



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## It Takes Two to Tangle

A four-plane division of A4D's, scheduled for night field mirror landing practice, had taken off at 1900 from their home field and climbed to altitude for a practice division TACAN penetration. Approach Control cleared them for the penetration, the flight to break it off at the 12-mile fix and 2500 feet.

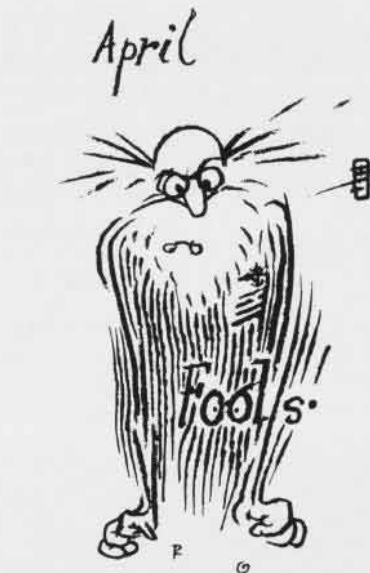
The penetration was accomplished without incident, and the division proceeded to the FMLP field. "Paddles" was contacted, they were told their signal was "Charlie" and the pattern was clear.

The flight entered the break in right echelon at 280 knots, the leader indicating 700-foot altitude. His lights were dim and steady, but the fuselage light was burned out. Over the runway the flight leader broke, held a 20° bank, reduced power to 70 percent and popped speed brakes. After about 60° of turn had been completed, he lowered the wheels and flaps and was just reaching for the speed brake switch when suddenly there was a heavy impact and an explosion!

He glanced at the gauges, was momentarily distracted by a ball of flame going forward and down to the left. He leveled out, applied back stick and full throttle, and in a vicious skid, with tremendous shuddering of the entire aircraft, slowly began to climb ahead into the inky darkness.

He decided on ejection and grabbed the face curtain, but a last quick check of the altimeter to insure safe ejection altitude showed 750-800 feet and climbing, airspeed 160 steady, engine instruments normal. He let go of the curtain, "stirred" the stick with little noticeable effect on the sickening skid and decided to stick with it to gain as much altitude as possible.

Just about this time, as the second section leader joined him, the pilot suddenly realized he still had gear, flaps and speed brakes extended. He pulled in the brakes and got a "looks O.K." on the wheels and flaps, but also a re-



port that the left wing tank was 90° to its normal position and a recommendation both tanks be jettisoned. The tanks were dropped successfully, and the wild skid immediately stopped with a reverse skid which was easily trimmed out.

They had arrived over the home base by now and were cleared to land by the tower, alert and fully aware of the entire emergency situation. A good normal landing was made, the hook dropped and the wire snagged for an easy arrestment. Fuel was gushing out of the under side of the port wing, hydraulic fluid was spewing out of the port brake lines, and the port wing pylon was twisted.

Leaving the section leader to survey the damage, let's drop back a few minutes to the wingman.

He had taken a five-second interval on the break, instead of the three seconds briefed, then held the 30° bank the leader had emphasized, alternately glancing at the leader's lights and his own instruments. Suddenly the leader's wingtip lights began to separate rapidly, so the wingman dropped his left wing down and dumped the nose in an effort to get beneath the leader's plane.

The pilot thought he had cleared but there was a shaking smash, and he had no doubt of what had happened! Immediately shifting his eyes to the cockpit, and adding full power, he eased in back stick to establish a climb. The altimeter bottomed at 300 feet and then crept up as the A4D climbed in a violent skidding right turn.

The pilot found himself pinned to the left side of the cockpit, the turn and bank indicator showed the ball hard to the left, the needle pegged to the right. Kicking rudder and using rudder trim had no effect whatever. He had power and was climbing, so ejection, if necessary, was definitely going to be delayed.

Through trial and error he now discovered that a 20° left bank would stop the skid and allow straight flight. An ejection now appeared unnecessary, barring any troubles in landing configuration.

The tower called and informed the pilot that abort gear was ready on two runways. He wisely had not changed his configuration after the collision since he had control of the airplane. At this point and now at 5400 feet, he dropped gear and flaps and retraced the speed brakes. The yaw or skid now ceased, and he apparently had normal control of the aircraft.

He made an easy descending approach to the runway, with a three-mile final and a fully controlled touchdown at 125 knots. Roll-out was normal, and he taxied into the ramp area and shut down. As he climbed down, he saw he had no rudder and the vertical stabilizer was sheared off just above the horizontal stabilizer! Fortunately, the wind had been directly down the runway, and he had no need for rudder at any time on the landing or roll-out.



**Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

Great horned toadies! Ol' Gramps sure hates to have to really chew out these two lads since they both did such an outstanding job AFTER the

collision, but look what they did BEFORE!

Standard operating procedures of this outfit called for less than 250 knots at the break, 22 degrees of bank, and a 7-10 second break up interval for daytime FMLP with 14-20 seconds on the break interval for night FMLP.

The flight leader briefed for a 30-degree bank and a three-second break interval! He then held a 20° bank himself, setting the mid-air up COLD as long as the wingman followed the briefed instructions.

They had all been thoroughly briefed just four days previously by the LSO on proper break speeds, banks and intervals! They had mighty short memories.

If the pilots in an outfit are not goin' to follow squadron doctrine, the outfit might just as well build a big fire and burn it!

## Booby Trapped

It was a dark night and traffic was pretty well congested over the busy air station. Helicopters were practicing GCA approaches to a 10,000-foot runway 90° to the wind line, and all other traffic was being landed on dual 8000-foot runways which had a slight downhill slope.

Since there was no-end-of-runway taxiway, all jet traffic which used the whole length of runway on landing roll-out was being held on a small stub end of another runway. This protruded at the end of runway point until they could be cleared back downwind on the duty runway to the nearest taxiway, a matter of about 1000 feet.

An R4Q was cleared to land on the right dual runway, and an FSU on the left dual runway. Three more FSU's were waiting on the stub at the roll-out end for clearance to taxi back to the taxiway. They were all on primary tower radio frequency and would remain so until clear of the runway. The FSU on landing approach waved off when the R4Q got in his path, and another FSU called overhead at the break for landing.

The FSU at the break was on ground control frequency, for he had been unable to work the tower on tower primary prior to take-off and had been cleared off on his night hop utilizing ONLY the ground control frequency. As the first FSU in the pattern took his wave-off, the three FSU's at the end of the duty runway were cleared to taxi back on the runway to the taxi-

way. One fighter had his nose gear steering fail and radioed the tower that he was holding with five feet of his nose sticking out into the duty runway, but he could taxi straight across the runway and hold on the taxi stub between the dual runways until help could be sent out to him. The other two FSU's taxied around him and cleared the runway safely. Meanwhile, the landing FSU operating on ground control frequency had touched down and was rolling out. Two R5D's were also calling the tower on ground control frequency for taxi clearance across the duty runway at the mid-field taxiway.

The tower called the disabled FSU and told him they would close the runway after "the plane" rolled out and taxi him across. The pilot saw an R4Q completing its rollout and starting to turn off of the other dual runway, so he called to state he would taxi across and hold. The tower rogered, so he poured the power to it. One third of the way across, the landing FSU plowed into him, driving its nose section right into his plane, hitting it broadside aft of the wing. The plane burst into flames.

The taxiing pilot jumped out and ran to escape the tremendous fire, but the other pilot was trapped in the crushed cockpit, his leg pinned in the wreckage with flames all around.

The crash crew fought heroically to

save him, two or three of them protecting the pilot with their bodies and a heavy blanket while foam was sprayed over them all to keep the flames down. After 30 minutes they were finally able to free him, badly burned but alive. He died of his injuries four days later.



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

Great balls of fire! This is one of the worst I've run across in many years! The loss of this fine young man was so needless that it's appalling. The dead pilot had accepted an FSU for a night hop KNOWING it had a radio incapable of operating on tower frequency! This same gripe appeared on FIVE successive yellow sheets preceding the fatal flight, yet the plane was considered in an UP status!

The tower cleared him on this hop on ground control frequency, KNOWING he had a radio inoperative on tower frequency. The tower cleared a plane to land with three aircraft sitting like bowling pins on the duty runway's upwind end, for the tower had NOT received an "all clear" from the planes he had cleared to taxi downwind on the duty runway just a few moments before.

As usual in such unnecessary tragedies, many errors had to be committed to set the stage for this one. It behooves every operations officer, whether he is assigned to a station or squadron, to look over HIS outfit to see if such booby traps exist for the unwary pilot.

