



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Crosswind Caper

An A-4 pilot departed an air station early one Monday morning for a cross-country training flight to a mid-western Air Force base. Prior to takeoff, the pilot received a weather brief indicating the surface wind at his destination would be 20 to 25 knots from 180°.

The weather en route was good and the pilot arrived over the Air Force base at 26,000 feet with 2,800 pounds of fuel on board. Prior to letdown, he requested the wind and duty runway from the tower. He was informed that the duty runway was 18 and the wind was from 240° at 20 knots with gusts to 30.

Instead of diverting to an alternate field in the area, the pilot informed the tower that he would attempt a landing. He carried his landing attempt all the way to touchdown but took a wave-off because of excessive crosswinds.

The pilot then climbed to 10,000 feet and asked the tower for information on the nearest suitable alternate. He was informed that the municipal airport had a runway nearer to being into the wind, so he proceeded to the municipal field and contacted the tower. He was given the same wind conditions with a duty runway of 19 and also informed that there were no facilities for military jet aircraft.



The A-4 pilot then returned to the AFB and asked the tower operator for a suitable alternate military field. He was informed that there was another military base only 75 miles away with jet facilities. The pilot was unable to locate the other AFB on his charts and also by this time he was getting pretty low on fuel. After weighing the situation, the pilot decided to attempt a no-flap landing.

With the wind condition the same as reported for his first pass, the pilot made a no-flap approach. Immediately after touchdown, he felt he had the aircraft under control but, after rolling a short distance, he realized he was being blown to the left. The aircraft left

the runway approximately 4,700 feet from the approach end and continued only a short distance before the nose gear sheared. After traveling another 260 feet across the field, the aircraft came to rest.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! This lad passed up scads of chances to prevent his accident. Pre-flight planning would have been a great time to locate an alternate landing facility. It would also have been a fine time to check his destination and discover there was arresting gear available. He showed a good deal of concern about the crosswind situation at a time when the most appropriate corrective action (to divert) was available to him, but apparently decided he could "hack it." The good book says he couldn't and he proved it.

The tower earned a bouquet of onions for its failure to advise the pilot of the BAK-9 arresting gear and its obviously hazy knowledge of other airfields in the area.

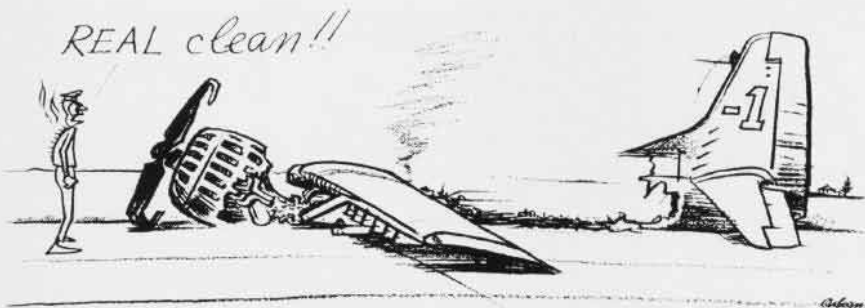
'Course, nothin' takes the monkey off this gent's back. He proved again incomplete planning can buy trouble.

'Clean' Landing

A three-plane flight of A-1E's departed home station for a scheduled rocket bombing hop on a target at a nearby Army Air Field. The pilot flying the #3 position was to land at the Army strip, drop off a Chief Aviation Ordnanceman, then pick him up on the way back to home base. The Chief was to proceed to the target area for a check-out on operations as he was to be in charge of the range for future ordnance flights.

The three aircraft proceeded to the Army reservation and upon arrival the #3 aircraft left the formation and circled the strip for wind information as there was no tower available. After observing the tetrahedron indicating a SW wind, the pilot went over his checkoff list and set up an approach for the SW run-





way. During the approach, the pilot noticed that the tetrahedron had swung around to the southeast so he initiated a wave-off and entered downwind for a landing on runway 14.

The pilot stated that after completing the landing check list he continued the approach at an air-speed of 100-110 knots with an apparently normal touchdown. He further stated that, just after contact with the runway, the nose of the aircraft seemed extremely heavy and almost immediately the propeller blades made contact with the runway. He hauled back on the stick in an effort to raise the nose but got no response. When the pilot applied pressure, the brakes felt as though they were locked. With the prop damaged, he realized it was useless to attempt a takeoff so he shut off the gas.

The aircraft continued nearly 2,500 feet up the runway in a fairly straight line before coming to rest on the right side of the runway. Fire broke out immediately and the pilot and passenger quickly abandoned the aircraft uninjured.

Luckily, the passenger in the aircraft was an ordnanceman. He removed the six rockets from the racks before the fire got to them. In a very short time, the aircraft was consumed in flame.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Balls of fire! A pilot cleared to land at a strip that has no control tower, no weather or wind information available from any source, and no crash crew, so what does he do? Goes in gear up!

The pilot says he remembers lowering the gear. I don't doubt that he did, but he probably forgot that he pulled it up when he took the waveoff. The belly tank started scraping the runway 639 feet from the approach end and the prop started bitin' into

the runway 100 feet later. There's really not too much evidence that this lad did anything except make a real good landing in a CLEAN condition.

It's sure lucky the Chief was around to get those rockets clear of the fire or things might have ended up worse.

Narrow Escape

After briefing for an afternoon flight, the crew of a UH-2B proceeded to their aircraft. The flight was scheduled as a practice for a simulated water pickup demonstration. Aircraft preflight and engine run-up were considered normal in all respects and the aircraft departed the base at about 1500.

The flight proceeded to a nearby river for a practice rescue at an altitude of 200 feet. The pilot established a pickup site in the water and flew past this point for a few seconds before initiating a wing-over approach into the wind. He entered the turn in about a 45° left bank, nose-down attitude and naturally the helo lost altitude.

Realizing that an excessive sink rate had been established, the pilot attempted to flare the aircraft by pulling the nose up and adding full power. He was unable to stop the descent and the aircraft hit the

water in a level attitude with very little forward motion. Immediately after hitting the water, the helo again became airborne and the pilot was able to keep it in a hover.

The crew chief quickly informed the pilot that it looked like the tail wheel strut sheared on impact with the water. The pilot then moved over to a small sand bar in the river and hovered while the crew chief got out and inspected the aircraft for further damage. He confirmed the previous report of the missing tail wheel. He also found that the aft fuselage and pylon area were buckled and damaged. In addition, all of the external equipment aft of the auxiliary tanks was wiped off on impact with the water.

The pilot did not notice any unusual vibrations or control problems so he flew the helo back to the base. The crash crew provided four mattresses to support the tail of the aircraft and held them in place during the landing.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel. That wasn't a close shave, it was a narrow escape.

It's just downright hard to believe that two grown men who are supposed to be qualified whirlybird drivers would take off in a fully loaded aircraft on a hot day and pull a junior birdman stunt like this. I don't really know who they were tryin' to impress with this "wing-over" bit to a water pickup, but they sure didn't rack up any plus points with this maneuver.

The helo sustained overhaul damage as a result of the impact, but, to be honest, it did pretty well to hang together at all. Every airframe has a design limit. When you exceed that limit with this kind of treatment, somethin' is sure to come unglued.

