



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Fam Folly

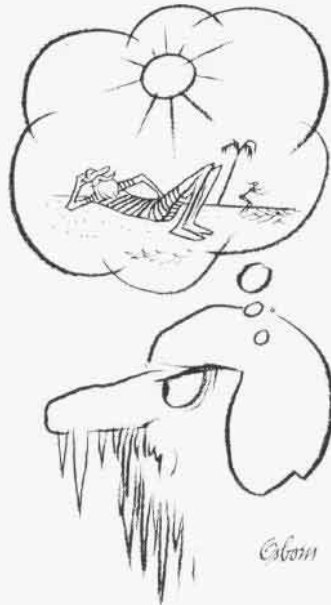
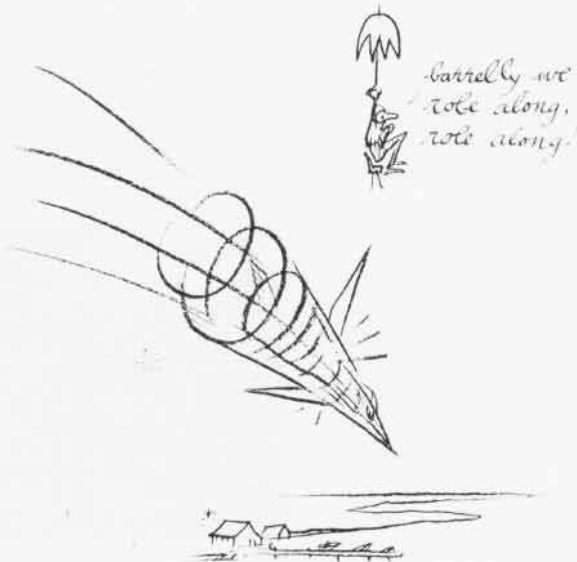
The replacement pilot (RP) was briefed at 0730 for his second fam flight in the RA-5C *Vigilante* with a scheduled 0900 launch. Takeoff was delayed, however, until 1335, owing to aircraft availability.

Once the RP was airborne, he was joined by his instructor (chase) pilot and the flight climbed to 12,000 feet where the instructor assumed the lead. When they had completed 20 minutes of formation flying, the instructor passed the lead to the RP for the acrobatic portion of the flight. Fuel on board was 14,000 pounds: and the flight was level at 14,000 feet.

After completing several wing-overs, the RP executed a few aileron rolls. Entry airspeed used for the rolls was 350 knots. The RP felt that the rate of roll was not as rapid as he expected, but, as this was only his second flight in the A-5 and his first attempt to roll the *Vigilante*, he thought this one of its characteristics.

The next maneuver, a barrel roll, was commenced at 450 knots, 14,000 feet, and power set at military. The maneuver appeared normal until the aircraft passed inverted through the horizon, wings level. The RP, sensing

that the nose was dropping too fast, attempted to increase the rate of roll to prevent scooping out. The aircraft did not respond to increased lateral stick movement and the nose continued to drop to a 60° nose-down attitude. At this point the pilot experienced uncontrollable nose oscilla-



tions and retarded power to idle and extended speed brakes. The instructor became extremely concerned and called for the RP to "pull out."

At about 6,000 feet the *Vigilante* appeared to regain controlled flight. The driver advanced the throttles, but did not observe any response in power. Thinking that the engines had flamed out, he extended the ram air turbine, checked the throttles at idle, and depressed the emergency igniters. Noting the airspeed to be in the vicinity of 200 knots and the ground awfully close, he forgot about the re-light and reached for the alternate ejection knob.

Ejection occurred at approximately 300 feet. It was routine in all respects, depositing the pilot in an inland waterway about 100 yards from a fishing camp. The fishermen plucked the uninjured downed aviator out of the water in a matter of minutes.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great gobs of goose grease! This fella would'a been a lot more prosperous if availability on this particular day had never gotten any better.

There ain't no use to insult the reader's intelligence with a discourse on NATOPS violations and cardinal rules of safety, but it really gets me when a seasoned aviator can't tell what his power plants are doing.

It came as a mighty big jolt to learn that this lad had no "inflight training involving acrobatics per se" in the past ten years. The only thing this mishap proves is that the *Vigilante* seat made up for this pilot's deficiency by saving him from himself.

Needlessly

The sun wasn't scheduled to appear for another hour and the morning was very dark as the F-8 passed over the shuttle on the starboard catapult. The *Crusader* jockey advanced the throttle as the tension signal was given and noted the engine turned up to 100%.

After a thorough check of his instruments and trim settings, he turned on his external lights signifying he was ready to go. Thirty seconds passed

ILLUSTRATED BY *Estom*

and he began to wonder why he had not been launched. (It usually takes about five seconds.) The perplexed driver was unable to discern any external lights on his port side. Thinking the absence of the port wing light would indicate he was not ready to go, he reached to the right console to reset the light switches. At this instant, while his left hand was off the throttle, the catapult fired.

The acceleration pinned his left hand to his chest and forced the throttle aft to the idle position. By the time he was able to reach the throttle and force it forward, the F-8 was airborne with insufficient power for flight.

The *Crusader's* wheels struck the water one-quarter mile ahead of the ship and the aircraft ditched in a wings-level, nose-up attitude. The pilot experienced a tremendous deceleration force and the plane assumed a port-wing-low, nose-down attitude.

With the stark realization that his aircraft was sinking, the pilot positioned himself in the seat and ejected by utilizing the face curtain. (The F-8 at this time was submerged.) The hapless aviator felt a moderate push and was suddenly free of the aircraft, but still underwater. The seat fell away and he inflated his Mk. 3C life vest. At this point he was inverted and being pulled down by the parachute which seemed to be still attached to the aircraft. Using both hands on each Koch fitting, he released the chute and rose to the surface.

The happy and extremely fortunate aviator was plucked from the water by the helo and returned to the flight deck within ten minutes of his mishap.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Sufferin' succotash! Once those external lights are turned on for the eat officer, taking your hand off the throttle makes about as much sense as trying to shut the startin' gate after the horses have moved out.

Ole Gramps is first to admit that this type of interlude gets the adrenaline pumpin' at max capacity, but in deference to longevity, I'd be the first one to sit there till the tanks ran dry before taking my hand off the go-handle. It doesn't speed up operations to suspend the cat, but this fella could've saved himself a heap of inconvenience (and an F-8) by just telling Pri Fly of his predicament without relaxin' his grip on the throttle.



Tail Thumper

Two jubilant *Crusader* drivers with an approved RO2N in their pocket were airborne on the first leg of their trip at 1615 Friday evening. They reached their first destination after an uneventful flight.

The twosome arose early the next morning and proceeded to their next stop in a purely routine manner. While their aircraft were serviced, the pilots had a bite to eat. They briefed for a section takeoff on the next flight and manned their respective aircraft.

Each pilot had one wet start, then started normally. The drivers performed their own post-start checks without benefit of plane captains, completed their takeoff check lists in the chocks and taxied for takeoff.


They positioned themselves on the runway for a section takeoff, leader to port and wingman to starboard. Engine run-ups were normal and, after giving and receiving "thumbs up," the leader dropped his right arm, as briefed. They released the brakes and commenced the takeoff roll. Both aircraft went to burner on signal and shortly thereafter, the wingman, noting he was becoming acute, made a small power correction. As they accelerated, the leader pulled ahead and noting the separation called for individual takeoffs.

The wingman noted he was slightly late on nose rotation and commenced at 135 knots. He became airborne and raised the gear. At 175 knots and about 50 feet above the ground, he lowered the wing. The initial transi-

tion was normal, but then the aircraft began to settle. As he rotated the nose higher, the wingman felt that he experienced a partial power loss. The F-8 continued to settle and the aft end of the fuselage touched the runway.

The port wing began dragging on the runway at the 6,000-foot marker and the plane began veering to port. At about this time the pilot managed to pull the throttle aft and secure the engine master switch. The F-8 continued to swerve to port, crossing the runway centerline just past the 7,000-foot marker and departed the 14,000-foot runway at about 8,000 feet. The starboard wing began dragging at 8,500 feet and caused the *Crusader* to veer back towards the runway. At 9,000 feet, the nose contacted the ground and the bird slid back onto the runway at 9,300 feet. At this point, the entire wing structure separated from the fuselage. The plane came to rest on its port side at 10,500 feet, engulfed in flames.

The cockpit was oriented 90 degrees from the vertical and in contact with the runway. The crash crew responded immediately, extinguishing the fire and extricating the slightly injured pilot.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Egads, what a mess! This fella had done such a good job up until this time, too. Just goes to show what can happen when you omit one item on the check list like the droops. It is a well established fact that the 40 seconds you save in this world by omitting the check list may put you in the next world about 40 years too early.