



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Hard Way

Preparing for a strafing hop, the *Skyhawk* pilot noted on a previous yellow sheet a complaint about an excessive amount of oxygen being used. This gripe had been remedied and a subsequent pilot had reported no further problems encountered with the system. Without further ado, the A-4 driver manned his aircraft and was catapulted off at 1748. At this time, there were multiple cloud layers and thunderstorms in all quadrants.

After takeoff, the *Hawk* driver proceeded to the rendezvous overhead at 13,500 feet and set up a port orbit. Upon being joined by his flight leader, he passed the lead and they switched to tower frequency in order to obtain clearance to strafe the sled. There was a delay of 40 minutes as the ship maneuvered and received additional aircraft.

At 1820, they were cleared to strafe. After completing four runs apiece, they rendezvoused overhead at 5,000 feet. The flight then climbed to 20,000 feet and searched for some fighters to practice tactics with, but found none. For nothing better to do, the section of A-4's just flew around dodging thunderstorms waiting for marshal time.

At 1900, they checked in and were told to marshal on the 130° radial, 39 miles, 29,000 feet. They were given an expected approach clearance (EAC) of 1930. A short time later revised instructions to hold overhead at 24,000 were issued, but the flight was unable to comply because of thunderstorms and informed the ship they would have to follow their previous instructions.

The flight held section integrity until 1928 when the flight leader broke away to commence his approach. At 1930, he started down, his wingman was to follow one minute later. The leader was informed at this time that his EAC had been changed to 1935 and that he should immediately switch to another frequency.



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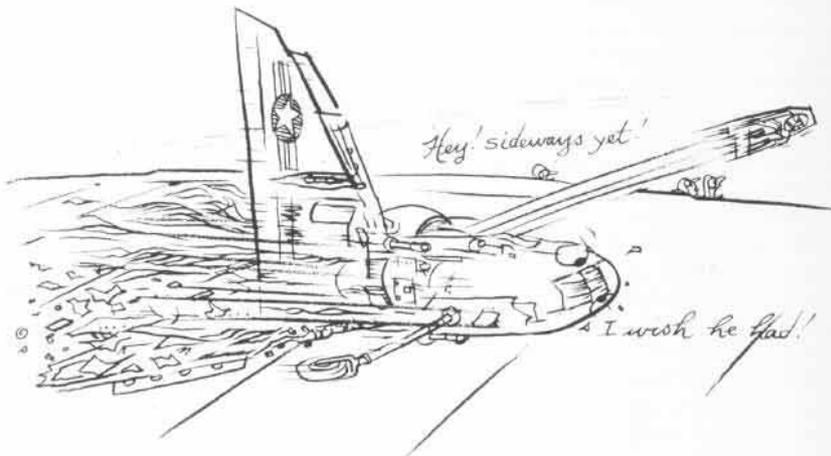
Since they were no longer a flight, the wingman remained on the originally assigned frequency, assuming that the frequency change was meant only for the flight leader. At 1936, the wingman called commencing and was told "in a very harsh manner" to switch to another frequency.

The approach, "other than being 180 degrees out of phase with the other aircraft," was normal to 15½ miles. Then the wingman began to arc around to the final inbound bearing. After commencing the arc, the *Hawk* pilot noted that the LOX was down to one-half liter, so he shut it off and loosened his mask.

He leveled off at 1,000 feet and, upon reaching 10 miles, slowed to approach speed and conformed to instructions issued by the ship. There were a few heading changes prior to

starting the descent to 600 feet at four miles. He called the meatball at 1½ miles with 2,600 pounds and came back on the power in order to start down. The ship appeared to be in a port list. Working for line-up, he dipped the starboard wing, added power to correct and subsequently went high, requiring another power reduction. Paddles heard a rapid deceleration of the engine and called for power. The driver recognized the abnormal sink rate also and added full power as well as retracting the speed brakes. Just as the engine started to respond to the added power, the aircraft struck the ramp on centerline.

Upon impact, the tailhook, landing gear and drop tanks sheared off and the plane burst into flames. The pilot pulled the secondary ejection handle as the aircraft started to cartwheel, but the seat did not fire. The canopy jettisoned, however. The aircraft, decelerated somewhat by protrusions on its bottom surface, and partially arrested by the wires, came to rest on its left side (the port wing sheared off during the cartwheel), 20 feet from the edge of the angled deck and five feet from the port catwalk. The driver pulled the harness release, literally fell out of the cockpit and got clear of the flaming wreck with minor injuries. The wreckage was subsequently jettisoned—a complete loss.



ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Oh, my achin' back! What a way to culminate an accumulation of "sorry about that's." There is no doubt in ole Gramp's mind that this youngster would'a been better off in bed this particular day. This mishap could've been avoided if the people involved (pilot and LSO's) hadn't accepted a sloppy performance on the glide slope. As things turned out, this young man was lucky to survive the ramp strike and doubly lucky he didn't yank that secondary handle all the way. Chances are he would'a ricocheted off the deck like a rubber ball.

No Sweat

During the takeoff roll, at 120 knots, the neophyte pilot, on his initial *Phantom* phamiliarization flight, smartly pulled the stick aft. The F-4 over-rotated and stalled at an airspeed of 135 knots, with at least 20 degrees nose up and commenced several wing rock cycles.

There was no response to the Instructor Pilot's frantic calls for "attitude." Being *in extremis* at about ten feet above the ground, the instructor elected to abandon the rear cockpit. The seat and chute performed flawlessly and deposited the disgruntled instructor on the runway intersection.

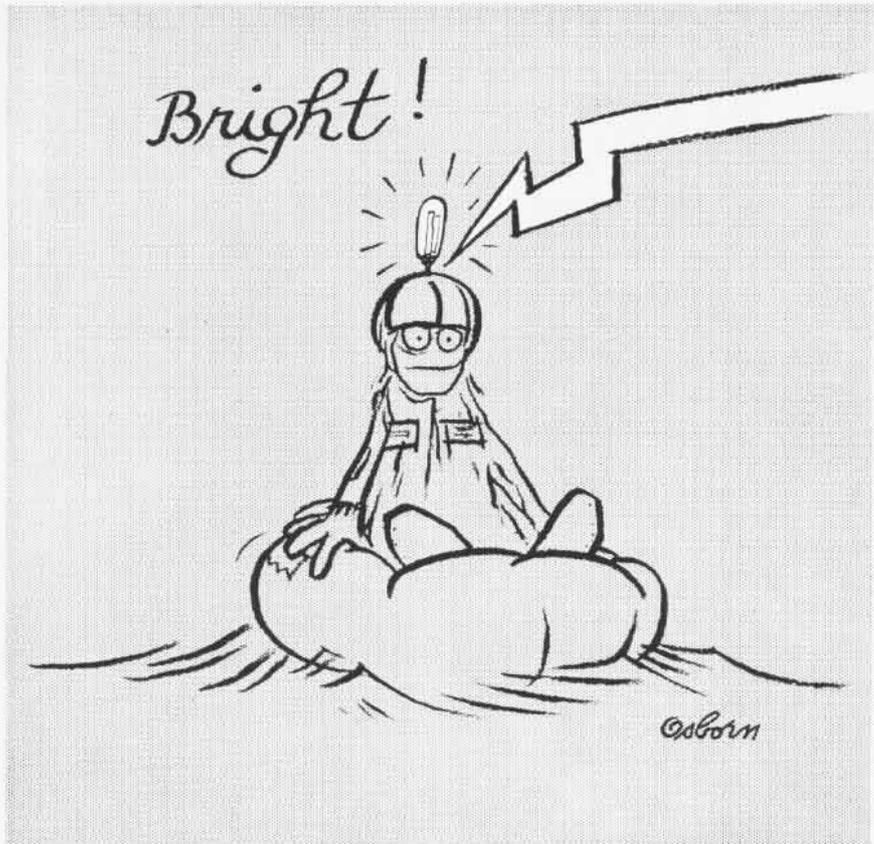
The fledging pilot, not too disturbed over the turn of events, found himself in the enviable position of stable flight again, continued on and landed uneventfully—and nonchalantly—just one hour later.

Editor's Note: Grampaw Pettibone simply refused to make a comment.

Dire Straits

At 2130 on a dark night, the *Crusader* jockey took off from his Marine air station on a scheduled night radar homing mission. After an instrument climbout to visual flight conditions on top, he had some difficulty with radio communications but solved this problem by resetting the affected channels.

After completing the mission, he turned for homeplate, contacted approach control and requested a radar-controlled letdown to GCA. Positive radar control was established ten miles out and the driver was vectored to an



inbound heading and cleared to descend to and maintain 4,500 feet.

As the *Crusader* pilot selected speed brakes for descent, the generator failed. Using his flashlight, he leveled off and reset the main generator. Still no electrical power. He then turned the main generator off, extended the external power package and waited five seconds for it to come up to speed. This too failed to restore electrical power and he switched to the land position which furnished power to equipment operating off the emergency bus. All attempts to regain the primary generator failed.

The unfortunate lad saw two aircraft on climbout and attempted to join them but was outdistanced. He reversed course and attempted to remain in the vicinity of his home field, but the cloud cover made it impossible to determine his position without Nav-Aids. The plagued driver then took off his helmet and attempted to use his survival radio. He made contact with one station, but communications were difficult and impossible to understand. The pilot joined a transiting c-123 but all attempts to contact it

with emergency radio and flashlight met with failure.

At about 2355, the *Crusader* flamed out. The ill-fated driver replaced his helmet and mask, positioned himself in the seat, trimmed the bird in a slightly nose-down attitude and pulled the curtain.

The seat and chute functioned perfectly and the pilot, not knowing whether he was over land or water, did not release his left rocket jet fitting. As things happened, he landed in water, disconnected himself from the chute, inflated the raft and climbed aboard without difficulty. Once in the raft, he activated his survival radio and strobe light, which were instrumental in his retrieval one hour later.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well done, son. You did just about everything you could, but I'll be gosh darned if you weren't a victim of circumstances. Of course, ole Gramps ain't overjoyed to see an F-8 lost, but it does my old ticker good to see a feller use good common sense right up to the bitter end.