



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Over the Side

While conducting night carrier qualifications, an A-4C made a normal approach and landing, engaging No. 3 cross-deck pendant. The pilot was instructed by pri-fly to leave the hook down in order to pull the aircraft back by retracting the engaged pendant. This was to be done so as to position the aircraft aft of the ship's island structure for a "hot refueling." Although this pilot had been briefed on this procedure, he had not previously experienced it.

The aircraft was pulled aft approximately 100 feet after which the director gave the "hook up" signal, followed by "come ahead." The pilot complied with these signals and, with a power setting of 85-90% (estimated by witnesses), lunged forward, angling to left of center-line and continued forward over the side.

As power was not reduced after the nose wheel straightened out, the director gave an "emergency stop" signal, but to no avail. Examination of the flight deck revealed skid marks from the main gear for the last 42 feet of travel prior to the deck edge.

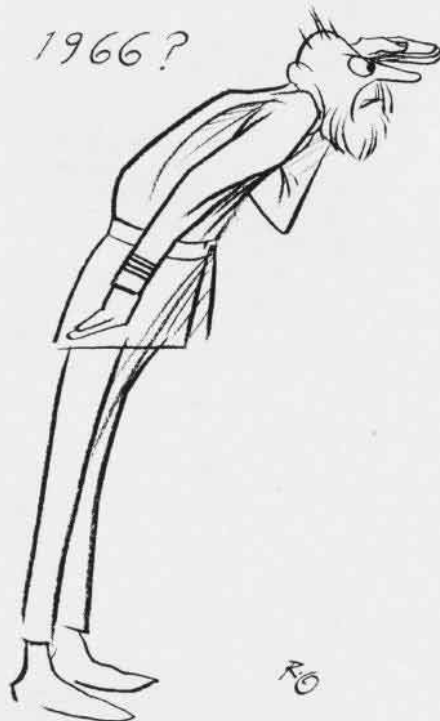


Grampaw Pettibone says:

What a waste! After demonstrating an above average ability to get off and on that deck safely, a newly qualified aviator and his aircraft were needlessly lost.

Although the accident board didn't list the ornery A-4C nose wheel as the direct cause, we've all seen how cantankerous it can be for the less experienced A-4 drivers. This lad had completed a total of 15 CV landings in the A-4C and had much to learn about the operation of the nose wheel after arrestment.

More than likely, the excessive power (80-90%), applied as a result of the nose wheel being castered or cocked, regardless of the possibility of a broken throttle linkage, perpetrated the whole fiasco. Monday morning quarterbacking can't say a tiller bar



would have prevented this accident, but having seen so many of these young fellas cuss, stomp brakes, pump the stick, and cause waveoffs just trying to get the ornery beast clear of

the gear, I'll bet my last sawbuck that more frequent and judicious use of the nose tiller bar would save a lot of frayed nerves, ulcers, near misses and A-4's from straying into the catwalk and over the side.

A look at the past 18 months' record lends credence to the old adage, "It's not over until you're chocked and chained." Twenty-two aircraft have unintentionally exceeded the bounds of our flight decks and dented appropriations to the tune of \$7,032,900.00. Breaking these 22 aircraft down, we find that six were being towed when they entered the catwalk, six rolled over the deck edge and ten were taxied over the side or into a catwalk. Grim results: Four fatalities and nine strikes.

When the Captain rings up 30 knots and turns that airfield into the wind, he rightfully expects action and the pace on deck has to be fast; but when is haste waste?

The pilot who doesn't know his aircraft and its peculiarities, including its present handicaps (weak brakes, sticky throttle, etc.), is waste! Checking brakes at the 180 doesn't cost a dime. Of course, it's not prudent to grow whiskers in the gear and cause a buddy to go around, but it'll cost less time than plucking catwalks, un-



tangling crunches or scanning the wake for the ace who barrels across the foul line without brakes.

"Aircraft Handlers" thru the college of hard knocks, trips to pri-fly, and much sweat compiled those aircraft handling instructions, but they might well be in the archives when the handlers ignore this bible or are permitted to. Each time a director elects the easier/faster way to move, direct, or spot an aircraft, he is leading his entourage down the old primrose path to waste. Each aspect of tending the flock on the bird farm is, or darn well should be, covered in these instructions and executed that way! If they ain't right, change em; don't ignore em!

No Gas—No Fly

An SAR duty pilot was requested to launch early one afternoon on a local flight to look for a tow banner that was supposed to have been dropped just outside the field.

The pilot with two lookouts manned the UH-19F after a quick pre-flight and prepared for the search hop. The pilot had turned the aircraft up in the morning. After a normal start and mag check, he went through what he described as an "abbreviated check-off" list.

The lookout, who was flying up front in the left seat, pointed to the aft fuel warning light during turn-up, but the pilot assured him it was OK.

After receiving taxi and takeoff clearance the pilot made a routine lift-off and climbed to approximately 100 feet to search for the tow banner. He made a couple of circles, at about 55 knots, over the area where the tow banner was supposed to be, but as he turned down wind on the second turn, the engine coughed, caught, then quit.

The pilot immediately dropped the collective and attempted to turn into the wind. During the initial turn, he broadcast a quick "MAYDAY." As the aircraft approached tree top level, a flare was initiated to stop the sink rate, then full collective was brought in as the helo fell through the flare. Touch-down was relatively smooth with very little forward speed and the rotors stopped almost immediately. After securing the mixture and mags the pilot yelled for the crewmen to get out, then followed them to the ground.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well, singe my old gray whiskers! This sad tale is older than I am, but it appears some pilots just refuse to learn from others' mistakes.

You can call it over-confidence, complacency, preoccupation, distraction or anything else you want to, but to me it's downright FOOLISH to fly any airplane without makin' sure the fuel selector is where it ought to be.

Many of Uncle Sam's bucks were doled out to install fuel warning lights on the birds we operate but guess some people don't really believe 'em.

Like a Rock

A student aviator launched at 1815 in his F-9 on a scheduled night instrument flight in CAVU weather. Departure went well and he was cleared to flight level (FL) 330. Arriving at the approach fix after an uneventful round robin, he was cleared by approach control to descend to FL 180 for a TACAN penetration. The aircraft's TACAN DME was intermittent at this time, and the pilot failed to notify approach control of this discrepancy.

Nevertheless, he commenced the penetration at 27 to 28 miles vice 32. All was "normal," except for being high "in close," owing to the late initiation of the descent. The power was reduced to 70% in the descent to increase vertical speed and further reduced to idle passing 4,000 feet and eight miles

from the runway. Speed was slowed to 210 knots, at which time the gear and flaps were extended. Approaching 1,100 feet, he was cleared to 850 feet and, while passing 900 feet, he applied power but the descent continued. The pilot was concentrating on resetting the radio altimeter when GCA alerted him to check his altitude.

In rapid order, a surprised aviator acknowledged GCA's challenge, added 100% power, raised the nose, and struck the ground a severe blow.

The aircraft sheared all the landing gear on initial impact, slid along the ground for 100 yards, shedding parts, and became airborne. The pilot activated the face curtain as the aircraft passed over a 40-foot-high, 72,000-volt electric power line.

The Martin-Baker functioned beautifully and deposited a bruised and shook student about 50-60 feet from the flaming wreckage and clear of the power lines.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

That wasn't a close shave, that was a narrow escape.

There aren't many left who have tried this type of penetration and lived to tell it. The lad can thank his lucky stars for an alert GCA controller who jolted him sufficiently—and in time—to adjust his attitude before impact. The ole Martin-Baker really salvaged what might otherwise have been a completely ruined day.