

Illustrations by **Ted Wilbur**

## Too Much, Too Late

An F/A-18 *Hornet* pilot launched on his third flight of the day from the ship for carrier qualification landings at about 0130. He elected not to use the 20-minute comfort time (before beginning his approach) after catapult launch, and entered the downwind pattern.

As the pilot flew the pattern, he failed to complete the carrier landing checklist by not properly setting the intensity of the external wing tip lights to bright. The landing signal officer (LSO) permitted the *Hornet* to continue despite the wing tip lighting problem.

The pilot had difficulty controlling power on the glide slope and developed an excessive sink rate. The LSO did not respond to approach deviations in a timely manner and initiated a waveoff too late to preclude the F/A-18's tail hook from striking the ramp at a point 10 feet down the ramp. The *Hornet's* left and right main landing gears also hit slightly below the ramp edge. The force of impact damaged the right main landing gear and tail hook. The aircraft continued along the flight deck and the tail hook



*Still going strong*

engaged the number three wire, but the hook point detached and the pilot executed bolter procedures.

The pilot diverted to an air station ashore and, en route, another pilot advised him the right main landing gear wheel and tire assembly were

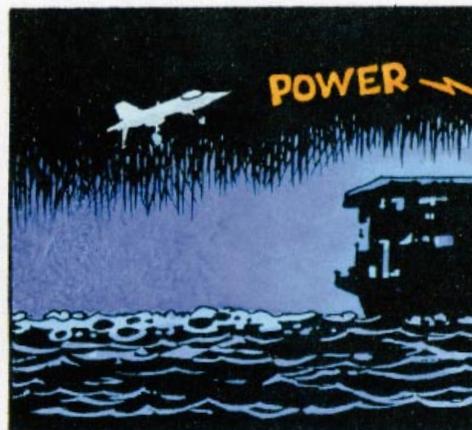
canted 45 degrees inboard. Subsequently, the pilot made a straight-in approach, landing on the left side of the runway. On the rollout, he developed an uncontrollable left-to-right drift and ejected as the aircraft departed the right side of the runway. The pilot sustained major injuries as a result of initiating ejection outside the ejection envelope. The aircraft was destroyed.



**Grampaw Pettibone** says:

**Error compounds error!**  
Don't know which poet, if any, said those words, but they're in Ole Gramps' quiver of barbs along with another favorite: Rules WEREN'T made to be broken. (Otherwise, why have 'em?)

The squadron's standard operating procedures limit a flier's day to 12 hours and two flights, unless the CO gives a waiver for the third. The leader of the carrier qualification flight asked the tower OinC to contact the squadron CO for the waiver, but the OinC couldn't reach the skipper. In the absence of further guidance, even



though all hands seemed to be aware of the 12-hour limit, the pilot launched.

The LSO's ability to safely recover the *Hornet* was degraded because of the loss of depth and range perception due to insufficient aircraft lighting. Plus, "Paddles" didn't respond in time when the F/A-18 had trouble on the glide slope. Seems like all the key players in this event were tired.

Gramps has said it before and will say it again. Our business is preparin' for wartime. But this ain't wartime. Don't press it!

## Sashayin' with a Seahawk

An HH-60H *Seahawk* completed its assigned Helicopter Visit Board search and seizure mission and returned to the ship to hold in starboard Delta (orbit) until recovery. In Delta, with eight passengers on board and the copilot at the controls, the *Seahawk* performed unbriefed and unnecessarily aggressive maneuvers at high angles of bank and pitch, at low altitude. In the process, the helo exceeded Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization aircraft limitations.

During the maneuvers, the copilot put the aircraft in a nose-down attitude at low altitude with a high rate of descent. The *Seahawk* struck the water while in controlled



flight. The pilot, copilot and one of the passengers were killed, the aircraft lost.

Grampaw Pettibone says:



Who knows what goes on in the mind of a flathatter! Flathatters have been with us—in decreasing numbers, I'll admit—almost from the time Ted Ellyson, Naval Aviator Number 1, got this grand community of Naval Aviation underway in an open-air Curtiss on New York's Keuka Lake way back when.

What really rubs Gramps like industrial-grade sandpaper on bare flesh is the fact that the copilot was known to bust the

rules and wheel the *Seahawk* around far too aggressively before this disaster. His careless maneuvering didn't bother the crew chief nor, we suppose, the pilot. If the CO didn't know he had a potential keg of dynamite in his midst, he shoulda.

There is absolutely no room in Naval Aviation for flathatters. Our people and our planes are too precious to expose them to those few undisciplined types who aren't as good at flyin' an aircraft as some weird force in their mind tells them they are. All you potential flathatters out there, if you can't stand up and brief it to the CO, don't do it!

