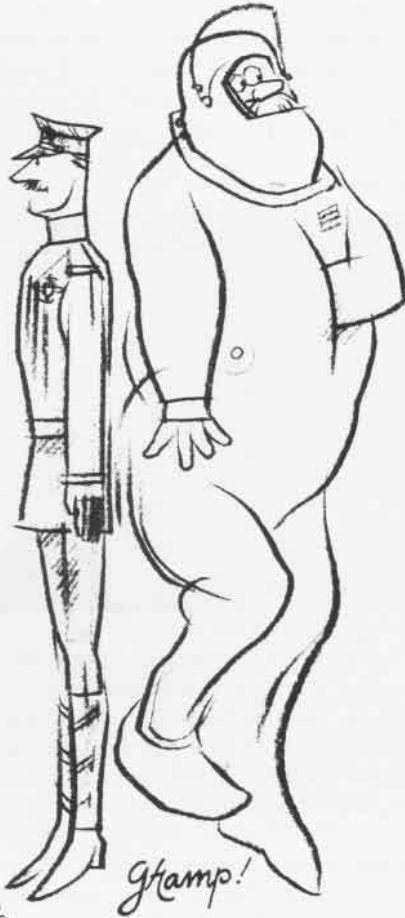




# grampaw pettibone



With thanks to Seth Warner, Gramps No. 1

taxi back the same direction from which he had entered the parking ramp.

During the time the aircraft was parked in front of operations, it started to rain. This reduced visibility on the black ramp. The pilot picked up the yellow nose-wheel line and taxiway lights on his left and proceeded toward what he thought was the throat to the parallel taxiway for the duty runway. A short time later the yellow line and taxiway markers disappeared, so the pilot requested further instructions from the tower. He understood the tower to say "continue straight ahead with a left turn at the blue lights." The tower controller changed the left turn to a right turn and told the pilot to taxi south to the duty runway.

After a few hundred feet, the aircraft entered an unevenly paved area. At this point, the pilot started to apply brakes and reached for the taxi

light. Before he could stop the aircraft or get the taxi light on, the nose wheel dropped into a concrete drainage ditch with the starboard prop contacting the edge of the ditch. The aircraft continued into the ditch, sustaining substantial damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! Our BuWeps friends in the hardware business obligated several hard-to-come-by bucks to put a taxi light and windshield wipers on this machine. To have a pilot utterly refuse to use them is downright disgustin'.

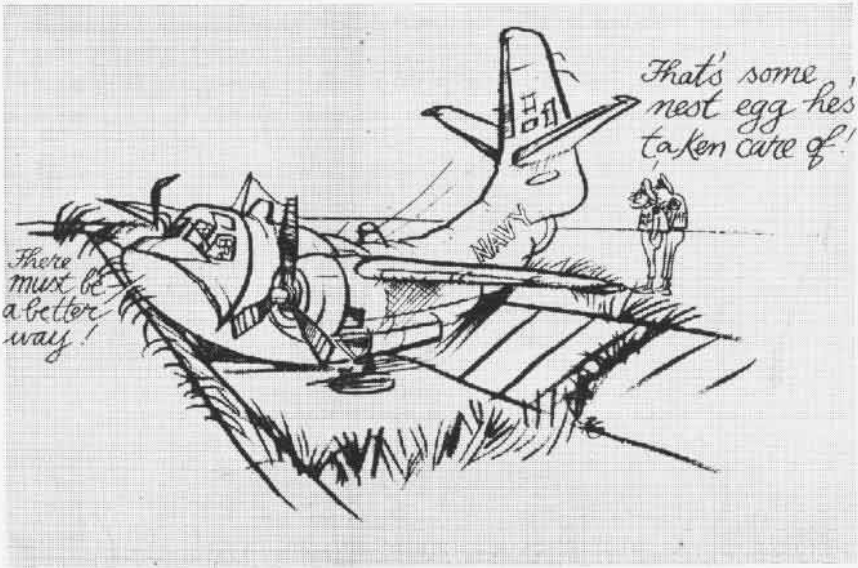
It'd be awfully easy to hold the tower operator partly responsible for the damage to this nice little bird, but there's just no way to take the monkey off the pilot's back. To go wanderin' around in an aircraft on a strange field or into an unlighted area just ain't smart. What's wrong with asking for a follow-me or, if necessary, shut the thing down and get towed in.

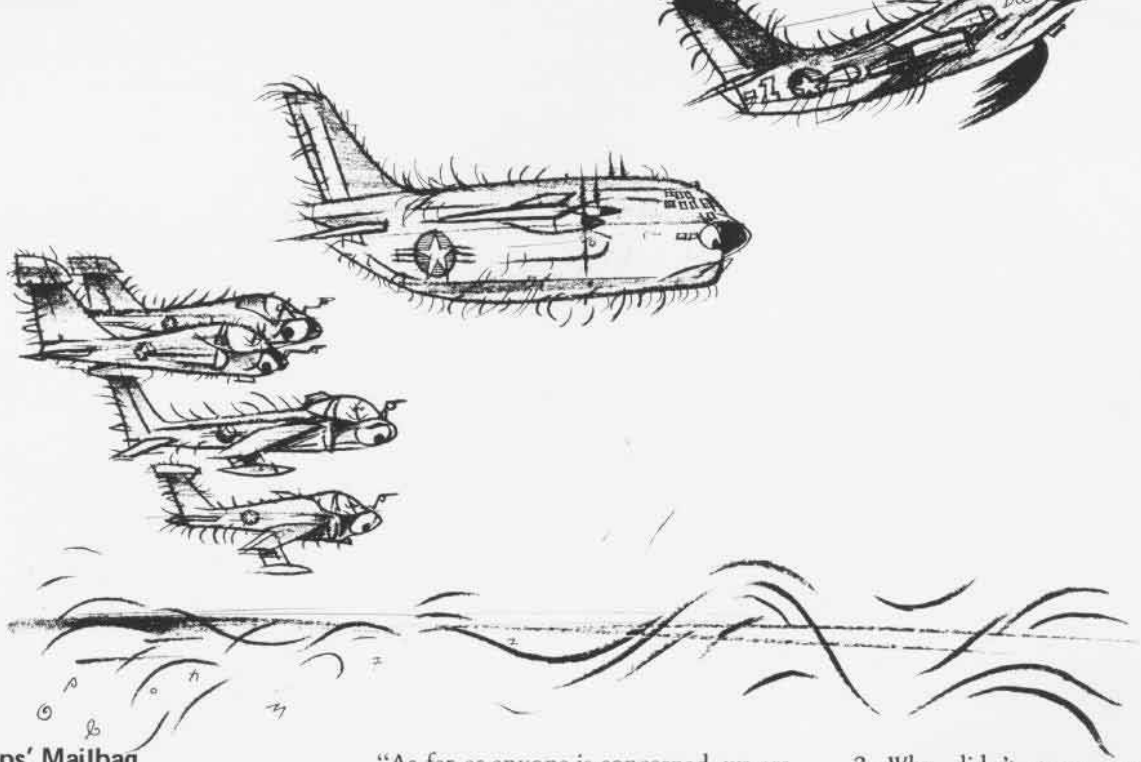
Thought for the day on this one, "When in doubt—don't!" (January 1964)

## No Light—No Taxi

The crew of a C-1A (TF) filed a combination VFR IFR round-robin cross-country flight plan with a five minute passenger stop at an Air Force base. The flight to the en route stop to drop a passenger was conducted on the VFR portion of the flight with the intention of proceeding IFR for the remainder of the flight.

The copilot contacted the AF tower for taxi instruction after the passenger departed. He was told to





## Gramps' Mailbag

Dear Gramps,

KC-130: Standby for Clearance

These words were spoken between a KC-130 transport plane commander and a Pathfinder pilot during a recent transPac. A flight of four ferry aircraft and a Pathfinder were en route from one island to another when they encountered rough weather at flight level 290. None of the five aircraft had working radar and the Pathfinder had lost HF communications with the airways controller.

The Pathfinder flight did have communications with the KC-130 which was flying separately and carrying the maintenance supplies for the ferry aircraft. The KC-130 had been passing position reports for the flight over its HF radios to the airways controller. When the rough weather was encountered the Pathfinder pilot, whose mission was to lead and navigate for the flight, asked the KC-130 to request clearance for his five aircraft to flight level 370.

Immediately after making his request, the flight leader started to climb. At this point the KC-130 informed him that he did not have clearance to climb. The reply was,

"As far as anyone is concerned, we are at flight level 290."

The Pathfinder flight leveled off in a block altitude from flight level 370 to flight level 405. Only the Pathfinder and his wingman had sight of each other. Word was received from the airways controller that the flight did not have clearance to climb because there was a commercial air carrier ahead and above them.

Word was relayed by the KC-130 to the flight leader that he did not have clearance to climb and that the airways controller wanted to know the flight's present altitude. There was no reply. The KC-130 decided to give the controller the altitudes as they had been reported to the flight leader from the different members of the flight. The air controller again requested the KC-130 to tell the Pathfinder flight that the aircraft had not been given clearance to climb and that they were to be at flight level 290.

Again there was no reply. After several anxious minutes the flight reported it had joined. An approach frequency was passed to the flight and an uneventful approach and landing at destination were accomplished.

A few questions Grampaw Pettibone might ask:

1. What was the forecast weather en route?

2. Why didn't even one of five multimillion dollar aircraft have a working radar?

3. When was that discovered?

4. When did the Pathfinder lose communications?

5. Why didn't the flight abort?

Would you say that a near disaster had been avoided or that several air crews just had a lucky day? It was a lucky day for the innocent civilians who just happened to be aboard the commercial air carrier.

Concerned Naval Aviator



Grampaw Pettibone says:

My achin' ulcers! Gramps doesn't have to ask those questions, you already have. Sounds like professionalism took a vacation on this flight. When you're in a tight spot you don't hide your head in the sand and hope it all works out for the best. Confess your dilemma and give the innocent a chance to change course. Declaring an emergency when total control of a situation is lost has not gone out of style. A red face is a darn sight healthier than none at all. If the Pathfinder lost communications, why didn't another flight member speak up? This potentially disastrous incident was the product of misguided initiative, poor headwork, poor planning and an overt violation of regulations — all combined with uncanny perfection.