



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Blind Faith

The *Crusader* driver launched in his F-8D at about 2000 one night from his carrier for a routine training flight. The weather in the area consisted of scattered clouds, wind velocity of 12 knots, and wave height of two to three feet.

The F-8 involved was downed on the previous flight by a malfunctioning angle of attack (AOA) indicator and approach power compensator or APC. These discrepancies were worked off prior to this launch and everything functioned properly during the post-start check.

After the launch and during climb-out, the pilot noted his AOA was behaving erroneously. He conveyed this information to the flight leader who recommended that this be checked out later in the flight in the landing configuration. Later on, during his intercept mission, the F-8 driver noted the AOA was again functioning normally and in turn informed his leader. Upon completing his assigned mission, the pilot proceeded to the marshal. En route his external wing lights failed. He reported this discrepancy to combat information center (CIC) and stated that he would have his probe light and rotating beacon on.

After commencing his penetration, the pilot again noted a malfunction of his AOA and, after engaging the APC, experienced a sluggish response. He then decided to fly a manual



approach, that is, without the APC.

As he picked up the meatball on the lens, it was high and he corrected to bring the ball to a one-panel high position. The CCA controller called him right of the center line and gave him corrections to bring him back on center.

As the *Crusader* pilot called the ball, paddles told him to hold his attitude, and then asked for line-up and power. The driver noticed he was left of center line and put in a right correction. He then saw the ball drop rapidly and disappear off the bottom of the lens. He added power and instantaneously went to afterburner.

The nose wheel of the *Crusader* struck the round-down nine feet short of the deck, and the F-8 burst into flames as it continued up the angled deck. As he passed the lens, the pilot pulled the curtain and successfully cleared the burning hulk as it continued up and off the angle into the water. The hapless driver was retrieved in short order with no more than minor injury.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! When will these lads get the word? This fiasco had all the required ingredients to make it a fatal as well as a strike accident.

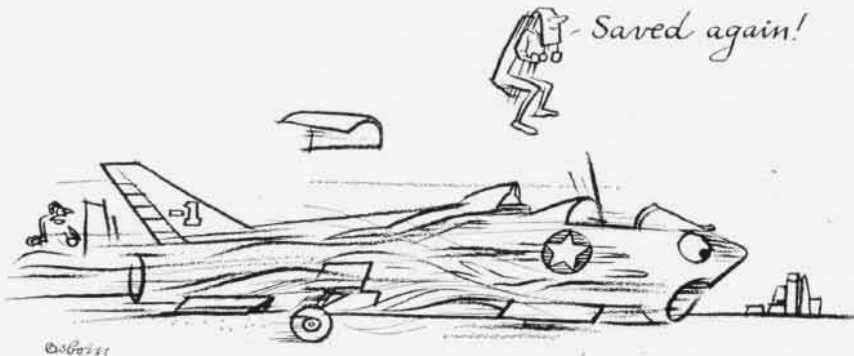
I was mighty pleased to see this young man come through with only minor injuries, but he could'a averted the whole mess. He knew the AOA and APC had malfunctioned on the prior flight and the AOA was doing everything but rap him on the noggin to indicate it wasn't reliable.

I'm an awfully suspicious cuss. I wouldn't have had the blind faith in that instrument that he did. An in-flight check with his buddy would'a confirmed the system's inaccuracy and coming down on the wing of his leader would'a put him in much better position at the ramp. I'm sure paddles did all he could, but without wing lights and an accurate AOA, he didn't have an awful lot to work with.

It might be well to remember that squeezing the margin for error is like squeezing the grapefruit. If you squeeze too hard, you get it—right in the eye—and all you've left is a messy handful of pulp.

Spun In

TWO TA-4F drivers (an RP and an instructor) briefed thoroughly at 0930 for a tactical training flight. There were no discrepancies noted on either aircraft during preflight and a normal section takeoff was made at 1110. The pilots proceeded to their assigned operating area, climbing to FL 330. Ninety and 180 degree turns were executed in section and then a descent to FL 260 was made in order



ILLUSTRATED BY *C. Sporn*

to clear the cirrus layer for break-ups and rendezvous. Visibility was good with a clear horizon.

Two break-ups and rendezvous were accomplished without incident and during the third, just as the RP was joining the instructor, the flight was required to make a manual frequency change. The evolution required the student to divert his attention from the leader to the right-hand console. Upon completing the frequency change, he looked up to find he had fallen behind, and that the instructor had steepened the turn to avoid exceeding the boundaries of their assigned airspace. The RP increased his angle of bank to about 45 degrees and added power; his closure rate became excessive. Realizing he had no chance of salvaging the rendezvous, he went behind and wide of the lead noting that the nose of his *Skyhawk* was rising in spite of forward stick.

With the plane at about 45 degrees nose up, the RP realized something was wrong and suspected a control malfunction. As the nose continued to rise, the airspeed decayed and the aircraft peaked out at about 70 degrees nose-up pitch and 15 degrees right wing down. At this point the RP thought of a trim malfunction and checked the trim indicators. (The nose trim showed 12 degrees nose up, which confirmed the RP's suspicions that this was the trouble.)

Before he could initiate corrective action, the nose fell off and he entered a post-stall gyration. The turn needle showed full left deflection and the ball was out to the right which he interpreted as a left-hand spin. Neutralizing the controls had no appreciable effect so he introduced full right rudder. The aircraft yawed abruptly but continued to rotate and buffet. He then applied full left aileron and full back stick. The *Hawk* flipped violently in an abrupt negative "G" maneuver and then stabilized nose down, almost vertical.

After stabilizing nose down, the aircraft started to pitch up once more and the RP corrected with forward stick and manual override trim. Level flight was regained at about 14,000 feet after which the RP informed his instructor of his plight. The two joined up, assessed the damage (popped rivets and a fuel leak) and proceeded to home plate uneventfully.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat, somebody could'a got hurt! I know this fella was a wee bit shy on experience, but you've gotta take first things first. That frequency change ain't gonna be any help at all if that machine ain't flying.

Fortunately, this fella (although a little late in the game) diagnosed his predicament and eventually applied corrective action to get him home in one piece. It might be well to remember that goin' into a spin is like steppin' out on your wife. You might get away with it, but if you don't, bub, your troubles are just starting.

Exception

A replacement pilot (RP) engaged in mirror landing practice completed his fifth pass and was informed by the landing signal officer that his A-7A *Corsair II* had ingested a bird. The RP asked if he should make a full stop landing and was instructed by the LSO to return to home station and execute a precautionary approach to a full stop landing.

There was considerable doubt in the RP's mind that the plane had ingested the bird as there were no visual signs or noises to indicate it had. Nevertheless, he proceeded as instructed and commenced the precautionary approach exactly as instructed in the training syllabus, with one exception. In order to be able to lower the speed-brake while the gear is down (a step he considered advisable to reduce the extent of power changes which might be detrimental to an already possibly

damaged engine), it was necessary to place the flap handle in the "ISO" (isolated) position and then raise the gear handle.

The approach was executed exceptionally well, and as the *Corsair* driver rolled into final, he mentally reminded himself that he would have to put the gear handle in the down position prior to touchdown. The apprehensive lad became so grossly involved with worry over sink rate, speed and touchdown point that he completely forgot the gear handle.

Touchdown was routine and as he slowed to turn off the runway, he noted that nosewheel steering was inoperative. He immediately diagnosed this as a result of the flap handle being in "ISO" and pulled the handle out of this position. As advertised, the system worked normally and retracted all three gears. (The gear handle was still in the retracted position.)

The A-7 suffered "Charlie" damage and the pilot got out with nothing more than injured pride.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! Why do you suppose these fellas all think they can improve on published procedures? The key words to this dilemma were "with one exception." Yet if he had followed the procedures as taught, he wouldn't have had that long humiliating walk back to the flight line.

I ain't sayin' that we are locked in concrete and procedures can't be improved, but until such time as deviations to the standard have been analyzed and approved, let's all of us stick to what the book says.