



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Or Else

The *Skyhawk* pilot departed home plate on a routinely scheduled cross-country to a naval air station in the Midwest. A squadron mate in a tanker-configured A-4 accompanied him and attempted unsuccessfully to refuel the cross-country aircraft at a pre-briefed en route fix. This particular contingency had been taken into consideration and both aircraft would land at the preselected en route airfield.

The A-4's let down from flight level 330 and entered the landing pattern. The leader, noting an extremely strong crosswind, wisely executed a voluntary wave-off and requested the other runway which had a lesser crosswind component. The control tower granted the request and the *Hawk* driver rolled into final with the angle of attack (AOA) indicator displaying a "doughnut" (on speed) and a fast chevron.

After touchdown, the pilot, on attempting to brake, realized for the first time that the runway was wet and the crosswind a little more than he'd bargained for. The wheels locked and the aircraft commenced a skid at 80 knots and, with barely 1,500 feet of runway remaining, the perplexed pilot decided to attempt a takeoff and, if he wasn't airborne in time, to eject at the end of the



runway. (Although the jet barrier was rigged, the runoff, which sloped sharply ending in a gully, did not look enticing.)

With the airplane at an indicated airspeed of 110 knots at the bitter end of the runway and all three wheels still on the ground, the pilot ejected. The parachute opened at an estimated 300 feet above the ground and 500 feet past the wreckage of the abandoned A-4C, right in line with the attempted takeoff.

The pilot struck the ground. Before he could release the Koch fittings, the chute dragged him fifty yards.

Fortunately, the chute canopy became entangled in a barbed wire fence, deflated and left him with no more than a few contusions and abrasions.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! The only thing this throttle-pusher proved was that the RAPEC is a darn good seat. Course, he also confirms my suspicions that going off half-cocked now and then ain't confined to the novices in our society.

The NOTAMS for this airfield on this particular day would'a discouraged ole Gramps completely: construction in progress on the runway, extremely limited facilities and general encouragement for all traffic to set down elsewhere. I ain't takin' issue with this lad's diversion being essential, but I'm sayin' he should'a thought twice before selecting this particular place for an alternate.

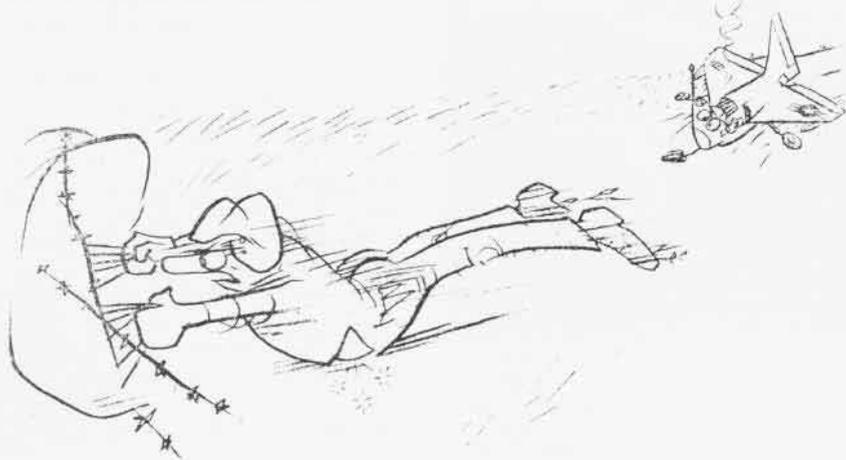
To avoid that horrible dry mouth and empty feeling in the pit of the stomach, ole Gramps says you ought'a take a good hard look at the NOTAMS and expected crosswind components for your destination and alternate.

Pure Luck

Fully day-qualified, the nugget *Skyhawk* pilot hot-seated (manned the aircraft while the engine was turning up) the A-4 on the flight deck for his initial night carrier landing qualification. The aircraft had been hot-refueled to 4,000 pounds by the last pilot and was ready in all respects for launch.

After adjusting his gooseneck flashlight between his legs so that the beam illuminated the altimeter and attitude gyro, the pilot signalled his readiness to the plane director and was taxied into position on the catapult. Completely satisfied with the engine's performance and having double-checked the trim and flap settings, the anxious aviator turned on the external lights and was launched.

The launch, made completely on instruments, posed no problems for the pilot as he had performed his daylight



launches in this manner preparing for his first night catapult shot. As he was passing through 300 feet after being cleared downwind, the engine surged and the internal lights flickered.

A rapid check of the instruments showed the RPM to be passing through 76% and the TPT dropping past 300 degrees. After lowering the nose to maintain flying speed, the A-4 driver noticed the altimeter unwinding and passing through 125 feet. As he passed through 100 feet, the instrument lighting failed. The gooseneck flashlight illuminated the gyro and altimeter well enough for the distressed pilot to note his altitude was zero—just prior to the violent impact with the water. The aircraft skipped and again struck the water in a slightly left-wing and nose-down attitude. At this point the pilot grabbed the secondary ejection handle between his legs and pulled. Although the maneuver was initiated in an extremely awkward attitude, the fortunate aviator was ejected from the aircraft and deposited in the water with little more than minor injuries. Within 12 minutes, the helo had the injured lad back aboard ship.



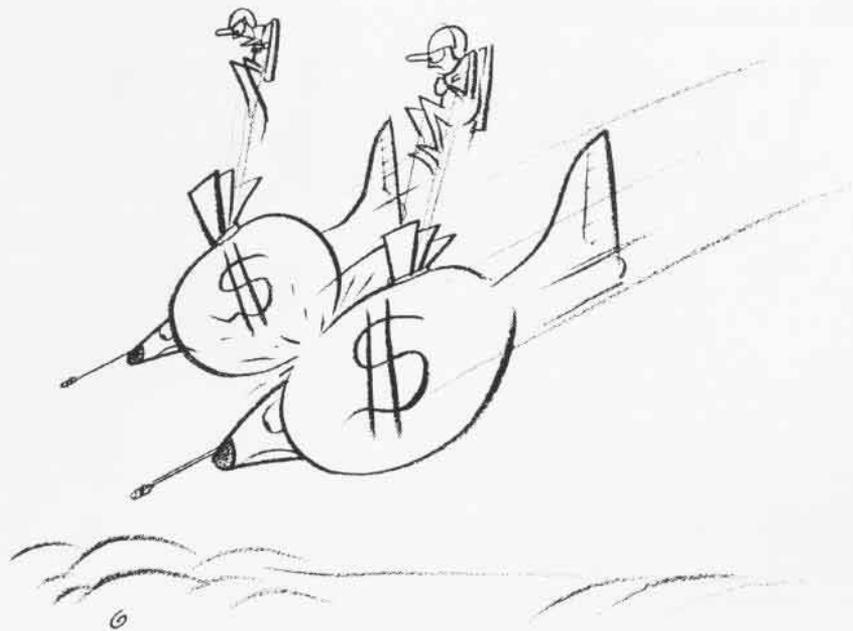
Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! It was a relief to see this fella come outta this one alive, but it appears to old Gramps he pushed his luck envelope right to its outer limits. We'll never find out what the real culprit was that caused this mishap, but we darn shore know this young man must'a been thinking some pretty pure thoughts.

In the Blind

Two *Skyhawk* drivers were scheduled for a live *Bullpup* (air-to-ground missile) shoot, this being the first for both pilots. The briefing covered all aspects of the flight. In addition, the flight leader included a short discourse on simulated air-to-air combat just in case another aircraft could be found to pounce upon after the missile shoot. The wingman, who had limited experience in air-to-air combat, was assigned to flying wing on the leader in combat formation provided they were fortunate enough to find some prey.

The flight launched without incident and proceeded to the target but they encountered a delay while the



target was being cleared. After orbiting for 40 minutes, the flight was cleared in and they commenced their runs. Each pilot completed four dummy runs and fired on the fifth. The leader brought the section down across the target to assess the damage. Upon departing the area, he spotted a section of A-6 *Intruders*.

The section of *Intruders*, unaware of the aggressive *Skyhawks*, separated and commenced individual climbs. The A-4 leader called for combat formation and took off in pursuit of the closest A-6. After arriving at the A-6's six o'clock position, the *Hawk* leader pulled alongside and flew wing until the A-6 driver noticed him. Neither A-4 driver expected a hassle to develop and both were surprised to see the A-6 accelerate suddenly and pull away.

The *Skyhawk* flight leader tailed in behind the A-6 and followed him through a turn to port and a reversal to starboard. The wingman, meanwhile, maintained proper position, trailing his leader as briefed.

At this point in time, all three aircraft were nose down, passing through 14,000 feet and accelerating through 380 knots. The next move was abrupt. The A-6 turned hard to port and the A-4 section leader overshot, going well outside the turn radius. His wingman, being further aft, was able to match the turn.

The wingman, noting his leader had overshot, pressed the attack on the

A-6 from his advantageous position and subsequently lost visual contact with the section leader. As this development transpired, the wingman, in hot pursuit, announced loud and clear that he had the lead. The leader did not receive the transmission and assumed his wingman would continue flying the briefed wing position.

At this time in the encounter, neither A-4 pilot had visual contact with the other. Both thought they had the lead and both continued the determined attack on the A-6. The A-4's were in a nose-down, steeply banked port turn, the wingman above and in line with the section leader. The leader tightened the turn by pulling additional G's and the A-4's made contact.

The two aircraft became uncontrollable immediately following the collision. The drivers ejected without further ado. Luckily, they were over an uninhabited area. Both pilots enjoyed highly successful ejections and received no more than minor injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! Aggressiveness is a highly desired trait in an aviator but when an experienced fella like this puts his neck and that of his wingman on the choppin' block, that's goin' a wee bit too far. There's nothing wrong with some healthy air-to-air tactics when they are briefed beforehand and played by the rules.

P.S. I'll bet these fellas really scared the daylight out of the A-6 driver.