



# grampaw pettibone

## Close Shave

A flight of four AF-1Es departed MCAS Cherry Point on a cross country to Pensacola via NAS Cecil Field. Upon arrival at Cecil, the flight broke into two sections for penetration and GCA to landing. The wingman was instructed to take a chase position at five o'clock, stepped up, with a 500-foot interval on final approach.

The wingman planned to fly his chase position to minimums, then wave off and enter the pattern for a normal landing, but changed his mind at about the two-mile position on final. The flight leader requested that he land on this pass and the chase pilot, realizing that he was too close, began trying to set up a landing interval by reducing power. As he attained the desired 17.5 units (angle of attack) and a fair interval, he suddenly realized that the flight leader had landed in the center of the runway and he had reduced power to the point that an excessive sink rate was established. About this time, jet wash had him in more trouble than he bargained for and the aircraft contacted the ground on the right wing tip and main mount, about 400 feet short of the runway. The nose gear sheared. The aircraft skidded 1,500 feet down the runway.

This little saga should end here but, to continue in the same vein as exhibited during the approach, the pilot encountered more trouble when he tried to abandon the aircraft. He had trouble disconnecting his oxygen and radio leads, then unfastened the rocket jet fitting. After releasing the shoulder fittings, he attempted to stand, but soon realized he hadn't released his lap fitting. Again he attempted to stand, but found the leg fittings were still intact. He sat down for the third time and released them,



then leaped from the aircraft and parted the emergency oxygen line as he did so.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**Holy mackerel! What was the great hurry to get on the ground? There is really nothin' against takin' it around and gettin' squared away for a comfortable approach and landing. This flight leader certainly helped a lot —after telling his wingman to land with him, he puts his bird smack dab in the middle of the runway. That's taking care of your buddy, but good.**

**One of the Board's recommendations was that, in view of the difficulty**

**and confusion experienced by the pilot in his egress from the aircraft, the squadron immediately institute a comprehensive training program concerning the equipment used and procedures for ditching, ejection, and egress from the aircraft in emergencies. Amen! (January 1964)**

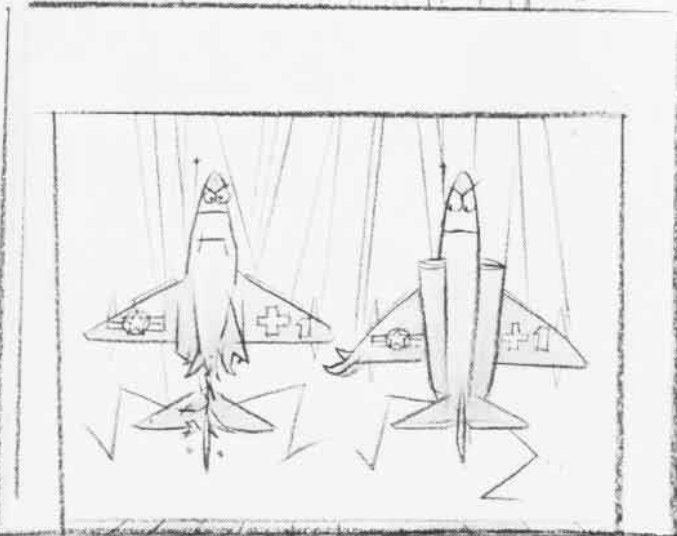
## Be Prepared!

A section of A-4s was engaged in an acrobatics training flight. Following a standard clearing turn to the right, the wingman was pulling his aircraft up at full power when he heard a loud bang and felt a single, simultaneous thump in the airframe. As he rolled wings level, he noticed the illuminated fire warning light. He reduced power and notified his flight leader of his difficulty.

The wingman was informed by his flight leader that he was trailing smoke from the aft fuselage. He checked his instruments for secondary indications of fire. There were none. After 10 to 15 seconds, the fire warning light went out and the wingman headed for NAS Home Plate, 30 miles east. The flight leader completed a rendezvous with him and made an external inspection that revealed the aft five feet of fuselage and tailpipe was missing.

All control surfaces appeared intact. The wingman switched to NAS tower frequency, declared an emergency and requested a straight-in approach to a short-field arrestment. The two aircraft continued inbound to the NAS at reduced airspeed, reporting their position every five miles. While inbound, the two pilots discussed pertinent Natops procedures.

The arresting hook was lowered and the aircraft was given a slow flight controllability check. The control tower was notified of the disabled



## Real Pros!

aircraft's intention to perform a modified low precautionary approach to a short-field arrestment. The landing checklist was completed and the approach flown as planned. When a successful landing was assured, the disabled A-4 pilot reduced the power to idle, deployed the speed brakes and flared to a touchdown on the centerline. Touchdown was 400 feet past the threshold and the aircraft rolled 800 feet into the short field arresting gear for a successful arrestment.

The pilot then secured the engine and emergency fuel control, pulled down the ejection control safety handle, quickly unstrapped, opened the canopy and exited the aircraft. With the crash crew on the scene, the landing gear was pinned and the aircraft towed clear of the runway.

 Grampaw Pettibone says:

Well singe my ole gray whiskers! These young fellers are a couple of professionals. Confucius says, "In all things, success depends upon previous preparation. . . ." The pilots involved in this incident were prepared. They worked as a team and

coordinated Natops procedures as well as communications. The mishap was caused by structural failure of the aircraft. The predicament was successfully resolved due to the professional action of both pilots. Bravo Zulu!!

### Pssst — The War's Over!

Turning back toward the target on a .50-cal gun run, the helo crew felt

a moderate jolt. Questioning the gun crew, the pilots were told that an ammo can had blown out of the aircraft, apparently under the sponson. Since no vibrations were felt, the pilot elected to return to home plate.

Post-flight revealed that the ammo can had hit the sponson, struck the aircraft in the vicinity of the one-man work platform, flown back into the base of the tail pylon, deflected into the tail rotor, and then impacted the main rotor before being thrown clear of the aircraft.

Utilization of improper .50-cal mounting equipment allowed the gun to vibrate excessively when fired and this vibration caused the ammo can to disengage from its mount. In this instance, two guns were operating from a single ammo can, which precluded proper security. The can was held in place by one of the crew members rather than being properly secured. Following a change in gunners, the ammo can was left unattended and blew out of the aircraft.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sonufagun! These sharpshooters were mighty lucky. Good judgment and common sense took a holiday. The crew's desire to complete a mission, in spite of unsatisfactory and improperly secured equipment, placed mission accomplishment above safety and was potentially catastrophic. Maybe someone oughta write more definitive Natops operating procedures for the .50-cal machine gun. Birthdays are more fun when you're around to eat the cake.



*It's sortuv a cross between Billiards & Volley Ball played with ammo cans!*