

It Ain't Over til It's Over

On a cold and stormy day aboard a carrier in the Mediterranean, an airman, who did not have a life preserver on, was carrying parts on the hangar deck. While walking near the edge of one of the elevators, the ship listed strongly to starboard. The airman was flipped into the water.

Fortunately, a plane guard helo was airborne and shortly after the "man overboard" call sounded, the whirlybird was hovering over the young man. A search and rescue (SAR) swimmer jumped into the water and the rescue hoist was deployed. The two sailors were hauled up to safety and the helo recovered aboard. A quick-responding medical team whisked away the airman for examination which revealed he was O.K.

After such an ordeal it is standard practice to replace the SAR swimmer with a "fresh man." The "wet" rescue swimmer was thus relieved. As he was exiting the helo, however, he was in such a hurry that he did not see an A-6 *Intruder* taxiing into position for launch just forward of his position. An alert first class petty officer safety observer hurried to the swimmer, grabbed him and pulled him away. Another couple of steps and the swimmer might have been caught up in the *Intruder's* jet blast and tossed back into the sea.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

As Ole Gramps recalls from the olden days, the best place to swim in the Med is within "seein" distance of the French Riviera, not way out there where there's no land or bikinis in sight.

This brave young fella coulda gone from hero to "helpless" quicker'n blink. Thank the Lord for that first class. You gotta be like a defensive driver when on the flight deck: expect somethin' bad to happen, then, hopefully, it won't.

Sad Surprise

The S-3A *Viking* was on a carrier-based, overwater surveillance flight

*It's not the heat,
it's the stupidity!*



with MK 76 practice bombs and sonobuoys. The crew conducted several radar run-ins on surface targets for RADEX (radar exercise) qualification

after which the sensor operator (SENSO) transmitted on the intercom, "This is getting really boring."

The mission pilot responded, "Well, are you ready to go bombing?" (The crew had briefed bombing practice after getting airborne.)

A little later, at an approximate altitude of 350 feet with airspeed 200 knots, and without any notification, the pilot added power and pulled the *Viking* into a 25-degree climb. At 2,000 feet, he began a wingover-type roll to the left. From their positions aft of the cockpit, the tactical coordinator (TACCO) and the SENSO felt the onset of a stall. They were uncertain as to whether the S-3 completed a roll or only achieved a 60-degree angle of bank before returning to wings level.

The TACCO believed the *Viking* entered a steep dive and felt a heavy load of positive Gs, as if a recovery from the dive was in progress. The SENSO felt the Gs but was uncertain about the aircraft's nose attitude.

Either the pilot or the copilot/tactical coordinator (COTAC) transmitted, "What's going on? . . . we're stalling . . . we're stalling . . . no, I got it . . . I got it."

The pilot or COTAC next said, "Now" or "No."



The pilot then ordered, "Punch out!"

One or the other initiated command ejection.

Neither the TACCO nor SENSO believed his chute fully blossomed during the ejection sequence, because they experienced no opening shock prior to impacting the water very shortly after leaving the *Viking*.

Although subsequent signaling and emergency radio difficulties ensued, a P-3 *Orion*, another S-3 and a helo from the carrier rescued the TACCO and SENSO as night was drawing near.

The COTAC's body was afloat in the sea and recovered by the helo. The pilot was not found. Apparently, neither the pilot nor the COTAC were ejected before the S-3A struck the water.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Goldang it! Seems like a brainbuster. There was no sign of mechanical troubles. Each of the four crewmen had a reputation as a pure pro. The pilot, especially, was an aggressive, athletic type who liked to fly and was good at it.

The mishap board dug deep, though. Some folks who had flown with the pilot admitted that he was apt, once in awhile, to "execute unannounced and unbrieffed aerobatic maneuvers, some . . . at low altitude." These witnesses didn't think the incidents were unsafe or involved out-of-control flight. So they didn't report them.

This squadron had an excellent safety program but the guys at the top were unaware of the pilot's negative tendencies because others didn't see a need to crack down, or at least caution, this popular, hard-charging Naval Aviator.

Ole Gramps doesn't have a good answer to prevent same from happenin' again. Nobody likes squealers. But skippers and everybody else had better be wary of the type aviator who, without even tellin' his own crew beforehand, wraps up the bird down low. It's flathattin' any way you cut it!

Sea King Calamity

A flight of three NAS West Coast H-3s were at a stopover point. The



Are we
clowns or
professionals?

pilot of number three told the flight leader he planned to break off during the next leg to fly by a friend's house. The flight leader said O.K. but, "Keep out of trouble."

Airborne over mountainous terrain, number three broke off and number two followed. Number three located his friend's house and descended to circle it. Inadvertently, the aircraft got too slow, settled and struck some wires near the house. The *Sea King* continued to settle as the pilot applied "aft" cyclic and "up" collective, contrary to NATOPS (Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization).

The H-3 struck the ground. The tail wheel was torn off. The helo bounced up into a hover just above a hillside. The pilot added manual throttles to regain altitude and flying speed, but he failed to secure them after leveling off. The number two aircraft noted smoke coming from number three's overtemping engine and reported same. Number three made an emergency landing in a field but, on touchdown, a sponson broke off and the helo rolled onto its side. There were no injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Where in blazes was number one? Not that it mattered. He doomed this sortie when he didn't come down hard on the wingman who wanted to pay a rotary-wing visit to friends in the country.

Bad, bad show. Makes Pettibone's stomach growl like I ate somethin' too hot and bubbly and thick for people my age.

Gramps' Advice to the Airborne

Ever watch a bunch of pilots preflight their aircraft? Some of 'em never look up the tail pipe or check for leaks around the hook, a real fire hazard, but almost ALL of 'em kick the tires! Must be a holdover from the old days when on a preflight we usta just kick the tires and twang the wires, or maybe it's just a savage urge to show the beast who's boss!

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