



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Simulated Takeoff

A young Marine lieutenant had just reported to his squadron in Hawaii and was in the process of getting checked out in the F-8B *Crusader*. He attended squadron lectures, ground school and flew an instrument hop prior to his taxi practice-simulated takeoff hop in the *Crusader*.

After a thorough cockpit check and emergency procedures brief by the check pilot, he cranked his bird and taxied out. Upon reaching the Hot Brake area, the pilot decided to lower and lock the variable-incidence wing to cycle the hydraulic fluid. He then completed his check-off list and called the tower for permission to take the runway. The tower operator cleared the pilot for an aborted takeoff and informed him that his wing was down. The pilot acknowledged the transmission with the intention of raising the wing after line up. However, after line up he ran up to military power and released the brakes.

The pilot allowed the aircraft to reach 105 knots before retarding throttle and attempting aerodynamic braking. Over-rotation resulted in dragging the tailcone on the runway and normal braking at approximately 85 knots had little effect on the heavy *Crusader*. The aircraft continued off the end of the runway, over the sea wall, into the blue Pacific. An uninjured, but totally confused, aviator vacated the cockpit and was assisted



through the surf to the beach by the crash crew.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

**Fetch me another aspirin tablet! This lad completely ignored the sage observations of a sharp tower operator and blasted down the runway with the wing locked in the down position. Makes me mighty ill when a pilot refuses to use that check-off list.**

Even after he realized the aircraft wasn't slowing the way it should, he failed to use all slowing/stopping means available, such as securing the engine, lowering the hook, emergency brakes and, as a last resort, raising the gear.

**Use of the CHECK-OFF list and a thorough knowledge of emergency procedures are a MUST in this business.**

## Mid-Air Mess

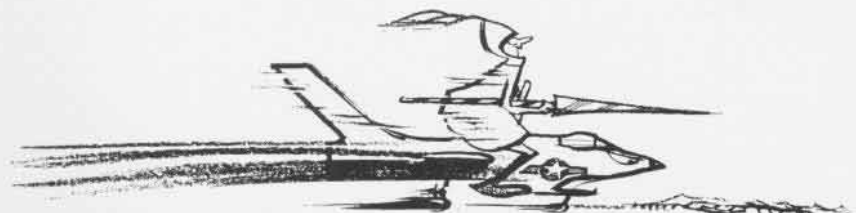
An O&R test pilot was conducting a routine test flight in an A-3B when he noted an unsafe indication on the port main gear. Aware that other test flights were airborne, he called for someone to inspect the gear in the air. An A-4B pilot heard the request and charged over to join on the A-3B for a visual gear inspection.

The A-4B pilot approached the A-3B from the rear and informed him that he had joined aft and would approach from that position for the inspection. The A-3B was flying straight and level at 12,000 feet, 260 knots. The weather was low overcast with tops around 2000-3000 feet, and a broken overcast with a base of 15,000 feet and a visibility of seven or eight miles.

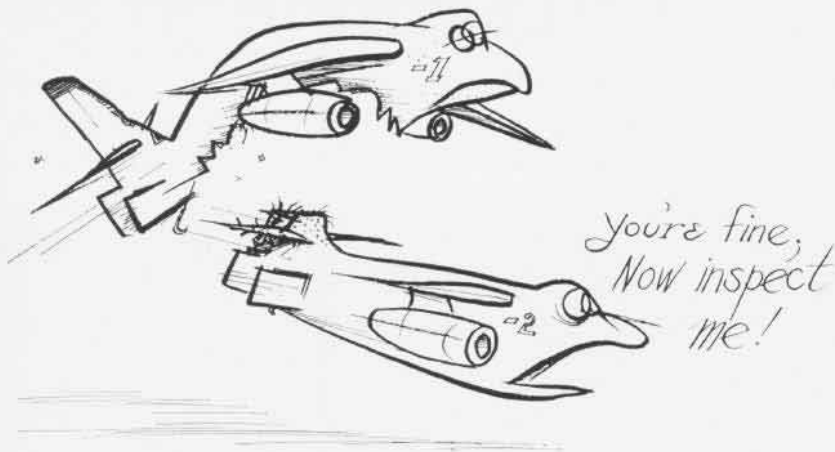
The A-4B descended to about 30 feet below the A-3B in the approach to make the inspection and was closing very rapidly when suddenly the pilot realized he was much too close. He reduced power and pushed the stick forward. Almost immediately the A-4B pilot felt the shock as the tail section of his aircraft contacted the bottom of the A-3B nose section.

The pilot of the A-4B received a severe jolt which threw his head to the right side of the cockpit and his feet and legs to the left. Evidently his seat belt was loose, for his seat pack was displaced to the left and he was sitting at a 20 to 30-degree angle. The A-4B pilot regained control of his aircraft and inquired as to the condition of the other aircraft. The A-3B was substantially damaged, but the pilot had no difficulty controlling it and proceeded back to the home base where he made an arrested landing on a foamed runway.

At this point another test pilot in an F-9E on the same frequency called to see if he could be of assistance. Very shortly he joined on the A-4B and informed the pilot that most of the vertical stabilizer, rudder and starboard horizontal stabilizer was missing.



*Our Crusader friend probably thinks something will stop him!*



With this information, the pilot proceeded to check the flying characteristics of his aircraft. In spite of considerable vibration and a severe yaw, he was able to maintain control at 225 knots clean and 185 knots with gear down.

The pilot would probably have ejected, but he was not sure the seat would operate satisfactorily. He thought it might have twisted in the rails when his seat pack was displaced by the impact. He elected to attempt a landing at a nearby Air Force base and, after broadcasting a Mayday, informed the base of his intentions. En route he experienced electrical and radio failure, but the F-9E pilot who was escorting him informed the Air Force tower of the damaged aircraft's position and intentions.

The A-4B pilot made an approach in excess of 200 knots over an unpopulated area in order to be able to abandon the aircraft should it become necessary. Touchdown was accomplished at about 185 knots, but the aircraft immediately started a swerve to the left and became uncontrollable, so the pilot added full throttle to initiate a wave-off. The aircraft vibrated violently during wave-off, but the pilot managed to get it to an altitude of 2000 feet over an unpopulated area at a speed of 225 knots. He ejected by pulling the curtain with his left hand while holding the stick with the right. The RAPEC seat operated as advertised with the pilot landing safely in an open field.



**Grampae Pettibone says:**

**If this fiasco wouldn't wilt the lily, nothin' would! Landing gear**

indication discrepancies are rather common occurrences on test flights and all pilots assigned to this type duty are thoroughly briefed on correct procedures to be used when making an in-flight gear inspection. It should be common knowledge that an area of turbulent air with a suction-like effect will be encountered in close, and can be extremely hazardous if not handled just right. At no time should a rapid closing situation be allowed to develop during rendezvous on a different model aircraft.

Although this pilot had been adequately briefed and possessed the skill to accomplish the job, nothing can replace good judgment based on basic fundamentals and airmanship, a professional approach to the problem and headwork.

## Professional Pilots

A flight of three A-4C's departed an East Coast air station for refresher landings aboard a CVS. After the initial landing, the lead aircraft was taxied to the #1 catapult for launch and a second landing.

The pilot was given the brakes off, 100% signal, went over his T.O. check list and lowered his seat. He noticed his RPM and TPT to be 96% and 560° and was about to shut down when he noticed the RPM and TPT stabilize at 100% and 600°. He then saluted the catapult officer and was launched.

While attempting to rotate after the launch, the pilot noted his RPM and TPT to be 95% and 550°. Shortly thereafter he felt the wings wobble and the air frame buffet. He also heard someone say, "Pull it up," over the radio, so he immediately pulled the face curtain.

The plane guard helicopter was over

the pilot in 30 seconds and had him safely aboard in only two minutes.



**Grampae Pettibone says:**

Well, bust my buttons! This Skyhawk pilot was in a tight spot and didn't have much time to react, but that RAPEC seat sure is great to have around at a time like this.

The helicopter crew fought a 32-knot wind and 10-foot waves to fish the pilot from the water.

We'll just bet this lad had no idea when he was spotted on the cat that in less than six minutes he would have successfully ejected, been picked up by an SH-3A and safely deposited back aboard the ship.

This jet pilot did everything just right after he elected to eject, and the reason for this is his squadron covers one A-4C emergency procedure during each preflight briefing. It takes about one month to cover them all, then they start over again. Each squadron pilot is also required to take a flight simulator hop each month. This gent had a "stall at low altitude" emergency in the simulator about a week prior to the accident.

You have to hand it to that helo crew for a fast and efficient rescue. An Air Force pilot, who was aboard the carrier and saw the ejection and pick-up, remarked, "That helo crew can get ahead of me in the pay line any day!"

It does ol' Gramps' heart good to see training pay off this way. These lads can rest assured that their names have been added to the "Real Pro" roster. That roster is beginning to swell lately and old Gramps' shirt size gets a little bigger each time I look at it.

## Memo from Gramps

These old eyes may be burning from reviewing carbon copies of Helicopter Rescue Reports, but they sure twinkle when they see that most all of our rescue crews know their business so well. Just as gratifying is the fact that nearly all the pilots and crewmen who suddenly find themselves in the pond are so well checked-out in the use of their safety/survival equipment.

It gives me cold chills to read about a lad who didn't know how to get in the sling or failed to use the survival equipment properly. Now there is really no excuse for this kind of thing to happen. We fly with the best equipment available and not to know how to use it properly is downright stupid. If you don't know all there is to know about your survival equipment, you're gambling with a life—YOUR OWN.