



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Exercise "Dawn Patrol"

Following an 0430 brief as the spare "alert fighter" the crew of this ill-fated F-14A *Tomcat*, CAP-04, launched as the duty combat air patrol (CAP) fighter. Climbout and overhead tanking were uneventful. CAP-04 then proceeded to intercept incoming contacts participating in the spirited "Dawn Patrol" exercise. After two hours of flight, CAP-04 was directed to remain airborne through the next event and vectored to a tanker, taking on 9,000 pounds of fuel. With a full load of fuel and 1,700 pounds of assorted missiles, CAP-04's gross weight topped out at 60,000 pounds.

Immediately after refueling, the F-14 was vectored to intercept two targets proceeding inbound at approximately 30,000 feet altitude. The intercept was initiated in zone 2 afterburner with the pilot acquiring visual contact with a pair of USAF F-15s in a right, line-of-bearing formation. CAP-04 passed the lead F-15 head-on and maneuvered to meet the trailing aircraft head-on. The second F-15 executed a starboard turn which CAP-04 matched with a port turn.

After more turning the two aircraft again passed head-on and then reversed. CAP-04 directed his RIO to keep track of the lead F-15 (7 o'clock low) while he executed a climbing right turn toward the trailing F-15 now at his 4 o'clock position. Climbing through 30,000 feet at 150 kias, gross weight estimated at 59,000 pounds, in a decelerating 20-degree nose-up right turn, the aircraft stalled and departed controlled flight.

Anti-departure controls were immediately applied with military power selected. No recovery was effected. Instead, the aircraft rapidly entered an upright spin to the right, verified by turn needle and visual cues. Anti-spin controls were applied. After two 360-degree horizontal turns, engine "chugs" were heard, accompanied by simultaneous aural warnings



April in Paris

of turbine overtemp. Both throttles were retarded from military to idle power. The aircraft's nose made two oscillations and the tail was felt to settle as the F-14 became firmly established in a flat upright spin. The pilot was progressively incapacitated by the increasing "eyeballs out" G force and was pinned against the glare shield with his lap belt loose and shoulder harness unlocked.

The RIO, with lap belt tight and shoulder harness locked (but with several inches of slack) was bent forward with his helmet forced against the glare shield. While passing through 19,000 feet he transmitted "Mayday, Mayday, 04's in a spin, 04's in a spin." Ten seconds later, he transmitted, "16,000 feet, canopy's going." The RIO experienced extreme difficulty reaching and pulling the canopy jet-tison handle. It required both hands due to the excessive G forces.

His oxygen mask, which was sliding up over his eyes, was removed in an

unsuccessful attempt to reach the ejection seat face curtain. However, he was able to reach the lower ejection seat handle and pulled it with both hands, ejecting himself and the totally incapacitated pilot as they passed through 12,000 feet. The flyers had made eight or nine spin revolutions. During the descent, the RIO communicated on his PRC-90 survival radio with the circling F-15 pilots who called for rescue assistance. Two SH-3D helos located approximately 50 miles away were dispatched to the scene and rescued the *Tomcat* crew.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Going into a spin is like stepping out on your wife. It may be exciting and you may get away with it, but if she (or the Grim Reaper) finds out about your "spinning" around, you're in for trouble.

The cause of this accident is tagged plainly and simply as pilot error. This experienced aviator is known to be aggressive and flies his aircraft to the edge of its limits. Old Gramps supports this philosophy wholeheartedly. But dang-it-all you gotta know what those limits are and be able to effect recovery should they be exceeded. If you can't, then don't!! Although highly experienced, this was the first time this pilot had flown the F-14 into such a high altitude, high gross weight, and low airspeed regime. He misjudged the situation badly, lost control of his aircraft, and nearly lost his and his RIO's life.

Thanks to the RIO, the rescue that followed was more successful than the intercept and resulted in a comparatively brief raft ride. Despite bad positioning during ejection, neither crewman suffered significant injury.

Gents, it's more than well-documented that the F-14 exhibits a flat-

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spin tendency following departure/engine stalls, and recovery from one is like pulling a scrapping cat out of a wire basket. No more demonstration or ad hoc flight test data is desired or required, please!

Flaming Phantom on Deck

The section of F-4Js split up and proceeded independently to marshal for a night recovery. After pushing over for descent, the pilot of the first *Phantom* observed an A-7 close ahead. He executed several S turns and slowed his aircraft in order to increase separation.

During the S turns his attitude directional indicator (ADI) froze in azimuth at 150 degrees but continued to function normally in pitch and bank. The horizontal situation indicator functioned normally and was used for heading information until the *Phantom* was about four miles from the carrier, at which time the ADI began working properly. Final radar contact was established with the F-4J left of course. Shortly thereafter, the pilot was given a heading correction, informed that he was approaching glide slope and advised to commence further descent. He responded late, holding well above glide slope until the one and one-half-mile point where he went below glide slope.

From one and one-half to three-quarter miles, the aircraft was on

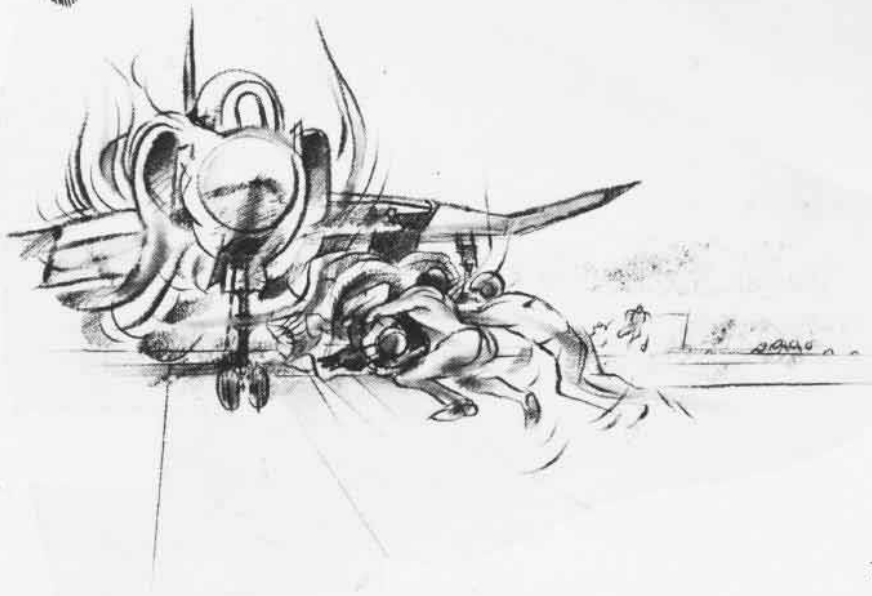
centerline. At the ball call, the aircraft settled below glide path. The landing signal officer (LSO) transmitted, "Don't settle." The aircraft continued to settle. The LSO advised, "You're settling." Power was added, causing the aircraft to go above glide slope. Then power was reduced and the aircraft decelerated, falling below glide path. "Power back on," advised the LSO. There was no response from the aircraft. "Power!" called the LSO. "Wave off! Wave off! Wave off! Wave off!" Simultaneously, the wave-off lights were actuated but there was still no response from the pilot.

In close, the aircraft drifted right, then rolled back to the left. The aircraft struck the ramp in a left-wing-down, nose-high attitude and exploded into flames. The radar intercept officer (RIO) initiated dual ejection and the crewless aircraft continued up the deck and engaged the number one arresting cable, stopping in mid-deck after 155 feet of rollout.

The pilot was ejected to the left, landing in the water off the ship's port side, and was rescued within 20 minutes. The RIO was ejected forward. His chute drifted over and onto the flight deck. With 40 knots of wind across the deck, the RIO was dragged by his chute into the burning F-4. He came to rest under the wing and belly of the burning aircraft with his shroud lines entangled in the left wing pylon. He was pulled to safety.



Grampaw Pettibone says:



Holy roastin' RIO! To escape a ramp strike and then become shroud-bound in flames on the flight deck is asking too much. The cause of this accident was pilot error. Had it not been for the quick reaction of the *Forrestal* flight deck crew, and the gallant efforts of V-2 division officers, Lieutenant Commander Denny Bergo and Lieutenant Dave Hastings, this RIO, who was severely injured, may not have survived.

Observing the bright fireball as the aircraft impacted the ramp, LCdr. Bergo and Lt. Hastings ran aft to assist with rescue operations. Fire-fighting teams had broken out fog foam hoses and were approaching the aircraft. Some delay was experienced in getting the hoses activated. LCdr. Bergo could see the RIO lying under the burning aircraft, engines running with afterburners ignited. Upon seeing the RIO move his arm in an attempt to free himself, LCdr. Bergo dashed under the left wing and tried to pull him free, but he remained entangled in his shroud lines. Lt. Hastings appeared simultaneously to assist. Together, the two officers managed to free the six-foot three-inch, 250-pound RIO from his harness and drag him away from the burning aircraft. The engines were ultimately secured by a heavy dosage of fog foam.

The quick reactions of LCdr. Bergo and Lt. Hastings resulted in saving the life of a fellow shipmate. They are highly deserving of the Navy-Marine Corps Lifesaving Medal which they received for their actions.