

## Fire in the Holes

A flight of three *Harriers* was approaching the break for landing at 1,500 feet, 340 knots. A TAV-8B was in the lead with numbers two and three in single seaters, flown by "student" aviators. Two miles from the numbers the lead *Harrier* pilot heard the master caution tone and noted that the yellow electronic fuel control caution light was on. (This light indicates that one of the digital engine control units has failed. Design calls for the other unit to automatically assume control.)

The pilot immediately realized that, under these circumstances, Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization calls for a landing as soon as practical. He asked the copilot to read him the procedure from the pocket checklist. The pilot decided to modify the break in a gentle turn downwind and did so, reducing power slowly.

Number two emulated lead's turn, five seconds later. At the 90-degree point, lead's copilot confirmed the procedure to land as soon as practical. The pilot then saw the red jet pipe

temperature limit warning light on. The heads-up display indicated an overtemp of 988 degrees.

The pilot experienced a minor

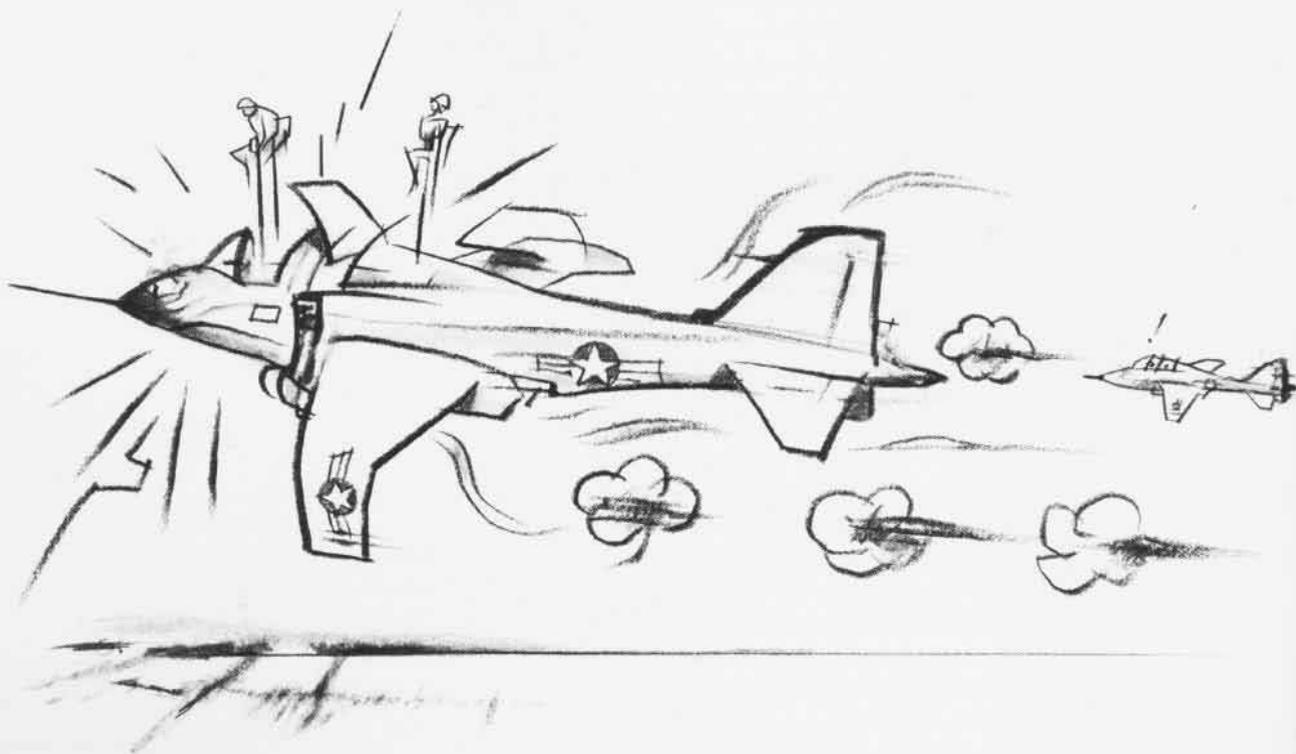
change in feel and thrust of the engine without any unusual noises. He leveled the wings and made an inadvertent ultra-high frequency transmission, which caught the attention of the second *Harrier* pilot. He alertly looked at lead and saw flashes of flame emanating from the hot nozzles. The flames appeared as four large orange and black cotton balls, lasting about four seconds.

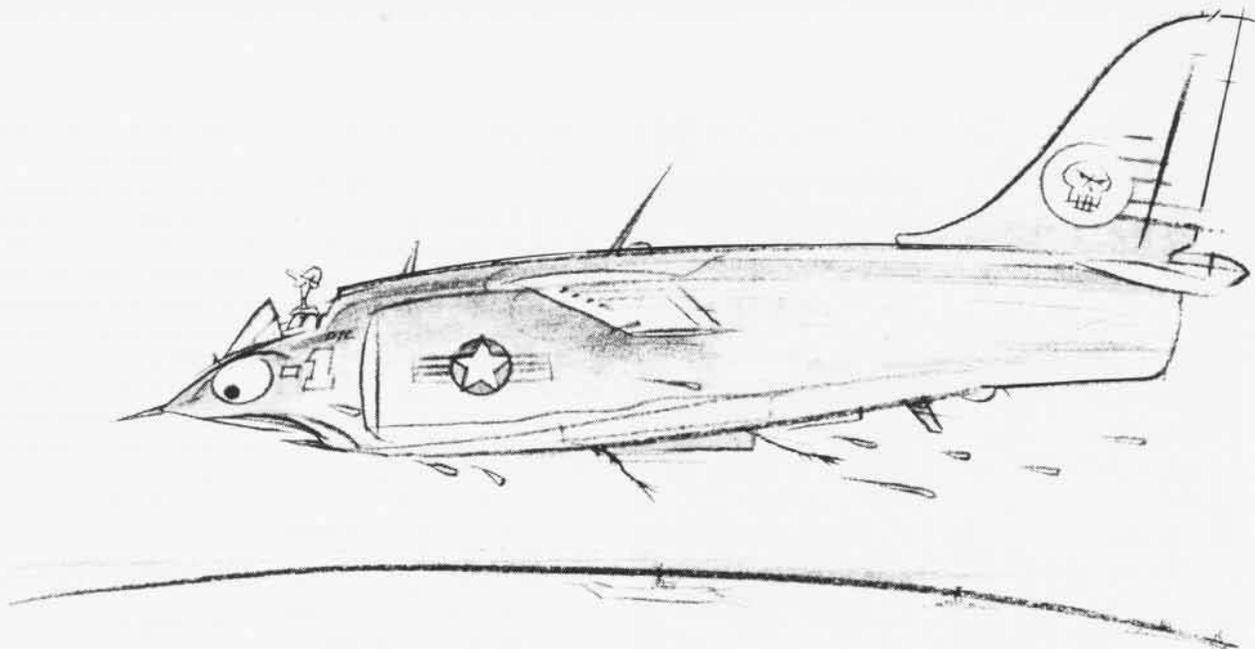
The wingman told lead about the flames and lead assumed he was on fire. To his copilot, lead said, "Get ready, we're going to get out." After three seconds – the *Harrier* traveling at 240 knots – the lead pilot initiated command ejection. Both fliers had good chutes, landed in a river, and were rescued about 20 minutes later. The aircraft flew for about one minute before crashing in the river.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**When you're hot, you're hot – and ya gotta go! Even though the *Harrier* flew all by its lonesome without pilots for a minute, these guys had no choice. The cockpit lit**





up – except for the fire warning light – and the wingman talked flames. It was decision time. The pilot smartly steered away from a housing area and punched out overwater.

The wingman did right, too, actin' quick like. Trouble is, an extra word or two in the right place and everybody, plus the bird, mighta stayed dry. It's all second guessin' but what if the wingman was to add "the flames have gone out," which they had. The ejection decision mighta been deferred and maybe the pilot coulda got the *Harrier* down.

Ole Gramps can't fault anyone, though. Number two had limited experience but the right instinct.

### Never Turn Back?

*The French say that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Testimony to this philosophy appeared in Naval Aviation News, June 1979:*

Shortly after takeoff from an East Coast AFB en route to Home Plate, an AV-8 experienced an AC/DC failure. The pilot promptly secured all electrical equipment except for the No. 1 and No. 2 batteries. He contacted the AFB on guard frequency and requested clearance direct to Home Plate, 500 miles away. This request was approved.

During the ensuing climb to altitude, the pilot noted a fuel transfer caution light with a simultaneous fuel gauge drop to 300 pounds. These indications reflect loss of fuel-system bleed air pressure. The pilot interpreted these two warnings as faulty indications.

Flight duration at this point was approximately 13 minutes. The pilot elected to continue visual flight rules to Home Plate. Thirty to 45 minutes later, the caution warning panel lights began to dim and two of four landing gear indicators went from a safe to an unsafe indication. These developments are indicative of near exhaustion of the No. 1 and No. 2 batteries.

After one hour and 13 minutes total flight time, the aircraft's engine flamed out. The flameout was caused by fuel feed tank unbalance and subsequent cavitation. Numerous relight attempts were unsuccessful. The pilot ejected successfully and was rescued without further incident.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**Great Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! This throttle pusher was really boresighted on getting home. With control shifted to the seat of his pants and experiencing an emergency, this aerial jockey continued his flight toward Home Plate and overflew at least 11 suitable landing fields before**

**flaming out!**

**When you assume that your experience level in the air makes you immune to accidents, you become a candidate for the Deep Six or the wrong end of the long green table. Nuff sed!**

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### From Gramps' "IN" Basket

A NOTAM (notice to airmen) had closed the field from 0800 to 1000. During a base-wide foreign object damage (FOD) walkdown in that timeframe, while personnel were walking over the parallel taxiway toward the north-south runway, an Air Force passenger aircraft landed and taxied to base ops. A VIP (Code 3) disembarked and subsequently boarded a helicopter which departed over the personnel conducting the FOD walkdown. Why was the aircraft allowed to land when the field was closed?



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**Good question! Maybe whoever OK'd the landing and/or somebody in that helo oughta come back, get with the pack, and help with the FOD walkdown.**