



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Wrenched to Pieces

A Marine OH-43D (HOK-1) lifted off from a Far East island base early one fine morning, headed for the far end of the island for a full day's work of ground troop support. The pilot was scheduled for a couple of passenger stops en route and had one passenger aboard in addition to his crew chief.

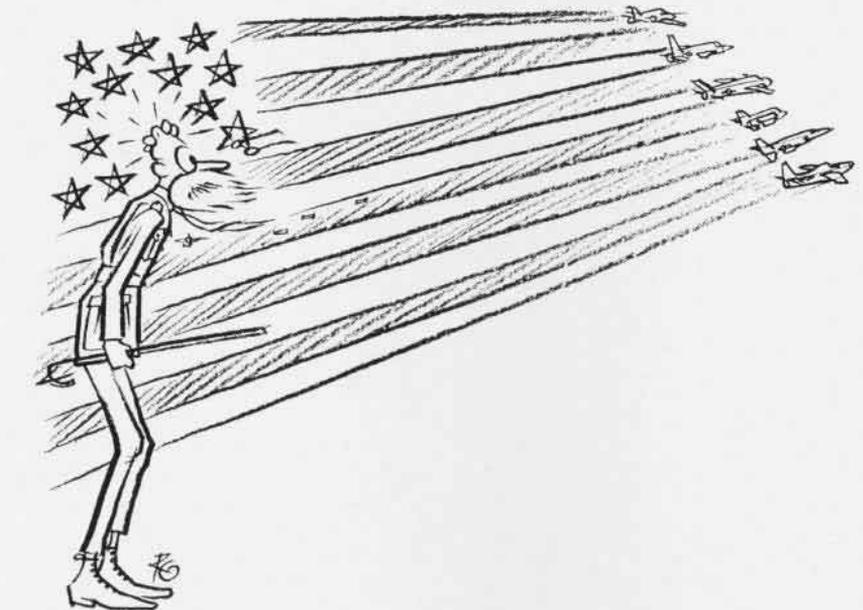
At the first stop the pilot made a low pass over the pick-up area and, since it was deserted, waved off and continued on to the next camp to drop off the lone passenger, as scheduled.

A slow descent was started one mile out from the helo pad and everything seemed to be running smoothly. As the helo reached an altitude of 200 feet and at an airspeed of 45-50 knots, the pilot felt something was going wrong with the controls! It was taking excessive control pressure to hold the nose up—it wanted to tuck under!

He eased on a little more power in an attempt to slow down the rate of descent. The approach was going from bad to worse, so he added power for a wave-off. The helo rolled rapidly into almost a 90° bank to the left and they were only at roof-top level!

He strained hard against the cyclic control and, suddenly as though something had given way, felt it break loose. The helo recovered and immediately rolled to the right. It looked as if it were going to roll all the way over. The pilot thought they'd surely crash inverted into the buildings around the landing pad, so he downed the collective and let the helo smash into the ground, right side up but hard!

The helo rolled over and over several times and came to rest, a total wreck and burning, lying on its right side. After a few moments, the pilot and crew chief forced open the port door. The crew chief leaped out and the pilot grabbed the dazed passenger, shoved him up and out and then leaped out himself, his own clothing afire. Other than some serious burns on the



pilot's legs and moderate burns on the crew chief's neck they were O. K.

Investigators found a loose $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wrench in the burned cabin wreckage. It had evidently jammed the control mechanisms.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! Too bad the guy who left the wrench in there wasn't in this helo-bird on its last ride. It'd have made a real string and wrench saver out of him. We lose several planes a year to just this kind of "damfool" carelessness and a lot of pilots are plain lucky. The O&R's clean buckets full of debris out of the innards of aircraft in rework.

Me—I can't even find a worthless hammer, but I'm getting old and forgetful. A young maintenance man, on the other hand, can't afford to lose even a single tool for its value can reach as high as a man's life.

Rescue

A young airman, working in the hangar deck area of a big CVA, walked behind an RF-8A *Crusader* which was turning up with the tailpipe directed

out the wide open No. 3 elevator ramp.

There was a great deal of racket in the hangar deck area and he was completely unaware of the bellowing engine in his path. As he stepped into the path of the jet blast, he was snatched up and hurled bodily through the opening and far out into the sea below!

"Man Overboard" was sounded immediately. The plane guard helo, already hovering near the flight deck, came to the rescue and was over the thoroughly dunked victim in less than a minute.

The helo crewman quickly observed the obvious panic and near exhaustion of the man in the water and went down the cable into the water to help him, with the pilot's approval.

The man struggled violently with the rescue crewman, climbing on his back and dragging them both under time after time, finally getting what seemed almost a death grip on the rescue hoist cable itself. The rescue sling meanwhile became detached in the melee and floated away.

The helo crewman also grabbed the hoist cable with his Chicago Grip, a

handy gadget, and hung below the panicky victim, helping him as much as possible as the pilot hoisted them both up.

Just as they reached the helo hatch, the man lost his hold on the cable and tumbled back into the water, almost taking the helo crewman with him. The crewman was made of sterner stuff however and hung on. After he had safely clambered through the hatch back into the helicopter, he coolly lowered another sling to the frantically floundering man below and this time brought him safely up and aboard.

It had been what the plane guard men call "a complicated rescue."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy smokes! I'll bet this airman shies away from jet tailpipes like they were coiled rattlers and will be standin' beers to this helo man at every port call. Sure wonder where the outside observers were during this engine turn-up. A little protection for day-dreamers who walk around in a daze is less effort than "Man Overboard" exercises like this one that take the concentrated efforts of a good part of the people on the ship.

Rescue demonstrations by the helos for all members of the ship's company can pay real dividends when the chips are down. This victim didn't know beans about rescue procedures!

Wild Ride

An RF-8A which had been scheduled for launch from a big CVA for a photo flight was downed by the plane captain just prior to final spotting on the No. 3 catapult because of an oil leak in the port wheel well.

The photo *Crusader* had to be taxied forward on the angled deck to clear the catapult for the impending launch. The pilot followed the plane director's signals, taxiing straight up the catapult track with the nosewheel and starboard main wheel in the track and between the Van Zelm bridle arrester tracks. The director gave the pilot repeated signals for right brake in an attempt to get the *Crusader* out of the catapult track and headed for the No. 1 elevator. The pilot repeatedly held hard right brake, but the deck was wet and the plane skidded along the track for 15-20 feet, all efforts to turn unsuccessful.

At this time the *Crusader* passed

behind four A-4C's which were turning up in preparation for launch from the bow catapults. These aircraft were parked just forward of the angle deck foul line with their tailpipes pointed directly at the taxiing photo plane. At least one of them was at 100 per cent power on an engine check.

Simultaneously, the big CVA commenced a turn into the wind and the deck heeled to port.

The plane director now gave the *Crusader* pilot a "hold" signal and he applied both brakes. The RF-8A began to slide *sideways* toward the deck edge in spite of the pilot's efforts, holding hard right brake and using nose wheel steering, picking up momentum as it skidded on the wet deck.

As the *Crusader* went over the deck edge and at an angle of approximately 50 degrees nose down, the pilot **EJECTED!**

Witnesses described his trajectory as an arc outboard away from the ship and riding to an estimated height of only 15-25 feet above deck level as the ejection seat took him clear of the doomed plane. Only the controller and drogue chutes deployed prior to the pilot's entering the water in a face first position and apparently still in the seat!

While under water, the pilot reached behind him to release himself from the seat but found it already gone. He was still wearing his oxygen mask and breathing underwater with no difficulty. Calmly pulling the toggles on his Mk 3C life jacket, he popped to the surface, disconnected his parachute fittings and only then realized he had suffered some serious facial

injuries. He could barely see. Suddenly he realized that an object he could see only dimly through the blood on his face was, in fact, that most wonderful of all sights, the three-pronged seat of the rescue helo, already on the scene and ready to hoist him up! He swung a leg over the nearest prong, hung on and was swiftly hoisted to safety. He'd been in the water only 52 seconds, thanks to this top-notch rescue crew. By the time the rescue hatch had closed, the pilot could no longer see at all but with prompt medical care was O.K. after a few days. His major injuries were cuts from his broken hard hat visor. It had taken up most of the impact but busted in the process.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! This pilot had some mighty extensive water survival training, had in fact practiced release of his chute fasteners under almost any conceivable situation, with gloves on, wet and slick, and gloves off. As a consequence he never panicked. He **KNEW** he could get free, even under the most adverse circumstances! His entire survival performance was outstanding and reflects the approach of a real PRO to every facet of his profession as an aviator.

Second guesses are easy, but a full stop and use of a tow bar to get him out of the catapult track might have made this yarn unnecessary. Turning up to 100 per cent without a good solid *all clear* is very poor headwork too, especially pointin' that pipe down the deck. This is a real good way to blow the flight deck crew over the side like a bunch of autumn leaves and give the rescue helicopters *lots* of business!