grampaw pettibone

Lock-On

A pilot was on a cross-country flight in a TA-4J *Skyhawk*. He had considerable experience in the aircraft with over 1,000 hours in type. All pre-departure phases were normal.

The initial portion of the flight was routine with weather as briefed. When the pilot reached his destination, he began a tacan approach. Upon reaching minimums he did not have the field in sight. He executed a missed approach and requested clearance to another airport.

There, he requested a GCA and a short-field arrestment due to the short, wet runway. The weather was 400 broken, 700 overcast with fog and light drizzle. The winds were 12 knots with gusts to 18.

On the last part of the GCA and just prior to acquiring the runway, the pilot was advised he was "slightly below glide path." Shortly after breaking out, he noted a 1,200-1,500 fpm rate of descent and added power. He stated that he clearly saw the runway area and mirror, but could not see the ball. Witnesses stated later that the aircraft appeared to come down hard. The *Skyhawk* landed short of the runway, engaged the arresting gear off center and left the runway. The nose gear sheared off and the IFR probe separated from the aircraft. The pilot shut down the engine and egressed normally. The aircraft sustained major damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well, bust my britches!! This is one for the book. Here's a gent with lots of experience and a good reputation who commits one of the most amateurish accidents — landing short!

This driver was so preoccupied with crosswind, line-up and other related factors that he let his scan go to heck! Once he realized he was coming down *fast*, he added power. But it was too late. Gents, you can't "lock-on" just a few items in this business. You've got to include all related items in the big picture.

Which Handle?

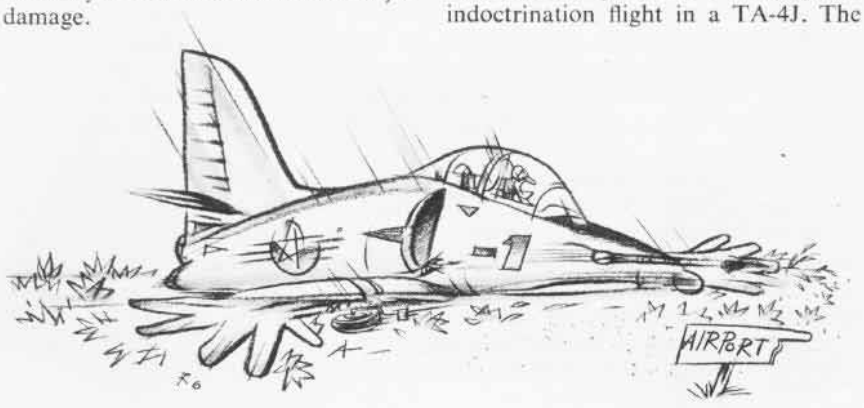
A Marine Aviator was scheduled as an instructor pilot for a midshipman indoctrination flight in a TA-4J. The passenger/midshipman had received numerous briefings on the aircraft. The function of the canopy jettison handle and its safety pin was particularly emphasized. Additionally, prior to putting on the flight gear, another instructor briefed him (and others) on the *Skyhawk's* equipment and procedures.

The passenger and the instructor then proceeded to the aircraft. The instructor briefed the midshipman on the flight plan and the function of various aft cockpit switches, including the canopy jettison handle and its safety pin.

After preflight, the instructor checked the aft cockpit ejection seat. He then grasped the canopy jettison safety pin and told the midshipman, "This is what I want you to take out when I ask." At this time, the midshipman strapped in the aft cockpit assisted by a student pilot assigned to help and to answer any last minute questions. The assisting pilot then removed the canopy jettison handle safety pin, showed it to the midshipman, and told him that the canopy jettison handle would blow the canopy if it were pulled in an emergency. The assisting pilot then properly stowed the safety pin in the right-hand map case.

After a normal start, the instructor told the midshipman to raise the ejection seat head knocker (ejection control safety handle) and to remove the canopy jettison safety pin. He replied that the pin had been removed.

Post-start checks and taxi were routine. In the hold-short area, the canopy was lowered and locked and the pretakeoff list completed. The instructor then asked the passenger if he was ready to go. The passenger enquired if he should remove the canopy jettison safety pin, to which the instructor replied, "Hadn't you taken it out before?" After a negative response, the instructor replied, "O.K., take the safety pin out." At this time the passenger pulled the canopy jettison han-



ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

dle, which jettisoned the canopy. The aircraft sustained minor damage requiring 250 man-hours to repair.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great gallopin' ghosts! I don't believe this one! First of all, everyone briefs the lad in the back that "he is the one who will pull the canopy jettison safety pin" and then one of the assisting student pilots does it for him! So, the lad in the back knows he has to pull some handle — and he does!

Talk about confusion — let's get together and decide *exactly* who is going to do *what*. Talk about surprises!!

Fuel Problem = Wheels Problem

A Marine pilot was scheduled for a cross-country flight to position his AV-8A *Harrier* at a deployment base. The pilot was to fly wing on another aircraft. The *Harriers* were scheduled for aerial refueling en route. The pilot had over 150 hours in the aircraft. Brief, preflight, taxi and takeoff were normal.

Approximately 20 minutes prior to the first scheduled inflight refueling, the wingman's port low level fuel warning light came on and remained steady. Fuel indication was 750 pounds port and 1,350 pounds in the starboard tank. The pilot determined that there was sufficient fuel left to rendezvous with the tanker and still be able to make his scheduled divert field should refueling not be accomplished.

He gassed up and the flight proceeded to the second inflight refueling point. The subject *Harrier* arrived at the second tanker indicating 700 pounds port and 1,250 pounds starboard. The port low level light was illuminated. The second inflight refueling was accomplished and the flight proceeded to its destination.

The pilot had not, up to this point, attempted to conduct a gauge check to ascertain his exact fuel transfer condition. At 100 nms from his destination, he again experienced a port low level fuel light illumination and was indicating approximately 750 pounds port and 1,300 pounds starboard. He determined that he would arrive at the field with about 1,300 pounds of useable fuel.

He was given the lead, after which he balanced his fuel. He had approximately 700 pounds per side and both low level fuel warning lights were illuminated when he began a descent from a distance of 75 miles. Ten miles from the field, it was determined that the pilot had sufficient fuel for a VFR entry. The lead was passed back to the original leader and the flight proceeded to the VFR initial point.

The leader attempted to contact the tower but was advised his transmission was garbled. The second *Harrier* pilot reported that the flight was at the initial. Five seconds later another transmission was made that indicated a green light might be required for landing. The tower controller acknowledged this but was uncertain as to which aircraft required the green light. He instructed one of his assistants to provide a green light to both AV-8s.

Approaching the field, the wingman lowered full flaps, retracted the speed brakes and noted that his fuel now indicated 1,100 pounds port, 600 pounds starboard. The starboard low level light was still illuminated. He stated later that, at this point, he became concerned about the fuel imbalance. He was now approaching the 180 position and decided to make a rolling vertical landing at 90 knots.

At the abeam, there were numerous radio transmissions being made by the tower to the other AV-8 and other VHF-only aircraft.

The pilot did not make the standard 180 call prior to commencing his approach because a tower transmission had stated, "AV-8 turning final, cleared to land 03 left, winds calm." The tower was giving a green light to both planes. The pilot continued to a point 4,000 feet down the runway, just beyond the arresting gear. His altitude over the approach-end/wheels-watch position was approximately 250 feet.

The wheels watch observed that the *Harrier's* gear was up. However, because of the aircraft's altitude over his position and the sound of power being applied, he thought the plane was waving off his approach. The aircraft landed 4,000 feet down the runway, 10 feet left of center line at 90 knots, flaps down and *gear* up. As the aircraft skidded to a stop, a small fire was observed which was quickly extinguished by the alert crash crew. The pilot was uninjured.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! Not again! I just can't believe it! And when it's all said and done, it all boils down to the same thing — distraction, preoccupation, non-use of checklist, and no help from his "friends," like the tower, wheels watch and others! This pilot was so concerned with fuel, he forgot to fly his machine.

Granted, in every wheels-up accident there are always extenuating circumstances. But the ultimate responsibility rests with one guy — the *driver*. Think about it. Is it possible that next time it might be you ?