



grampaw pettibone

Tricky Stuff

As an AF-1E (FJ-4B) pilot took off on a VFR night cross-country flight, the weather at his destination, which was also home base, was clear with three miles visibility in smoke and haze. En route, he received current weather broadcasts and found no change at all. Not a cloud in the sky, just some smoke and haze to cut down the visibility a bit.

He started a gentle letdown about 20 miles out and soon had the lighted field in sight. Orbiting overhead at 2,500 feet, he could plainly see the entire airfield and the neighboring areas but was informed by the tower that the field was IFR with one-half-mile visibility and that he would have to contact approach control for a GCA landing.

Proceeding to a radio beacon some eight miles from the field and orbiting there, he had no success in contacting approach control and finally got a clearance using the control tower as a relay. All this time he had the airfield in sight. It didn't seem possible the field had only one-half mile visibility. It was a real puzzler.

After being assigned a GCA frequency, he made contact immediately and was given a vector for a dogleg approach to the runway. GCA cleared him down to 1,000 feet, had him dirty up for landing and informed him the arresting gear was not rigged for this runway. The wind was calm, and visibility was now one-fourth mile and deteriorating rapidly. The pilot rogered, said he had the field in sight and shortly after this touched down right on the centerline, but just a little fast and about 500 feet past the normal GCA touchdown point. He had about 5,500 feet of runway remaining for the rollout.

The pilot had the sensation of being in a ball of cotton. Only the runway lights to either side of him were dimly visible. Visibility ahead was absolutely zero! He braked as hard as he felt he



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! There's *nothing* more treacherous than ground fog, for it usually suckers you in with an apparently good view of the runway and surrounding area and then smothers you in a white blanket right at flare or touchdown points. And, that landing rollout can be sheer horror, kinda like fallin' into quicksand!

Once you touch down and that old fuel state forbids any further excursions into the blue, you've pretty well had it. The only solution is to go to an alternate *before* trying a letdown and while fuel permits. When temperature and dewpoint are hangin' close together and the wind is calm, you can expect ground fog, especially in coastal areas, and plan accordingly. There's more to a weather broadcast than just ceiling and vis. (March 1963)

On Saving a Phantom

The pilot and his radar intercept officer (RIO) were scheduled for a two-plane air intercept training flight in a *Phantom*. The pilot had considerable F-4 experience and enjoyed a good reputation in his community. The flight was thoroughly briefed in accordance with current directives. The first portion of it was normal in all respects.

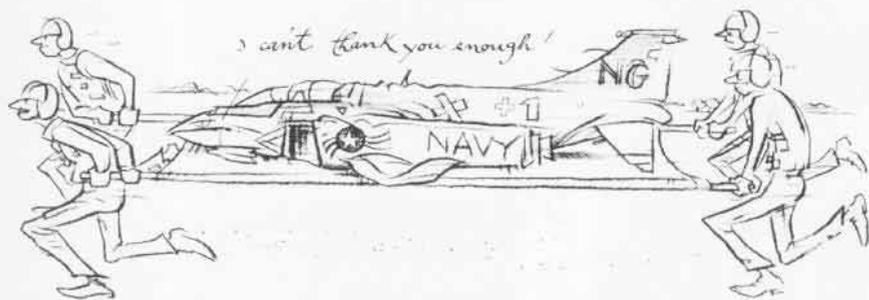
The F-4 proceeded to an offshore operating area at 24,000 feet as the "fighter" aircraft while another *Phantom* was positioned to act as bogie at 21,000 feet. The fighter turned to a heading of 360 and descended to 15,000 feet. The bogie heading was 180 and the fighter began a shallow climbing right turn to bogie heading; power was smoothly applied toward 100 percent.

As the fighter *Phantom* was climbing through 18,000 feet at 360 knots, both engines accelerating, a loud explosion occurred. This was followed by an immediate and abrupt yaw of the aircraft to the left. The plane began to vibrate violently and the left engine

could do safely for what seemed an endless time. Suddenly the threshold lights on the bitter end loomed up close ahead! Shutting the engine down, he jammed both feet hard on the brakes, heard the right tire blow and then hurtled off the end into the shallow waters of the bay which virtually surrounds the airfield. He had about 50 knots when he hit the water and went some distance out before stopping.

His radio was still running, for he heard GCA calling him, so he answered up, saying he was in the water, not injured, but to come quickly.

The first man on the scene was the pilot's GCA final controller who illuminated the wreck with his truck's headlights, then waded out and assisted him into shore.



fire warning light illuminated. The pilot retarded the left throttle to idle.

At this time, the left engine overheat light came on. The pilot shut down the left engine by placing the throttle to off and securing the left engine master switch. The right engine fire warning light illuminated and the right throttle was retarded to idle. Both fire warning lights remained on and the aircraft continued to vibrate violently.

Shortly thereafter, the wingman (the bogie) joined up and observed white and brown smoke streaming out of the left engine area. Subsequently, small particle debris was noted coming from that engine.

As the aircraft was turned toward home base, the right engine was advanced from idle. (The fire warning light was still on but no secondary indications existed.) The wingman observed no evidence of smoke or fire, so the pilot continued to home base at 13,000 feet and extended the ram air turbine.

Vibrations continued and the wingman observed the left wing tip vibrating rapidly. The emergency checklist was completed and the bleed air switch was turned off as an added precaution. With the left engine shut down, the PC-1 hydraulic system was observed to be at 2,000 psi and decreasing. At this time, both aux-air-door lights and the speed-brake-out light were illuminated. Pneumatic pressure was noted to be holding at 200 psi.

The pilot had elected to make a straight-in approach. He descended to 8,000 feet and dumped fuel to reduce to the single-engine landing weight. An attempt was made to extend the gear by lowering the gear handle as utility pressure was noted at 1,500 psi. Only the right main gear extended as observed by the wingman and all three cockpit indicators showed bar-

ber poles. The gear was then extended pneumatically and all three wheels indicated down and locked.

The pilot then elected to orbit clear of the field in order to complete fuel dumping and to perform a controllability check. At 7,000 feet, the minimum control speed was 210 knots with 6,000 pounds of fuel indicated. As fuel dumping continued, a low fuel light came on with 4,000 pounds indicated. Fuel dump was secured.

The pilot decided to commence an approach. He made a straight-in landing at home field with a flared touchdown speed of 220 knots after passing the short-field arresting gear. The drag chute was deployed and the arresting hook was lowered prior to engaging the long-field arresting gear. After the aircraft stopped, the right engine was secured and the aircraft was towed to the line. It sustained substantial damage due to the explosion and fire. Both fire warning lights remained illuminated and aircraft vibration continued until touchdown.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Hallelujah! This one goes to show ya that there's no substitute for the safety device between your ears.

This lad did a commendable job and got great assistance from his back-seater and his wingie. What else can I say but Well Done!

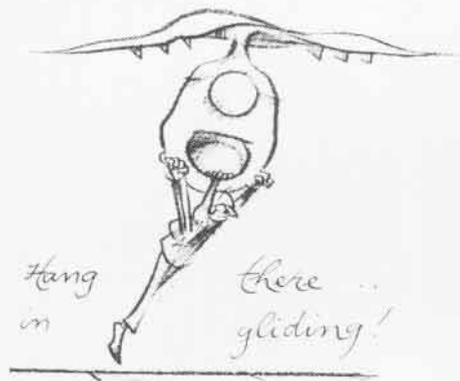
Cool, Calm, Collected

En route to the home field after a four-plane A-7 tactics flight, the No. 2 man was rendezvousing with his wingmen. His throttle stuck at 99 percent with 2,500 pounds of fuel remaining. He declared an emergency and the flight split up with the pilot assuming the lead of his section and proceeding

toward the base. His wingman observed fuel streaming from the tailpipe and quickly told him about it. At 29 miles out, the pilot initiated a climb from 14M in order to slow to gear extension speed. At 220 knots, he blew down the wheels, lowered the flaps and placed the gear handle in the up position to allow use of the speed brake for speed control. The speed brake would only extend five degrees and his wingman now reported hydraulic fluid on the belly of the aircraft.

At 11 miles and 2,500 feet with 1,400 pounds of fuel remaining, the pilot initiated a 360-degree turn in order to remain below 240 knots while descending. At this time, fuel loss increased rapidly. He completed the turn with only 600 pounds remaining.

At 240 knots, one and one-half miles from the end of the runway, he secured the engine with the fuel master



switch. Only 150-200 pounds of fuel remained. He then executed a flawless landing, rolling into the arresting gear at 10-20 knots with a final fuel indication of 150 pounds.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of professionalism! What a pro! Talk about being cool. This lad stayed cool all the way and carried out an extremely difficult task as if he did it everyday.

Sure does my heart good to hear about "jobs" like this one after some of the episodes I hear about!

Well Done to Ltjg. Mike Anderson of VA-82!