



grampaw pettibone

Flat-Hatter

On a beautiful July morning, a young ferry pilot departed El Paso International in an AF-1E he had accepted at NAS Alameda the previous day. A VFR flight plan was filed direct to NAS Dallas at 21,000 feet. The pilot reported his position to Wink radio, then proceeded to the Dyess AFB area.

At this point, however, he deviated from his planned route and a short time later crashed the *Fury* in a plowed field. Witnesses report the aircraft made several extremely low passes in the vicinity prior to the crash landing. It may be hard to believe but these passes were near or over his father-in-law's home.

Luckily several residents of the area saw the aircraft crash-land and rushed to the pilot's aid. They were unable to remove the canopy, but cut a hole in it and pulled the flat-hatter out. He received a cut above the left eye and a cerebral concussion. The aircraft sustained strike damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Oh, my achin' back! Any description of the cause factors involved in this needless accident other than plain ole flat-hatting would be wasting words. Wit-



nesses' statements verified that the pilot was making unauthorized maneuvers at an unauthorized altitude. How many times have I read these overworked words!

There isn't a pilot flying today who hasn't been warned about flat-hatting at least 100 times, yet this guy thought he could beat the odds. I'll admit he's rather lucky in one way—most flat-hatters end up a very unhealthy kind of statistic. (November 1963)



Divert Dividend

Upon an A-3's arrival at a divert field, GCA took control of the *Sky-warrior* at 1,500 feet on a modified base leg. GCA issued a turn to final with instructions to perform the landing check. These were acknowledged. On the glide path, the pilot said he was having some difficulty in maintaining his position because of a light fuel load.

Nevertheless, he proceeded without incident until just prior to touchdown. In switching his attention from the mirror to the runway, the pilot saw pulsing red lights lining the runway. He thought the lights were line-up aids; therefore, no wave-off was initiated. The aircraft settled to the runway without benefit of undercarriage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Someday, someone will come up with a Dilbert-proof method of getting the gear down when it's supposed to be, but until such time let's all use what we've got—the checkoff list, wave-off lights and our heads. (March 1967)

Super Rescue

Late one afternoon two construction workers lining the inside of a 650-foot smokestack became trapped 250 feet from the top when the scaffolding they were using collapsed. The two men, supported by chest harnesses, clung to the broken scaffold. Various rescue techniques were considered and rejected until a call was initiated for helicopter assistance. Time was now a factor as concern grew over the possible failure of the scaffold and lifelines. About 2255, the

Chicago Coast Guard air station was asked to help.

En route weather was checked as satisfactory and the alert HH-52A launched at 2319. Lower than forecast ceilings forced the crew to file an en route IFR flight plan. A VOR approach and radar vectors were utilized by the crew to land at the scene, at 0110.

The aircrew briefed with local plant supervisors and received a thorough update on the exact location and predicament of the trapped workers. Local equipment available and the capabilities of on-scene workers were discussed. The plant representatives suggested the HH-52A hoist cable be attached to the lines on the chest harnesses so that the men could be pulled out vertically. The pilot rejected this idea because the men might be injured by scraping or bumping the inside of the chimney during the lift.

A steel cage much like a large bird cage was found. It was five feet high, three feet square and made of metal bars with a cable attachment welded on top. The plan was to attach 250 feet of cable to the eye of the cage, which would then be hand lowered to the trapped men by workers positioned on a catwalk atop the smokestack. The HH-52A delivered the cable, cage and two workers to the catwalk using the helo rescue winch.

The cage was then lowered to the trapped men. The weather was deteriorating with the ceiling down to 1,000 feet AGL as the helo positioned itself, at 0400, over the catwalk. The workers attached their end of the cable to the helo mechanism. The slack was taken up and all was ready with the helo hovering over the top of the stack.

When, via portable radio, the trapped workers passed the word that one of them was inside the cage, the pilot began a slow vertical ascent to raise the cage. After moving the cage up

about 30 feet, the pilot lost sight of the top of the stack and, since there was no reference point, he had great difficulty maintaining a stable hover. With calm assistance and encouragement from the crewman, the pilot smoothed out and continued his ascent.

At 900 feet AGL (250 feet above the stack) the HH-52A entered the overcast. Almost simultaneously the crewman reported the cage clear of the stack. Using voice reports from the crewman, the helo pilot eased to a clear spot and started down. Soon he was low enough to regain visual contact with the stack and used it to judge his rate of descent until the cage was lowered to the ground.

After refueling, the cage and cable were again delivered to the catwalk. The ceiling was getting lower, so the pilot stopped the rescue attempt. The crew waited six hours and, finally, at 1100 the ceiling improved to 1,000 feet AGL. The second man was then successfully extracted the same way as the first.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Applause! Applause! Gramps is very proud of this crew. They were briefed, prepared, considered alternatives, selected a reasonable plan and stuck with it! They displayed knowledge of their limitations and had the moral courage not to exceed them. They exhibited excellent crew coordination, coupled with good judgment, during an evolution surrounded by fatigue and urgency. They refused to be over-extended when the easy decision would have been to attempt the second rescue right after the first. Well done, lads! Gramps salutes Lt. Richard Hauschildt, pilot; Ltjg. Jeffery Kaylor, copilot; and AT2 David Larson, crewman. (Source for this article was *On Scene*.)

