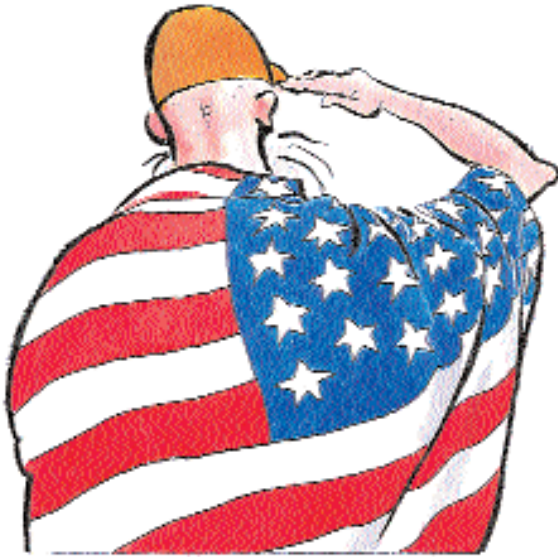


Illustrations by *Ted Wilbur*



911 REMEMBERED

Human Tragedy

A section of F/A-18 *Hornets* was on a night air-to-ground training mission. The section entered the target area from the west at 6,100 feet, identified the target (two smudge pots appearing as a single-point light source) and circled the target once to set up for a 360-degree final attack heading for practice 30-degree dive deliveries.

The lead pilot overshot his run-in heading and rolled in from a lower altitude and closer to the target than the planned attack profile. The pilot called in “live” but three seconds later impacted the ground heading about 330 degrees, 60 degrees nose down and 30 degrees left wing down. He suffered fatal injuries. The *Hornet* was destroyed.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Another controlled flight into terrain! The immediate cause of this tragic loss of life and aircraft was the pilot’s loss of situational awareness and his misjudgment of the distance to the target during the run. But there are contributing factors that raise flags of concern. In the squadron, this aviator was noted to have difficulty with task loading in flight, and his flight lead responsibilities were reduced to afford him the opportunity to

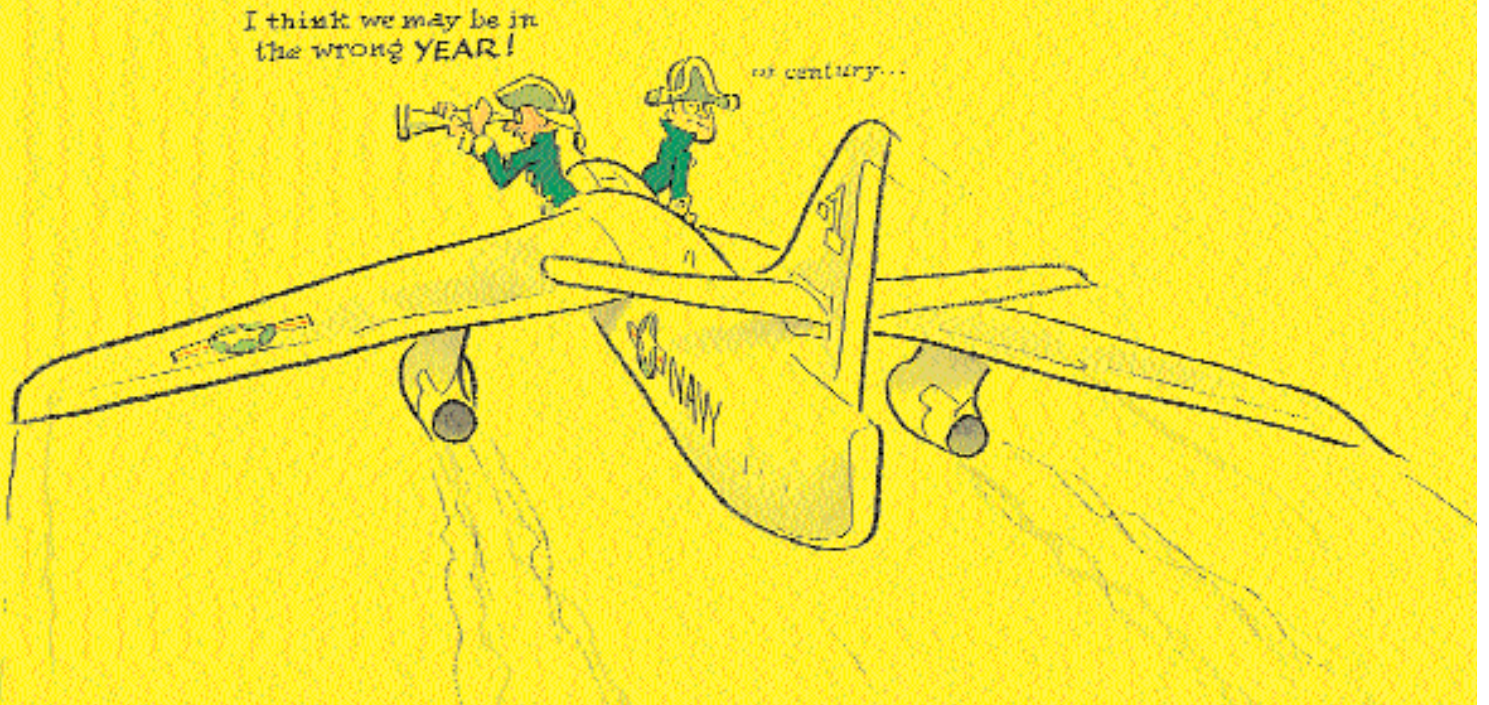
regain proficiency. Other pilots also noted that he had difficulties such as personality changes, typing skill degradation and memory lapses. None of these were correlated by the command nor admitted by the pilot to the CO or flight surgeon. No Human Factors Council sessions were held during the pilot’s eight months in the squadron.

The intensity level of the missions conducted during this exercise caused a degree of alarm in other pilots, in addition to the pilot in question. The need for aggressiveness might not have been balanced by a degree of caution. The pilot had flown only three day air-to-ground sorties in the seven months prior to the mishap.

We’re all human beings and, in this case, action by a Human Factors Council might have been a sound preventive measure and might have broken the key link in the mishap chain. We are also our brother’s keeper. Gramps knows that it’s a sensitive issue, but if a shipmate is having trouble, get him or her to seek help or alert leadership.



Don't Roll Into Terrain...



Gramps from Yesteryear Two Navigators

An EA-3B *Skywarrior* was scheduled for a routine flight of about three hours from NAS Small Island to NAS Large Island. During the sortie, one of the navigators was to receive his navigator check flight. The crew consisted of the pilot, an electronic countermeasures operator, two navigators and the plane captain. Ltjg. Magellan was the designated Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization navigation examiner and Ltjg. Prince Henry was the navigator who was to be checked. He gathered the navigation equipment and, upon checking the sextant, found that the bubble in the sextant could not be reduced in size.

Following an uneventful departure, en route radio was contacted and the flight proceeded on course. The crew made aircraft position reports using a dead-reckoning plot. Midway timewise into the flight, the crew noted the wet compass was heading 290 degrees (the desired heading was west) and drifting northward. The main compass also appeared to be drifting.

The navigator decided to take a deviation check. When he reviewed the air almanac, he discovered that although the months were correct, he had the wrong year (1972 versus 1973)! However, the navigators interpolated the 1972 almanac for sun position and subsequently took two deviation checks, both of which were discounted as being inaccurate since neither was

close to the heading indicated on the compasses.

Approximately two hours and 45 minutes into the flight, when land should have been in sight, the pilot declared an emergency. He experienced some difficulty convincing the controlling agency that his flight was lost. Direction-finding steers, some of which were completely unreliable, were received. One placed the *Skywarrior* overland when, in fact, no land was in sight. It became more apparent that the EA-3B would not reach land or an airport before fuel starvation occurred.

Five hours after the start of the flight, the crew bailed out. All were rescued at a position 1,000 miles off course.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thunderin' thunderins! Do you believe an aircraft with two navigators aboard got LOST? Sure there were extenuating circumstances—like the compass failure and inaccurate direction-finding steers—but these couldn't hold a candle to the people failures. First of all, what good are navigators when they let you down at the time you need them most. Anyone can navigate when all the electronics are working right, but real pros can do it when the chips are down. Secondly, supervision at the home station looks shaky. Why are old almanacs left lying around the navigators office and why did one navigator claim there were no other sextants in the navigation office when he discovered the one he had was less than satisfactory? Poor show.