

Knockin' Heads

An instructor and his student Naval Aviator were on a low-level navigation training flight in a T-47A (Cessna *Citation II*). They ran into a pocket of turbulence that lasted two seconds and imposed a positive 2.8 to negative 1.7-G load on the aircraft. Both flyers struck their heads against the cockpit overhead molding. The student became disoriented and remained in that condition for about three minutes. The instructor was unhurt. The mission was aborted.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

That's one way to get some sense. Have it knocked into you.

Actually, the student had his restraint harness fastened, but loosely. The instructor's was unfastened so that he could see better outside the cockpit. He was lucky. In the T-47A, there is less downward visibility and instructors tend to unstrap and sit on the edge of the seat. What if they'd both become disoriented? Who's gonna fly the bird?

When you're driving the bird, strap yourself in. No exceptions.

Phantom Fireball

A *Phantom* was on an air combat maneuvering flight with a pair of *Tomcats* and two *Hornets*, in an area featuring both valley and mountainous-type terrain. The first two of three planned intercepts proceeded as briefed. The third began with the F/A-18s and the F-4 northbound in a wedge formation with the *Phantom* stepped down between the *Hornets*. The F-14s were southbound.

The engagement followed with the *Hornets* pursuing one F-14 and the



Phantom, in a climbing right-hand turn, going after the second.

After 270 degrees of turn, the F-4 pilot called "Fox Two, F-14 nose up ... Starboard turn." The companion

F-14 saw the *Phantom* in pursuit of his wingman and turned hard to port, resulting in a nose-on pass 1,000 feet above the *Phantom*. This F-14 then continued to rendezvous with the other *Tomcat*, climbing away to the right. At this time, the F-4 appeared to be level at 12,000 to 13,000 feet MSL in a 30-degree angle of bank turn to the right.

Next, the *Tomcats* and *Hornets* agreed to knock off the engagement but the *Phantom* crew apparently did not hear this transmission.

After passing the *Tomcat* with 1,000 feet of separation, the F-4's RIO said to the pilot, "Let's bug [out]." The pilot responded, "No. I have an F-14 on the nose." The *Phantom* was now at about 13,000 feet in a 35-degree bank to the right, passing through a 360-degree heading. Thirty degrees of turn later, the RIO felt "uneasy" due to a perceived nose drop of about 10 degrees. Airspeed was 250 knots.



The RIO also noted a ridge line west of the F-4's position and cautioned, "Watch your nose." The pilot did not respond. The *Phantom* continued its turn. Altitude was now about 9,500 feet.

"Do you have it?" asked the RIO, as the *Phantom* turned through a southerly heading. The pilot said, "uhhh," in a thoughtful tone, as if he were trying to formulate words. At 8,000 feet, with the *Phantom* pulling three Gs in a 50-degree bank and the nose about 30 degrees down, 250 knots airspeed, the RIO pulled his lower ejection handle.

Either just before, or as he was actually pulling the handle, the RIO heard the pilot command "Eject!" in a clear, loud tone.

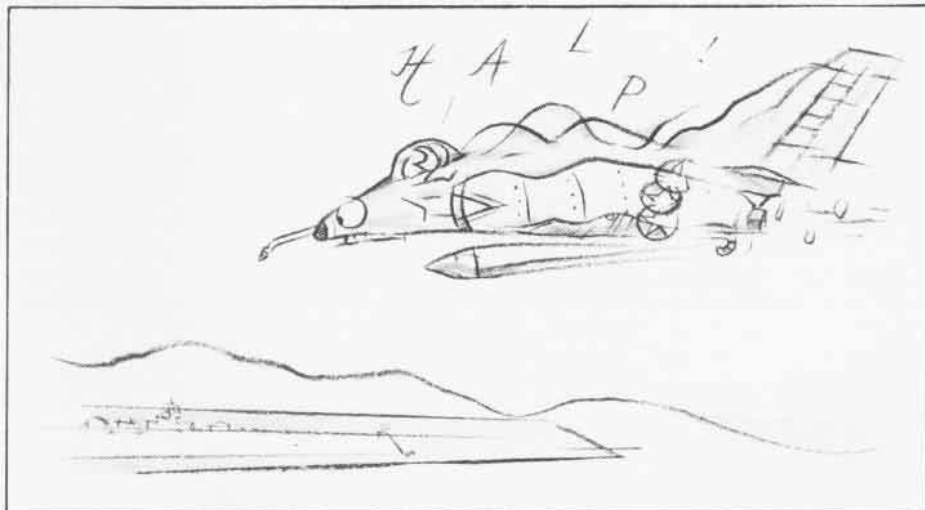
Both men ejected but the pilot was killed on impact. The RIO sustained minor injuries. It is believed that the pilot was in the early stage of seat-man separation when he struck the ground outside a survivable ejection envelope.

It was about a minute after the F-4 and the F-14 passed each other that the fireball was observed on the ridge line.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire, alright! The cause of this tragic accident could be "lettin' up on the concentration." On the other hand, maybe GLOC played a part. That's "gravity induced loss of consciousness," somethin' that can happen in high-performance aircraft, specially in dogfights. Put Gs on the machine over a very short piece of time and you might gray out, even black out. Also, the RIO in this case could have been more insistent on getting the pilot's attention. Meantime, no matter what the mission, whether you're mixin' it up in air-to-air, or just travelin' from point A to point B, keep the scan goin', and be aware of that bad gremlin called GLOC.



Up, Up and then Down, Down

The A-4F pilot was climbing through 26,000 feet on a post-maintenance inspection flight when he experienced signs of hypoxia. Lack of oxygen was manifested by the aviator's difficulty in communicating with air traffic controllers and his inability to maintain complete control of the *Skyhawk*. Still, he was aware of what was happening to him.

The aircraft lost altitude and, at a lower height, went into an unusual attitude. The pilot recovered from this and declared an emergency. He then executed an uneventful recovery at home base.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Last month, I shook my fist in the air and hollered about attention to detail and how professional success depends on it. This *Skyhawk* driver came close as a whisker to provin' the point all over again, even though it wasn't his fault. Post-flight inspection revealed that the seat pan oxygen hose assembly fittings were loose. The aviator wasn't gettin' enough oxygen.

Grant ya, there was no requirement in the daily MRC deck to inspect security of the seat pan oxygen hose assemblies. "Local" inspections have since begun to prevent any future A-4s from fallin' out of the ozone.

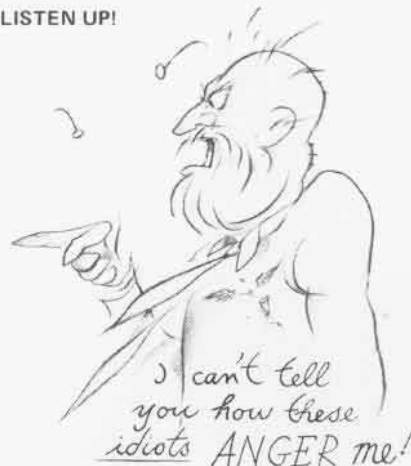
There just ain't any foolproof systems in Naval Air. Imagine losin' a bird

and a pilot because of a loose connection like this.

Details, folks, details!

Memo from Gramps

LISTEN UP!



In the past few weeks, we've had some Naval Aviators go off the deep end flat-hatting. The toll is high in lives lost and aircraft destroyed. One junior officer had a reputation for flat-hatting amongst his fellow JOs. He's dead now. Dead from flat-hatting. His C.O. was unaware of the man's bad habits.

We can't tolerate misuse of precious human lives and costly hardware.

Skippers: Do you know what your boys are doing when they are out there in the wild blue?