



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Loose Stick

The flight was briefed as a two-plane practice close air support mission in A-4M *Skyhawks*. The briefing was conducted using the NATOPS briefing guide. The *Skyhawks* were manned and made an uneventful departure.

The A-4s arrived at the target about ten minutes later and began to orbit while waiting for other aircraft to clear the range. The weather in the area was clear with visibility seven miles in haze. The other aircraft cleared the range and the *Skyhawks* commenced their runs.

One of the aircraft, which had just rolled into its fifth Zuni run, stabilized in a 20-degree dive and accelerated to 430 kias when the pilot noticed the right wing begin to drop. He moved the stick to the left to correct and felt the stick bind momentarily. Then the stick felt like it was free in his hand. The aircraft continued to roll right and the pilot attempted using left rudder, which only slowed the roll to the right.

As the aircraft was passing approximately 55 degrees of bank with no response from the stick, the pilot decided to eject. He ejected with his right hand holding the stick to the left and aft, and his left hand actuating the ejection handle. The ejection sequence was normal.

The pilot was picked up in rocky terrain about 20 minutes later by a helicopter in the area. He was taken to a nearby hospital with major injuries. His poor body position contributed to the injuries he incurred during the high speed ejection.

Following ejection by the pilot, the aircraft continued to roll and impacted into a hillside in a wings-level inverted attitude. Investigation revealed that the bolt and nut which secures the control column to the pivot crank shaft was not installed. The aircraft had just completed a modification program which required stick removal. The stick was apparently "placed" on the pivot crankshaft with *no retaining nut and bolt installed!*



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire!! A lot of people worked at trying to get this

driver kilt!! There is a tendency for the pilot to get extremely aggravated when the steering stick comes out in his hand — in a dive yet!

Like a lot of things, people scrambled around claiming who was responsible for not replacing the stick properly. When everything was said and done, looks like the squadron liaison officer never told his maintenance people about various decisions made at the get-together before the aircraft was worked on by the modification team. I most certainly hope this fella has another job now — not involving aircraft.

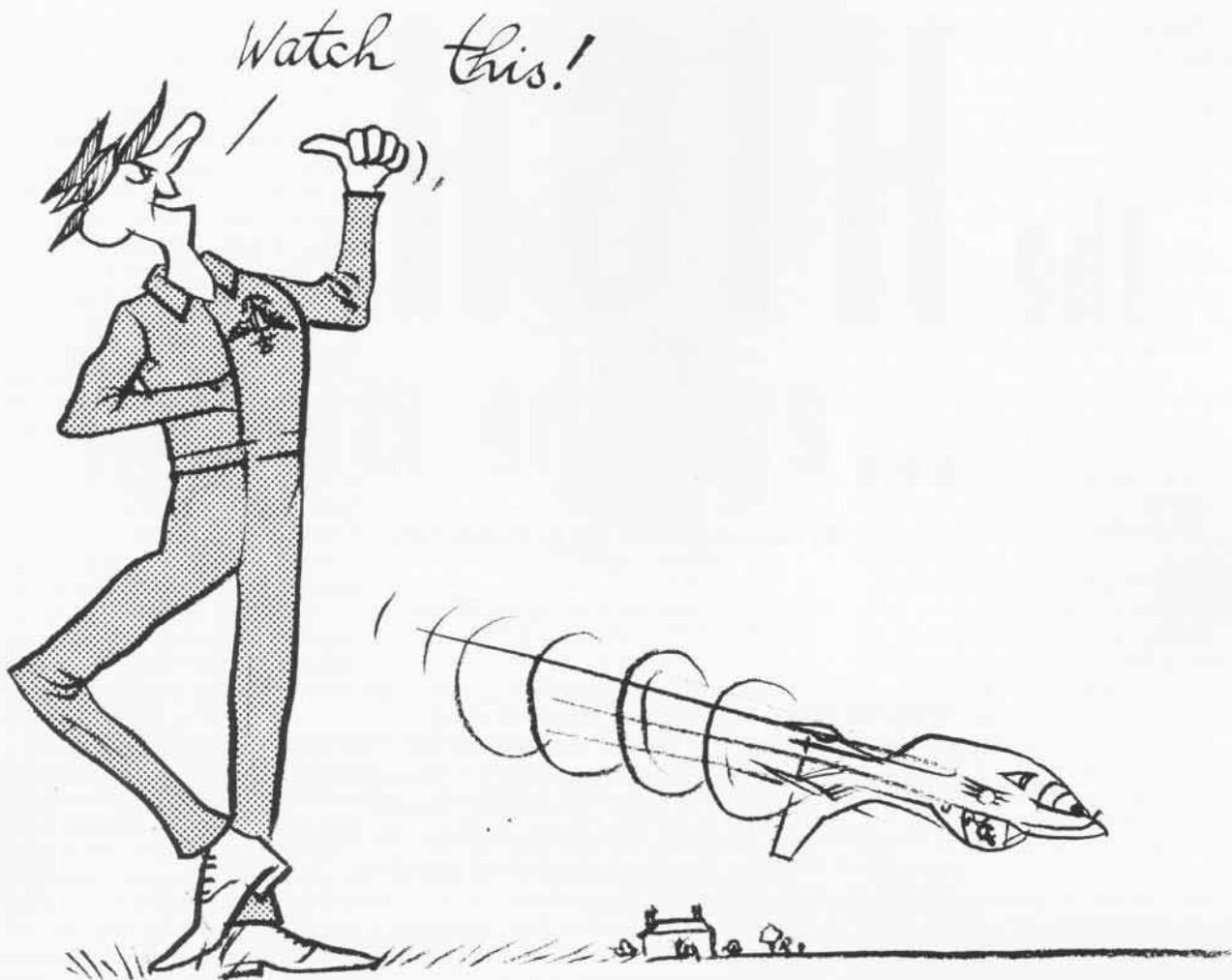
## The Big Show

A student pilot was scheduled for a 1.5-hour VFR acrobatic training flight in a T-2 *Buckeye*. The pilot was briefed on the proposed conduct of the flight by the unit duty officer. Preflight, taxi and takeoff were uneventful. Radar advisory service was utilized for climb-out as required by the local course rules and squadron directives.

As the pilot was passing 10,000 feet, he terminated his radar service with no indication of distress. Approximately 15 minutes after takeoff, a witness on the ground observed the *Buckeye* making a low-level pass and dipping his left wing. The aircraft



ILLUSTRATED BY *Opblom*



continued on a northerly heading with wings straight and level. The aircraft was then observed starting a low-level rolling maneuver while maintaining heading. With the aircraft in an inverted position, the nose dipped toward the ground. As the aircraft approached the ground, witnesses observed an ejection attempt.

As the aircraft impacted the ground, a flash and fireball with smoke were seen. Another aircraft in the area also reported the crash. This was reported to the home-field control tower on VHF radio. Shortly afterward, home-field operations received several phone calls from ground witnesses reporting the crash.

The mishap occurred in a rural area very near the residence of the pilot's relatives. The aircraft was generally described as flying low and fast and rolling just before ground collision.

The pilot, just prior to impact, attempted ejection at a low altitude outside the seat capability. He sustained fatal injuries.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Holy Hannah, I feel very sad about this. For all the years I have been writing about flatthating, there are still some pilots around who refuse to believe the inherent dangers of "unscheduled airshows." It was no surprise to me that a close investigation by the accident board revealed that this was not the first unscheduled airshow by this lad.

For you drivers who have had one or more successful airshows, keep this in mind: this lad had survived at least one previous show before he did himself in!

For you who are thinking about puttin' on a show and will not reconsider, complete the following checklist:

Ensure that you have sufficient insurance.

Write the "notification letter of your death" to your next of kin. (This will expedite things for your C.O. in addition to adding a personal touch to a letter which most C.O.s have difficulty writing.)

Make your burial requirements and desires known to your next of kin.

Invite your friends and relatives to drive out to an unpopulated area. (You have no right to risk the lives of other people. Your relatives will have to take their chances.)

Make sure you disappear from view immediately following rolls, etc., so that friends and relatives will not actually see the impact. (This will make it easy to believe that you were really a hot pilot and that you had a control problem. As you well know, the accident board will know better.)

In spite of all these unpleasant thoughts, some idiot will try it again!! I hope I'm wrong.