



# grampaw pettibone

## Tanker, Dry – Crew, Wet

A KA-6D was accepted at an East Coast naval air station for transfer to a West Coast repair facility (NARF). The aircraft departed with all fuel tanks filled. The first leg of the flight to a planned Air Force base fuel stop was uneventful. While on deck, the pilot requested that the ground crew fuel only the fuselage tanks, and 938 gallons of JP-4 were taken aboard.

On start, the pilot noted that the main fuel quantity indicator or needle showed 8,600 pounds with 1,000 pounds in the wing tanks. Shortly after takeoff on the next leg, en route to a Midwest ANG base, the crew observed the left fuel psi light on. It



remained illuminated for the remainder of the flight. The oxygen caution light also came on intermittently.

The pilot was unable to reset the constantly flashing master caution light, so he disabled it by pulling it slightly out of its socket. During the descent to the ANG base, the low-fuel caution light illuminated. Both crewmen (pilot and enlisted aircrewman) noted the main fuel needle indicating 4,200-4,400 pounds. The pilot declared "minimum fuel" to the controller and continued with a maximum range descent. During a momentary level-off, the low fuel light went out. The pilot continued in his visual straight-in approach with no further low-fuel indications.

After landing, the crew attempted to trouble-shoot the left fuel psi caution light by depressing the fuel boost pump test button. No degradation of engine performance was noted. The crew concluded that the light was incorrect but also noted the main fuselage needle indicating 3,200 pounds compared to 2,000 pounds of fuselage fuel shown on the selectable needle. A full load of fuel was requested and 13,075 pounds of JP-4 were taken on.

The crew planned to stop at a West Coast NAS in Fog Valley for a 20 minute package pickup next morning. Upon starting at the ANG base, the same left fuel psi light and the oxygen caution light discrepancies experienced the previous day were noted. The flight continued and a landing was made at NAS Fog Valley after 2+07 hours airborne.

The crew departed on the final leg after a 22-minute on-deck package pickup. (No fuel was received.) Both crewmen observed 4,300 pounds of



fuel indicated on the main needle. After climbing out, leveling off and cruising for a time at FL200, a descent to 12,000 feet was made. During a further descent from 12,000 to 6,000 feet MSL, the crew observed the low fuel caution light on and a main fuel needle indication of 3,200 to 3,400 pounds with the selectable needle indicating zero wing fuel.

The aircraft's position at this time was 23 nautical miles between the 130 and 140 degrees radial from the NARF just south of a bridge. The KA-6D crew declared no emergency during descent and was cleared for a visual approach with a right turn away from the field to clear the city and a commercial airport nearby before making the final landing approach.

On intercepting the runway center line, the landing checklist was completed. Airspeed was being reduced to 150 kias. As power was added to stabilize speed, the right fuel psi light illuminated. The right engine began running rough and quit within seconds. The pilot advanced the left throttle, raised the gear, attempted a

restart, and deployed the ram air turbine. During this restart attempt the left engine flamed out also.

The crew remained in the aircraft until clearing the bridge and then ejected. A Coast Guard boat observed the ejection and recovered both crewmen within approximately five minutes.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy jumpin' pinball machines! This aircraft had more flashin' lights going than a penny arcade. The only light that wasn't on was the "big picture bulb" over the crew's head saying, "Hey, we get the message!" Aside from the fact these gents launched from Fog Valley with a known discrepancy, had they spoken up, they just may have been lucky enough to stretch it across the ramp. This one, boys, is another shot right in the old wallet!

### Limp Blimp

The following article of interest was passed to Old Gramps through the mailbag.

"Aug. 1942. Airship L-8, with engines stopped, made a crash landing at Daly City, Calif. The crew was not on board. No parachutes were missing and there was no evidence of fire or any other reason for a hasty departure. Both engines were stopped when the blimp was first sighted from the beach. No reason for the incident could be found and it remains undetermined. It was theorized that the passenger may have inadvertently fallen overboard. The pilot stopped the engines and in the attempt to retrieve the passenger from the sea, he, too, fell overboard."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balloonin' gas bags! Someone musta told these boys to "go pound sand!" This one has Old Gramps by the whiskers. There's not enough meat in the accident report to say grace over. However, if any of you old pros of the days gone by can shed any light on this mystery, drop me a note. And if, by any chance, you partook in this impromptu Daly City triangle swim call, then fess up! I promise amnesty.

