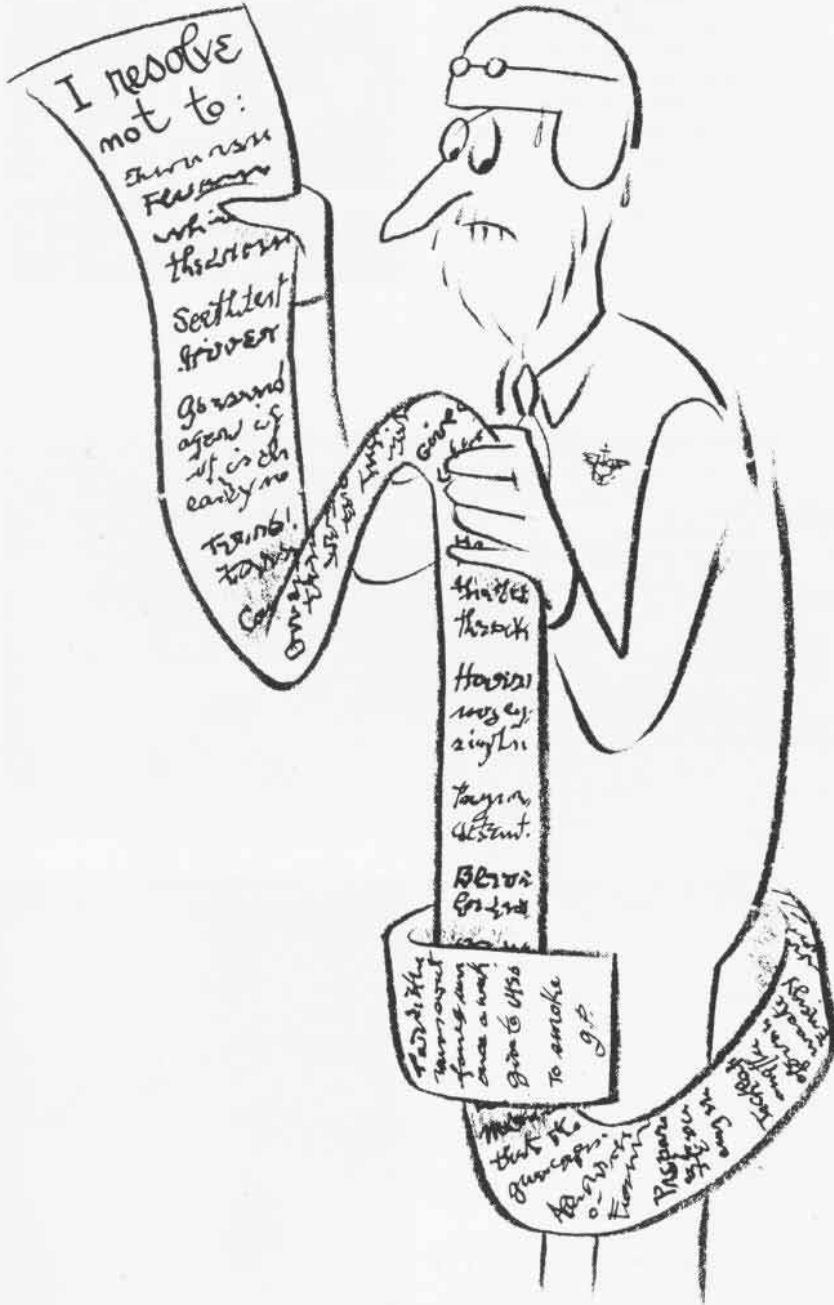




GRAMPAW PETTIBONE



Two Navigators???

An EA-3B *Skywarrior* was scheduled for a routine flight of about three hours from NAS Small Island to NAS Large Island. During the flight, one of the navigators was to receive his navigator check flight. The crew consisted of the pilot, an ECM operator, two navigators and the plane captain. Ltjg. Magellan was the designated NATOPS navigation examiner and Ltjg. Prince Henry the Navigator was the navigator who was to be checked. He gathered the navigation equipment and, upon checking the sextant, found that the bubble in the sextant could not be reduced in size.

Following an uneventful departure, en route radio was contacted and the flight proceeded on course. Aircraft position reports were made using a dead reckoning (DR) plot. Approximately midway (timewise) into the flight, the pilot manually moved his compass heading to see if the navigator was including it in his scan, then reset it. At this time, it was noted that the wet compass was heading 290 degrees (the desired heading was west) and drifting northward; the main compass also appeared to be drifting.

The navigator decided to take a deviation check. When he checked the air almanac, he discovered that although the months were correct, he had the *wrong year* (1972 vs 1973)! However, the navigators interpolated the 1972 almanac for sun position and subsequently took two deviation checks; both were discounted as being inaccurate since neither was close to the heading indicated on the compasses.

Approximately two hours and 45 minutes into the flight, when land should have been in sight, the pilot declared an emergency. The pilot experienced some difficulty in convincing the controlling agency that they were in fact LOST. Direction finding (DF) steers, some of which were completely unreliable, were received. One placed



them over land when, in fact, no land was in sight. It became more apparent that the *Skywarrior* would not reach land or an airport before fuel starvation occurred.

Approximately five hours after the start of the flight, the crew bailed out. All were rescued at a position 1,000 miles off course!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thunderin' thunderin's! Do you believe that an aircraft with two navigators aboard got LOST? Sure there were extenuating circumstances — like the compass failure and inaccurate DF steers — but these couldn't hold a candle to the "people failures." First of all, what good are navigators when they let you down at the time you need them most. Anyone can navigate when all the electronics are working right but real pros can do it when the chips are down (*NA News*, March 1973, p. 5). Secondly, supervision at the home station looks shaky. Why are old almanacs left lying around the navigation office and why did one navigator claim there were no other sextants in the navigation office when he discovered the one he had was less than satisfactory? Undoubtedly, this was a leg of a flight flown many times by this unit. A short ride overwater. A no-sweat navigation flight — **COMPLACENCY!**

It appears to be sound procedure to take a deviation check shortly after level-off or following last TACAN fix. The point is, nobody really navigated until they had compass problems. Relying on a DR plot solely for position fixing is not professional navigation! If this was a navigation check flight,

wasn't the navigator NATOPS instructor planning to check the examiner's celestial proficiency?? Looks like the answer was "No" since the sextant was only used after the compass difficulties! This fiasco is one of the most nonprofessional performances I have witnessed! I can't believe it!!!

Drag and Splash

Following a complete and thorough briefing, the Marine CH-53 *Sea Stallion* departed the ship for a practice mine-sweeping flight, towing an anti-mining device. The crew consisted of a captain as aircraft commander with a first lieutenant as copilot. Approximately one hour after takeoff, the #2 engine chip detector light came on and the pilot informed the ship of the trouble.

A circuit breaker check and recheck did not change the chip detector light and a scan of the instruments showed no engine malfunction. At this time the pilot decided the chip light repre-

sented an electrical failure and elected to return to the ship, which was two miles away, while towing the anti-mining device. Approximately 12 minutes after the chip detector light came on, a loud "pop" was heard from the #2 engine and the pilot, feeling this indicated failure of the #2 engine, brought it to idle cutoff and immediately pushed the #1 engine full forward. He then took control of the aircraft from the copilot and released the tow cables.

He noticed that the rpm was passing through 55 percent. He momentarily lowered the collective to increase the rpm, but noted the altitude passing through 50 feet and decided to flare to cushion the landing as much as possible.

The aircraft contacted the water in a level attitude with zero to five knots forward airspeed at about 200 to 300-foot-per-minute vertical rate of descent. The aircraft immediately began a left roll and all four crew members exited without difficulty. They remained on top of the floating aircraft for the ten minutes it took a boat to arrive.

The entire crew boarded without incident and were later found to have sustained no injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehosaphat! What does it take to make some pilots follow NATOPS?!? Appears to me that it makes good sense when you are dragging somethin' from your machine to drop it when you develop troubles. This gent fooled around for approximately 12 to 15 minutes with that warning light on when he was only a few minutes from the ship. Just can't explain that one! As far as "learnin' a lesson" goes — we can't afford lessons or pilots of this type.

