



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Nightmare

It was a pitch black night at a busy West Coast air station. Ceiling was 1000 feet, visibility six miles, and the overcast solid. The mirror pattern was full, using one of the dual runways, and GCA was bringing the high flyers down on the other runway at regular intervals. All in all, it was a smooth, well-coordinated traffic situation.

An F-4B *Phantom* (F4H) had completed his MLP's and requested clearance to the other runway for final landing. He was cleared No. 2 behind an F-8E *Crusader* on GCA final which had just broken out of the overcast about two miles back of the runway. At the 180, he spotted the F-8E's wing lights and flew a normal pattern to touchdown, taking what he felt was a good interval.

Immediately after touchdown, he lifted the drogue chute handle and raised the flaps, rolling out, holding to the right of centerline. The drogue chute did not deploy, at least the pilot didn't think so, and he decided to roll to 10,000 on the 12,000-foot runway. Passing the 8000-foot marker, he still had 70-80 knots and now figured he'd better go all the way to the end.

Meanwhile the *Crusader* ahead of him, still on GCA frequency and also on the right side of the runway, was slowing down to take the 10,000-foot turnoff. His rotating beacon, turned off during the GCA pass to avoid



flicker vertigo, was still off. From behind, only his steady tail light showed.

The *Phantom* was closing rapidly, and the tower made a fast call to the *Crusader* on both tower and ground control frequencies in an attempt to expedite his clearance of the runway. No luck—he was still on GCA frequency.

The *Phantom* plowed into the *Crusader* at about 50 knots as the F-8E was just starting his turn off, spinning him around three times and sending him into the taxiway backwards. The F-4B stopped about 400 feet after impact, still on the runway but badly damaged. Seems incredible with 12,000 feet of runway 300 feet wide. Fortu-

nately, only the feelings of the pilots were injured.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

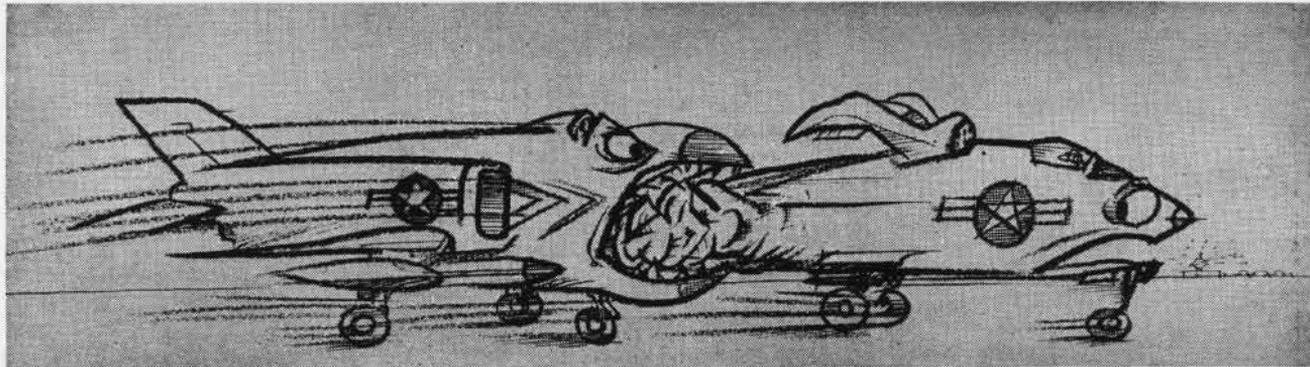
Great shakes! Maybe we make such a fuss over misuse of *GUARD* channel that our control towers hesitate to use it in a real emergency. I dunno—but the only sure way to alert *BOTH* pilots to an impending disaster was to use *GUARD*. I'd personally engage in hand-to-hand combat, whiskers and all, with the man who'd argue agin *THAT* one! This is a *SHARP* tower; they surprised me on this one.

In my day, we took all burner jobs to the bitter end at night and staggered port and starboard. Things have changed?

Tricky Stuff

As an AF-1E (FJ-4B) pilot took off on a VFR night cross-country flight, the weather at his destination, which was also home base, was clear with three miles visibility in smoke and haze. En route, he received current weather broadcasts and found no change at all. Not a cloud in the sky, just some smoke and haze to cut down the visibility a bit.

He started a gentle letdown about 20 miles out and soon had the lighted field in sight. Orbiting overhead at 2500 feet, he could plainly see the entire airfield and the neighboring areas but was informed by the tower that the field was IFR with 1/2-mile visi-



bility and that he would have to contact Approach Control for a GCA landing.

Proceeding to a radio beacon some eight miles from the field and orbiting there, he had no success in contacting Approach Control and finally got a clearance using the control tower as a relay. All this time he had the airfield in sight. It didn't seem possible the field had only 1/2-mile visibility. It was a real puzzler.

After being assigned a GCA frequency, he made contact immediately and was given a vector for a dog-leg approach to the runway. GCA cleared him down to 1000 feet, had him dirty up for landing and informed him the arresting gear was not rigged for this runway. The wind was calm, and visibility was now 1/4 mile and deteriorating rapidly. The pilot rogered, said he had the field in sight and shortly after this touched down right on the centerline, but just a little fast and about 500 feet past the normal GCA touchdown point. He had about 5500 feet of runway remaining for the roll-out.

The pilot had the sensation of being in a ball of cotton. Only the runway lights to either side of him were dimly visible. Visibility ahead was absolutely zero! He braked as hard as he felt he could do safely for what seemed an endless time. Suddenly the threshold lights on the bitter end loomed up close ahead! Shutting the engine down, he jammed both feet hard on the brakes, heard the right tire blow and then hurtled off the end into the shallow waters of the bay which virtually surrounds the airfield. He had about 50 knots when he hit the water and went some distance out before stopping.

His radio was still running, for he heard GCA calling him, so he answered up, saying he was in the water, not injured, but to come quickly.

The first man on the scene was the pilot's GCA final controller who illuminated the wreck with his truck's headlights then waded out and assisted him into shore.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! There's nothing more treacherous than ground fog, for it usually suckers you in with an apparently good view of the runway and surrounding area and then smothers you in a white blanket right at flare or touchdown points. And, that

landing roll-out can be sheer horror, kinda like fallin' into quicksand!

Once you touch down and that old fuel state forbids any further excursions into the blue, you've pretty well had it. The only solution is to go to an alternate before trying a letdown and while fuel permits. When temperature and dewpoint are hangin' close together and the wind is calm, you can expect ground fog, especially in coastal areas, and plan accordingly. There's more to a weather broadcast than just ceiling and vis.

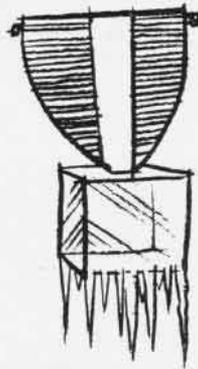


Cool Headed

After a normal preflight, start and turn-up, with no discrepancies of any kind noted, a Marine pilot released the brakes on his F-8B *Crusader* (F8U-1E) and started his takeoff, using burner early in the roll.

After takeoff he climbed in burner, droops in, at 450 to 500 knots. As he passed through an altitude of 21,000 feet, without warning, there was a tremendous explosion which momentarily stunned and confused him! Quickly scanning the instrument panel, he checked RPM, TPT, oil pressure, fuel flow and hydraulic gauges. All instruments were in normal ranges, but the wind blast in the cockpit was terrific. He realized the canopy was missing and was the source of the explosion. He came out of burner, reduced power to 80 per cent, extended speed brakes, started a descent, and switched his radio to GUARD channel to be ready for an emergency transmission.

Still somewhat dazed yet realizing that the aircraft was responding normally, he took time out to evaluate the situation. His helmet visor was broken; two pieces of it were dangling, one near each eye. He removed and discarded the glass fragments and re-scanned his instruments. All normal, but there were blood spots all over them and the entire right cockpit area. Checking the mirrors, he saw his right cheek was bleeding quite a bit, but the cut didn't look serious, just messy.



He broadcast MAYDAY on GUARD channel and told a nearby Air Force base tower which answered that his canopy was missing, there was blood in the cockpit, his position was northeast at 30 miles and he was descending through 15,000 feet trying to reach their field. The tower's reply was almost unreadable owing to the shriek of the wind around him. He continued to press on for the airfield.

At 10,000 feet and 215 knots, he placed the gear handle down and checked all down by the wheel indicators. At 190 knots, he unlocked and raised the wing. A visual check in the mirrors verified the wing up and droops extended, so he added power to 92 per cent and tried a few easy S turns to check the *Crusader's* control response. She flew fine.

He now called the airfield tower and advised that he would make a modified downwind entry and engage their arresting gear.

His landing and arrestment were normal and, after taxiing clear, he had landing gear pins installed and shut down the engine before leaving the aircraft unassisted.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! When it comes to pickin' a cool-headed man, this one wins hands down! Losing a canopy at high speed is a mighty nerve-wrackin' experience. Some people have pulled the curtain with lesser inspiration and quite a few, mostly Marines, have brought 'em home safely. One pilot was ejected involuntarily at Mach 1.3 when the slipstream pulled the curtain after a similar canopy loss. It can get real hairy!

Cracks in the canopy glass or heat crazing can get mighty serious in a high speed machine. Best to change 'em when in doubt. One thing to consider: you **COULD** lose the whole bird!