



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Hit a Rock

Following an extensive one and one-half hour brief, two lieutenants (instructor and student) manned a TA-4J *Skyhawk* for a day instrument training flight. The crew encountered nothing unusual during preflight, start, taxi and launch. Departure was normal and they arrived at the designated training area which was over mountainous terrain. Once in the area, no further communications were heard.

Approximately forty-five minutes after departure, two forest rangers saw a Navy jet in the dirty configuration, flying straight-and-level up a valley. They watched it for about ten seconds until it passed out of view. The sound of the engine suddenly stopped. They heard no explosion. About the same time, a forest fire lookout spotted smoke and reported a possible forest fire. It turned out to be the crash site of the *Skyhawk*, located at the 8,000-foot level, below the ridge of a mountain. Evidence at the site indicated that the aircraft had been flying level. The port wing had struck a tree moments before it hit the ridge. It appeared, however, that given the plane's attitude, altitude and configuration, there would have been no way for it to clear the ridge or turn out of the valley. Both pilots were fatally injured.

Careful investigation of the aircraft escape systems revealed that a last minute ejection had been attempted, but time and distance precluded a successful completion of sequence prior to impact. Additionally, even though an exact, clear-cut cause factor could not be determined, the most probable cause was the pilot instructor failing to maintain a lookout for his hooded student.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' succotash! About the time everyone figures we have seen the last of this type of accident, another flyin' machine runs into the



“rocks” at altitude. The answer or preventive cure is so obvious it leaps up and bites you in the butt every time — when you got a fella under the bag, you gotta maintain an eagle eye — ALWAYS!

I gotta compliment the fellas who investigated this tragedy, cause they looked at every aspect — a very thorough job. However, when it was all over, the finger of suspicion pointed at misuse of the old MK-8 eyeball — one of the most reliable “instruments” in the aircraft. Nuff said!

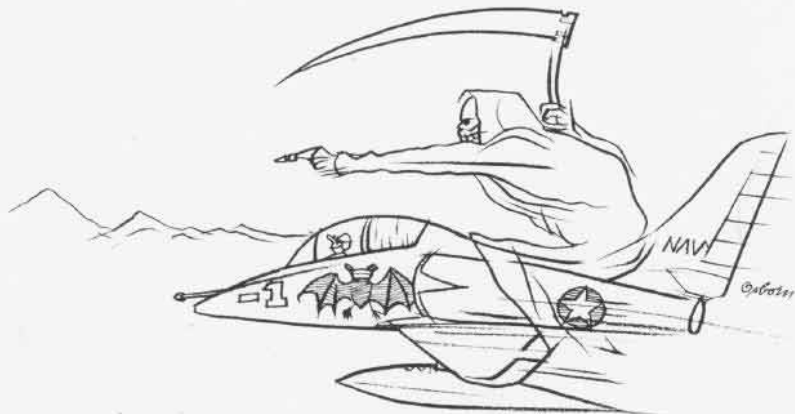
Mow the Man Down

It was evening after secure and the duty section had just completed normal secure activities. The line supervisor asked maintenance control if any aircraft movements were anticipated. Maintenance control indicated there was nothing more at that time and that he could shove off.

Prior to this, at 1600, the line supervisor had instructed the line watch, consisting of two airmen, not to move any aircraft without contacting him. He knew that these two individuals were not qualified but that fully qualified personnel were reporting for night check duty at 2000.

The maintenance control duty CPO was relieved by the 1800-to-secure duty CPO and did not know that the line supervisor had been secured. At approximately 1830, the on-coming maintenance control duty CPO told the line watch to move an A-3 from the hangar to the line. Hours earlier, the two line-watch personnel had participated in two movements of this same aircraft when a team of four men and five men, respectively, completed the moves safely. Knowing this, they attempted to contact additional men for this movement.

After waiting a short time, they decided to disregard the line supervisor's previous instructions, believing they could handle the move themselves, and proceeded to carry out the CPO's



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The COOL PRO!

orders. Prior to the abortive move, one of the airmen briefed the other on how to ride the aircraft brakes. During the move, one AN was on the tractor while the other was on foot, directing the movement of the aircraft out of the hangar.

Once the aircraft was clear of the hangar, the man on foot was going to ride the brakes to the line. As the aircraft was pushed out of the hangar onto the slightly downward sloping ramp, it separated from the tractor and accelerated uncontrollably. The driver stopped the tractor; both individuals attempted to stop the aircraft by placing chocks under the starboard main wheel.

One of the ANs lost his balance and fell in such a manner as to place his right leg in the path of the starboard main mount. It is estimated that at least part of the aircraft wheel rolled over his right foot and lower leg. The other AN endeavored to push the man away from the rolling main mount and most likely succeeded in saving him from additional injuries.

The aircraft continued to roll until the lower aft fuselage came to rest on top of a small power cart, causing minor damage to the aircraft. The airman was not as fortunate, having numerous fractures of his right leg.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Leapin' lizards! These young lads just don't understand English! Appears to me the line supervisor

made it very clear — don't move an aircraft without contacting me! Clear enough. However, these two young lads are not alone in taking "the blame"! Those two CPOs who relieved each other at 1800 did not properly brief each other. Had the relieving CPO known that his line supervisor had been secured — that would'a made a difference! Seems to me the C.O. has a number of "heads" that could be banged together in this fiasco.

Dear Gramps:

Byrd Camp is an isolated site on the Antarctic Continent located 800 nautical miles northwest (grid) of the major U.S. base at McMurdo. During the early part of each *Deep Freeze* season, camps such as Byrd are opened and supported by ski-equipped LC-130 *Hercules* of VXE-6 throughout the season.

On takeoff from Byrd Camp during an early season resupply mission in mid-October, an aircraft's inertial navigation system failed. This was no real problem, since polar-qualified navigators are trained to navigate by other means. However, upon entering an overcast, the N-1 compass system failed. The compass card began to rotate and attempts to stabilize it were unsuccessful. Being above the overcast, a return to Byrd Camp was not advisable as there are no approach aids, radios, fuel, or adequate shelter available there. Ahead some 800 miles, was McMurdo. There were no en

route navigation aids in between and no visual references on the never ending snow below.

The challenge would task even the most experienced of polar navigators. LCdr. Joe Wiebelhaus immediately realized the major problem of no heading reference. The magnetic compass, constantly moving, was of little use since variation changed 75 degrees during the trip and the unstabilized radar indicated relative bearings only. The only way to determine aircraft heading was to continually check the sun's azimuth.

So, for three hours, LCdr. Wiebelhaus computed and observed celestial data on the sun, thus determining the aircraft's heading once every three minutes. The pilots of the aircraft maintained heading by attitude gyro alone, with corrections made between sun shots. During the ensuing three hours the aircraft's position never deviated more than 20 miles off the desired track. The few fixes obtained en route were a result of his past knowledge of certain peculiar radar returns from snow and ice crevasses along the route of flight. A McMurdo TACAN lock-on 40 miles out provided the final assurance of his navigation. The landing was uneventful.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Shades of Prince Henry the Navigator! Prince Henry, Magellan and Balboa had nothing on this lad — well done, LCdr. Wiebelhaus!