



# grampaw pettibone

## Head Up, Wing Down

A flight of four RF-8As were briefed by the flight leader for individual departures through a low overcast. They were to continue individually for entry into the mirror landing practice pattern at the auxiliary field. Vertigo and generator failure were discussed as well as other emergency procedures. All aircraft were fueled to 5,800 pounds and it was planned to shoot heavy passes from the estimated initial MLP weight of about 4,000 pounds until reaching maximum gross touchdown weight.

At about 30 miles out, our victim called for the current field altimeter and at 15 miles he received confirmation of the scheduled Charlie time. Approaching the break, the pilot shifted to paddles frequency which he had previously set on the manual position. Unable to contact paddles, the pilot switched back to tower and was cleared to break and contact paddles downwind.

The break was executed at 1,500 feet and 300 knots. He reduced the power to 82 percent, extended the speed brakes and rolled into 60 degrees of bank. After 90 degrees of turn and at 220 knots, the pilot lowered the landing gear, shallowed the bank to 30 degrees and turned his attention back to the field. Glancing back in the cockpit after 90 degrees of turn, the pilot noted the airspeed approaching 170 knots. At this point he added power to 90 percent and again looked back to the field.

Shortly thereafter, the aircraft began to roll and pitch up mildly. The pilot attempted to level his wings with opposite rudder, noting the airspeed to be 130 knots and angle of attack at 22-25 units.

At this time he was experiencing disorientation and *thought* the aircraft rolled to about 60 degrees right



wing down. Passing 500 feet, he pulled the curtain and ejected successfully, landing in soft dirt.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**Great balls of fire! If this fiasco don't wilt the lily, nothin' will.**

Here's a case of just plain doping off. Old Gramps has been out there at night and bewildered at times, but never enough to forget all the fundamentals of flying that bird in the dark. You've got to put that wing up for landing, Bub, or you darn well better have enough airspeed to stay airborne. Can't beat that checkoff list to keep you out of trouble — and alive. Not

usin' that flip-top wing on the *Crusader* is like walkin' in the rain with a closed umbrella. (May 1966)

## Danger Areas

An SBD pilot, flying at 4,000 feet about three miles off the Atlantic coast, suddenly heard "a noise similar to a loud clap of the hands." Inspection in the air failed to show anything wrong. Upon returning to base, the pilot discovered a jagged hole about three inches long and an inch wide in the leading edge of the wing.

When the wing was removed, an unexploded 20mm high-explosive incendiary projectile was found on top of the auxiliary gas tank. The nose fuse of the shell had been sheared off when it entered the wing. It was believed that a serious accident was prevented only because the shell had reached its maximum range and was tumbling when it hit.

The Trouble Board reported that the accident proved to the pilots of this squadron that firing notices must be studied while on the ground and danger areas given a wide berth in the air. In order to make it easy for the pilots to do this, the squadron has now adopted the old Navy custom of having all local danger areas plotted on a large map. The map is kept up-to-date by the navigator and is hung in the ready room where pilots can take a good look at it before each flight.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

**You don't get the Purple Heart for getting wounded on a friendly firing range!**

Firing notices are issued for your protection. Believe what they say — and don't wait to do so until somebody in the squadron gets hit. (July 1944)

## Neither Rain Nor Snow . . .

A section of A-4s was returning to base on an IFR flight plan. Prior to takeoff for the flight home, forecast weather was 300 feet broken and one mile visibility. Single pilot minimums at home plate were 200 feet and one-half mile. The flight failed to update the destination weather forecast en route with metro. Each pilot had adequate fuel to attempt an approach and proceed to a suitable alternate.

Upon arrival at the base, the flight was split up for individual approaches. When aircraft #1 commenced, existing weather was 300 feet and one-half mile visibility in rain and fog. Ten miles from the airport, #1 elected to turn out and proceed to his alternate airport. Aircraft #2 was passing 2,500 feet in its approach when GCA advised the pilot existing weather was now indefinite, 300 feet obscured, one-eighth of a

mile visibility.

The pilot of #2 was also advised that #1 had diverted to an alternate airfield. Aircraft #2 elected to continue to home plate. During the GCA portion of the approach, he was consistently below glide path. At decision height, the pilot was warned to use "caution" since he was below glide path. He was then told he was "well below" and if the runway was not in sight, to execute a missed approach.

About this time the pilot sighted the high intensity lights, followed shortly by the green threshold lights. The radar altimeter, set at 150 feet, sounded an aural warning. The pilot felt comfortable and continued, transitioning to a VFR approach.

Only immediately prior to ground impact did the pilot realize the extreme danger. Then it was too late. The aircraft touched down approximately 450 feet short of the runway

threshold on centerline. The nose gear collapsed and the aircraft slid straight ahead coming to rest 320 feet down the runway. The pilot secured the engine during the slide and was assisted from the aircraft by crash crew personnel. He suffered only minor scratches.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

A classic case of get-homeitis! This one corners the market on poor judgment. This aerial jockey was warned about the poor weather, pressed a below-glide-path approach and tried to land VFR with only line-up information as a visual clue. The rain and fog eliminated any depth cue that might have assisted him.

Great horned toadies! This mishap could'a been prevented if the pilot had accepted the fact that the weather was below minimums, executed a missed approach and proceeded to an alternate. Sometimes the obvious escapes us. . . .

