

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Bronco Busters

A section of OV-10s arrived at the initial point for landing at home base following a night ordnance training mission in good weather. The flight was at 4,000 feet, which is 1,500 above specified initial point altitude. Both lead, a pilot under instruction, and the wingman, the pilot in command (PIC), had condition levers in the takeoff and land positions. Due to configuration differences, lead's drag index was 42, the wingman's 10. Prebriefed descent speed was 150 knots but, since the section was high, lead increased rate of descent by increasing speed to 175 knots and further reducing power to between 800 footpounds of torque and flight idle. The wingman was at flight idle but began to overtake lead and increased lateral separation from parade position.

Lead began leveling off at 2,200 feet but the wingman continued to overtake him and transmitted "power." The wingman's forward speed at this time was plus 10 to 15 knots. When the wingman's vertical stabilizer was 10 feet in front of lead's nose, both *Broncos* started converging. The wingman went under lead's *Bronco* and shortly thereafter collided with it. The wingman's aircraft pitched nose down. The PIC tried but failed to regain control. He and his copilot ejected with the OV-10 nearly vertical to the ground. Lead rolled right, nose down. He could not control his bird either so he and his rear seat observer also ejected. Although injured, all four flyers survived. Both OV-10s were destroyed on impact.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Ragin' reptiles! Why not make a descending turn before initial? If you gotta get down in a hurry, at least give your wingman some power to play with, especially when it's dark out.

The pilot under instruction was in that stage of replacement aircrew training when, says the report, it's a common error to increase rate of descent by increasing airspeed at minimal power. You



instructors out there, let's make that common error *uncommon*. More important, don't get trapped beyond the

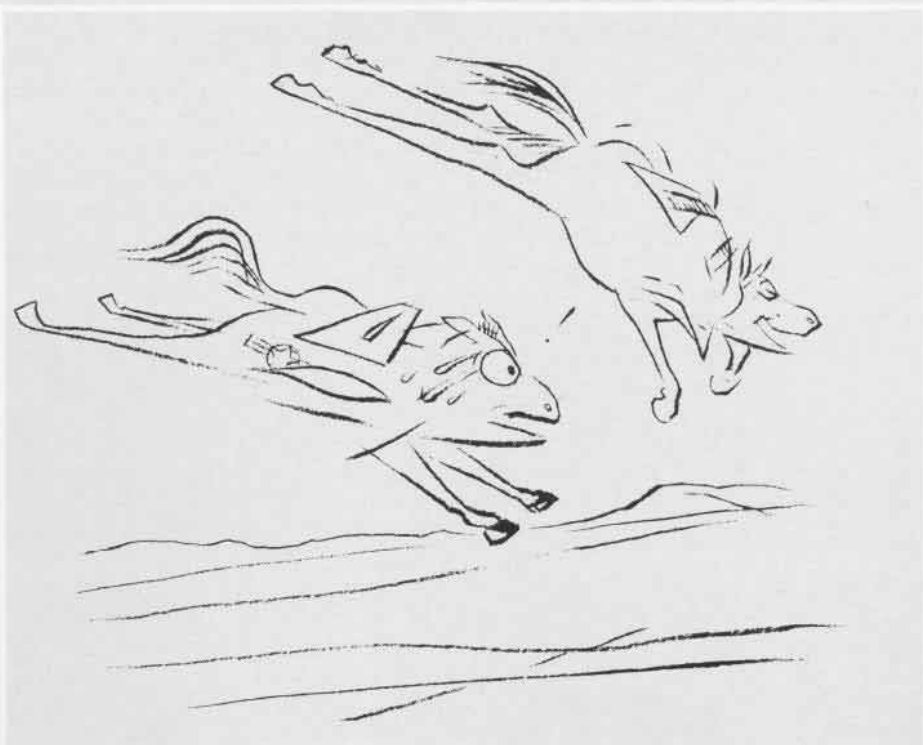
point of no return by one of your charges. Communicate. Break away if need be. Don't press it. Two healthy *Broncos* will buck no more, I'm sad to say.

## Mentors' Mistakes

Scene: traffic pattern at a busy Training Command airfield. Players: three T-34C *Mentors*. Time: dusk.

Number One entered the break for landing. The tower told him to take interval on number Two, on a waveoff, who was at One's three o'clock low approaching crosswind. Inbound for a practice precautionary emergency landing (PPEL) was number Three. One said he had Two in sight. A few seconds later Three reached high key. The tower told Three to "follow the T-34 approaching the upwind numbers downwind," meaning number One. But Three thought tower meant Two because he didn't see One. (Hang on, reader.)

As Three approached the perpendicular position of the PPEL, tower inquired if



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he had his interval at one o'clock low. "Affirmative," replied Three, still thinking it was One. (He was looking at Two). One was beneath the nose of Three.

Two, approaching the 90, was cleared to land. Eight seconds later, One called abeam and was also cleared to land second in sequence after Two. Ten seconds later, Three called past low key and was cleared to land, third in sequence.

At this point the IP in Three was concerned because he was aware of only one other *Mentor* in the pattern ahead of him, number Two, on short final, never having visually acquired One.

Three transmitted, "Tower, if we're number three [to land], I don't have the interval, am I number two [to land]?"

Just then, Two crossed the threshold. According to air traffic control standard operating procedures, Two was dropped from the landing traffic count. Tower thus replied to Three, "You're now number two [to land]." Three was still unaware of One and seeing Two cross the threshold counted him as one (to land) and himself as two (to land).

Meanwhile, the student in One was in a wide, low slow approach, in effect keeping his bird out of Three's field of vision. Three's left wing was up for the PPEL profile.

The tower controller's attention now shifted to an aircraft calling for the break.

Thankfully, an alert assistant runway duty officer (RDO) saw two T-34Cs on final and quickly warned the RDO who reported, "Tower, we have two on final."

This transmission prompted One to look up, whereupon he saw a *Mentor* descending on top of him. One chopped the power and touched down short of the RDO cart. The tower controller ordered Three to wave off, which he did, missing One by an estimated 15 feet.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Bring on the bicarb! You can't cut it closer than this. Goes to show that there are days (and nights) in Naval Air when its three-dimensional chess time out there. Use all your senses — eyes, ears, intuition, whatever — to keep clear of each other, especially around airfields where traffic is as busy as bees around a hive.

Also, know that once an aircraft passes the threshold to land, it's no longer in the sequence count.



### Tow Tractor Tragedy

The duty office in an S-3A squadron, bypassing maintenance control, ordered the line crew to transport an anthropometric dummy to a *Viking* on the flight line for the day's first flight schedule event. The airman who received the call told his supervisor he would take the dummy to the aircraft. He obtained a tow tractor, gathered up the dummy from the tool room, and placed it in the passenger seat of the TA-75 tractor.

The airman was observed traveling at excessive speed en route to the line shack, where he asked the line supervisor for assistance in loading the dummy into the *Viking* and was told personnel were available at the aircraft.

He stopped near the port horizontal stabilizer where the line watch confronted him regarding excess speed. The airman replied, "The only time I get to drive is in the morning before work because I do not have a license." Whereupon the airman accelerated rapidly into a sharp left hand turn around the tail. The dummy began to topple from the tractor in the turn. Distracted by this, the airman rose in his seat and, looking to the right, reached for the dummy. About 20 feet from the nacelle of the starboard engine, the tractor straightened out. It was moving at about 20 mph. The airman turned his head forward and in the

next instant was crushed between the lower portion of the starboard engine nacelle and the top of the TA-75 tow tractor. He suffered multiple injuries and died.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

This one scores the soul! A characteristically jovial young man volunteers for a job but does it so recklessly he loses his life in the process.

The airman didn't have a support equipment (SE) license because he didn't possess a government motor vehicle operator's ID card or a valid state driver's license as required by OPNAVINST 4790.2C. He was designated a plane captain during an earlier shipboard deployment. The requirement for an SE license was waived until return to home base. Line division personnel, including the leading petty officer, *presumed* the airman had the necessary license. In fact, superiors unknowingly had assigned the airman tractor-driving tasks.

Folks, Ole Gramps must say again the bottom line: Drive safely! That's a given. But before that — before the yellow gear is allowed to move — make sure the people in the drivers' seats are trained and authorized to be there. The check and balance system in this unit fell through the crack with horrible results. How's your system working?