



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Fatal Error

An air group was conducting an aerial demonstration. All scheduled exercises had been running like clockwork. The finale was to be a coordinated attack on a target 2000 yards off the port beam of the big attack carrier, the attack force to consist of four plane divisions from four squadrons of the air group.

F4D's would lead off firing rockets from Aero 6A pods, A4D's would follow with 250-pound bombs, then A4D's and AD's with rockets would finish the job. After the firing runs, the aircraft were to proceed to a point 10 miles astern of the ship to rendezvous for a formation fly-over.

The F4D's fired their rockets in a 30° run, followed closely by the first A4D division. At the completion of the attack, the F4D's and A4D's each made a climbing left turn to reverse course. The A4D's proceeded to close the interval, so that at the completion of the turn, they were in a parade formation 300 yards astern and 150 feet below the F4D's. The two divisions were at about 2800 feet at 325 knots.

Suddenly the following radio transmissions broke the silence:

"Stand by to drop hung ordnance."

"A4D's are behind us."

"Stand by to drop pods."

"Stand by—DROP".

Before a warning could be shouted, the F4D's dropped their empty rocket

Pods! The pods came tumbling back through the A4D flight. One struck the A4D division leader's plane squarely on the windshield, shattered the canopy and then glanced off the vertical fin. His plane slowly rolled to the right, made two complete rolls, turned inverted and plunged into the ocean. Apparently incapacitated, the pilot did not eject.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy smokes! This is the first such miserable error to come to O!



Gramps attention in many a year and I read 'em all. We lost a 3500-hour jet pilot and *it could happen again!*

With expendable rocket launchers in common usage, it behooves EVERY squadron to take a real close look at their doctrine to make sure this NEVER happens again!

A high price was paid for this blunder. Don't waste a lesson so dearly bought. Pass the word!

Memo From Gramps

O! Gramps really pulled a classic boo-boo in the June issue of this magazine. I chewed an LSO but good for telling an S2F pilot "this pass would be a cut", the inference being no matter what his position or attitude was, he'd get a mandatory cut. This Gramps got from the AAR, and believe you me, it left that impression.

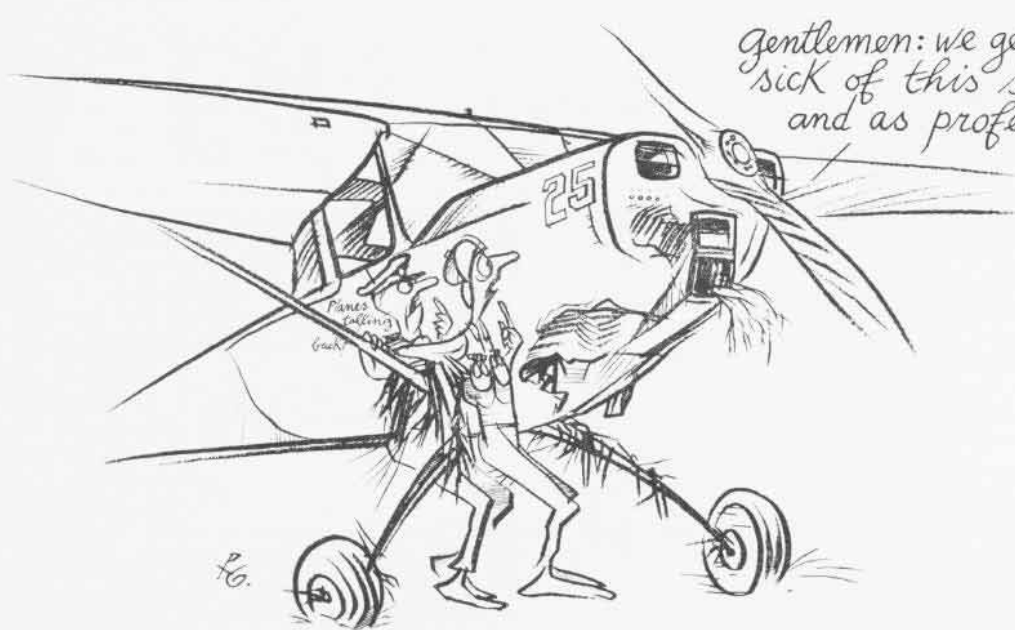
After reading that horrible chewin' out and knowing it was HIM (O! Gramps didn't mention names), the LSO wrote me a real fine letter full of the "True Word."

Having a warm heart for LSO's I'll pull his chestnuts back off the fire, at least a little bit.

The S2F outfit was using the usual "no cut" drive 'em on, power on, mirror pass landing technique. This saves the electronic gear but often results in more frequent bolters for the S2F. The LSO had briefed and worked them on "full cut" technique for use on pitching decks, in emergencies, and at times when it seemed necessary to insure an engagement.

This was such a time. He told the pilot this pass would be a "cut" and a cut he gave him. The pilot smashed the S2F all to heck when he took the cut, dove for the deck, and pranged the main landing gear. Second guessing is real easy and Gramps does plenty of this, but the man on the platform must make the decisions. Most times it's a good one. Course I remember one time long ago, after being towed off with two flat tires, when the LSO's consoling remark to my Commanding Officer was: "He looked good when he went by me."





Gentlemen: we get mighty sick of this sort of thing, and as professionals YOU ought to know better!

Cane Choppers

A young Marine pilot was scheduled for a mapping exercise in an OE-1. An Air Force pilot was invited to go along as special crew and lookout, primarily to log a little flight time.

The pilot's briefings of his passenger was thorough on the aircraft cockpit and controls, bailout, and use of the Mae West. The rear seat controls were set up and after a normal pre-flight and turn up, they took off.

After reaching 500 feet altitude, the pilot passed control to his passenger. Using the approved procedures, he shook the stick, patted his head, announced, "You've got it." Proper responses were returned by the rear seat man.

A little later the pilot again took control of the OE and made a low pass over some targets at about 100 feet, pulled up to 500 feet again and headed toward the coast, pointing out some areas of historical interest enroute. Here he "thought" he passed control back to the rear seat pilot and turned his attention to some map reading.

The little plane went into a descending turn, reversed course and headed inland again, getting lower and lower as it progressed. Suddenly the pilot glanced up, saw telephone wires dead ahead, grabbed the stick, made an

abrupt pull-up and let go of it again, shouting to the rear seat pilot, "Didn't you see those wires?" The rear seat man said, "Sure, I saw those wires!"

Back to his map reading went the pilot, and the little plane again took an easy dip toward the ground, this time toward some sugar cane fields. Caneworkers ducked as the plane careened along some 10 feet off the ground. The rear man began to get a little jumpy but said nothing.

The nose dipped a little more and just as the OE-1 entered the sugar cane, the pilot looked up, snatched back on the stick, and with sugar cane flying in all directions, the sturdy little aircraft came flying right back out of the field.

As they were climbing, the pilot again shouted, "Did you see that sugar cane field?" The rear seat man answered promptly, "I sure did, didn't you?"

Stricken, both men realized no one had held the controls for some time!

Taking the OE up to 500 feet, the pilot made a slow flight check, found both the elevators and rudder pretty well binding—cane was hanging everywhere—but was controllable.

They headed for home, but couldn't raise the tower on the radio, so they changed course to reach another field whose tower was coming in faintly.

After a normal pattern entry the pilot told the tower to have crash equipment stand by since he had a fouled rudder. This was fortunate since on touchdown the OE-1 ground looped in a light crosswind from the left. The right brake hydraulic line had been torn loose during the cane chopping incident back in the field.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great leapin' balls o' fire! This pilot was so interested in his map readin', he clean forgot he was in a flying machine! A few seconds more and they coulda used that map for a shroud!

Unauthorized low passes, sightseeing or otherwise, are one sure way to get the whole civilian population and your C. O. on your back. OPNAV Instr 3710.7A clearly states that 500 feet above the terrain is the minimum flight level authorized. This can only be waived when a military mission or an authorized training mission requires a deviation. This applies to EVERYBODY.

Maybe there were a few more mistakes this pilot could have made, but I doubt it! A slow flight check at 500 feet! The OE handbook says 750 feet is the absolute minimum for safe bailout! Course, I guess 500 feet seemed pretty high after the grass cuttin' they'd been doin' in the OE-1.