



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Screamin' Demon

A *Demon* pilot was assigned to chase an initial fam hop of another pilot in the squadron. Takeoff and climbout to 30,000 feet were uneventful and the hop was proceeding as briefed. Suddenly, the chase pilot felt his F3H vibrate severely, the nose tucked under and no response to stick pressures or movement eased the dive.

The hydraulic gauge, power and utility system pressures read zero. Emergency hydraulic pump was lowered and he was able to raise the nose to level flight. Emergency hydraulic light was "ON," AC generator light "ON," fire warning light "ON," and radio dead.

The pilot switched to inverter, retarded the throttle and put out the panic light—figured he had it in hand again. The *Demon* lasted only 15 seconds level, pitched forward again, rolled 180° left and dove for the ground inverted. The pilot had had enough and got out at 20,000 feet at about 400 knots. After a free fall to 8000 feet, he finally located the "D" ring, pulled it, and floated down to land safely on a 4,400 foot hillside.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Friend, you had a purty narrow squeak. The account I read was a little lengthier and indicated that you handled the airplane pretty well, so you've got the ability to fly these birds when the goin' gets rough.

BUT you better grab aholt of yourself and do a durned sight more than



a quick eyeball check of your personal survival equipment or some day you'll have bought the farm. You didn't hook your 'chute automatic lanyard anchor to your lap belt, you had no bail-out bottle in your seat pan, hadn't checked it on your pre-flight or attempted to hook the tubing to your oxygen hose.

You fly a high-performance, high-altitude, beautiful machine. Make darn sure you're as ready to go as it is. When you're hurtlin' down at 400 knots is no time to be huntin' for the "D" ring.

GOG Flight

Ten *Cougar* jets were rendezvousing below a 1500-foot broken overcast for return to their home base shortly after takeoff from a major East Coast air station. One of the *Cougars* pulled up in a turn and collided with another which had overrun him.

The planes still seemed to maneuver properly, and a visual inspection by others in the flight disclosed visible damage but nothing considered sufficient to require ejection. The decision was made to continue on to their destination.

Both *Cougars* were checked for slow flight and straight-in approaches made. On the landing roll-out, the starboard wing of one of the *Cougars* collapsed at the wing fold joint! Little more than air pressure had kept the wing on in the air!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

The PIO attributed the safe landings to the Grace of God, smooth air, and stouthearted pilots.

I don't doubt for a minute his statements, but would like to add, "Mighty poor headwork."

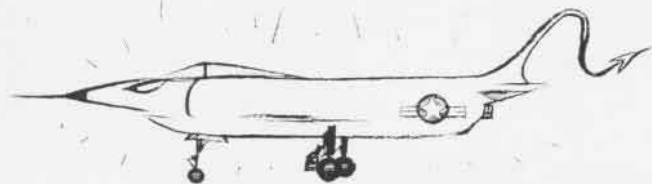
These lads had their mishap only a few miles from a base with a 14,000-foot runway and all rescue facilities, and flew several hundred miles home over some pretty desolate areas. A smart professional would have landed and checked his plane right there.

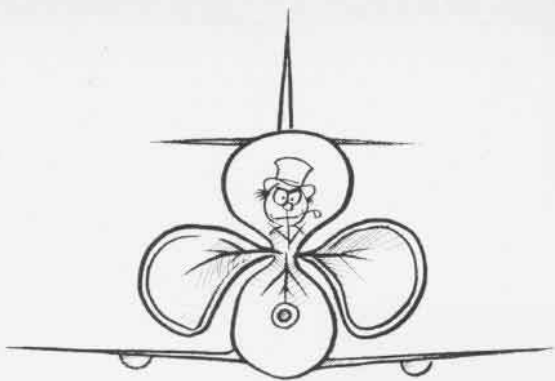
Get-home-itis is a sly killer, always ready to trap impatient aviators. This lad was a clay pigeon for it.

Luck o' the Irish

A young Irishman was scheduled for his Fam 3 hop in the A4D *Skyhawk*. He was well briefed, and both takeoff and the hop were uneventful. He finished up with a simulated flameout approach from 13,000 feet and a wave-off at 500 feet.

The pilot then entered the pattern downwind for touch-and-go's. At the 90° position at 400 feet and 125 knots





Remember! All A4Ds don't resemble four leaf clover!

at 80% power, he felt a distinct and sudden slowing and sinking of the aircraft. A quick glance showed the engine dropping to idle, and he immediately shoved the throttle up to the stops, with no results. His first impulse was to eject and he grabbed the curtain, but remembered his low altitude and dropped his hand.

He called MAYDAY, leveled his wings, dropped the nose, and went on in gear down. The *Skyhawk* hit in a clear area.

On initial impact the ejection seat rollers were ripped off, the seat rocked forward, the pilot struck his chin on the stick, and then rocked back. Just as the seat hit the upright position again, and while the plane was skidding onward, the pilot ejected.

Since the seat had been torn off the track only partial ejection force was applied. The pilot and seat rose only 15 or 20 feet, made one complete somersault and landed on the seat pan 50 feet forward of the aircraft.

Owing to a faulty assembly job, the automatic lap belt release mechanism did not fire, and the pilot remained tightly strapped in the seat. He unstrapped and walked away from it. His injuries were only minor cuts and bruises although the initial impact was estimated in excess of 40 G's.

 **Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

Great horned toadies, this was the mostest! This young man came out of an almost impossible situation smellin' like a rose. He never remembered pulling the curtain,

so obviously it was a reflex action he made while dazed from the +40 G impact. If he hadn't ejected, he'd have made it anyway though, because the plane retained its cockpit integrity.

In this instance, the Murphyed automatic lap belt release undoubtedly saved the pilot's life, BUT he flew the whole hop *booby trapped* for a normal ejection. The safety and survival equipment officer better get right on the ball in this outfit and make dog-gone certain his men are properly checked out 'cause he's holding an awfully big sack in his hand right now.

In the maintenance and care of aviation safety equipment, there is no such thing as an excusable error.

The Last Ditch

An F3H-2N was catapult-launched on a local carrier landing practice flight. When off the starboard quarter at 2500 feet, the pilot heard a loud

explosion and the engine flamed out. Unable to get a relight, the pilot ditched the *Demon* an estimated three to four miles astern of the ship.

In the pilot's words, "I tightened my shoulder harness and checked the lever in the locked position. At 170 knots at 600 feet, I started a flare, then I nosed the plane over with the intention of flaring at 300 feet. My airspeed was 140 knots. The aircraft hit the water and skipped back into the air to an estimated height of 20 to 30 feet. The second touchdown was in a nose-down attitude and I had the impression that I was in a vertical dive. The aircraft continued to crash through the waves and I leaned my head forward to keep it from striking the seat headrest.

"The aircraft stopped in a nose-down attitude. The lap belt was under about six inches of water. I released the lap belt and climbed onto the left edge of the canopy and while unfastening my parachute the plane sank and I swam about 10 feet away.

"The helicopter was soon overhead and I got into the sling which the helicopter had dropped in the water. Once I was in the helicopter, my back and neck started aching. I have no recommendations on how this accident might have been prevented, since the cause of the engine failure is undetermined. *Under similar circumstances, I would strongly recommend ejection instead of ditching for I realize that I was extremely fortunate to survive.*"



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Fella, you can say that again. When circumstances permit, ejection from jet aircraft is normally much safer than ditching. To get a line on the odds, a review of OPNAV Instruction 3750.12 is recommended.



It makes you sweat to watch a plane PLOW through the water at 140kts!

