



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Candid Camera Collision

The flight was scheduled for an exercise involving a section of F-4Ns, launching from a desert-based expeditionary auxiliary airfield on a close-air-support and air-to-air photography mission. Flight lead was delegated to the wingman so that the mission commander's back seat civilian passenger could film the mission. The brief was conducted by the mission commander less the photographer who was allowed to proceed directly to the aircraft and be "strapped in" by the plane captain.

As the flight leader started his roll for a section takeoff, the photographer passenger in #2 aircraft requested a max performance takeoff demonstration. The pilot (mission commander) delayed his takeoff roll for separation and then executed an unbriefed, maximum power takeoff, losing sight of the lead aircraft in the process. Section joinup was delayed due to the fact the two aircraft proceeded to different rendezvous points, lost visual contact, and were on different radio frequencies.

After rendezvous was finally effected, the flight orbited in loose parade formation awaiting clearance onto the training range. During this time, the photographer frequently asked the pilot to change positions on the lead aircraft so he could take photographs.

The flight was established in a 30-degree left angle of bank, 300 kias, in a level orbit at 17,000 feet. The photographer then asked the pilot to execute a canopy roll so he could film the lead aircraft from the top against the desert background. The pilot stabilized his aircraft on the leader's right wing in a loose parade position and then commenced an unannounced right-to-left canopy roll over the

leader. As the aircraft reached the inverted position the two aircraft collided. The nose of the #2 aircraft passed slightly aft of the lead aircraft's canopy and to the left of its longitudinal axis.

After collision, the #2 aircraft fell out of control into an upright 30-degree dive, having sustained catastrophic failure of the left wing spar. The entire left wing panel departed the aircraft also. The pilot initiated ejection with the lower handle. Ejection sequence was normal and successful landings

*You have to
SEE it... to
believe it!*



without injury followed.

Aircraft #1 experienced a much more violent reaction during the collision. The aircraft immediately went out of control and rolled to the left inverted. The crew were hanging in their straps in a zero/negative G load, 80-degree nose-down, left-spiral condition. The violent roll and yaw threw the pilot's head against the canopy rail with such force that he damaged his helmet and fractured his cheekbone.

Fuel gushed from the broken lines and ruptured fuselage tanks, engulfing the entire aft section as the aircraft fell flaming to earth in a flat left spiral. The pilot desperately pulled himself down into his seat, grasped the lower handle and initiated successful ejection.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

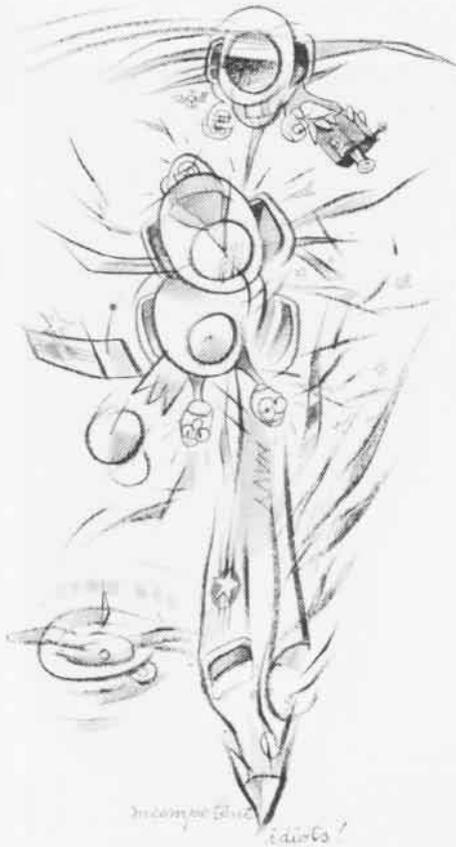


Holy colossal collisions! This is dumber than dirt, gang, and gets old Gramps hotter'n a Franklin stove! For one thing, these fellows took off in a pair of high-performance tactical aircraft with little or no oxygen aboard. Their masks were attached to only one side of their helmet making necessary communication awkward at best during unbriefed maneuvers, and virtually impossible during an emergency ejection sequence. This may explain — but does not excuse — a lot of the unannounced maneuvers.

The fact that the photographer did not attend the flight brief is perhaps of little significance since the actual flight resembled little of what was described in the brief (i.e., unannounced high performance takeoff by #2, losing sight of leader, going to a wrong rendezvous point on wrong frequency, and performing unannounced, unbriefed canopy rolls.)

The quality of the "wingman's" performance as a mission commander

and the airmanship demonstrated in his canopy rolls blows me away. It probably didn't impress the rest of his flight crew much either!



Item 2: A Naval Aviator, with about 10,000 pilot hours (including 2,000 in light aircraft), permitted a pilot under instruction to bounce more than twice during an attempted landing in a Citabria. When the dust settled, each prop blade was curled back three inches.

Item 3: Another Naval Aviator, currently qualified in F-4s, "pranged" a Cessna 172 so hard on the nose wheel that each prop blade was curled back two inches.

Item 4: A military aviator with over 2,000 pilot hours departed Offshore Island for a weekend of fun-in-the-sun. The flight, two hours over open ocean, took a little longer than planned. When in radio contact with the destination airport, he reported that he was low on fuel and was experiencing control difficulties. Tower personnel provided priority landing instructions and advised him that he had a large object on a six-foot line dangling from the tail of his aircraft. After landing, an FAA official determined that the

object was a 40-pound concrete rock tiedown. Our hero forgot to untie the tail tiedown during preflight. His newly acquired certificate was to be taken away.

Grampaw Pettibone says:



Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! You young bucks have got old Gramps goin' full circle again. This sounds too dang much like the stuff I wrote in my first issues. Aviators have a natural desire to "try 'em all out," but you gotta remember which machine you're drivin' if you plan on arrivin'!

Each of these instances occurred because a pilot — *who should know better* — treated light aircraft without appropriate respect. Moral of the story is that you can wound your pride just as severely or get killed just as dead in a Beechcraft, Bellanca or Cessna as in a P-3, F-4, H-3, or any other military aircraft when you treat 'em with a heavy-handed, light-headed, terminal case of disrespect! Nuff said!



The net result of this dastardly demonstration of disregard and ad hoc air showmanship was the loss of two expensive aircraft, and a mighty close call for four human beings.

From the Mailbag

Gramps received four items from *NANews'* most important customers, you readers. These short but important summaries address a problem that has been around from the very start of this aviatin' business.

Item 1: A Naval Aviator, embarked as a passenger in the rear seat of a flying club T-34B, failed to fasten his seat belt. During the flight, air turbulence caused him to be thrown violently upward, his head shattering the canopy. Ouch!