



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Distracted?

A lieutenant commander who was to be the flight leader of a four-plane ordnance flight briefed the other members. This was the flight leader's second flight of the day, the first being an hour-and-a-half ordnance flight in an A-4 *Skyhawk* in which he flew as a wingman. The flight completed its pre-flight activities and departed the field without incident.

The ordnance flight was completed and the flight leader, with the three other *Skyhawks*, was returning to home field. The flight, on making initial call-up, was informed that there would be a three to four minute delay due to work in progress on the runway. The leader then opted to take the flight to the initial point for re-entry.

At this time, the flight was cleared to break. After what appeared to be a normal break, the leader was concerned about establishing a good interval for his flight so he deliberately delayed activating speed brakes and lowering his gear and flaps until the beam position. He then extended his speed brakes, reported abeam with gear and expressed his intention to land.

As the *Skyhawk* continued its approach, the flight leader's attention was diverted to the cockpit to check a previous gripe on the aircraft. He had flown this same aircraft on his



first flight and had experienced a compressor stall at low rpm; he was, therefore, scanning his engine performance indicator while continuing his approach. His attention then focused on the angle-of-attack indexer which appeared not to be working. (A previous discrepancy had been noted regarding the indexer not working, but the discrepancy had been corrected.)

The pilot felt that this, then, was a repeat of the gripe and shifted his attention to the angle-of-attack indicator. He later stated that he found

the indicator needle at approximately the four o'clock position. Throughout the final portion of the approach, he requested the wind two different times after hearing the tower report a change in the initially reported surface winds. The tape transcript shows only one request by an unknown source for surface winds.

The pilot then tried to locate the wind sock in order to ascertain surface winds for himself. Continuing his approach, he landed the A-4 *wheels and flaps up*.

Initial touchdown was approximately 1,000 feet from the approach end. The aircraft continued up the runway for approximately 1,500 feet where the port station triple ejector rack engaged the arresting gear pendant.

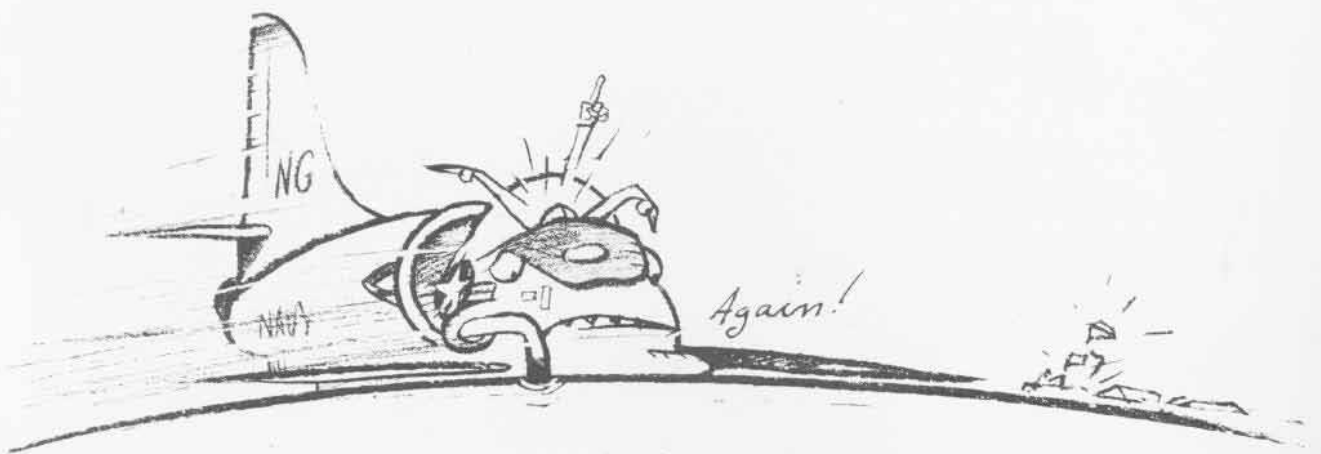
The aircraft came to rest on the port side of the runway. Fortunately there was no fire and the pilot was not injured. The aircraft sustained substantial damage.



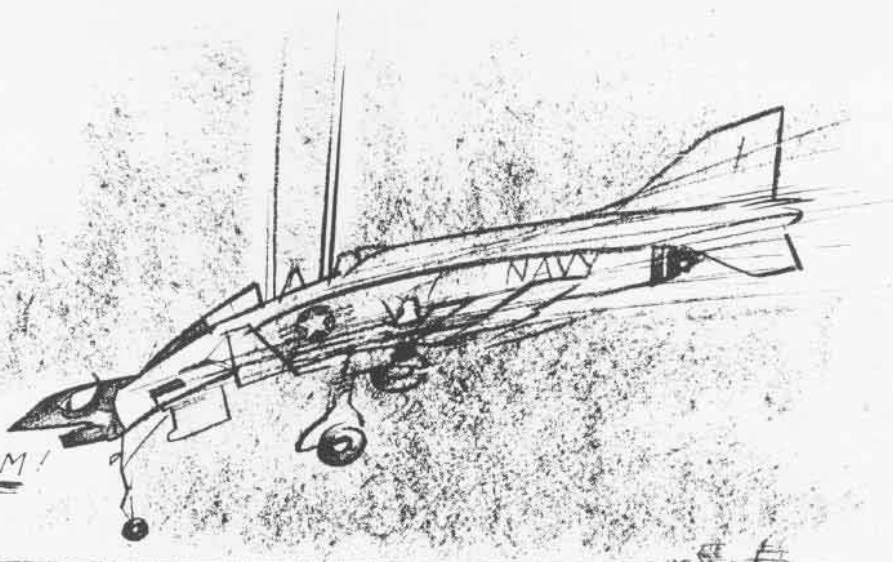
Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel, it happened again! Everytime I believe all has been said or done about belly whoppers, an aerial jockey makes me out a liar. This driver was just not attuned to that old adage "a break in habit pattern is the signal for a rollers-up landing."

This lad even reported the gear down at the 180-degree position. The driver was occupied, or should I say



The Foggy
BOTTOM!



“distracted,” by everything: maintaining proper interval, checking the angle-of-attack indexer, concern with surface winds, just watching everything — except the wheels and flaps. Sure is funny that when a wheels-up landing occurs, everyone jumps on the bandwagon with a multitude of reasons on how it coulda been prevented: use of wave-off lights, where was the wheels watch, the tower shoulda broadcast a wave-off and on and on and on! Fact of the matter is, if the driver had followed the checklist, it wouldn't have happened. Too simple! As one man put it, “The buck stops here (in the cockpit).”

Disappearing Runway

A Marine captain and his RIO were scheduled for a two-plane practice night intercept mission in F-4 *Phantoms*. Briefing, preflight and departure were normal in all respects. The radar intercept mission went smoothly and without incident.

After completion of the mission, the two F-4s began their return to base. The flight leader requested individual descents to a radar vector GCA final with a touch-and-go to the VFR pattern. The controller acknowledged and the two-plane flight broke up for individual approaches.

At 15 miles, the accident F-4 lowered the landing gear and flaps. The runway was in sight and the pilot felt that he could see the entire field. Descent to 2,000 feet was given and

the pilot still had visual contact with the field.

The controller had broadcast that a fog bank was lying off the end of the runway and, as the aircraft reached 3,000 feet altitude, the crew began to lose contact with the field. At approximately six nautical miles, the GCA controller stated that they could not do a touch-and-go because the field was IFR. The F-4 acknowledged and stated they would make a full-stop landing.

At this point, the controller stated they were on GCA final and gave a descent and vector. The aircraft continued inbound and was essentially on glide path — with minor deviations. At approximately 1,000 to 1,200 feet, they entered the fog bank, flying completely on instruments.

During the approach, the GCA controller informed the F-4 that the outside observer had visual contact. This information and the knowledge that they had seen the field earlier made the pilot confident that he would be able to see the runway soon. He saw the strobe lights flashing and looked out of the cockpit to his right to see where they were. He looked back into the cockpit and saw *1,500 feet/minute descent on the VSI*. He added full power to initiate a wave-off and the plane immediately hit the runway and bounced, becoming airborne immediately. The pilot called for minimum fuel GCA to expedite his landing.

The pilot now began having severe

control problems with the aircraft. The RIO informed him that there was a hole in the left wing (caused by the left strut protruding through the skin) and that it was getting hot in the rear cockpit. The pilot noted that the aircraft tried to stall even though the airspeed indicated 200 knots. The PC-1 hydraulic pressure was now indicating zero.

As the F-4 lined up with the runway, the RIO said he was going to get out. The pilot acknowledged and, when the RIO asked if the pilot wanted to go, the pilot said “Yes.” The RIO then initiated command ejection from the back seat.

Ejection sequence was normal for both pilot and RIO. They landed on the runway with no injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! What in the world was this gent thinkin' about? Although he had all of his instrument and NATOPS requirements, he still drove his machine in a manner to allow it to go below minimums.

Unfortunately he got no help from anyone. The RIO was no help when he interrupted the GCA transmissions at a critical time or when he didn't tell the pilot they had reached decision height (or, I should say, were passing through it). This guy didn't know when to talk and when to shut up. The final controller didn't help either when he failed to inform the pilot of the latest ceiling and visibility. All in all, a pretty bad show — all the way around.