



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Belly Whopper

Two senior aviators, one with over 4,000 hours and the other with over 3,000, were scheduled for a local night training flight in a US-2. The aircraft commander arrived on the scene first and commenced preflight of the aircraft. The copilot arrived shortly thereafter and a briefing was held on sequence and conduct of the flight. The aircraft commander was to occupy the right seat.

Pre-start, start, pre-taxi, engine run-up, and pre-takeoff checklists were followed, using the challenge and reply method. Prior to takeoff, another brief was given by both pilots concerning takeoff and procedures in the event of an engine failure.

Following the initial takeoff, the aircraft remained in the local traffic pattern, with each pilot making several touch-and-go landings. Following several normal GCAs by both pilots, various simulated emergencies (i.e., no gyro, radio failure) were introduced to provide additional training for the GCA controllers. On the last approach, the aircraft commander reported a simulated fire in the electrical compartment and requested an immediate landing.

Vectors were given to intercept the final approach course at two and three-

quarter miles from touchdown. During this approach a transmission to "perform landing cockpit check" was not given by the controller; however,

the "wheels should be down" transmission was given shortly after interception of the final approach course. The aircraft continued the approach, touched down 1,200 feet past the threshold, coming to a stop 2,200 feet later.

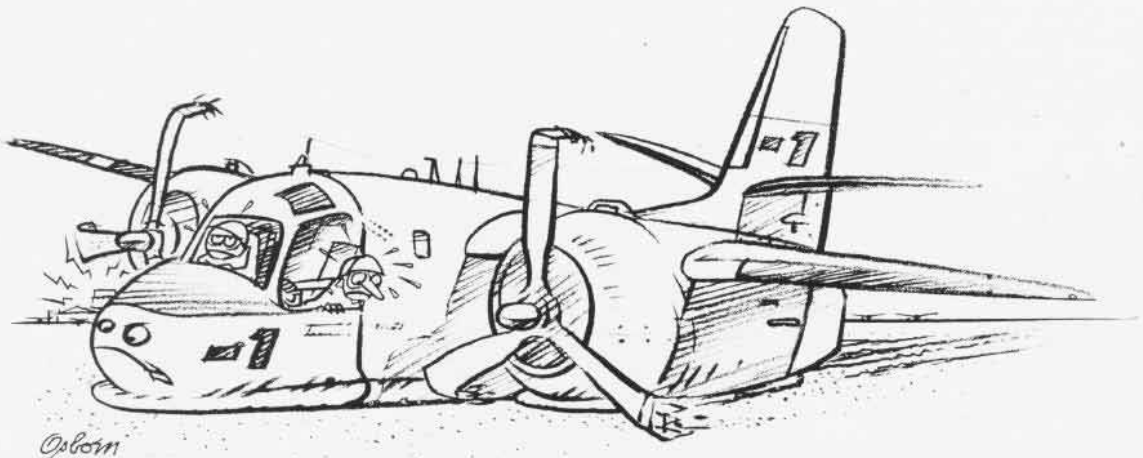
Shortly after initial contact with the runway, the pilots realized the landing gear handle was up and secured the magnetos, battery and mixture and placed the flap handle up. The fuel was turned off after the aircraft came to a stop, and all occupants exited the aircraft, uninjured. The aircraft sustained substantial damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat!? I can't believe it! Two experienced drivers deviate from NATOPS and then when they land minus the rollers, they holler, "But GCA didn't warn me to perform landing checklist." Baloney! These boys were too busy giving GCA a practice emergency approach; they didn't realize they were booby-trapping their own aircraft. My, let's see how sharp GCA is today. A damn sight sharper than the driver in the cockpit!!

I get sick and tired of readin' about this type of accident. I might have a little sympathy for a pilot who at least tries to comply with NATOPS but no sympathy for pilots who either don't know NATOPS — or don't care!



I have to surmise, in this case, that the pilot was unaware of the proper method of going through the checklist in an S-2. If that's so, then we have a supervisory problem because of improper initial checkout! Nuff said.

If

A lieutenant-type aviator was scheduled as a wingman on a two-plane practice night bombing flight in an A-4E *Skyhawk*. Pre-launch activities and departure from the ship were uneventful. The two-plane formation proceeded to the practice target area. The bombing portion of the flight was completed without incident and the flight leader took the flight to the local bingo field to check the weather and then back to the ship for recovery, where the two A-4s separated for individual approaches to the ship. Our pilot commenced his approach to the ship but was waved off for being low and slow. During the second approach, the ship entered a rain shower and the *Skyhawk* was waved off again and told to rendezvous with the tanker overhead and proceed to the divert field.

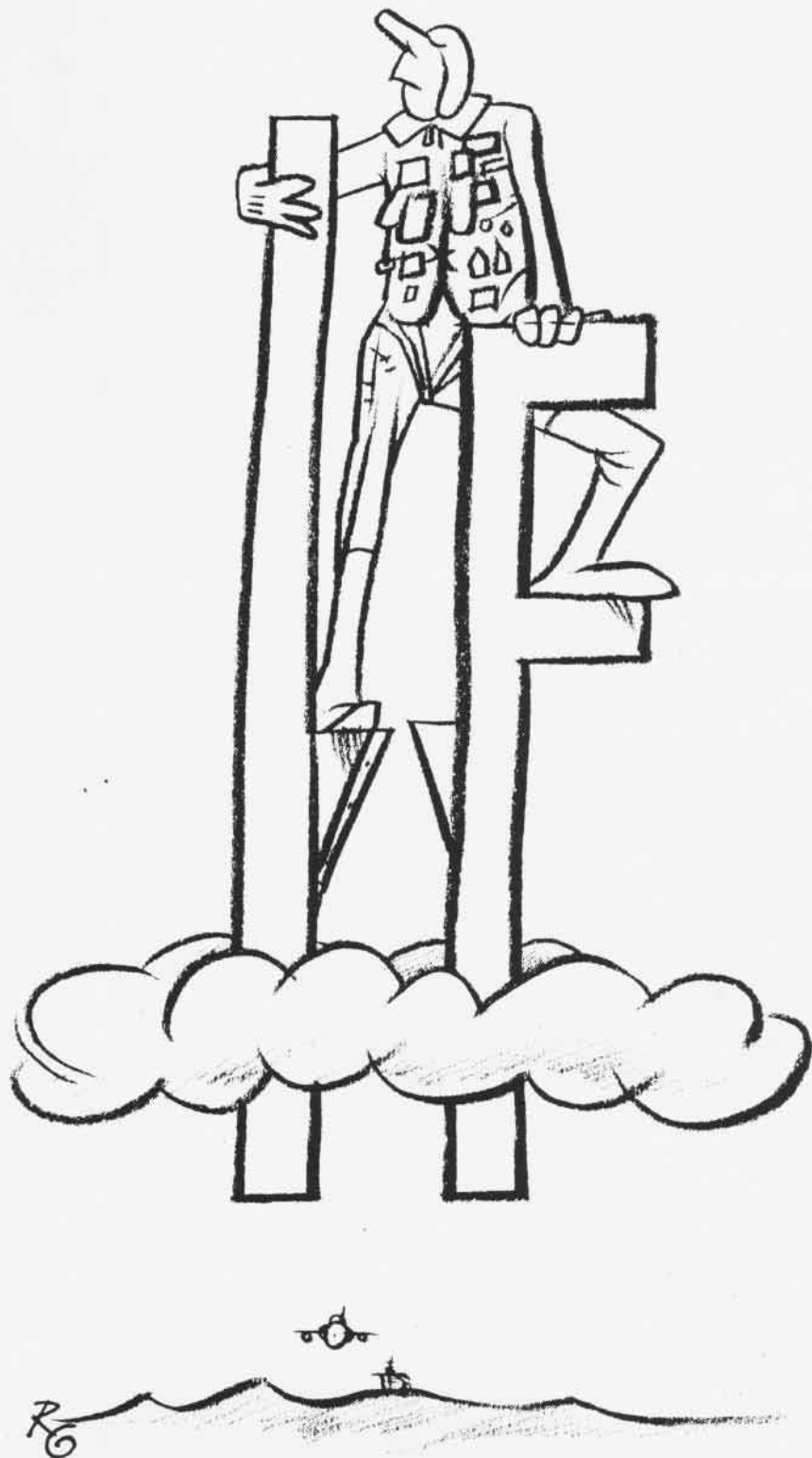
The tanker, an A-3 *Skywarrior*, had been experiencing radio difficulties which made rendezvous more difficult. The ship directed the two aircraft to tank at 5,000 feet; however, there were clouds at 5,000 feet, so the *Skyhawk* was directed to proceed to the bingo field (30 miles) and tank en route. The A-4 now continued its climb to 30,000. Its fuel state was approaching a critical condition. Upon reaching 30,000, the aircraft commenced an idle descent. During the descent, the A-4 pilot finally spotted the tanker and attempted to plug in. The weather at the divert field was reported 500 scattered, 1,900 overcast, visibility of ten miles with periods of 700 overcast, 1,900 overcast, visibility seven miles in heavy rain showers.

While attempting plug-in in rough air with the fuel gauge reading zero, the A-4 flamed out due to fuel starvation. The pilot broadcast his intention to eject. The ejection was uneventful and the pilot was picked up by the ship's helo and returned to the ship.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! You really blew it, son! What in the heck did you climb to 30,000 feet for? Seems to me some pilots believe we print bingo



charts for nothin'! In spite of a briefing before the flight, this lad proceeded to botch the whole job by losing his machine and placing his own life in jeopardy.

There are an awful lot of "ifs" in

this fiasco . . . if only the radios in the A-3 were working properly . . . if only the bingo procedures on the ship were different . . . if only the pilot had not climbed to 30,000 feet . . . if . . . if . . . if . . . if . . .!