



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE



## The Kiss

A Naval Aviator and Naval Flight Officer (RIO) were scheduled for an area FAM in their F-4J *Phantom*. Preparation for the flight was uneventful and the crew departed home plate and climbed to 10,000 feet en route to a nearby offshore island.

Upon arriving over the island, they

circled for a short period and then let down to 2,000 feet. Slightly west of the island, the pilot descended further, to 1,000 feet, then continued his descent over the water to just under 100 feet. The pilot rolled in some nose-up trim, checked his radar altimeter at 75 feet, and noted 350 knots indicated airspeed. There was a haze layer at approximately 100 feet. But it was a beautiful day with a glassy smooth sea state and excellent visibility beneath and above the haze layer.

The pilot climbed slightly to 100 feet, which placed him in the haze layer. He then descended again, at which time there was a thump and vibration in the aircraft as if it had hit something. The pilot's first thought was that the *Phantom* had struck the water.

The RIO asked if they had centerline transfer and the pilot affirmed that they did. They then climbed to 10,000 feet, checked engine instruments, which were reading normal, and circled the area looking for boats and debris in water. None was noted.

They turned north toward home field and slow-flighted the aircraft. Flaps and gear came down, locked and retracted normally. The RIO again asked about centerline transfer. Now

there was no centerline transfer indication.

They landed and taxied to the pits and shut down the port engine. The RIO got out and inspected the aircraft. There was no centerline tank. The pilot taxied to the line and shut down the aircraft. The *Phantom* sustained minor damage.

The accident board clearly determined that the aircraft had, in fact, struck the water tearing off the centerline tank.

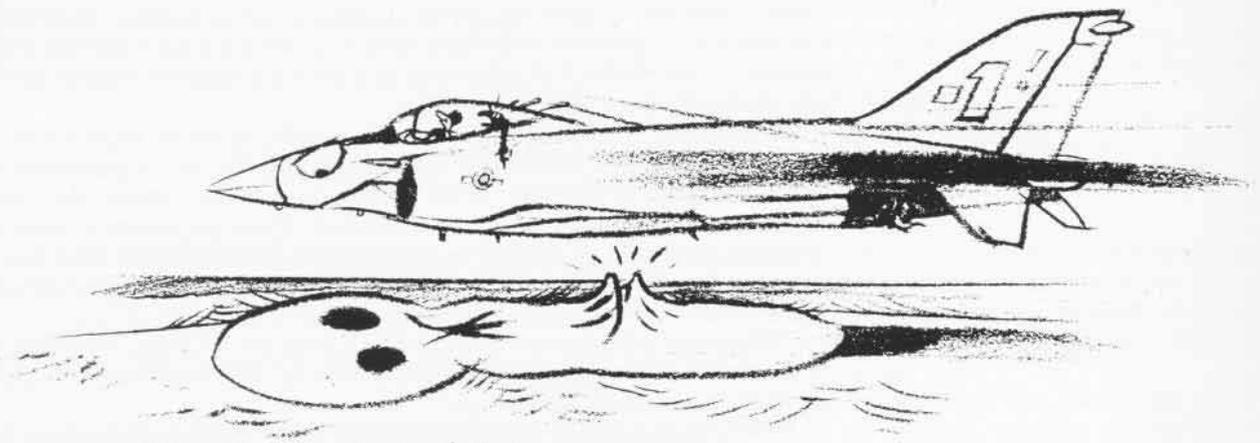


Grampaw Pettibone says:

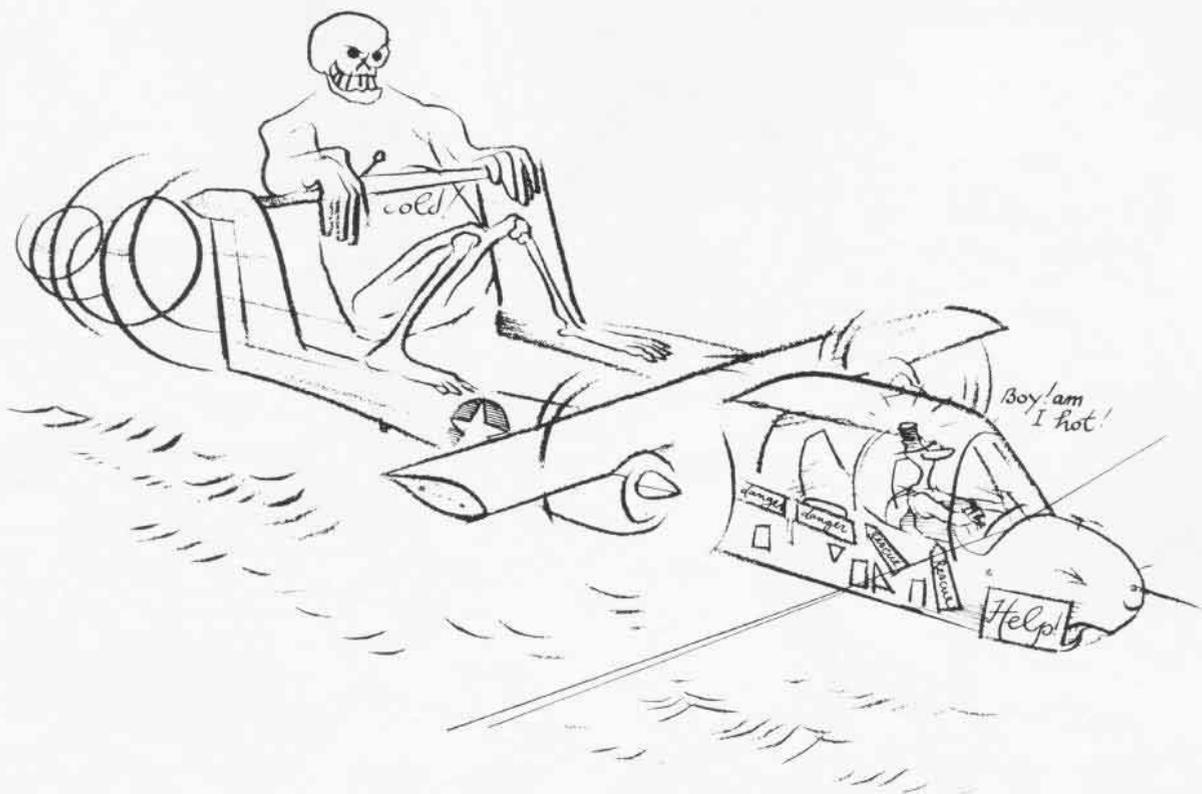
Great gallopin' ghosts! If you want a close shave, see a barber! This "kiss" was inches away from causing the loss of two lives and an aircraft.

This is a clear case of violation of existing regs and, most of all, a violation of plain common sense. To top it all off, this gent is supposed to wear his glasses when aviating. You would think that if he is going to "cheat" and fly at low altitude over a glassy sea, he would at least be smart enough to wear his specs!

As I have repeated many times – the survivors of this type of mishap have a tough road ahead to stay on flight status. I say again, "Is it worth your wings?"



*The Kiss of death!*



## Caught at the Wire

Two pilots arrived at operations to prepare for a three-hour cross-country flight in an OV-10 *Bronco*. The first leg of the flight was uneventful. Following an RON, the crew departed the following morning to drop off the copilot at an NAS en route to the next destination. This flight went as planned and the *Bronco* pilot arrived at the destination AFB. There the pilot spent the night with some relatives who lived near the base.

Next morning he arrived at operations and inquired about a special VFR clearance for a local flight. He was told he would have to talk with the tower. Tower informed him that special VFR for military aircraft was not permitted. (The weather was IFR at the time.)

Additionally the pilot was advised that there was real light weather 70 to 90 miles to the north but that the east, west and south looked bad. A short time later, it was reported that the weather was VFR.

Tower next heard from the pilot

when he asked for taxi instructions. Tower told him they had no flight plan on him and he would have to contact pilot dispatch.

The pilot complied and filed (over his radio) a VFR flight plan. The estimated time en route was three hours. The pilot departed the airfield and approximately 20 minutes later the *Bronco* was observed flying at an altitude of about 50 feet over a local lake and performing wingovers.

He was next spotted over another lake performing the same maneuvers. About one hour after takeoff, he was seen over the first lake again, performing similar maneuvers and flying at low altitude (50 to 150 feet).

Following a series of these maneuvers, he made a left turn to proceed up a small finger of the lake. While proceeding up this finger, he impacted power lines at an altitude of about 100 feet. The aircraft was then observed to nose up slightly, then nose down and glide into the lake. The crash occurred one hour and thirty minutes from takeoff time. The pilot was killed instantly.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! I no sooner put my pencil down after writin' up one of these stories, and the same incident, with different players, happens again. It's amazin' that these foolhardy mishaps always end in one of two ways: the death of the pilot or the loss of his wings, if he survives. In this case, the pilot was "had" on his first maneuver since he was observed by an Air Force officer (aviation safety type at that) who was fishing on one of the lakes. Rightfully so, he would have reported that first incident.

On occasion you may hear a few aviators claim that this type of incident is part of the necessary aggressive nature of pilots — Bull Hockey! The place to be aggressive is not on an unscheduled "buzz job." Pilots who "pull" these jobs show me nothin' but stupidity and, if they survive, they should be "boarded." We don't need aviators around to teach us expensive object lessons. Neither do we need aviators who lack self-discipline. You will have to excuse my ramblin', but needless loss of life and machine just gets to me.