



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Glued On

An A-4C (A4D-2N) pilot had filed an IFR flight plan for the return leg of a cross-country flight, this segment being from a Gulf Coast base to his home station on the West Coast.

He performed a careful pre-flight of the plane, instructed the line crew thoroughly on starting procedures, and then completed a normal engine start.

He received clearance to taxi and was cleared on the duty runway in takeoff position to await his ATC clearance. The takeoff check list was completed at this time;  $\frac{1}{2}$  flap, speed brakes closed, trim at 5 degrees nose UP. Lift-off speed had been computed at 140 knots at the 4000-foot marker. Gross weight was 18,500 pounds, including two 300-gallon wing drop tanks and a center-line tank containing miscellaneous gear.

He had a crosswind of 15 knots at  $90^\circ$  relative, but the 8000-foot runway had three sets of abort gear and a Davis barrier in the end zone. The local weather was outstanding with scattered high clouds and eight miles visibility.

His ATC clearance came through and, on being cleared for takeoff, he rechecked all items on his takeoff check list and poured on the power.

At the 4000-foot marker, he had 140 knots at 100% power. At 5000 feet down the runway he had 150 knots and attempted to lift off. But



*the nose would not lift!* At 160 knots, he had the stick all the way back against what felt like the stop, and the nose only porpoised slightly on the oleo. But the nose wheel did not break ground and the aircraft would not rotate to a takeoff attitude.

The A-4C was accelerating steadily, and he decided to keep trying to fly it off instead of aborting the takeoff.

As he went off the end of the runway into the overrun, he had 180 knots, both hands were on the stick and he was pulling back with all his strength. He briefly considered ejection. The A-4C went through the Davis barrier as if it were made of butter and started to lift off. Airspeed was now 200 knots.

He was finally airborne 931 feet past the end of the runway and felt a slight "thud" as he passed over the heavy wire mesh boundary fence. This thud was the collision of the left main

landing gear with the fence about three feet from the fence top. Twenty feet of two-inch steel pipe was now firmly wedged in the landing gear structure as he climbed up to an altitude of 3000 feet over the station.

Calling the tower, he told them of the collision with the fence and was informed he was trailing smoke. Actually this was found to be fuel from his ruptured drop tanks when an A-1H (AD-6) joined up to look over his damage. The left main landing gear was also broken and trailing at a 45-degree angle.

The pilot was vectored to a drop area to jettison his external tanks and then returned to the field to attempt an arrested landing on the newly foamed runway.

The landing was much less eventful. Approach was made at 105-110 knots and, upon touchdown just short of the pendant, the pilot shut down the engine.

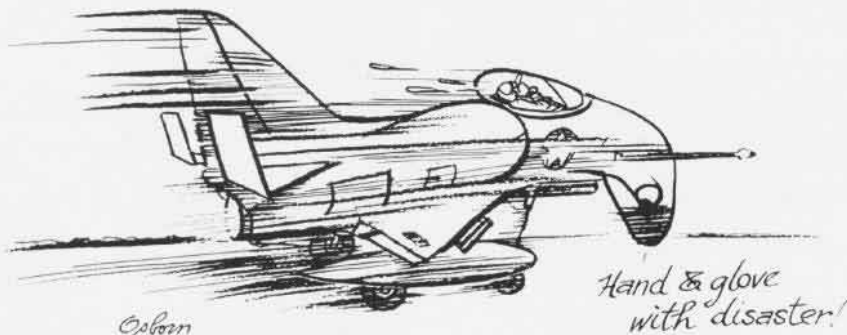
After engagement the A-4C swerved left and sheared the nose wheel as it left the runway, then briefly nosed up and fell back in an upright position. The pilot exited uninjured. Aircraft damage was assessed as overhaul. Although the flight had been a very short one, it had been costly.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

**Great horned Toadies!:** This whole hairy deal was simply caused by inadvertent actuation of full-nose-down trim while this otherwise thorough pilot was correcting for crosswind on the takeoff. The more speed he attained on the roll down the runway, the stronger the nose-down forces became. It is virtually impossible (and this is the moral of my yarn) to take off with this trim condition in all A-4 aircraft. **EVERY** pilot must take particular care to insure that the glove slack between thumb and forefinger while gripping the stick does not roll in *full down trim!*

A-4C Service Change 230, which limits nose-down trim travel, will eliminate some of the hazard but remember, a *light touch* on the stick—please!



Colborn

ILLUSTRATED BY Colborn

## Memo from Gramps:

As our whiskers get gray, some of us tend to forget past problems or, because we get out of close touch with our younger fire-eatin' types, just don't see their problems in the same light.

One of the biggest problems of a young hard-workin' aviator today is FOOD and how to ease that achin' stomach while wearin' flight gear. At sea it's no problem, but ashore everyone is enforcing "uniform of the day" like crazy and probably with good reason. Remember though, an aviator or crewman works both early and late hours, especially during heavy training cycles or during alert periods. When an air station is overloaded during an exercise or an alert, lockers are not usually available for flight gear in the flight line area and a man must dress in his room. Special arrangements to eat in flight gear become almost mandatory or he is going to cut corners on the flight planning, briefing, or pre-flight of the aircraft. This could lose us a million dollar aircraft—and him, maybe his LIFE.

This is an old problem but is now complicated by lengthy briefing and pre-flight requirements for present day birdmen. "Kick the tires, twang the wires, light the fire" just doesn't cover it anymore.

Consider what you can do to solve their problem. It's easy for the man with the gray whiskers to order a special table for early or late fliers, a "fast service" table for men in flight gear or good food in a clean snack bar near the flight line or a "milk truck" from Ship's Service to roam the airfield areas.

You'll get no direct thanks, but you'll get some mighty snappy salutes and "Gangway for the Skipper" everywhere you go. They'll know the "No. 1 EAGLE" had a hand in it.

## Tough Day

A flight of three C-1A aircraft flew out from a West Coast base to a CVA operating off shore to conduct some very necessary carrier qualification landings for new pilots. All three planes had very experienced aircraft commanders aboard who were scheduled to ride as copilot and safety pilot during all day and night landings.

They arrived overhead at 1300 local time and orbited in the Delta pattern, awaiting recovery at 1400. The big ship finally turned into the wind and each aircraft made two arrested land-

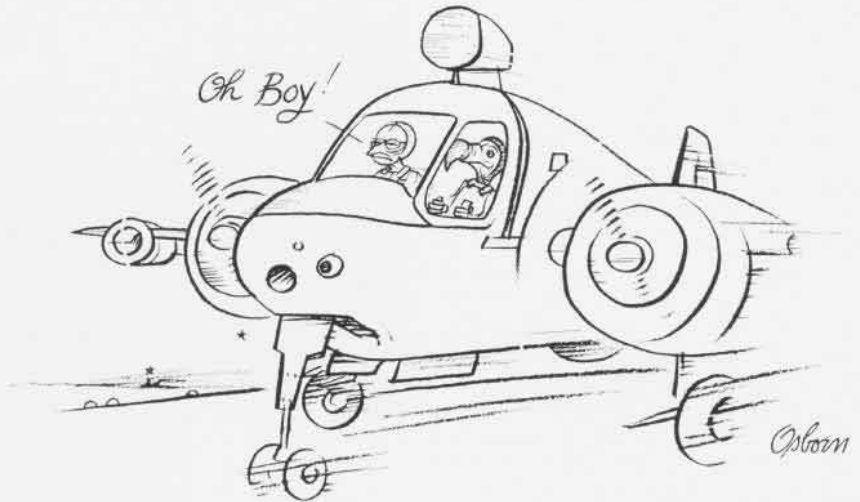
ings, changed pilots on deck and launched again.

While on the deck each aircraft commander/safety pilot was given a copy of the proposed schedule. They were somewhat staggered to find they were each scheduled for a minimum of 34 arrested landings, 22 day and 12 night, with a possibility of 4 to 6 more if time permitted. Whew!

The afternoon went pretty much as scheduled. One aircraft commander, whose woes form the basis for the rest

Approaches were tightly controlled by the ship, CCA being the order of the day. With three different pilots, our safety pilot now rode through 16 CCA approaches to a total of seven arrested landings with eight wave-offs interspersed between traps.

Finally, at 2300 local time, after an approach in which the qual pilot had line-up trouble, a cut was taken on signal in an apparently good position. There was a little crosswind from the right and the port wing dipped just



of this yarn, rode through 16 day landings with six wave-offs. The qual pilots weren't bad, wave-offs being mostly for lineup. Any tendencies toward low and slow, he took care of over ICS with a few well-chosen words. One of the three afternoon qual pilots, a complete stranger, shook his confidence a bit by announcing as he strapped into the C-1A's left seat that he might have trouble starting the engines as they were usually running when he entered the cockpit! This man also stated that *all* of his previous experience had been in jet aircraft! This *bird* he rode with through four arrestments and two wave-offs and then secured for dinner. Total cockpit time for day—five hours.

About two hours later, at 1920, they started engines again for night quals. The weather wasn't bad, although haze eliminated the horizon and a heavy overcast made it black as ink.

prior to touchdown. The No. 5 wire was caught with the C-1A heading left of centerline. Near the end of the rollout, the port wheel dropped over the deck edge and they went in the catwalk. Total night time this day—3.5 hours. It had been a long day!



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Sufferin' catfish! The one thing that staggered me on this whole deal was 34 arrested landings scheduled, maybe a total of 38-40 if time permitted. I sure wonder if the character who made up *that* schedule had ever done it himself! Fleet Commanders have put out directives which clearly state the limiting number of arrestments any one pilot may make per day. Just because it doesn't specifically apply to copilots or crewmen doesn't mean the *intent* wasn't there. Some people just need *everything* spelled out.

As for the man who 'always had the engines running when he got in,' Ol' Gramps could write a book on him.