



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

From the Mailbag

Sparks in the Dark

What began as a routine field mirror landing practice (FMLP) hop came close to imminent disaster last fall for LCdr. Doug Bradt. He and his A-7 Corsair took off from NAS Cecil Field and flew toward nearby Whitehouse Field at about eight p.m.

"I cleared him for takeoff," said AC2 Joe Biles, who was in the tower at Cecil Field. "While he was rolling down the runway, I saw sparks shooting from the exhaust. I immediately called Jacksonville departure control and they relayed the message to the pilot."

In the meantime, crash crewman Randy Alexander, from the Cecil Field fire department, was also alerted and he called the tower on the FM radio to confirm AC2 Biles' observation. The aircraft returned to Cecil without further incident. LCdr. Bradt taxied to the line where the maintenance crew discovered the aircraft had ingested some birds on takeoff roll, seriously fodding the engine.



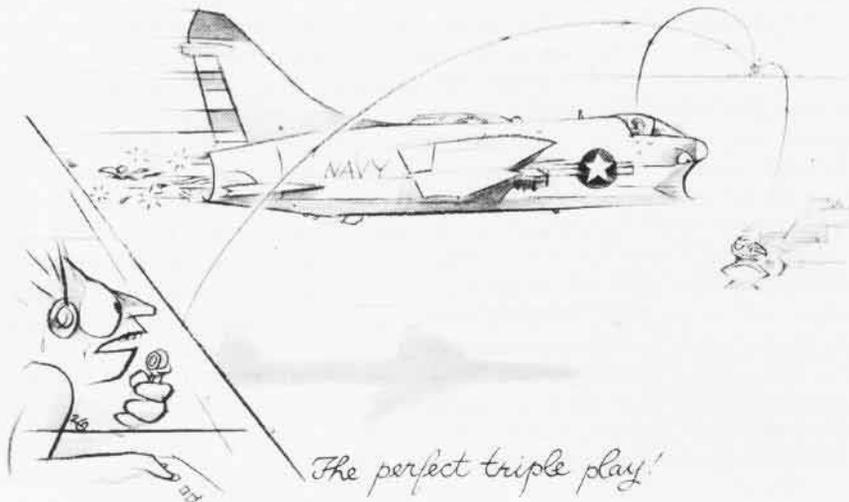
Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy fodding feathers! The accurate diagnosis and alert actions by



AC2 Biles and crash crewman Alexander averted a potential disaster that was promoted by birds of the feather flocking together — unfortunately, on the duty runway.

It makes old Gramps proud to be able to add to LCdr. Bradt's and Attack Squadron 174's thanks to these two gents. "Well done."



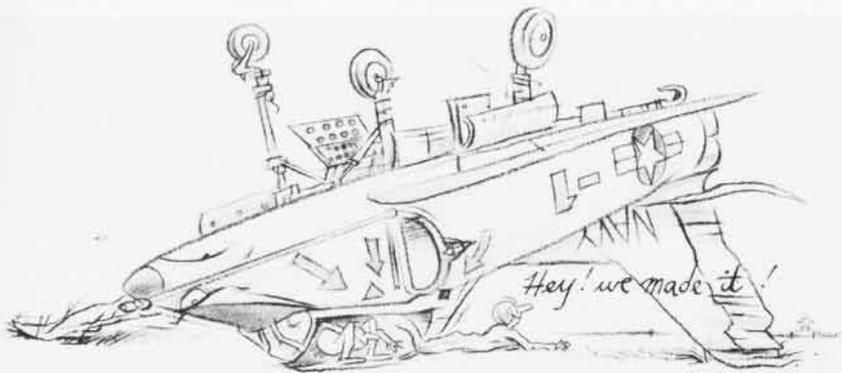
No Flap Flop

Upon completion of the high altitude portion of a familiarization-type flight check ride, the instructor pilot (IP) in the rear seat of a TA-4J directed the student to make some practice precautionary approaches at home field where a light but steady rain was falling and a crosswind was blowing. After the approaches, the student entered the touch and go pattern but was waved off three successive times due to overshooting the centerline. The instructor demonstrated a touch and go, then the student made one. After this fifth pass, the IP noted 1,600 pounds of fuel remaining and directed the student to make a full-stop landing. Realizing that the student hadn't made a no-flap approach, which was required for the flight, the instructor directed the student to make a no-flap, full-stop landing using speed brakes and spoilers.

The approach was flown on speed and centerline with a centered ball to touchdown. The student brought the power back to idle and the spoilers were extended. At the 5,000-foot-remaining marker, the aircraft was traveling about 120 knots; at 4,000 feet, 100 knots. The instructor told the student to commence braking. Speed was 50 knots at the 2,000-foot marker. Shortly after that, the instructor took the controls, released the brakes, crossing the long field arresting gear (located at 1,000 feet remaining), and then began braking again. The aircraft drifted right, the nose swinging to the left. The IP ordered the student to drop the hook. The Skyhawk was now in a right skid, 15 feet right of centerline.

The instructor released the left brake, engaged nosewheel steering, and reapplied the right brake in a futile attempt to stop the nose from drifting. The aircraft, sliding sideways with its nose 90 degrees left of runway head-

ILLUSTRATED BY *Osborn*



ing, departed the strip at 20 knots, 200 feet from the end. It continued skidding upright for another 40 feet before the starboard wing dug into the ground. The aircraft rolled inverted and came to rest on the canopy, tail section and left wing. The student secured the engine, using the throttle and emergency fuel cutoffs. The crew egressed without injury.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehoshaphat, you gotta be skiddin' me! The decision to attempt a no-flap, full-stop landing in the TA-4J on a wet runway with an obvious crosswind was not in the best interest of aviation safety. The computed roll-out distance for such a landing under the conditions indicated, using maximum braking techniques, is 6,300 feet. Since touchdown was 700 feet from the approach end, there was minimum room for error. Sufficient fuel remained to safely permit execution of the no-flap approach to a touch-and-go landing followed by a full-flap, full-stop landing.

These lads could have also made a long-field arrestment or, at the 4,000-foot marker with speed in excess of 80 knots (which was the case here), take it around.

Luckily, the two survived. Unluckily, the *Skyhawk* sustained strike damage. The adage, "Any landing you can walk away from is a good one," does not apply!

The Bent Mentor

Following a normal briefing, pre-flight and engine run-up, the pilot of the T-34B *Mentor* positioned his air-

craft for takeoff on runway 12L, 2,087 feet long. It was the shorter of two parallel runways. The pilot went to full power, checked his instruments and commenced takeoff roll. The aircraft left the runway at about the 1,000-foot mark. Seconds later it began to vibrate and seemed to lose power. The back-seat passenger, who had no aviation experience, noted some difficulty in getting the aircraft to lift off. Once airborne, the aircraft was in an abnormally nose-high attitude and displayed sluggish roll and yaw characteristics. The T-34 then settled back toward the ground, the right wing dipping momentarily and contacting the runway.

At this point, the pilot considered aborting the takeoff but elected not to in view of the short length of runway remaining. He continued airborne and raised the gear and flaps, which seemed to improve the flight characteristics sufficiently to establish a slight positive rate of climb.

The pilot attributed the poor aircraft performance to a possible engine malfunction, and decided to attempt an emergency landing on the remaining portion of the upwind end of the longer parallel runway, 12R, which was 7,270 feet long. He began a right turn and requested an emergency landing. The engine appeared to have regained power and was now running smoothly. The pilot thought he could make the runway and extended the wheels and flaps.

The aircraft began to vibrate again and the engine seemed to lose power. Its rate of descent also increased. Seconds later, the *Mentor* struck the ground, left wing first, and skidded to a stop, 150 feet abeam of the long

runway. The pilot and the passenger egressed unharmed. The aircraft sustained strike damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy over-rotation! This song sounds like the all too sad and familiar "Aviator's Lament" (pilot error) with a strong a cappella chorus of the "Supervisor's (lack thereof) Waltz." Old Gramps questions the rationale of putting a passenger in the air with an aviator who has relatively little model experience, only 1.2 hours of flight time within the last 80 days, as a matter of fact. Plus, he was on his first flight from a strange field, using the shortest runway possible. Why did this pilot, who was the unit Natops officer, have so little recent flight time? One would think that an hour or so of refresher flight in the local takeoff-landing pattern would have been in order for starters and may have saved the day, not to mention the aircraft or the passenger's respect for Naval Aviation.

Engineering analysis of the engine fuel flow divider showed that it was not functioning properly, and could have caused sluggish response to fuel throttle commands. Whether or not this contributed to the cause of this mishap is unknown. When you over-rotate the aircraft and arrive on the back side of power curve, as this young lad did, you're hurtin' for certain, and the best fuel flow divider in town won't help. Recognizing an on-coming stall might, however.

