



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Sweat Job

It was a black night shortly after midnight, overcast, a heavy sea was running and the big attack carrier was steaming through rain squalls as a young night fighter pilot was catapulted in his F4D *Skyray* for a night CAP mission.

The launch was normal, but at 600 feet the pilot was in solid weather, with heavy rain, mild turbulence, and a moderate amount of static electricity throughout his climb. At 12,000 feet he broke out on top, CAVU, and proceeded with his mission.

Approximately one hour later he reported over his marshal point and was told to disregard his expected approach time, conserve fuel, be prepared to divert to a land base, and that the next scheduled launch had been cancelled due to weather. Mulling this over, he maintained his position and awaited instructions.

He was cleared for a CCA approach! Making a "tear drop" let-down, he descended and finally broke out of the overcast four miles astern of the ship at 600 feet. The LSO stated that it was raining, and visibility was down to a half mile with low scud under the overcast.

Following CCA instructions, the



pilot came on in on the glide slope, picked up the meatball at about a mile out, and then was asked to "check his lights" at a half mile astern. He refused, since the switch was located at the rear of the right console, and was given a waveoff!

He couldn't see the ship in the heavy rain, so CCA brought him around until he picked up the meatball again. This pass he ended up "low at the ramp," so he hit full power and burner and took a waveoff again.

He came out of afterburner, eased the power off and began to sink rapidly as he forged ahead of the ship. Alerted by a radio call from PriFly he glanced at his radio altimeter, saw "40 feet,"

pulled up, went into afterburner again, and continued around for his third pass.

Turning in from the 90° position he suddenly found himself in an extreme state of VERTIGO! Concentrating on his instruments, he forced himself to fly level, climbed and took another waveoff.

The fourth and fifth pass flown were very erratic patterns, high at the ramp, with no meatball at all and although he touched down, were bolters.

His sixth pass was a very steady one, but again the pilot did not have the meatball in sight. The LSO talked to him all the way. The F4D crossed the ramp slightly fast and touched down starboard wheel first. The starboard landing gear and starboard drop tank tore off, the pilot hit full left rudder to keep aligned with the angled deck, and boltered again! The *Skyray* was now down to 400 pounds of fuel so the pilot was ordered to "climb to altitude and eject."

He climbed to 9000 feet in a 360° climbing turn and ejected just two miles ahead of the carrier.

The ejection was normal, lap belt and chute opened in perfect sequence, and he was able to remove his paraaft from the seat cushion and let it dangle below him on the lanyard. Upon striking the water, he lost the chute as it pulled away from him in the wind. The life raft was also lost on impact with the water, for the "D" ring on the lanyard separated and the raft floated away.

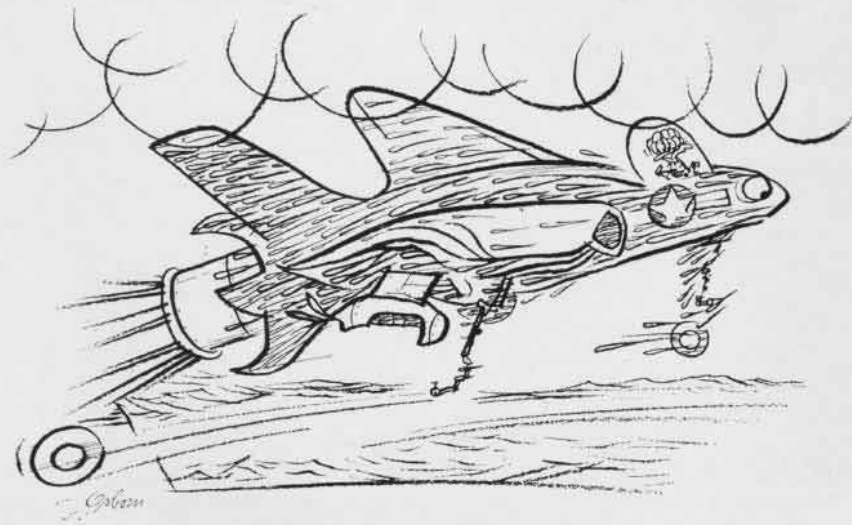
Floating in his exposure suit and Mae West, he ignited his night flares, and fired .38 caliber tracers vertically. He was picked up after 40 minutes in the force, pretty well exhausted but suffering only from minor bruises and abrasions.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehosaphat! This story sure puts sweat in the palms of your hands!

After a jet penetration and a visual mirror landing approach under ex-



tremely adverse weather conditions, the quick transition back to instruments after a wave-off or bolter can be a sure vertigo producer. You've gotta shift control from the seat of your pants to your instruments and absolutely believe those gages to fight it. A wider pattern and an extended final approach leg will generally give a man more time to steady down for a good mirror approach on the second pass.

This man was a well-trained, well-qualified all weather fighter pilot, with plenty of time in model, but even the best pilots sometimes miss approaches in the weather. There seems to be a need for a better, more standard missed approach procedure for minimum weather conditions.

Ol' Gramps would like to hear from some of you gents in the all-weather business. I'll pass your ideas along where they'll do the most good.

Spoiler

Immediately after takeoff from a West Coast base, and really loaded down for a bombing and rocket hop, a pilot found his AD-7 was so left wing heavy that it took 15° of right wing down trim and full right stick just to hold straight and level flight!

Cruising out over the water, he released two 500-lb. bombs and all rockets in 12 FFAR pods electrically, then jettisoned a 1000-lb. bomb and the 12 FFAR pods manually. Climbing on up to altitude, he checked the slow flight characteristics of the AD, found it reasonably stable, and made a steady straight in approach for a safe landing at the home base.

After landing, investigation revealed that the port wing ammunition can access door was not secured prior to the flight. When lift was developed on the wing, this door raised about 30° to the upper wing surface and had the same effect as a large spoiler.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Well, I'll be . . . ! The ordnance crew were really gunnin' for this lad! They had a lot of work hangin' all that ordnance on this machine, but there's no possible excuse for not buttonin' her up! The ordnance petty officer-in-charge better get with it! There's no place in an operating outfit for such a spoiler, human or mechanical. Betcha this pilot does a thorough pre-flight NOW. There's an old saying that really hits this one on the nut, "He who inspecteth not his aircraft giveth his angel cause for concern."

Mayday

A P2V-3B took off from its Florida base on what was intended to be a routine night overwater navigation training hop. The destination was NAS CORPUS CHRISTI, and the nine men aboard quickly settled down to their duties as the flight progressed. The big plane droned steadily and smoothly along, cruising in the tops of a cloud layer at 6000 feet.



After about 1½ hours of flight, the #1 engine fire warning light came on steady, there was a muffled explosion, and fire began streaming out of the cowl flap openings and in the winter front door area! The engine was immediately feathered and fuel, oil, and hydraulic emergency cut-offs were actuated. The winter front door was opened and a dive started in an attempt to blow out the remaining fire. Cowl flaps were also opened wide but although the flames seemed to decrease somewhat, the metal itself now seemed to be burning intensely.

Simultaneously, the crew had been instructed to don their chutes, the radioman notified New Orleans radio of the emergency, and the navigator gave a heading to the nearest airfield, Tampa, about 150 miles away, and IFF was put on EMERGENCY. "Mayday" was declared and the intention to abandon the aircraft, its position and altitude were radioed to New Orleans.

The plane commander sent his copilot aft with instructions to insure a close bail out interval. As he left the cockpit, the plane lurched and the port engine fell off, burned through. The fire was gone.

Bail out instructions were immediately cancelled, and all hands resumed their normal flight positions. Flying the P2V was difficult; it took more right rudder than they had trim, so both pilot and copilot had to hold hard right rudder to keep her straight.

New Orleans Overseas Radio was notified of the change in status, and the pilot's intent to continue to MacDill AFB.

Loose gear was jettisoned to lighten the aircraft after a series of power losses on the starboard engine had necessitated a power reduction and constant regulation of the carburetor air control by the copilot to keep it running. Altitude was steadily lost until the stricken P2V finally settled down at 110 knots and 3400 feet.

Both G-2 and standby compasses had shown tremendous errors after the port engine had burned away, so the ADF was the pilot's only directional aid. The coastline and Tampa Bay were finally reached, and vectored by radar. The pilot, fearing a possible split-flap condition, made a no-flap steep approach to the MacDill AFB runway. A 100° left crosswind at 14 knots was reported but the pilot, using a wing-down correction for drift, made a perfect touchdown.

The main braking system failed on the rollout, but as the speed decreased, emergency brakes were actuated and the tired bird brought to a stop on the runway. The crew evacuated promptly on the pilot's command.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Your old Dad is real proud of this cool, mighty professional crew! The plane commander did EVERYTHING right and is the kind of professional patrol plane commander that every C.O. would like to have a dozen of! The actions of the entire crew speak well of the training given them by the Heavy Attack Wing. These boys are trainin' for real high performance aircraft and look good.



Even a sour old rooster like me likes to crow once in a while when it looks like the young-uns are masterin' the trade, and I'm really crowing now.