



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Cold Swim

On a dark, windy night at sea aboard an aircraft carrier, what should have been a routine plane guard flight became a nightmare.

As an A-7A *Corsair II* went too low at the ramp, frantic calls from the LSO alerted the rescue UH-2C crew to an impending crash. The *Corsair* hit the ramp forward of the main mounts and burst into flames. The pilot ejected near the #2 elevator as the cockpit section of the aircraft went over the side. The Escapac seat deposited him in the sea at about 2215.

In less than a minute, the rescue helicopter was hovering over the pilot. A high sea state (eight-foot waves at five-second intervals) and strong gusty winds made holding altitude rough and erratic. A crewman aboard the helo descended on the three-pronged rescue seat to assist the pilot. The PR3 had removed his Mk 2 life vest to doff his leather flight jacket and had not put on the Mae West again. Nor was he wearing any other flotation gear except his wet suit. His only signalling device was a strobe light that didn't work.

The crewman cut the pilot loose from his parachute, and they climbed into the rescue seat. As they were hoisted up through a high wave, the PR3 lost his balance but managed to



hold on until they reached the door of the helo.

The helo pilot, looking over his shoulder, saw two men in the doorway. Because he was having difficulty with his engines at low altitude, he started to ease out of the hover in order to gain some altitude and airspeed.

As the second crewman tried to turn the men around in the doorway to bring them into the chopper, the PR3 lost his grip and fell into the water. The helo pilot immediately tried to back down, but there was no sign of the lost PR3.

With the rescued pilot in the aircraft, the helo circled back on a random search. Word was passed to the ship, and the helo made the search until relieved by a second UH-2 from the carrier.

With both lights on, the second helo continued the search in a 60-foot, 40-knot pattern. The heavy sea state and wind made sighting difficult, but at 0110 a crewman sighted the PR3. A smoke light was dropped and, after two more passes, the helo made positive contact. The PR3 had his hands out of the water, but, in his weakened condition, he was unable to mount the rescue seat.

A crewman from the second rescue

helo immediately went into the water and found the PR3 stiff and almost unconscious. It was hard to keep him in the seat because the rescue crewman couldn't find the strap to hold him in. Halfway up the hoist, the PR3 again fell into the water. The crewman followed him in and managed to get him into the seat. This time they made it to the door and, with both crewmen helping, the PR3 was placed inside. He had been in the 57-degree water for a total of two hours and three minutes.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

That's what I call gettin' a close shave without a razor. This young lad was so eager to help rescue a downed pilot that he showed almost no interest in his own safety. Such behavior ain't likely to lead to a long life. You won't find ole Gramps pluggin' into the depths without grabbing every dangd piece of survival gear he can make use of. This fella owes his life to the never-say-die spirit of his rescuers and the sharp eyes of a crewman.

Living Right

A young replacement pilot (RP) was nearing the end of a night radar mapping flight in an F-8E. Although he was a bit late getting off, the hop went routinely, and he completed the mapping. As he was returning to base, the pilot requested a VFR-practice ground control approach to final. When radar control was established about 30 miles out, he changed to a manual frequency. Because the lights were out on the GCA runway, he was advised that, at three miles, he was to break off the approach, switch to tower frequency and land on the parallel runway.

During the approach, things became a bit sticky. The pilot had difficulty maintaining proper position, particularly with heading control. Approaching three miles, he was holding below glide path. The controller cleared him to land on the left runway and told him to break off the approach and contact the tower. As the aircraft continued in its descent, the RP started to change radio channels. He then realized he was low, pulled back



on the stick, and broke out of automatic throttle. Too late! The F-8 struck the earth 8,000 feet short of the runway where it disintegrated.

The *Crusader* driver was ejected through the canopy by the initial impact. Fifty minutes later, he was found some 450 feet toward the runway on his back with his parachute spread around him. Though badly banged up and hospitalized for several months, he has recovered.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Whew! Some folks can get away with anything — and without gloves and with improperly secured leg restraints to boot. This lad may have had hypoxia, but more than likely he lacked alertness as to what was happening to his aircraft. There is certainly no place for holidays in a pilot's think-in' when he has one of these ornery beasts strapped to his back.

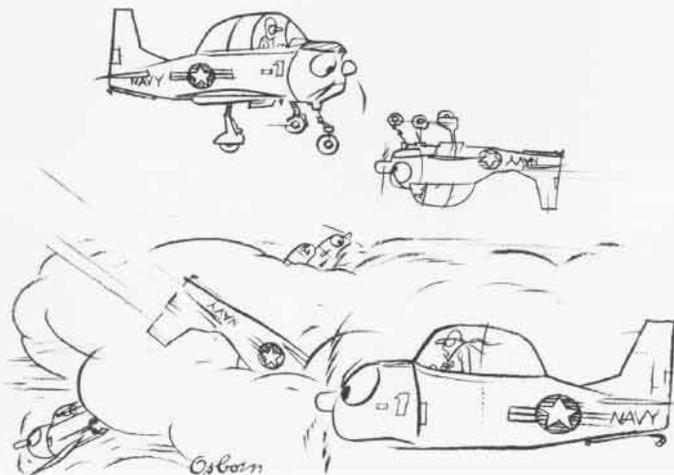
Sucker Hole

One Sunday afternoon, six T-28's, in two flights of three planes each, were scheduled to depart a southeastern Air Force base for a day VFR navigation mission on the return to home base. Each group was made up of one instructor and two student pilots.

Bad local weather all afternoon made them decide by 1600 not to leave that day. As the pilots walked to their planes to get their gear, blue patches of sky appeared and the field went VFR. Since the earlier forecast for their destination was VFR, a quick GO decision was made, and the flight members scurried to get off.

Airborne at 1629, they completed their rendezvous and proceeded on course at 2,500 feet. Twenty minutes later, encountering some cumulus clouds up to 3,000 feet, the fliers climbed to 4,500 feet. When they were about an hour out and it started to get dark, power settings were increased to 33 inches manifold pressure (mp) and 2,200 rpm (about 185 knots). As it became darker, power was again increased to 36 inches mp and 2,400 rpm to pick-up speed. The two instructors discussed the possibility of landing for an RON, but decided to continue. A short cut was taken to bring them home faster.

The lead trio arrived in the vicinity of home base to find the weather had gone IFR with scud and haze. As the flight tried to descend below the clouds and come in VFR, the #2 man



became separated and climbed back on top (about 2,000 feet). The #1 student, though told by the instructor to climb also, saw the runway and proceeded to land. The instructor climbed back on top, joined the #2 man and brought him in on his wing with a VOR approach. The wingman broke off when the runway was sighted while the instructor S-turned and landed behind him.

The second flight, some ten minutes behind, had descended to 1,500 feet and, upon encountering scud, started a gentle descent to get clear of the clouds. Encountering more scud, they descended further. The instructor pilot, flying the #3 position, ordered a right 360-degree turn to pick up the original heading.

As the flight descended toward the field, still in parade formation, it became darker. At 300 feet and in the clouds, the #2 man found himself in a 20-degree right bank, still descending. He leveled his wings and started a climb. At this point, the leader was visible only by his lights and the instructor was nowhere to be seen.

Breaking out on top at 2,000 feet, the #2 man made contact with #1 who had also climbed on top. Course was reversed to take them back along their previous flight path. A fuel check revealed #1 had only 200 pounds of fuel remaining and #2 had only 45 to 50 pounds.

Attempts to make radio contact with their instructor were fruitless for his aircraft had struck the ground in a descending turn within three miles of home base.

The #1 man flew back along his previous route and could soon see the

ground. Remembering an airfield he had seen earlier, he continued north until the lights of the field came into view where he landed at the municipal airport.

The #2 man, who was really short of fuel, climbed to 6,500 feet as he continued north looking for a place to land. He reduced power to 19 inches mp and 1,900 rpm. As he broke out from over the clouds, he saw a small town. With only 25 to 30 pounds of fuel remaining, a bailout appeared to be in order.

He then spotted a very large field in the dim light, decided to land there, switched to guard frequency, and broadcast a *Mayday*. Setting himself up at the high key, he could easily see ground references, but as he flew lower, he could hardly see the field in the dark.

On final, with the gear up, the battery, mags, and gas were turned off, the canopy was blown open, and the radio cords were disconnected. He flew over some trees that suddenly appeared ahead, then floated on across the field. On touchdown, the plane skidded, started burning and came to a stop about 150 feet from a farmer's house. The relieved student got out fast and ran to the house. The farmer's wife came out and proceeded to put out the fire with her garden hose.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' succotash! These guys should'a stayed in bed! There were so many errors in judgment on this flight, I didn't take time to count 'em, but they all add up to the same thing, TROUBLE. You really can't blame these poor students. After following their leaders almost over the cliff, they did a good job of salvagin' the situation.