

Illustrations by Ted Wilbur

Gramps from Yesteryear

Close Shave

An A3D returning from a night training hop crossed the ramp of an attack carrier with the meatball right on the money. The hook picked up the number two wire after the touchdown and the arrestment seemed normal. Suddenly, the wire broke, and the big plane lurched forward with full power on—but SLOW! As the Skywarrior cleared the flight deck, the pilot cleaned up his landing gear and concentrated on holding his attitude and airspeed. All three men aboard held their breath as they watched the altimeter unwind.

The A3D shuddered as it spanked the water. The pilot gently eased the yoke toward him as the fuselage lightly slid through the dark water. After a few seconds, the aircraft broke free of the sea and climbed swiftly.



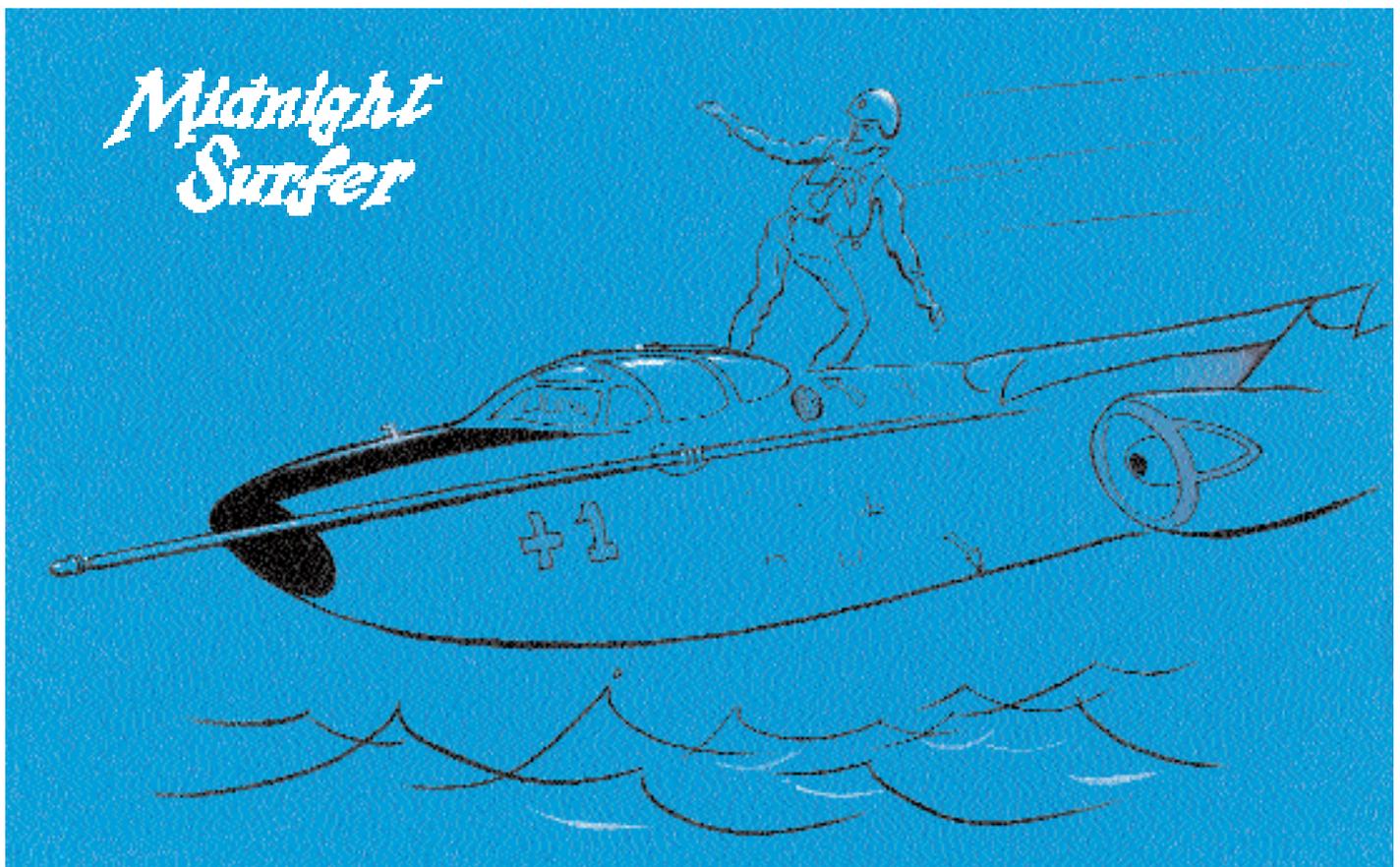
Vectored by the carrier, the bomber flew to a nearby island airfield and landed safely. Inspection of the A3D revealed that the underside of the fuselage aft of the bomb bay door and the port engine nacelle had been dragged through the water. The landing signal officer logged the narrow squeak as an arrested landing, a bolter and a water touch and go.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

How close can you get to wet feet? This pilot is a cool one, but if he has many more like this, I'll have to check the competition before I unlimber one of my tall tales at any happy hour where the air wing is represented.

Just goes to prove you ain't got an accident till she smashes to a stop, so keep flyin' it. You may luck out. This crew did.





Suddenly!

During rollout following an arrested landing, the pilot of an F-14B Tomcat experienced an uncommanded ejection through the canopy. The radar intercept officer's (RIO) seat did not fire. The pilot was rescued from the water by a search and rescue helo. Both aviators sustained first aid injuries.

During the start-up prior to the flight, the RIO was unable to initiate normal carrier alignment of the inertial navigation system and elected to perform a ground alignment. He strapped a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receiver in a cloth holder to the digital data display (DDD) handle to verify the ship's latitude and longitude and to provide accurate navigation data. The GPS remained strapped to the DDD handle throughout the flight.

During the arrested landing deceleration, the hand-held GPS became dislodged from its holder on the DDD handle and struck and displaced the pilot's ejection seat firing mechanism. Thus, the pilot's ejection seat fired

through the canopy, bypassing both the canopy jettison and the RIO's seat ejection initiation sequence.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

The biggest surprise of this pilot's life, I'll wager, was being fired into the blue without any notice whatsoever.

The RIO didn't consider the GPS in its cloth holder strapped to the DDD to be loose gear. He had left the GPS in the cloth holder on previous arrested landings and did not recall ever reading or hearing that the GPS shouldn't be secured to the DDD, especially for carrier operations. The cloth holder was provided by the command with no specific instructions or restrictions on its use. Should be some now.

Another classic example of Naval Aviation's inexorable demand for attention to detail.