



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Memo from Gramps

Old Gramps recently came upon some golden words in the May issue of *Aerospace* magazine which I feel obliged to pass along. The following, taken out of context, reflects RAF Squadron Leader Barrett's feelings on pilot factor accidents:

"To err is human, as we have often been told, and I cannot see anything that will radically alter man's fallibility. Aircrew error has become a very emotive issue. It is the aircrew who have the final responsibility and, more often than not, it is the aircrew who also have the unenviable task of trying to sort out the situation when it is all going to worms. But we have become too accustomed to shooting the pianist even when the piano is out of tune or when the score is wrong. Simply because the accident situation occurs at the final man-machine interface (i.e., pilot-aircraft) we should take more care before we rush in and blame the pilot. Conversely, when the pilot is skillful enough to rescue a situation that was not of his own making, we should be much more ready to heap acclaim upon him. However, the human being will continue to show its limitations – limitations in perception, in understanding, and in reaction and implementation. No, let us think twice before shooting the pianist; seldom will he not have been giving of his best even if his best still costs us an aeroplane. On the other hand, any breaches of discipline should be dealt with swiftly so the distinction can be made more easily by those on the sidelines."

Indian Ocean Bingo

"Red Griffin 711 – your signal 'bingo!' Nearest land bears 090 de-



grees, 1,900 nautical miles"

" . . . are you kidding me?"

The Lockheed S-3A *Viking* had returned to the landing pattern overhead the carrier, following a somewhat fatiguing five-hour mission. During preparation for landing, the crew was unable to extend the aircraft's tail hook. Executing all the prescribed emergency procedures and several long-shot possibilities, and coordinating with squadron maintenance technicians manning tower frequency, they were still unable to effect tail hook extension.

After carefully assessing their dilemma, they selected the divert option. Taking on 14,000 pounds of fuel from two A-7Es and one KA-6D

tanker they headed east, destination mid-Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

Five and one-half hours and 1,935 nautical miles later, the tired and hungry crew of *Red Griffin 711* landed safely, ending a ten-and-one-half-hour flight, for the longest carrier-based divert in history.



Grampaw Pettibone says,

Holy great circle routes! This may be one for several record books: *Guinness World Records*, *Diverts I've Known and Loved* and *Aviator Gamesmanship*.

To old Gramps the most impressive thing about this evolution was the timely planning, excellent coordination and professionalism of the total carrier/air wing/aircrew team. Their action resulted in a normal and safe landing ashore, with no aircraft damage (and a little reward of a night's liberty for the crew?). Too often, situations similar to this have, through lack of coordination and/or untimely decision, decayed into a "no-options remaining" situation with unfortunate losses of both men and machines.

The alternate solution to this problem – a nylon barricade arrestment – would also have been a record first for the S-3. Some aircraft damage would have been expected with nylon strap burns on canopy and windcreens, damage to refueling probe fairings, nose gear doors, wing leading edge, antenna, and possibly foddled engines. Fortunately, this option was not required.

This team did it right and old Gramps is proud! Additionally, the VS-38 aircrewmembers handled their situation like the pros they are supposed to be, and rightfully deserve their commendations as AirPac "Pros of the Week."

For the record, Gramps will recog-



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great sufferin' supervision (or lack thereof)! This is enough to blow your socks off — with legs attached. It's stuff like this that leaves old Gramps speechless. So I've enclosed some appropriate comments from the investigation safety CPO: "This is one very lucky blueshirt. He was cut and badly bruised and may require knee surgery. But he could have been hurt a lot worse. He may have lost his eyes or even his life. The safety petty officer had seen a tie-down chain with the hook pointed up vice down, and stopped the move. Why then was the hazard not removed prior to continuing?"

nize the 1,935-nautical-mile divert as the longest U.S. Navy bingo recorded. However, our USAF "cousins-in-blue" in the early sixties logged a 3,300-plus-mile divert (without in-flight tanking), following a U-2 missed approach at Guam, landing at Hickam Field, Hawaii. (Gramps invites contributions from potential B-52 candidates.)

Also for the record, old Gramps would like it to be known that he is not entirely fooled by all this, for it is well known that any aviator worth his salt will do anything for a little extra flight time — a cold beer at the end of a long flight, and a night's liberty ashore (gamesmanship extraordinaire).

From the Mailbag:

You'll get a bang out of this!

"I was walking chocks on the port side of an F-14 heading forward on the port side of the ship right between the hangar bay divisional doors. The aircraft was moving very slowly when suddenly the safety petty officer, who was near the aft part of the aircraft, blew his whistle. Wheel chocks were put in place.

"The aircraft director had a dispute with the safety petty officer about why he had blown his whistle. The director then told the safety petty officer to get off the hangar deck. He resumed moving the aircraft. I was to stay near the main landing gear to get the chocks in quickly when they were called for. An air conditioning cart was parked about three feet from

where the landing gear would pass, so I waited until there was enough room for me to fit in between them and the plane. It was dark in this area due to shadows from the aircraft and red lights in use in the hangar bay. Seeing no hazards, I continued to follow the aircraft — chocks in hand. I moved near the landing gear, facing it for a few brief seconds, awaiting a signal for chocks-in. Suddenly the aircraft main gear tire exploded!

"I felt my legs blown back from the pressure, followed by a terrific pain in the left knee and ankles. I ran to a clear spot aft of the aircraft, stood there for a few seconds, and then sat down on the hangar deck due to the intense pain in my legs."

Every day we face some hidden hazard aboard a carrier, but it really hurts when we see a problem and do nothing about it. Every job we take has some calculated risk involved, but this task rapidly went from calculated risk to near uncontrolled disaster. Anytime an aircraft is to be moved it takes a team of heads-up, alert people to ensure this type of accident doesn't occur. Here we have an example of a supervisor failing to use the inputs of his men. Think about it. How many times have you done basically the same thing but got away with it? When will your luck run out?"

I couldn't have said it better, Chief. Thank you for your guidance and your concern.

Some Blow-up!

