



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Ramp Thumper

A flight of four F-8E's launched shortly after lunch and headed seaward to conduct refresher carrier qualification landings. Once the flight established positive radio communication with the ship, they were given an expected approach time.

The division departed marshall on time and dumped sufficient fuel to arrive at the ramp at landing weight. As number two man commenced his first approach, he discovered he had no radio and took a voluntary waveoff. His second pass resulted in a foul-deck waveoff but he did regain two way communications with the radio on this approach. On his third pass, the driver went into APC (automatic power compensator) and rolled out in the groove with a high start.

The *Crusader* continued on down with no recognition of a low ball or even a tendency to go low. The next transmission was Paddles calling, "Wave it off." He backed up the call with the waveoff lights. The pilot went to full throttle and and moved his scan from the lens to the ramp. Almost simultaneously, he lit the afterburner as it

was obvious he was going to strike the ramp. Next, he felt what seemed to be the tail striking the ramp and, without hesitation, he reached for the face curtain and pulled it with both hands.

The ejection sequence was normal and he landed safely in the water off the port quarter of the ship while the disabled *Crusader*



*That isn't  
oil! That's hair!*

G.P.

proceeded off the angled deck and headed for the deep six.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! Why do these young fellas keep pushin' the odds on surviving a ramp strike? It's a pretty well known fact that the pilot and his aircraft will lose every one of these encounters.

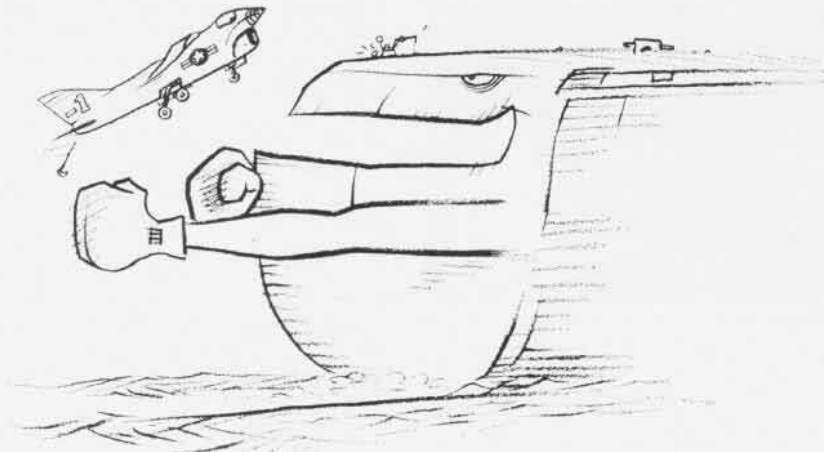
A bit of sage advice on the inside back cover of the April 1966 issue of *Approach* is worthy of repeatin'. "Only constant vigilance and strict attention to the exacting demands of carrier landings will prevent the recurrence of accidents of this type. Positive measures must be taken to ensure that pilots continue to be reminded at frequent intervals of the consequences of making large corrections in close, and of the necessity to initiate an immediate waveoff whenever the meatball is lost late in the approach without attempting to salvage the approach. In addition, it is recommended that LSO's continue to be reminded and encouraged to monitor each carrier pass with an objective eye. Standards should not be altered to match individual pilot capability, more capable pilots must not be burdened by the LSO's expectation that they will somehow salvage their infrequent poor approaches."

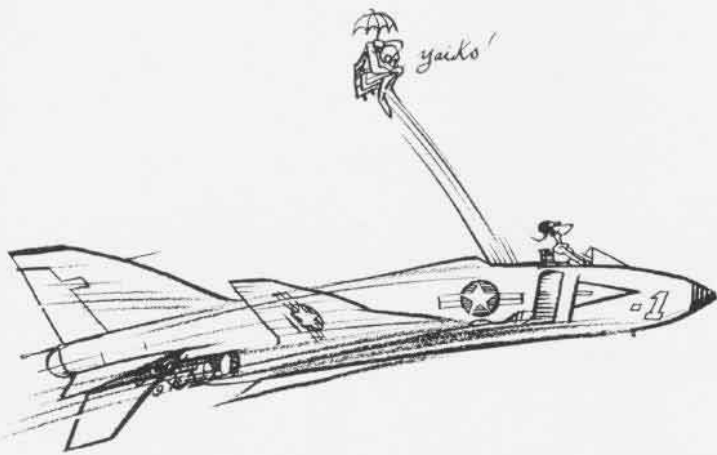
Amen! Don't believe Ol' Gramps could add much to that. I recommend you CV types reread "Power! Power! Power!" on page 24 of the same issue.

## Phlamed Out

This particular pair of *Phantom* phlyers was scheduled to fly as number four in a four-plane *Sparrow* missile-firing flight. After departure, the leader experienced an auxiliary air door malfunction and returned to base. Number two assumed the lead and headed for the designated firing range. All three aircraft attempted to fire but, owing to problems with the ground controller's radar, they were unable to do so. The flight then departed the firing area and set up an orbit in trail to burn down fuel southeast of the home field at 10,000 feet.

After a few turns in this pattern,





all three aircraft were down to landing weight and the flight leader took up a heading for the initial to the duty runway, simultaneously instructing the flight to join up. Number three, believing that number two had lost sight of the leader, attempted to lead him in the rendezvous. As number three approached the leader from slightly above and astern, he realized the closure rate was excessive, so he retarded the throttles and extended the speed brakes.

Shortly thereafter, all electrical power was lost, both engines were unwinding through 35 percent, airspeed was 300K and the altimeter read 1,700 feet. The distraught driver attempted to re-light the starboard engine by activating the ignition button but met with failure. (RPM on both engines was down to 20 percent by this time.)

Again he attempted to airstart the starboard engine by checking the left throttle in the off position, positioning the right throttle to idle and depressing the right ignition button. While the pilot was holding the ignition button, his RIO yelled, "Do you want me to eject?" To which he replied, "Affirmative."

After the RIO departed, the pilot turned his attention to the left engine and met with failure again. During this interlude, the *Phantom* continued its descent and at this moment was down to 400 feet, indicating 200 knots. Noting the

acuteness of the situation, the unfortunate driver followed the example of his RIO and ejected. Both flyers enjoyed successful ejections and were retrieved in short order by the station helo.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Oh, my achin' ulcers! The board concluded that contributing cause factors to this fiasco were "the pilot's perceptual error which led to a high closure rate necessitating rapid retardation of the throttles, the impaired physical condition of the pilot's left thumb (due to previous fracture) resulting in his unorthodox grip on the throttles, and 'body English' which may have caused excessive lateral forces to be applied to the throttles."

Well, I've heard everything now. Sure, we can afford improvement in design but we can't legislate against poor headwork. I seriously doubt if it would've helped this youngster anyway. First of all, we've gotta accept a missed rendezvous once in a while and take it like a man by sliding outside to a safe distance. Secondly, drivers like this fella had better bone up on the right procedure for restarting after a dual flame-out.

A little more *Know* and a little less *Hope* will save us a lot of airplanes and pilots, not to mention boosting the morale of the next-of-kin.

## Gear Grinder

Following a routine preflight, the *Crusader* pilot made a start and taxied out to the duty runway. After receiving clearance to take

the runway, he taxied into position and conducted a full-power check-out. Noting no discrepancies, he released his brakes and lit the burner shortly after commencing the take-off roll. Approaching 125 knots, the pilot rotated to takeoff attitude and very shortly thereafter, thinking he was airborne, retracted the gear. The fuselage settled back onto the runway immediately. Despite extensive scraping and grinding of the gear doors and the bottom of the fuselage, the *Crusader* continued to accelerate and became airborne.

The amazed *Crusader* jockey made a turn to avoid a populated area and decided to assess the situation. There were no warning lights illuminated nor were there any other signs of trouble in the cockpit, so he requested the tower to divert an aircraft to conduct a visual inspection of his aircraft. No other aircraft being immediately available, it was decided that the pilot should lower the gear and fly by the tower for a check. The driver lowered the gear handle and noted all three gear indicated down and the hydraulic pressure normal. A low fly-by was conducted; the air traffic controller confirmed the gear was down. The pilot remained in the landing configuration and after making arrangements for a short field arrestment, made it without further damage.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Great balls of fire! If this stunt doesn't shake the dew off the lily, nothin' will.

Here's an above average fighter pilot, with two WestPac cruises under his belt, that just couldn't stand prosperity. This fellow, a bit bored by a routine test hop, thought he'd spice it up a bit by executin' a sharp takeoff. There's nothing wrong with a sharp takeoff, but when it leads to a departure from flight discipline, the "professionalism" required in the execution becomes overshadowed by plain old "showmanship."

There are two dangerous periods in a pilot's life: One, when he's a young cub just learning to become a tiger, and two, when he's a battle-scarred tiger with plenty of time in model and maybe gettin' a few too many automatic reactions and becoming too relaxed. (Wish I had a quarter-inflation, you know—for every time I've said that.)