

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

DO Bother Me with Details

A VP-24 *Orion* was on an airways flight. Radar operator AW1 Timothy Walker had helped guide the P-3 through frontal weather. When the bird was in the clear, Walker went to the flight station. He wasn't required to do so, but he examined the exterior of the aircraft and noted a large piece of rubber partially torn loose from the prop afterbody. It was being ingested into the number two engine intake. He quickly told the pilot who, just as quickly, feathered the engine. Later, on the ground, maintenance pros determined that it would have been only minutes before the seal would have torn completely loose and fodded the engine with potentially catastrophic results.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Kudos to Petty Officer Walker for superb professionalism and being on the ball! His actions bring to mind David Noonan's words from an article he wrote for *Esquire* magazine:

*In the end,
It is attention to detail
that makes all the difference.*

*It's the center fielder's
extra two steps to the left,
the salesman's memory for
names,
the lover's phone call,
the soldier's clean weapon.*

*It is the thing that separates
the winners from the losers,
the men from the boys and, very
often, the living from the dead.*

*Professional success depends on
it,
regardless of the field.*

David Noonan, Copyright 1985



First Tour, Final Tour

The OV-10A was on a photo drop mission during a combat readiness evaluation (CRE). An aerial observer in the rear seat accompanied the pilot. Both were on their first squadron duty tour. The *Bronco* passed overhead the zone assigned as the mission drop point and, because he had launched early, the pilot proceeded to a canyon area awaiting the precise drop time. The OV-10 performed terrain masking and tactical maneuvers below 1,000 feet in a manner which persuaded ground troops that they were being attacked by an "aggressor" aircraft.

After a time, the aircraft flew straight and level above a ridgeline. The *Bronco* rolled to the inverted position. The nose fell through the horizon and the *Bronco* entered a steep dive. The OV-10 flew directly into the ground, impacting at a descent rate of 4,000 fpm, with 11 degrees left wing down, and the nose 47 degrees down.

Both flyers were killed, the aircraft destroyed.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

What a sock to the esophagus! Two men and a good bird gone forever. This young aviator lost what we nowadays call "situational awareness," which is another way of saying the *Bronco* got away from him. The accident report said he "made a gross error in judgment by initiating a maneuver that he had neither the altitude nor proficiency to recover from." No argument with that.

Turns out the pilot had four student pilot disposition boards during flight training, took two months more than the average time to complete the course, and had the lowest flight time in the squadron for four out of six months prior to the mishap. Taken together, these factors added up to trouble. No doubt about it, he was marginally proficient. The pilot flew about six hours every 30 days compared to the unit average of 15. He had asked for more flight time and the squadron tried to accommodate him but lack of funds, among other things, worked against this. The flyer asked for a transfer to the training command where he might get more time in the sky but was directed to remain on board for his full three-year tour.

Nevertheless, on the day of the accident, the pilot was enthusiastic about the mission, particularly since it was part of his first CRE. He briefed thoroughly and was in good physical shape. (The day before he had flown a good hop monitored by a CRE evaluator.) Maybe it was the enthusiasm that clouded his judgment during the extra 30 minutes of "loiter" time available due to the earlier takeoff.

Ole Gramps has gotta say that supervisors aren't all clean on this one. We are our brothers keeper. You old heads, keep an eye on younger ones. You can compensate for their inexperience with professional attention. Make sure they're gettin' the best possible training and advice you've got to offer.

Roll, Go, Whoa!

The student Naval Aviator in a TA-4J proceeded to the approach end for a "roll and go" takeoff and entry into the



boat and surely wanted to look good. He was also in the process of transferring fuel from one tank to another, which was safe and OK, but somethin' for him to think about. Then there was the audience at the LSO platform. Count 'em: three LSOs and three wives, a fiancée and a girlfriend of other students on the FCLP hop! Good for morale but bad if it pumps you up and enthusiasm crowds out proper procedures, specially one like linin' up on centerline before pourin' on the coals.

An informal study by the Naval Safety Center has revealed that roll and goes have little tactical value, while representing an unnecessary risk during a critical flight phase. The training command no longer uses them.

By the way, nose wheel steering can be used during a takeoff abort in the *Skyhawk*. But it won't help much unless you haul back on the power real quick like when trouble comes, as it did to this young flyer.

field carrier landing practice (FCLP) pattern. He taxied onto the runway at a slightly fast rate, decided he was on centerline, and added military power. He then looked inside the cockpit. As he was reading his engine instruments, he sensed something was wrong. He looked up and saw that he was drifting left. He applied right rudder and right brake to correct but did not reduce power, actuate nose wheel steering, or elect to abort takeoff. The LSO realized the *Skyhawk* was heading off the side of the runway as the aircraft passed abeam the platform. He transmitted "Check your lineup" three times, then told the student to eject. The ejection was successful. A voice from the tower exclaimed, "Oh God." The *Skyhawk's* left main gear was sheared by an arresting gear motor housing. With the engine still at military power, the aircraft sped toward the embankment of another runway left of the original, and smashed into it. The TA-4 became airborne, rolled inverted, then fell to earth on the opposite side of the runway. It slid to a halt and the engine shut down by itself.

The student may have been a bit distracted or anxious because he had "disqualified" on a previous trip to the



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Good grief, what a brain bruiser! This gent got in a hurry and learned the hard way that haste makes waste. The investigation showed he wasn't lined up to begin with. Matters really turned to worms when he didn't come back on the power and try to stop.