attitude.

At this time, shipboard personnel strongly suspected either an aircraft



or pilot problem or both, and the aircraft was diverted to home base.

Investigation revealed that prior to his initial trap, the pilot had activated wing and auxiliary fuel dump. The pilot, knowing that the aircraft had a previous wing fuel indicator gripe, had assumed the wings were empty when

they actually contained 4,600 pounds of fuel. He was, therefore, Rogering his weight at 4,600 pounds less than his actual weight. Consequently, his catapult end speed was minus one knot the first time and plus five on the second shot.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! Looks like what some people consider a "minor maintenance discrepancy (fuel gauge)," almost cost a flyin' machine. The pilot didn't help much when he assumed his fuel had been dumped. Looks to me like he should'a got the message after the first shot almost wound up being his last!

You see, gents, so often it ain't the "big things" that do a fella in—it's all those little things that we call "up gripes." So, when it comes to looking over your previous discrepancies on the yellow sheet—be a suspicious cuss!

Night Lumberjack

A lieutenant junior grade instructor and an ensign student were scheduled for a two-plane night formation train-



ing flight in TF-9J *Cougars*. The brief, preflight and turn-up were uneventful. The two *Cougars* departed the airfield and flew their night formation training flight without incident. Following the formation flight, they returned to the airfield and entered the landing pattern for some night landings.

The student broke first for landing, with the lieutenant junior grade taking interval in the pattern on his student. As the instructor approached a deep 90-degree position, he picked up traffic that he believed to be a single aircraft in his 12-o'clock position but in reality what he saw was a section of F-9s on a GCA to the outboard runway. The pilot could not distinguish the type of aircraft. Calling the ball, he continued his approach to the 45-degree position, becoming more concerned about the traffic which remained in the vicinity of his 12-o'clock position.

After passing the 45-degree position and continually checking the 12-o'clock traffic, it appeared to the pilot that a potential for a midair collision was occurring. Because the section of aircraft appeared as one, he believed

he was extremely close to this traffic, so he took evasive action. As the section split, it appeared that the traffic went into a 90-degree bank.

The exact evasive action taken is not certain; however, when the lieutenant returned his attention to his aircraft, it was near a stall attitude and approaching final. He added full power, leveled his wings and continued the approach.

At this point, he was estimated to be below 100 feet and the additional power did not stop his sink rate. He settled into an area of small trees in a landing attitude.

As he felt the impact, he tried to eject but couldn't find the face curtain. He continued approximately 500 feet at high power through the trees until he struck a three-foot diameter metal pipe lying on the ground. It sheared all three landing gears.

The aircraft continued at high power another 330 feet through dense trees until it came to rest, heavily damaged but intact, with the engine still running. The uninjured instructor secured the engine and essential switches and then

attempted to blow the canopy. Since the emergency canopy release was not activated properly, it did not blow back. He opened it manually and exited the aircraft. The aircraft was a total loss.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

My surgin' blood pressure! This pilot could'a got kilt! How many times have we seen "drivers" get pre-occupied with other traffic with the result being landing short, landing without rollers, minus the flaps, or some other forgotten item—you've gotta fly your machine! This lad said this accident could'a been prevented had we waved off—too bad his immediate analysis was not as good as his "hindsight" analysis. It's a darned good idea to keep your head out'a the cockpit—but this lad carried a good thing too far! If you want to play lumberjack, get yourself a chain saw.

'The only material failure which occurred was me.'