



# Robert Naval Aviation Legend

**R**obert Osborn is one of Naval Aviation's most treasured legends. When he stepped down as the illustrator of "Grampaw Pettibone" in March 1994—at the age of 89—he created a huge vacuum. No one has had a more remarkable and productive "tour of duty" in service to Naval Aviation than Bob Osborn.

In 1943, Lt. Osborn, in collaboration with Commander Seth Warner, created the "Sage of Safety" character for a column in the Bureau of Aeronautics' *News Letter*, predecessor of *Naval Aviation News*. (See "Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Fifty Years of Gramps," *Naval Aviation News*, Jan-Feb 1993.) Osborn's illustrations commingled with Warner's narrative accounts of aircraft accidents. Following a description of a mishap, "Ole Gramps" railed with invective when necessary to make a point. More than one aviator, caught in a pinch in the sky, has suddenly remembered a timely pearl of wisdom from Gramps that helped the flyer avoid a costly mistake.

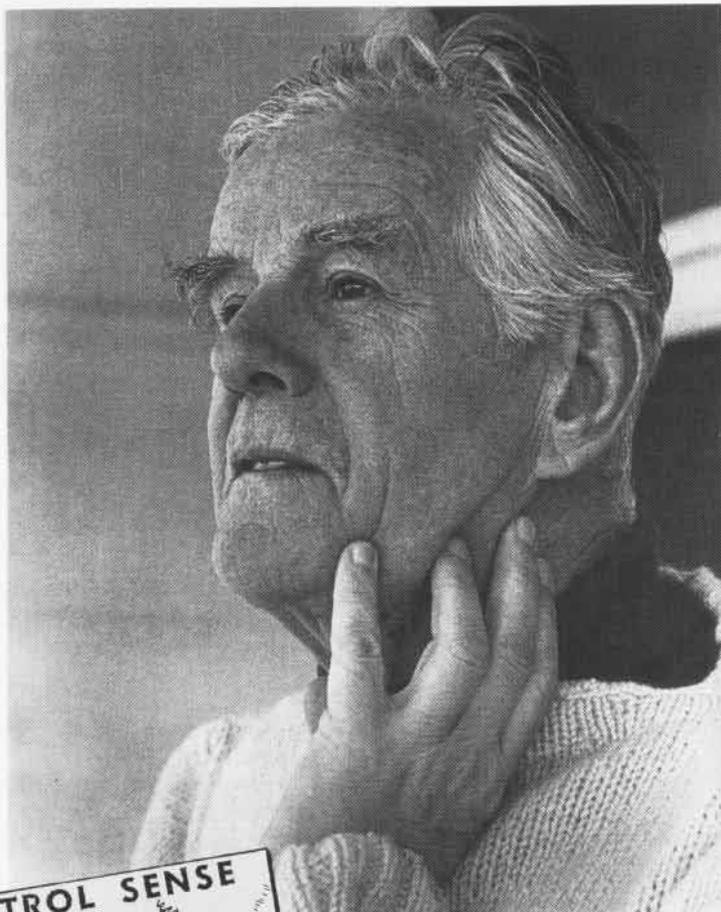
Osborn is also the creator of more than 2,000 of the famed "Dilbert the Pilot" and "Spoiler the Mechanic" posters. These were safety gems which were liberally displayed in hangars and aboard ships during WW II and into the 1950s.

In 1977, Osborn's dedicated service to Naval Aviation was recognized when he was designated No. 14 in the elite group of Honorary Naval Aviators. This honor is one of his most cherished.

# Osborn

Not once in all of the 51 years did Bob Osborn miss a deadline with *Naval Aviation News*. His drawings were terrific in the early days and somehow got even better with time. Recognized as one of America's greatest satirists/artists, Osborn's works have been published in prestigious magazines, newspapers and books.

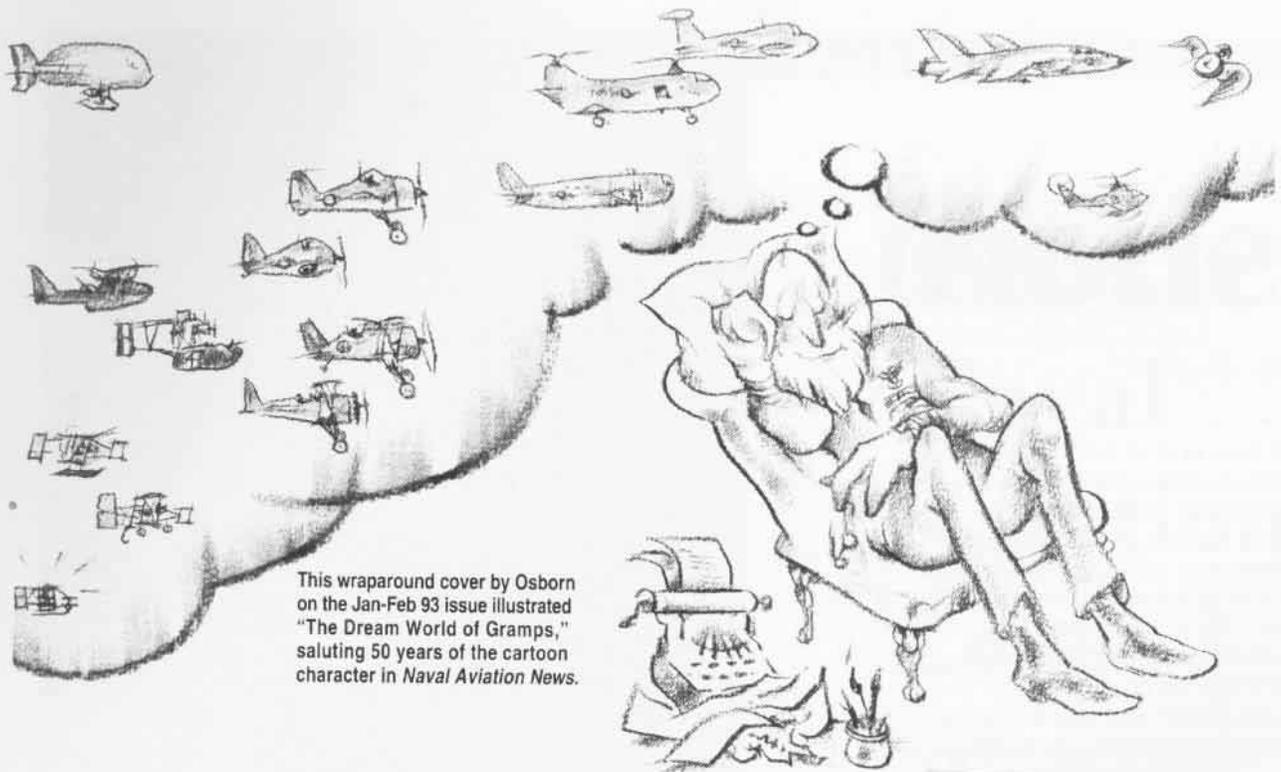
Naval Aviation was only one of his many subjects, but Osborn has a special



Opposite: Osborn's "Swan Song" bids farewell to *NA News*, ending over 51 years drawing the Grampaw Pettibone safety column. Right: In 1974, a pensive Osborn perhaps reflects on some of his contributions to Naval Aviation, including the "Sense" pamphlets, which gave WW II flyers common sense safety rules.



Retired Capt. Zip Rausa contributed to this article.



This wraparound cover by Osborn on the Jan-Feb 93 issue illustrated "The Dream World of Gramps," saluting 50 years of the cartoon character in *Naval Aviation News*.

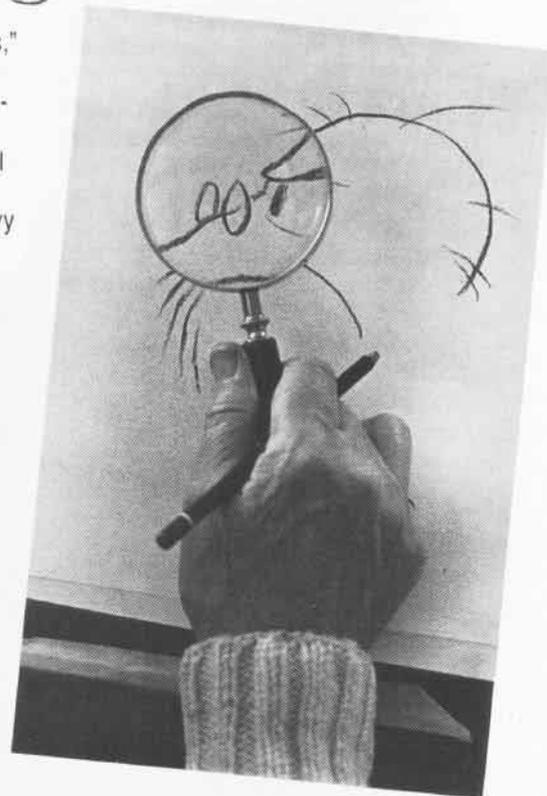
place in his heart for the Navy. It helped give him his start and he had great admiration for the people he knew in the service, junior and senior alike.

Upon his retirement, Osborn wrote, "You all must know that the Navy has been kind and considerate of me. From [the beginning], it has made such intelligent use of me. And the whole relationship has been a grand one as far as I'm concerned . . . one of the rarest cooperative efforts I have ever seen. . . . Fly, fly, fly with care and mind what happens to the Passenjair [sic]!"

There have been 13 Gramps "writers," including Cdr. Warner, but only one "Gramps drawer"—Bob Osborn. Fortunately, Osborn wants "Grampaw Pettibone" to live on. The column will continue to appear in *Naval Aviation News* with illustrations by retired Navy captain and well-known artist Ted Wilbur.

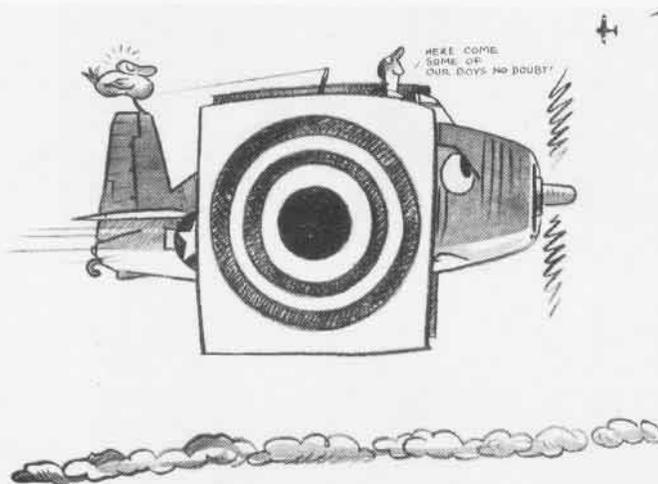
The tradition that Bob Osborn created continues.

Below: During WW II, Lt. Osborn drew over 2,000 posters depicting the "unsafe" actions of "Dilbert the Pilot" and "Spoiler the Mechanic"; they were seen in ready rooms and ships throughout the Navy.

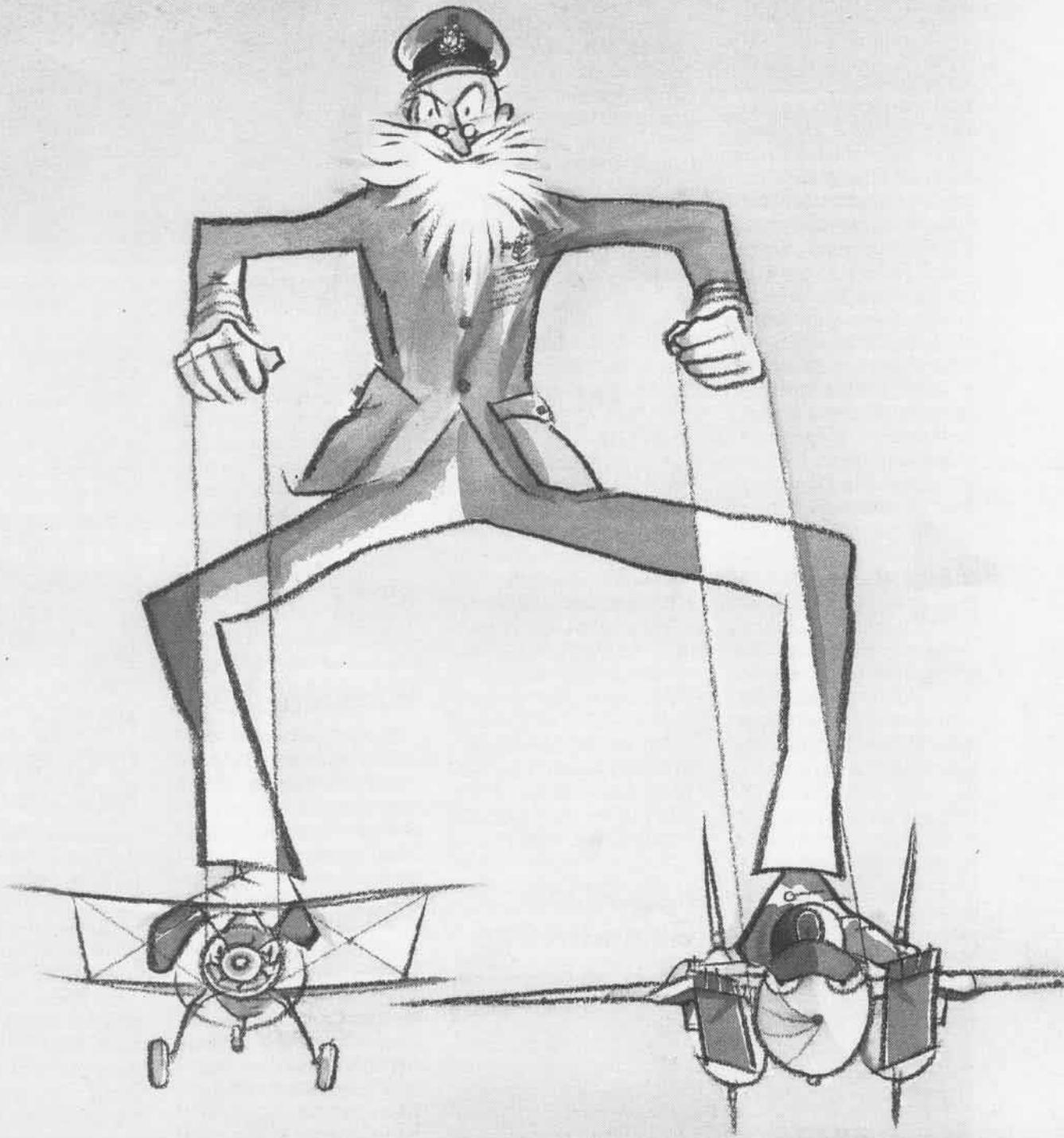


Above: Bob Osborn calls himself a "drawer." After studying art in Rome and Paris, his life led him to pursue a cartoonist's career—a decision that served him well. Right: Originally called P. S. (Post Script) Pettibone, Gramps was named by Cdr. Seth Warner, the Bureau of Aeronautics' Aircraft Safety Counselor, and drawn by Osborn, who used some of Warner's personal attributes.

The character has evolved with the times—as shown in one of Osborn's favorite drawings, which depicts the "Sage of Safety" straddling vintage and modern aircraft.



Actual picture of a STRAGGLER!



Osborn