



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

One for the Birds

An A4D-2 pilot, one of a flight of three on a training mission, was about to release a napalm bomb on a target just a few miles from the home airfield. He was flying at 100 feet above the terrain and indicating 450 knots when he struck a turkey buzzard!

The buzzard crashed through the port windscreen, dislodged the instrument panel, destroyed the engine instruments, altimeter, and airspeed indicator, and struck the pilot in the chest and face! Fortunately, he had his visor down against sun glare, so his eyes were not injured, although the visor was both broken and smeared with bird debris.

Slightly stunned and realizing he had struck a bird, not knowing whether he still had an engine or not, he eased back on the stick, climbing for a safe ejection altitude. With great difficulty he was able to raise the smashed visor on his APH-5 hard hat. He saw for the first time the wreckage of his instrument panel, the hole in the port windshield, and the rest of the windshield and canopy almost completely blanked out by bird debris. He couldn't see a thing except through the hole in the windshield and using it for occasional

references to the ground, climbed out to sea. After one 360° turn, he eased power off until he felt the A4D was settling, then dropped gear and flaps, got a down and locked indication and put the power on again.

He made another 360° turn, spotted the home airfield through the hole in the windshield, saw there were no



planes either taxiing or on the runway and decided to try to land, setting it down heading downwind due to a 47-foot cliff at the other end of the runway which he wasn't sure he could see to clear. With no altimeter, airspeed indicator, and a clobbered-up windshield, an approach over land would be easier to judge properly.

The cockpit was a bedlam of noise with the wind shrieking through the hole. His radio had apparently been dead since the original impact. He entered the landing pattern slightly high, rolled into final at about three miles. Heading in he found he could barely discern the runway through the center windshield panel.

He slowed down as much as he felt he dared. When he figured he had the runway made, he took a high dip, popped the speed brakes and made a steep approach. He flared, touched down, cut the throttle to OFF, dropped the arresting hook, raised his flaps and braked hard but intermittently.

The hook missed the runway arresting wire, which was not tensioned up and was rigged for the opposite direction anyway. He saw the field mirror go by through the hole in the windshield, figured "this was it" and opened the canopy manually.

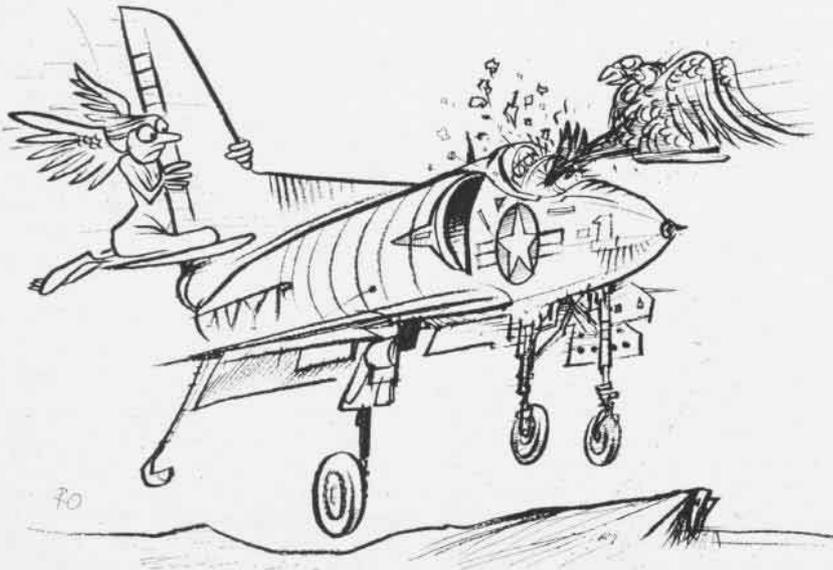
The A4D went off the end of the runway, through 600 feet of overrun and went over the 47-foot cliff at an estimated 80 to 100 knots! It hit nose down in six inches of water over 300 feet out from the cliff and stopped within 15 feet from the initial impact point. The pilot unstrapped and climbed out to await the SAR helo. His injuries—minor lacerations and back strain. The A4D was a strike.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

This lad must of been thinkin' pure thoughts all week 'cause he's just about the luckiest man alive! The particular angel who keeps an eye on pilots, balloonists, trapeze artists, and all the other lads engaged in occasionally hairy occupations must have been pretty close at hand that day!

When things are as bad as he had it,



an ejection would be considered more prudent. He had a real good chance of buying a plot of ground, but permanently.

While engaging the arresting gear from the wrong direction was his only possibility of stopping in time, it was fruitless at his roll-out speed. This type of engagement and its possible consequences are a prime topic for a ready room bull-session in EVERY squadron!

Even if you think the radio is gone, *try it!* Give your buddies a chance to help you. Give all the second-guessers a chance to get in on it first hand!

With more experience this lad will make out. He's tryin' all the way.

Singe Job

After escorting the tow plane and banner to the air-to-air gunnery area, a young F8U pilot was ordered by the flight leader to break off and join the flight passing 2000 feet overhead.

He added power, turned left, eased the nose up, realized he had overshot the flight's heading and started a hard turn to the right. The left wing pitched up suddenly almost inverting the *Crusader*, and after some wild gyrations, the plane settled down into what appeared to be a right spin with the nose yawing violently. He radioed the flight leader and was told to extend his emergency leading edge droop and get out at 10,000 feet if not recovered by then.

The pilot cut the power to idle and began his recovery attempts. He was being thrown violently around the cockpit. Even though he was strapped in securely, he had to use both hands to release the droop handle lock.

Five distinct corrective measures were applied by the time the aircraft had reached 10,000 feet in its gyrations. The pilot glanced at the altimeter, saw 9500 feet, and decided to try one last maneuver. He dropped speed brakes and tried to pull the nose up. It didn't change a thing, so he pulled the curtain at 4500 feet indicated (actually 2500 ft. above the terrain).

Everything worked beautifully, and as the canopy blossomed fully, he felt a wave of tremendous heat from under him! He was just over the top of the fireball of the exploding wreck! After what seemed an eternity, the wind blew the chute to one side, and he hit on hard rocky ground about 20 yards from the blazing wreckage, his chute collapsing immediately. He unsnapped and scrambled behind a sand dune



nearby to take refuge from the exploding 20 mm shells.

After his rescue by helicopter, the pilot's injuries were found to be confined to some mild abrasions and burning of his leg hair and stocking tops. His chute seat pack bottom was well browned, the chute panels within five risers were "crisped" a couple of feet in from the edge, and the nylon G-hose covering was scorched.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Burn my hide, but this young feller sure cut it mighty fine! One more second and he woulda fried! We've had a rash of fatal accidents these past few months, many among young and fresh pilots who have tried "one last maneuver" in an attempt to save their machine. This is most commendable and shows we're still got the old fighting spirit around, but also shows an appalling lack of knowledge of their survival equipment.

We've all got to remember that the hard-learned lessons of the past five years are "brand new" to all of our younger pilots. Some real detailed explanations of the rules we've set up are necessary. We can't afford to have each new generation of fighter pilots learn 'em the hard way.

Bone Crusher

Early one fine spring morning, a young Marine hydraulics mech was trouble-shooting an hydraulic system gripe on an F8U-1 *Crusader*. The wing had been blown to the UP position in flight after an hydraulic system fail-

ure, and the maintenance crew had been unable to lower it after the flight, apparently because of a faulty hydraulic check valve.

While checking the hydraulic system bypass valves, the mechanic placed both hands between the wing and the fuselage just as the normal mechanical up-lock gave way! The wing fell to the down position, crushing both his hands in the slot!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

This lad lucked out. After taking a smashing more than equal to having someone swing a sledge hammer on your fingers while you held them on an anvil, he had no broken bones. Some fine surgical work he's had will make him as good as new.

Betcha neither he nor any other man in THAT outfit will ever work under a *Crusader* wing without first installing the jury-strut required by SOP. How about the rest of you F8U men? You stickin' your hands in that bone crusher too? Life can get pretty dull with BOTH hands in a cast!

Stray Wrench

A JD-1 was turning final for landing after a short and uneventful cross-country hop. The landing touch-down was a good smooth one, right on 105 knots. Immediately after the touch-down, the port tire blew, and in spite of all efforts by the pilot to control the roll-out using both starboard brake and power on the port engine, the JD left the runway after about 3500 feet of roll, struck a runway distance marker and finally stopped about 1000 feet out in the boonies.

Examination of the port tire revealed a broken 12-inch crescent wrench on the INSIDE of the tire!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Son-of-a-gun! The JD's are pretty much in the Model T category age-wise, but they have a real job to do and we need every one we've got.

This tire was mounted some two months previously. The wheel and tire were changed on the JD just prior to this hop. Some sad sack's hoo-hoo could have cost us two experienced pilots and the airplane.

You should inventory everything you've got in your tool box and account for each tool after a job is completed. Sure wonder who supervised THAT work! Usually takes TWO men to mount a tire as big as this one!