GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Asleep at the Switch

About 0810 one bright and sunny morning, a division of F8U *Crusaders* returned to the field after completing an air-to-air gunnery hop. All planes broke upwind over the runway for practice mirror approaches, and all landings were normal except for that of one pilot who didn't like his angling approach and took a wave-off.

His second pass was right on all the way and a normal mirror landing was made. He commenced braking with 2500 feet of runway remaining and was down to taxi speed when suddenly the left wing dropped. The F8U slewed to the left and stopped as the main wheel and tire went rolling down the runway ahead of the aircraft.

Two ordnancemen ran out to the crippled F8U and shouted to the pilot that his wheel drum was on fire and fuel (actually hydraulic fluid) was leaking onto the fire. The pilot called the tower on his radio, shut down the engine and climbed out of the cockpit with considerable haste. He slipped and fell to the concrete, fracturing his heel, and lay there for a moment.

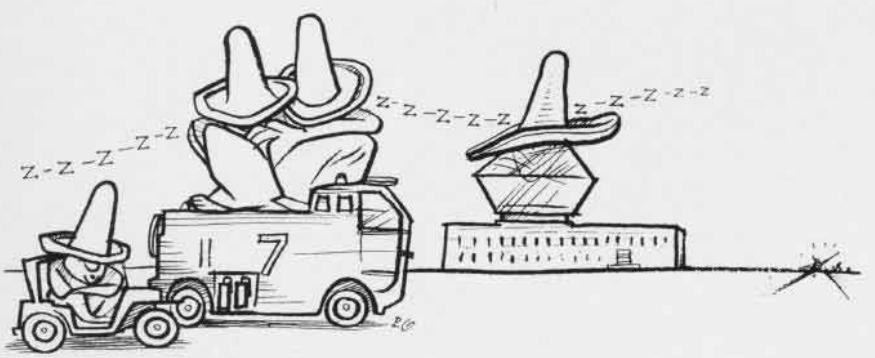
Being unable to walk, he first had the two ordnancemen help him away from the *Crusader* and then sent one in the ordnance jeep to get the crash trucks which were nowhere in sight.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehosophat! This really twangs my burstin' blood vessels!

Ol' weak eyes in the tower should have SEEN the accident occur, especially with a loose wheel rollin' down the runway and a bent bird generally blocking things up, and he got a call-up besides. This place gets real warm and crash truck cabs get pretty uncomfortable, but the duty truck at the runway should have *somebody* watching the store!

Once a crash occurs, TIME is the main factor in saving lives and a mighty expensive aircraft! This same outfit had a wheels-up with no wheel-watch posted and a landing aircraft hit an unlighted mirror installation just off the edge of the runway. The Operations Officer better get with it. This was too early in the day for a siesta.



Wheels, Wheels, Wheels

An A4D pilot was returning to the home field one CAVU day after completion of the air work portion of his seventh daylight FAM hop. Upon arriving overhead, he received permission to make several simulated flame-out approaches to the duty runway.

The first SFO was carried down to 2500 feet with a wave-off because of traffic, the second to 2500 feet again and another wave-off. At this point the pilot requested clearance for the final landing. Cleared by the tower, he broke, descended to 1500 feet, dropped speed brakes, then flaps as he got below 170 knots downwind, braked in again, and called "All down" for landing.

He was a little fast on final and was just coming back on the throttle as he started to flare when he heard an unfamiliar voice yell "Wheels!" Too late! As he added full throttle, the A4D touched down (no drop tanks on her either). Throttle came around the horn, and it skidded out, straight down the runway at the wheels watch who was posted at the opposite (wrong, that is) end of the runway!

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! The fog count was pretty high in both the cockpit and on the ground this fine day. Gramps has no tears for the pilot since he goofed with a capitol G. The wheel watch fiasco jest knocked your ol' Dad for a loop or two.

Seems the wheels watch was posted at 0930 on runway 24R, complete with paddles and flare guns, then because of a 180° wind shift at 0940, the duty runway was changed to 6L. The lad on duty asked the tower by field telephone if the watch should shift too. The tower told him to wait, they'd check.

Two hours and 47 minutes later, the A4D became a statistic! The watch was conscientiously checking wheels, spotted 8000 feet down the runway and admitted it was a lot harder from THAT position! Man-O-Man, when this particular outfit posts a watch, they practically set both his feet in concrete.

Yakety-Yak

An experienced pilot with over 400 hours in the A4D had just completed a climb to 40,000 feet during the course of an acceptance test of a newly received A4D-2. During the climb he had established radio contact with a nearby GCI unit to check out the electronic gear, and as he leveled off at 40,000, a turn was commenced to insure positive radar identification.

Suddenly the pilot was startled by a muffled explosion, followed by a rise in tailpipe temperature to 900°C, the maximum temperature! He retarded the throttle to idle, told radar of his trouble, and switched to GUARD channel. Since the TPT remained pegged, he shut down the engine, dropped out the emergency generator, and set up a glide for a nearby desert airfield, contacted the field tower and gave a series of position reports, instrument readings and action he planned to take.

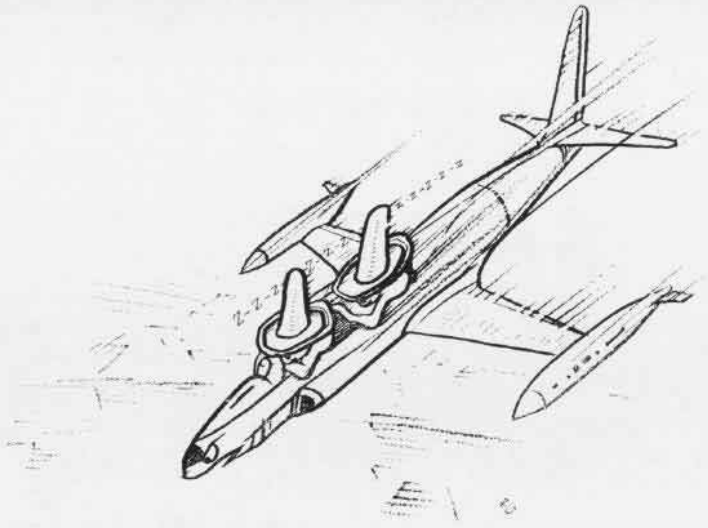
When he arrived over the field at 27,000 feet, airstart attempts were made in both primary and manual fuel systems, but both light-offs resulted in 900° TPT readings and the RPM would not accelerate beyond idle. The last attempt was made at 9000 feet. Stop-cocking the engine, the pilot notified GCI and the airfield that he was going to eject immediately.

At this time the airfield tower came on the air requesting the pilot's position, base of origin for the flight, and bureau number. Although rapidly approaching critical ejection altitude, the pilot responded with the information requested. On learning his position was near a local target area, the tower again called and told him to clear the area since the targets were in use! The pilot calmly informed the tower he was unable to comply and asked that the target pattern aircraft be cleared instead. Upon receiving the tower "Roger," he reported his altitude as 5300 feet and ejected. The ejection was successful with all equipment functioning properly, including the zero delay lanyard, which was installed. He was subsequently recovered safely by men of the target crew.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! When a man has his hand on the curtain and is down to CO-GO-GO altitude, that's sure no time to start yakety-yaking with him as this tower did. As far as the aircraft in the target area are concerned—with radio gear set properly they should have heard all the traffic on GUARD channel and been clear of the target area without being ordered to do so.

Ol' Gramps can't picture any pilot going ahead with bombing or rocket runs on a routine basis when about six tons of metal coming down out of the blue overhead. I'd of had that lad in sight or been heading out of there pronto! Radio discipline is a mandatory requirement. COMMON SENSE is what makes it possible.



Who's Got It

Two fighter pilots in a TV-2 at 34,000 feet were engaged in a combination fam/instrument hop, actually a solo check for the front seat pilot.

After some routine air work, the pilot up front asked for a check-out on acrobatics in the TV-2. The check pilot agreed and proceeded to explain the air speeds needed for various maneuvers. As he talked, the plane nosed over and began a steep descent. Noting the airspeed passing .8 Mach, the check pilot, who was not flying the TV, took the controls, cut the power, dropped the speed brake and eased it back to level flight.

Since there had been considerable vibration and buzz on the pull-out, both pilots checked the wings visually. Everything seemed normal so they continued the hop. Several barrel rolls and a loop later, the check pilot discovered a bad wrinkle in the port aileron and an immediate penetration and landing were safely effected.

As they were taxiing in to the line, the check pilot remarked that he was sorry he had not briefed on the limiting Mach of the TV-2, especially after that high speed let-down the front seat pilot had made, perhaps understandable, since the front seat man was used to the tremendous speeds of the F8U. The front seat pilot replied that he was aware of the TV-2 limitations, but he wasn't flying it at the time and thought the instructor was just gaining speed for a loop. In consternation, they realized no one had it!

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Here's a couple of normally savvy pilots completely disregarding the normal procedures for passing control in an aircraft. Ol' Gramps jumped on these lads because theirs was not an isolated case and they were real handy.

We've had a copilot, without being told to do it, flip up the gear before the plane was airborne. In another case, passengers told the copilot what to do in an emergency without the pilot gettin' a chance to decide.

When you sign that yellow sheet and clearance, you've effectively bought the aircraft, and it's your responsibility until you return it to its legal custodian. If it's damaged or an infraction of flight rules takes place while you've got it, you just have to be prepared to tell a plausible story. Before you take the runway you better have a clear understanding of who's gonna do what and on what signal.

OPNAV Instruction 3710.7A, Section 3, tells how it MUST be done. Every man flying a dual control machine should review the instructions, especially if he's normally pushin' fighters up there. It could save your bacon.