



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Low Blow

After an extensive briefing two A4D-2's took off on a hi-low level navigation training hop. The flight was scheduled to end with a simulated low-level, high-speed, bombing run-in on a large dam. The instructor pilot, who was to fly the chase plane, had reiterated, "You should know the area from IP to the target like your back yard."

The student pilot flew a perfect hop, hit his IP right on the nose and passed over the target with wings level at about 200 feet and 500 knots. Right then, the chase pilot who was flying a higher trail position saw a puff of brown smoke come from the lead plane which had immediately gone into a steady wings level climb.

The student asked the chase pilot to look his plane over for damage, for he'd hit something. Inspection revealed that he must have hit a wire cable, for the canopy was gone, part of the VHF antenna cut away, and the vertical stabilizer had been sliced half way through. The ejection curtain was pulled out, but the handle was caught on some jagged Plexiglas. There seemed no danger of an accidental ejection.

They decided to try for the home base. At a greatly reduced speed and at 7000 feet, they made the trip safely. Telling the tower of his difficulty, the pilot then lowered the gear, flaps and speed brakes at 4000 feet and made a long straight-in approach to an uneventful landing.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Now hear this! There have been 290 sorties flown to this same target in the last 24 months by this outfit, and all of 'em missed the wire and no one ever saw it! This cable had two  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch strands, had been there since 1922 and is only 1000 feet from the target dam. Investigation revealed the pilot had hit it at an altitude of 150 feet.

Power lines are not shown on aeronautical charts and any low level train-



**ing area better darn well be checked over pretty carefully before it is approved for minimum altitude use. Until you're SURE, keep those minimums UP!**

**Seems to me that 4000 feet is a little low to first check the plane in landing configuration. Wonder how he figured he'd get hold of that hung-up ejection curtain if everything turned to a can of worms?**

## Long, Long Minutes

An F3H pilot ejected at an altitude of 1000 feet a few minutes after being catapulted from the deck of a big CVA. His engine had flamed out only four miles ahead of the ship during initial turn for rendezvous, and he actually had little time for anything more than a quick "Mayday" before positioning for ejection. He did, however, try one relight attempt, used up 500 feet of precious altitude in the process, and at that point, he pulled the curtain.

The seat functioned as advertised, and the chute blossomed at about 800 feet altitude, so he had plenty of time to prepare for a water landing. The water was rough and white caps showed up everywhere, but his water entry was uneventful, for he submerged only about six feet and popped right up.

Releasing both rocket jet fasteners he then pulled both toggles on his Mark 3c life preserver, removed his flight gloves and APH-5 helmet and relaxed, floating easily in the water.

The parachute was partially submerged with shroud lines floating all around him so he figured if he remained fairly quiet while he carefully picked them away he'd avoid entanglement. He was right. Things cleared up in very little time, and he now was able to easily remove the life raft from its container and inflate it.

Resting comfortably in the raft after two tries to get in it, he now drew his .38 pistol and fired five tracer rounds straight up in the air to give the ship a position on him. Reloading the gun he fired two more rounds at slow intervals.

A couple of F3H's were now circling him at low altitude, so he calmly pulled his survival seat pack aboard the raft and was breaking into it to get the emergency radio and a smoke flare when the rescue helo suddenly appeared and came to a hover nearby.

Abandoning his raft, he swam to the sling which the copter men were trailing slowly towards him and was promptly and efficiently hoisted aboard. Returned safely to the carrier deck, he found only eight minutes had elapsed from flame-out to rescue and return to the ship!



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

This man didn't drag his feet once he made up his mind to go. He accomplished more in the few minutes he spent in the water, rough seas, whitecaps and all, than the average man can do with the same gear in a calm pool with a survival instructor lookin' on.

One thing he proved: DON'T PANIC. Get that life vest inflated first and work on those sticky shroud lines CALMLY. It can mean your life. This gent knew every piece of his survival gear and how to use it.

How's YOUR score in this life-or-death part of our business?

## Blunder Birds

A couple of AD-5's headed east from their West Coast base, bound for an inland target area. They each had six HVAR 5-inch rockets and a rack of bombs aboard, and it was a beautiful afternoon for an ordnance hop.

The wingman had removed his oxygen mask during the climb-out and began to feel slightly uncomfortable and disoriented. As they cruised over a desert valley, he became so dizzy he began to fear he would lose consciousness and seemed unable to control the *Skyraider* smoothly. He called the flight leader and advised him of his predicament and said he was going to land at a small civilian field below.

The flight leader told him to go on 100% oxygen which the pilot did, although he never put the mask on, just held it up to his face. The stricken pilot then made an uneventful landing while the leader circled.

The flight leader observed his landing, saw the engine shut down and the pilot wave, so he flew on to the target and expended his ordnance.

leader would fly his former wingman's plane out of there.

They had a little trouble with the Operations Duty Officer. Seems that little civilian field isn't listed in the "Enroute Supplement" or "Flight Planning Document" and is not approved for landing by military aircraft. They disregarded his warning and went anyway.

The trip to the desert field and landing were uneventful. Starting up the sick man's plane, the flight leader taxied out as the C.O. got his cranked up with the still ill pilot aboard as a passenger.

About 600 feet from the end of the runway while taxiing downwind the AD seemed to settle quickly and then abruptly nosed up! It had broken through the runway surface! Three feet deep! The Ops Duty Officer had been right. The runway was only 3/4-inch of asphalt over rolled desert sand!



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat!  
These men all showed about as much



*The Three Gooneybirds*  
SNAP Pop CRACKLE

On the way home he returned to the small field, landed and was told by the sick pilot that it was impossible for him to fly. Taxiing out after telling his buddy he'd send help, the flight leader took off and returned to the home base.

After the C.O. of the pilot's outfit heard the story, he decided to take the pilot back to the desert strip in another AD-5. The sick pilot was to ride home with the C.O. and the flight

sense as a flock of gooney-birds. The wingman lucked out on his landing and his leader was sure dedicated. Imagine flying on to complete the hop! No radio calls to the home base—get a helo out there with a doctor aboard—just blunder through.

The airfields listed in the "Enroute Supplement" have been carefully screened by both the Navy and USAF. Any not listed are TABOO and for good reason. This quiet little airfield now needs 600 feet of runway and the

parking areas resurfaced. A real can of worms, this fiasco. That's what comes of tryin' to run your own private air-rescue service. Better to turn the job over to the Pro's.

## Up or Down?

After a normal pre-flight and engine start, a young FSU pilot started to taxi out for a scheduled hop as escort on a gunnery exercise. As he left the chocks, he depressed the nose gear steering button to make a right turn onto the taxiway; but before he even used rudder to start the turn the *Crusader* veered sharply to the right! He used hard left rudder to straighten out and completed the turn. Taxiing out was no problem although he had to use nose gear steering gently, for it pulled sharply to the right whenever the button was depressed.

Take-off and the entire flight were normal. He made a practice field mirror approach to a landing, touching down just short of the mirror. Immediately the nose started bumping and bouncing and pulling to the right. He applied left brake in an attempt to hold it straight, but as the *Crusader's* speed decreased, the pull to the right became more severe. Suddenly the left tire blew and a violent skid to the right developed.

The pilot now tried nose gear steering in desperation but it didn't help a bit. The FSU slid off the right side of the runway, dragging its left wing, and just before hitting the dirt, the pilot cut the engine.

The nose dug in and, as the port wing tore off in one big piece, the fuselage rolled over and stopped, almost completely inverted.

The pilot released his harness, fell down onto the canopy and, after what seemed an endless period of time, managed to chop his way through the Plexiglas with his knife and crawl to safety. The ever-present thought of fire really spurred his efforts. As he stood up beside his dead bird, the first fire rescue truck drove up. He'd been less than a minute inside!



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great holy cats! Seems this lad needs a little guidance as to what constitutes a downing gripe! Of Gramps has polled quite a few FSU pilots and some say they'd go, some say NO. After this million-dollar lesson, it SHOULD be on EVERY outfit's downing gripe list! I suppose everybody has such a list—or do you?