



grampaw pettibone

Lt. Crandall Saves Pilot/Plane

Lt. Ken Crandall is a Naval Flight Officer instructor assigned to VF-124, an F-14A readiness training squadron. On January 19, 1978, he and a replacement pilot were engaged in routine air combat maneuvering training in their F-14A *Tomcat*. The offensive flight syllabus called for a split S maneuver with about 5,000 feet of vertical separation between the F-14A and an adversary aircraft.

The *Tomcat* began the maneuver with an airspeed of 325 knots and an altitude of 23,000 feet. The plane rolled inverted and pulled through the vertical but suddenly ceased to complete the maneuver, with the aircraft nose 60-70 degrees below the horizon. Lt. Crandall noticed little or no G forces on the aircraft. He encouraged the pilot to complete the maneuver but received no response. Passing the adversary aircraft altitude of 18,000 feet, Crandall again tried without success to initiate response from the pilot. He started shouting at the pilot to "pull out," and had decided to eject as the aircraft reached 10,000 feet at .92 IMN.

Realizing that every moment delayed increased the amount of flail injury he would sustain from ejection at that airspeed, Crandall still elected to try a final attempt at eliciting a response from the pilot. Yelling "pull out" repeatedly, he detected slight lateral movement of the wings and began to feel positive G on the aircraft.

Recovery from the dive pullout was accomplished at 6,000 feet above ground level. The aircrew immediately started for NAS Miramar with the pilot having no recollection of the events which had occurred in the past several minutes. Lt. Crandall felt the



pilot was still incoherent and indecisive, and encouraged him to fly toward home plate.

As time passed and Crandall con-

tinued talking, the pilot appeared to grow calm and to sound better on the radio. Crandall ensured that the pilot had fully regained his senses and then worked him into a ground controlled straight-in approach at Miramar.

A squadron landing signal officer manned a radio beside the runway to talk the pilot through the final landing/touchdown phase. This coordination between Miramar air controllers, the LSO, and Crandall resulted in an uneventful landing.

Crandall's decision to remain with the aircraft despite the fact that each passing second rapidly decreased his chances for a safe ejection and his success in getting the pilot's attention (the pilot recalls only semi-consciously hearing and responding) saved the pilot's life, prevented major injury to himself and saved an F-14A *Tomcat*.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

"Oh, my achin' back!" Jumpin'



at that airspeed could ruin your whole posture. Ole Gramps is proud to put Lt. Crandall on the list of "pros." In my book he is a real hero - it's tough to delay that one more second and keep usin' the ole noggin'.

Naval Flight Officers take "pride!" Crandall again proves the real worth of two-place fighters with a "pro" in the back seat.

Naval Aviation Tradition

Recently Ole Gramps received a letter from an air traffic controller who had saved a pilot from the embarrassment of a belly flopper with his helo. The controller was sure he had earned at least a bottle of "wine" from the aeroplane driver (Navy tradition?). Over the years Gramps has seen aviators, who failed to drop their hooks or lower their landing gear on approaches, give "bottles" at the end of

a cruise to LSOs who "saved" them.

Additionally, pilots surviving a bail out or ejection have been known to give a "bottle" to the parachute rigger who last packed their parachute. Gramps has to think these "traditional fines" were offered, by the pilots involved, more in the spirit of thanks to the individual who saved the pilot from further embarrassment or an accident, rather than as a purely disciplinary action. At the bar tradition chimes: "He who enters covered here, buys the bar a round of cheer." There are very few moments when aeroplane jockeys really have an opportunity to confront a controller who has done him good. Saving a driver from the

embarrassment of a "belly flop" probably does warrant a bottle of rosé, to be consumed in moderation, of course, as well as a note of "Thanks!"

Navy tradition? Who's to say for sure, but any pilot who makes a gear-up pass and refuses to at least verbally acknowledge the controller's alert performance ain't my kind of people.

Gramps personally votes to keep what may only be a "perceived tradition" by some and a "real tradition" by others, alive. In this case Gramps has sent the controller in question a bottle of rosé. Gramps likes controllers who have spirit and realize their importance to the team. Controllers take heart and keep the safe calls comin'. Some days it pays off with a little extra comradery, some days it don't. Pilots are not obligated to reward you (with booze) for your efforts. It's sorta like refusin' to buy the bar a round of cheer when the bell rings. Not a popular move to say the least, but I've seen it done. So - enjoy the wine - Gramps is personally thankful and proud you saved us an aeroplane. Besides, I love tradition.

