



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Red Hot Ride

A flight of six Marine AD-5N's was enroute from their home station to a nearby bombing range, cruising at 6000 feet. Suddenly the flight leader's wingman came up on the radio, told him he was trailing smoke from the port side of his engine nacelle and advised him to return to base.

The flight leader broke off, his wingman trailing him, and started a slow let-down. He called the tower and declared a deferred emergency, then requested and was cleared for a straight in approach.

He was on 100% oxygen, so he couldn't smell any smoke and none had been visible to him up to this point.

At about 14 miles from the airfield as he was descending through 2000 feet, the port side of the aircraft seemed to burst into flames! With flames racing past the canopy, he pulled the mixture all the way back and cut the switches. Within a few seconds, flames burst into the cockpit near his left foot! He popped the canopy and thought of bailing out, but decided against it because he would have to go through a wall of flame. He felt that 1500 feet was too low for a safe bailout, and he was afraid



his chute had already ignited from the flames now roaring near the cockpit deck.

His legs were badly burned as he nosed the AD over sharply and dove for the water. He now put his feet up on the instrument panel, but of necessity had to keep his hands in the fire to handle the stick. Ditching was the only answer—and it had to be fast.

Pulling back on the stick, he leveled the AD off just off the water and then pulled back hard. The tail hit first, then the nose dug in and swerving

wildly to the right, the stricken AD came to a halt. As it settled deeply, the fire was extinguished.

Getting rid of his lap belt and shoulder harness, the badly burned pilot, with great pain, eased himself over the side into the water. With great difficulty owing to his burned hands, he inflated his Mae West and got out of his chute harness.

When rescued by helo a short time later, he was found to have both arms and legs of his flight suit burned away, his APH-5 charred, his visor warped by heat, and Mae West badly burned and melted although it still worked properly. Even the flares on his Mae West were deeply charred on the outside. He'll be a long time in the hospital, but he made it!



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

**Jumpin' Jehosophat!** I think every man who flies dreads most the thought of fire and nearly always figures he'd get out and do it pronto. It took real guts to stick this one out right to the water with the fire burning his gear right off him all the way down!

One thing he forgot—the fuel selector—that would have killed or at least cut down the fire. I'd have bailed out, but it was his decision to stay, and he made it a good one.

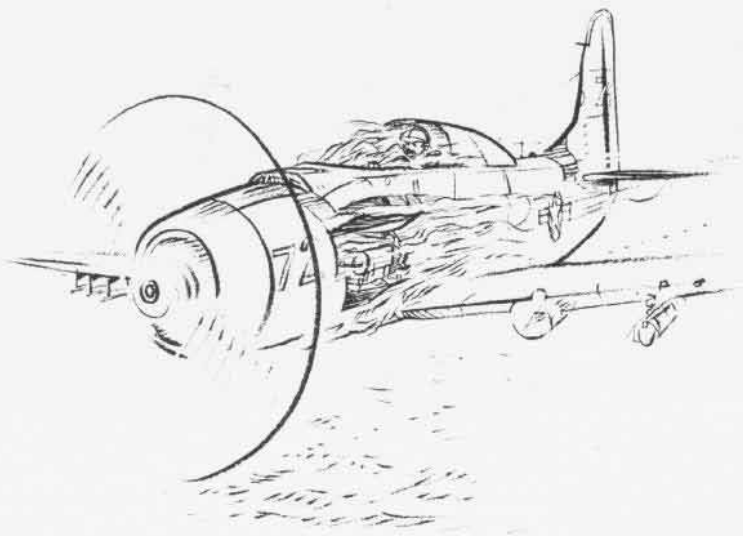
If he'd kept his altitude while returning home, he would have had enough to feel he could safely bail out. Then he could free fall until well clear.

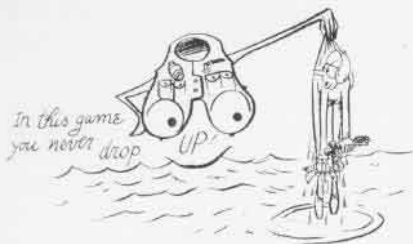
Surely this man is a real "Never give up" Marine! No panic here.

## Memo from Gramps

All year long Gramps burns his eyes out readin' carbon copies of survivors' statements in helo rescue flight surgeons' reports. Some of these fellers turn in pretty candid stories, and lots of 'em are just plain sittin' ducks for a good yarn.

Some pilots (land-based types), who NEVER wear a Mae West, loudly assert, "I can swim a mile," and then cruise blithely along 10 miles off shore on good old Victor 139. Others (ship board types) ALWAYS wear their Mae





West and literally dozens of 'em have been snatched out of the water by a helo, heavily waterlogged what with trying to orally inflate their Mae West. The trouble? No bottles, caps not screwed on tightly, a used-up bottle that he "meant to replace" before the hop, or just a worn-out seam or two in a vital spot.

One thing Gramps would like to suggest: Check that Mae West NOW and before EVERY hop, THEN hit your other check-off list—four-leaf clover sealed in plastic, rabbit's foot, lucky bullet (the one that had your number on it), Tiki carving, lucky coins, and all other essentials.

The Mae West will keep you afloat longer than all that kind of stuff.

### Poor Headwork

A UF-2 was scheduled to fly cover and act as communications liaison for a helicopter on a flight from Argentina to Harmon AFB in Newfoundland.

The pilot arrived at the flight clearance desk promptly at 0800, found that the helo had already departed on a VFR clearance and that his own copilot, not being aware of his assignment to the flight, had not shown up. Since the weather was reported VFR at both Argentina and Harmon, with a weak cold front across his route, he elected to make the flight VFR without a copilot, his plane captain riding the right hand seat.

The take-off and first hour and 15 minutes of the planned one hour and 45 minute flight were uneventful. The UF-2 was cruised at 1000 feet until some low clouds were encountered. Altitude was then decreased to 500 feet but the weather kept closing in. A 45° left turn was made to remain over nearby Lake Victoria, and as the aircraft steadied on the new course, ceiling and visibility dropped to zero in heavy fog.

The pilot started to climb and had just added climb power when he suddenly saw the ground and trees very close and dead ahead!

As he pulled back on the yoke, the

UF struck the ground in a nose high altitude with enough force to knock the pilot's radio headset off his head.

Amid the roar of the impact and a great screeching of tortured metal, the UF bounced back into the air! Tearing through the tree tops, it became safely airborne again. The pilot kept full power on and climbed up on instruments until he became VFR at about 4000 feet on top of the overcast.

Here the crew donned their parachutes and inspected the damage. The starboard wing tip float was gone, the radome was gone, the whole hull from the nose wheel aft was gouged out, and there were huge rips on the starboard side of the fuselage.

Harmon AFB was contacted by radio, informed of the trouble and asked to foam the runway for a possible wheels-up landing. The UF landing gear had been lowered by means of the emergency system, but only the port main wheel and nose wheel came down and locked.

As the pilot orbited Harmon for the next three hours, the plane crew chopped a hole in the wheel well and finally forced the damaged starboard main wheel mount to the down position. It was heavily damaged, and they advised the pilot it might not hold.

After an SNB had been launched from Harmon to inspect the damage, the UF pilot decided to fly back to his home base with the SNB as escort.

Here again the runway was foamed and a good approach and landing were

made. The UF touched down in the foam, and the pilot used reverse pitch on the props and full power to slow down rapidly. At the end of the foamed area, the starboard wheel gave way and the UF swerved to a gentle stop on the runway, a strike.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great balls of fire! This pilot must have lost his marbles! The weather portion of his DD-175 sure didn't read like a VFR clearance was warranted. Minimum ceiling enroute was forecast to be 400 feet at the cold front, visibility zero in fog in the front, maximum cloud tops 15,000 feet, light rain showers enroute, but both the destination and home field were VFR. This is hackin' it mighty thin. Being a "green card" pilot, he signed his own clearance.

After an impact like that, he was lucky to remain airborne and reach Harmon. Deliberately to fly 207 miles back home over desolate country with a heavily damaged plane was a GROSS error in judgment. The SNB couldn't help him if he went down, only mark the spot. Small comfort!

Aircraft as large as the UF-2 are meant to be flown by TWO pilots! Any deviation from this policy for the UF or any other multi-engine aircraft should be subject to the specific approval of the station or unit commanding officer.

Pilots who know all the loopholes in the rules generally end up diggin' their own graves.

