



# grampaw pettibone

## Gramps' Mailbag

Dear Gramps,

There we were at 300 feet, 160 knots, in our intrepid S-3A *Viking*, scanning the blue waters in search of a submerged threat. Our protruded MAD boom had been quiet so far, but an eager crew anticipated the imminent detection of a magnetic disturbance. Then it happened — the MAD reacted violently, the copilot called out, "Madman," and the pilot yelled, "What the hell?" as an A-7 quickly pulled away after having slipped *underneath* our flight path.

Now, as impressive as that stunt was, I should make it known to that



A-7 pilot that S-3s have been known to spit out sonobuoys from time to time in order to fulfill the ASW mission. Should the buoy be intercepted before hitting the water by a

low-flying buoy-snatcher, not only will our mission suffer, but that of the low flyer, too. Imagine the FOD potential, or better yet, the damage potential of 20 pounds of metal.

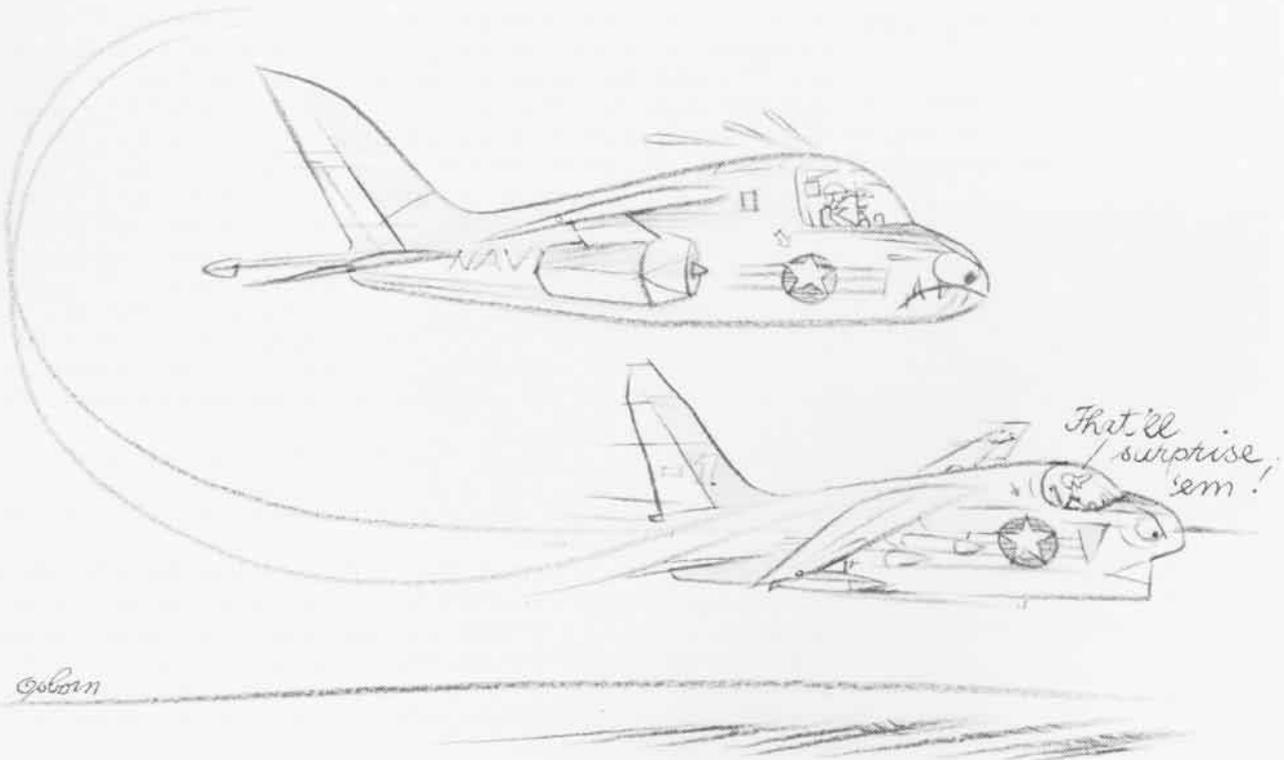
Food for thought from an S-3A copilot.

George T. Sullivan, Ens., USNR  
VS-28



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Buoy-oh-buoy! An A-7 *Tiger* who is all claws and no brains. You're right, son, this leads the list of unprofessional performances. This pilot could have paid with his life for participation in an unscheduled air show — that's too high an entry fee.



## Gear Grinder

Following a routine preflight, the *Crusader* pilot made a start and taxied out to the duty runway. After receiving clearance to take the runway, he taxied into position and conducted a full-power checkout. Noting no discrepancies, he released his brakes and lit the burner shortly after commencing the takeoff roll. Approaching 125 knots, the pilot rotated to takeoff attitude and very shortly thereafter, thinking he was airborne, retracted the gear. The fuselage settled back onto the runway immediately. Despite extensive scraping and grinding of the gear doors and the bottom of the fuselage, the *Crusader* continued to accelerate and became airborne.

The amazed *Crusader* jockey made a turn to avoid a populated area and decided to assess the situation. There were no warning lights illuminated nor were there any other signs of trouble in the cockpit, so he requested the tower to divert an aircraft to conduct a visual inspection of his aircraft. No other aircraft being immediately available, it was decided that the pilot should lower the gear and fly by the tower for a check. The driver lowered the gear handle and noted all three gears indicated down and the hydraulic pressure normal. A low fly-by was conducted; the air traffic controller confirmed the gear was down. The pilot remained in the landing configuration and after making arrangements for a short field arrestment, made it without further damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! If this stunt doesn't shake the dew off the lily, nothin' will.

Here's an above average fighter pilot, with two WestPac cruises under his belt, that just couldn't stand prosperity. This fellow, a bit bored by a routine test hop, thought he'd spice it up a bit by executin' a sharp takeoff. There's nothing wrong with a sharp takeoff, but when it leads to a departure from flight discipline, the "profes-



sionalism" required in the execution becomes overshadowed by plain old "showmanship."

There are two dangerous periods in a pilot's life: One, when he's a young cub just learning to become a tiger, and two, when he's a battle-scarred tiger with plenty of time in model and maybe gettin' a few too many automatic reactions and becoming too relaxed. Wish I had a quarter - inflation, you know - for every time I've said that. (July 1969)

## Night Taxi

An A-7E pilot on a local night mission was cleared for takeoff. After 100 feet of roll, the pilot heard a "pop" and observed a fuel boost caution light. Takeoff was aborted at 20 knots and a turn off the duty runway was requested from the tower. Clearing the runway, the pilot called the squadron duty officer on base radio to inform him of the difficulty. The pilot then switched back to ground control and made a turn onto an adjacent taxiway. The taxi light was not used.

The pilot made another turn through what he thought was a taxiway throat to the main mat area. In reality, he had inadvertently entered a fuel pit. The pilot saw the fuel pit pumping equipment almost immediately and stopped. Just before he stopped, the starboard main mount

struck the center pit light and severed the hydraulic line to the landing gear actuator unit.

The pilot noted smoke drifting up the starboard side of the aircraft. The smoke was actually hydraulic fluid spraying forward from the ruptured hydraulic line. This mist ignited, causing fire to engulf the starboard side of the cockpit. Heat inside the cockpit became intense and the pilot broadcast that he was on fire and getting out. He unstrapped, blew the canopy, secured the engine and egressed over the port side. Line and fuel pit personnel extinguished the fire.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! The moral of this story is - or should be - pretty obvious. This young aviator felt familiar with the field and did not use his taxi light. In the 75 seconds before the mishap, he made three UHF frequency changes, three radio transmissions, three 90-degree turns, and traveled about 600 feet over the ground. Let's slow down, use our taxi light ashore and stop the aircraft when the burden of communicating precludes looking outside the cockpit. Taxi lights are neat. They shed light on things. The macho man is cool, but he can't see in the dark! Turn the taxi lights on ashore for common sense safety. Gramps would really appreciate your help on this one.