

Steady As She Goes

An S-3 Viking launched from the carrier on a sea surveillance and coordination mission. The flight was uneventful until the approach phase. The Viking rolled into the groove a little high, right and fast. An F-14 Tomcat with its engines turning was parked on elevator number four, 15 feet forward of the landing signal officer (LSO) platform. UHF transmissions from a stuck mike on the tower frequency were audible, and disorienting, throughout the pass. The S-3 arrived at the close-in position lined up six feet left of centerline. The pilot interpreted radio transmissions from the aircraft with the stuck mike as a line-up call from the LSO and made a rapid and large right wing-down correction. The aircraft crossed the ramp still lined up left. The LSO called "Right for line-up!" 1.3 seconds prior to touchdown.

The Viking struck the flight deck in a 19-degree right wing-down attitude. The right wing tip engaged the number three wire. The Viking yawed rapidly right causing side brace failure which, in turn, caused the right main landing gear to collapse. The aircraft yawed



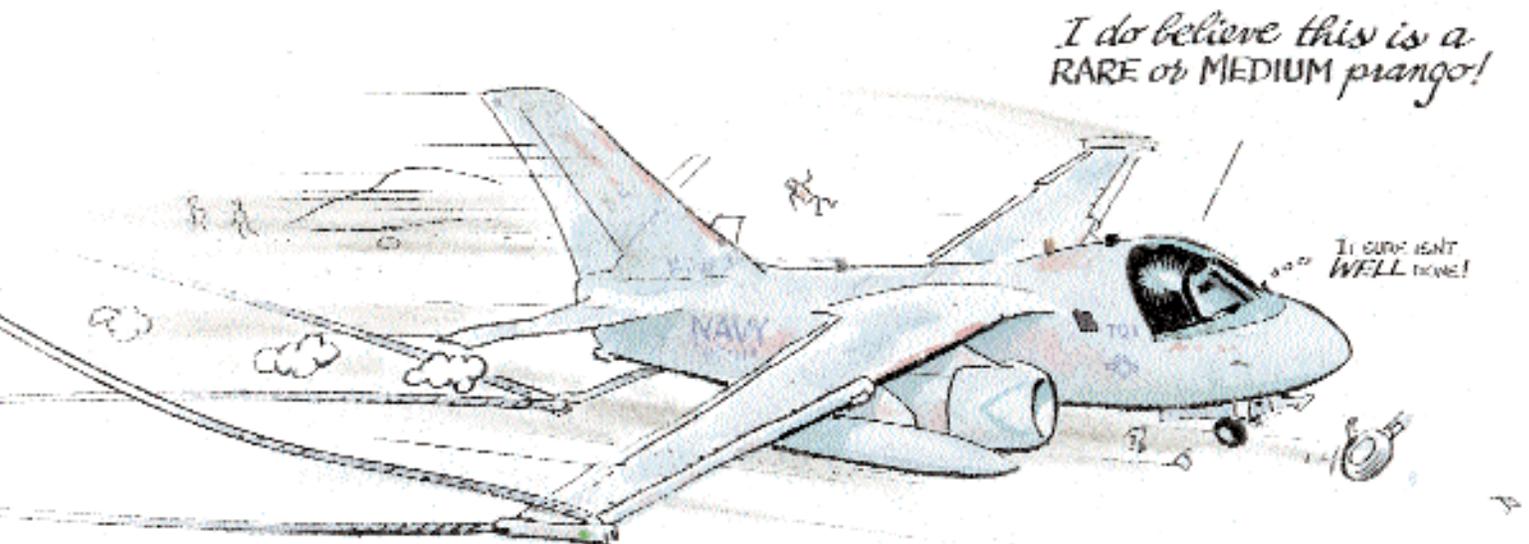
violently right, then left, causing a deck person to be blown over the side of the ship. The aircraft came to rest 16 feet right of centerline, causing the three-wire to strike the nose gear door of a parked E-2 Hawkeye. Flying debris from the aircraft struck the windscreen of a parked F/A-18 Hornet. The Viking's crewmen sustained first-aid injuries while one flight deck crewman suffered major injury, two had minor injuries and two had first-aid injuries.

 Grampaw Pettibone says:

Wow! Plenty of parts and people flyin' around on this one. The stuck mike, transmissions from which confused both the

S-3 pilot and the LSO; the late call for line-up from the LSO platform; and the increased inflection in the voice of "Paddles" combined to trigger an overreaction by the Viking pilot, leading him to execute an excessive line-up correction. Making things worse, the right aileron servocylinder failed to respond to control inputs immediately prior to touchdown.

Gramps knows it ain't easy to keep cool when



trying to get aboard, day or night, but it sure helps if you can develop a “steady as she goes” mindset when making corrections on the approach. Legendary basketball coach John Wooden of UCLA used to tell his players, “Be quick, but don’t hurry.” And don’t overcontrol the bird.

Gramps from Yesteryear

Swift Kick

Hawaiian Waters, 1958, Operational Readiness Exercise. Upon reaching the flight deck for launch, an AD Skyraider pilot saw his aircraft on the number one catapult with a twin-engine AJ Savage on number two and another AJ parked behind his AD-5W. The Savage bombers weighed more than 50,000 pounds, the airborne early warning Skyraiders about 20,000 pounds.

The pilot immediately sensed trouble because the carrier had hydraulic catapults, compared to the more modern steam cats, and they could not be quickly adjusted for differing weights. The common practice was to catapult aircraft in descending order of the required forces on carriers with hydraulic cats. Moreover, higher authority had directed that ADs had to be catapulted rather than make deck runs.

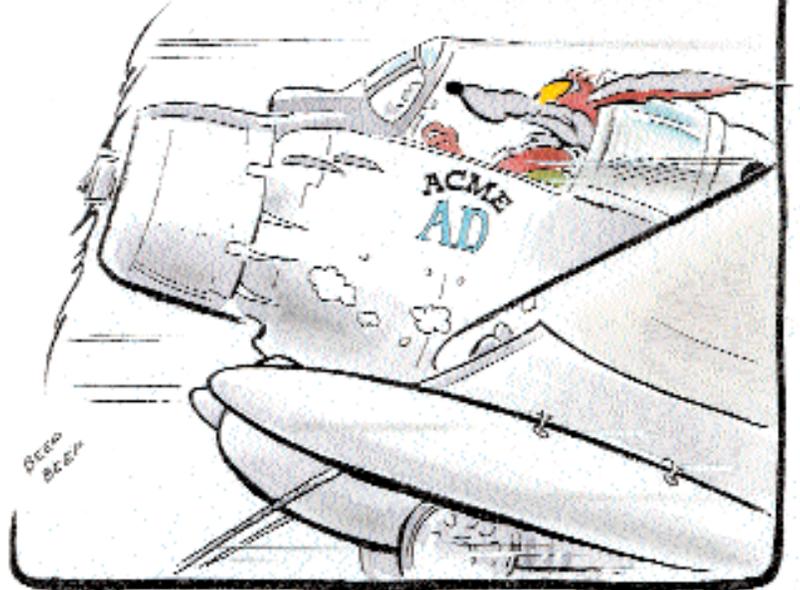
The pilot and his two-man crew got set for launch and strapped in tightly. The pilot had warned his crew, “This is gonna be the cat shot from hell!”

The ship turned into the wind, the pilot went to full power and was about to salute, signaling he was ready to go, when the catapult officer gave him the throttle-back signal. With power reduced, the pilot was then signaled to raise the flaps. He was confused because he had never heard of a plane being launched from a carrier with the flaps up.

The ship then turned out of the wind and slowed down, which reduced the pilot’s fears, thinking now the launch had been delayed. The carrier turned 180 degrees, continued to slow down and maintain just enough speed to hold her downwind course. Wind across the deck had changed from a 30-knot headwind to a 10-knot tailwind. The pilot then realized all of the maneuvering was on behalf of a safer cat shot for his AD-5W, since the cats had been set for the heavy AJ to launch into a 30-knot headwind.

Nonetheless, as the pilot advanced power for launch he wondered if the Skyraider would hold together while absorbing such anticipated force. He knew from experience that a hydraulic cat shot was like being rifled

Cat Shot from HELL



♪ On the good ship **LOOPY TOON** ♪

into the air with black powder, because it consists of a horrendous, instantaneous slam in the back, rather than a smooth accelerating push. It was not uncommon for pilots to lose peripheral vision in a conical manner, with the resulting tunnel vision restricting the ability to scan instrument gauges for precious seconds, much less fly the aircraft.

In this case, the crew was on the receiving end of a swift and definitive kick in their backsides, and the pilot and crew lost all vision for a brief time. Fortunately, the aircraft held together and was flung fast enough that the crew regained their senses while safely airborne. They were in pain from the shot, and even after an hour of flying their lower backs were aching. The “Able Dog” and this crew endured a force nearly three times normally required.

No other aircraft were catapulted out of proper sequence during the remainder of the exercise.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Nothin’ like a swift kick to get the blood goin’ and the eyes goin’ out! This boot in the behind is another example of why Naval Aviators have to be tough. Ole Gramps would prefer a good old deck run.

Gramps thanks Skyraider pilot Harry Hamilton for this story.