



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Sad Story

An A-4B departed a naval air station for what should have been a routine cross-country training flight. The flight had been requested, approved, briefed, planned and filed as an IFR cross country training flight to a midwest NAS. The pilot was cleared IFR at 31,000 feet, but very shortly after takeoff he cancelled his IFR, reporting that he had a compass malfunction and would proceed VFR. Approximately one hour later he requested and received a change of flight plan to an Air Force base over 900 miles away and filed for an en route time of 2+00 hours with 2+30 hours of fuel remaining.

There was no further communication between the pilot and control agencies for the next hour and 20 minutes. Then he requested the winds at 35,000 and 40,000 feet.

Approximately 2+30 hours after refilling in the air, the pilot contacted the control tower at the destination field and informed them he was 15 miles out and requested landing instructions. He also reported fluctuating fuel pressure and requested the status of the VORTAC serving the field. The tower advised him that the VORTAC was down for maintenance and that a NOTAM stating it would be out of service was sent the day before. The pilot then requested a DF steer and the tower controller gave him a heading to the field.

Some 10 minutes after initial contact with the Air Force tower, the pilot reported a flame-out and indicated he would not be able to make the field. The tower informed him that there were no auxiliary fields near his position and that the bailout/ejection area was 10 miles northeast. At this time the pilot informed the tower that he was passing through 9000 feet. A short time later the aircraft crashed in the desert nine miles east of the Air Force Base. The pilot ejected at an estimated altitude of a little more than 10 feet above the ground and was fatally injured.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great balls of fire, what waste! This well trained and experienced lad made some real bad moves on this flight and after they accumulated to the point of no return, he made the fatal mistake of staying with the aircraft until he was too low to eject safely.

Most of us have committed errors hard to explain, but this pilot's decisions from takeoff to flame-out are beyond reason. Here's a pilot whose demonstrated ability and personal conduct were such that his cross-country request was approved without reservation; yet he cancels his instrument flight plan just after takeoff, proceeds VFR through APC, with insufficient fuel and no NOTAM info, changes his flight plan to a field several hundred miles away and overflies good en route fuel stops trying to make his new destination.

Poor judgment and lack of professionalism were the primary factors in this accident. Several Navy and FAA directives were violated; but neither NATOPS nor any other publication ever was written to take the place of a pilot's judgment.

## Memo from Gramps

Your ole grey-haired friend has been receivin' some pretty shockin'

bits of info that are beginnin' to add up to the sad situation that some of our flight crews are allowed to fly without proper flight gear. I'll grant you, this is pretty hard to believe after all that's been said and written on the subject, but evidently it's goin' on in some outfits.

One of the weakest excuses in the world has been offered for the situation and that's "to save dollars." Now I'm for operating aircraft or doin' anything else for just as few bucks as possible, but when it comes to safety and survival gear that's carryin' things too far. This gear was designed and bought to "save lives."

Competition between squadrons on just who can operate their birds the cheapest is great, but it's just plain false economy when a squadron commander tries to save "B" money by not providing flight personnel with all items of safety and survival gear.

It appears to me the only way a topnotch plane commander can feel about flight gear for his crew is: If you don't have it, get it; if you don't know how to use it, find out; otherwise—YOU DON'T GO.

## Hairy Hurry

An A-3A pilot was scheduled for a flight from a midwest AF base to a West Coast naval air station with an 0800 departure. The purpose of the flight was to deliver two passengers and several pieces of aircraft test equipment to the naval air station.

Departure was delayed until 0930 due to en route weather. Shortly after the plane was airborne, it was discovered that the landing gear would not retract. The aircraft was landed and returned to the parking area for repairs. For the next few hours, the pilot waited for maintenance personnel to correct the gripe, but at approximately 1400 he was informed that the A-3 would not be available. The trip would have to be made in an A-1E.

Owing to the extended delay and a switch to a slower aircraft, the pilot and his passengers hurriedly switched the test equipment and personal gear into the Skyraider for the trip. Al-

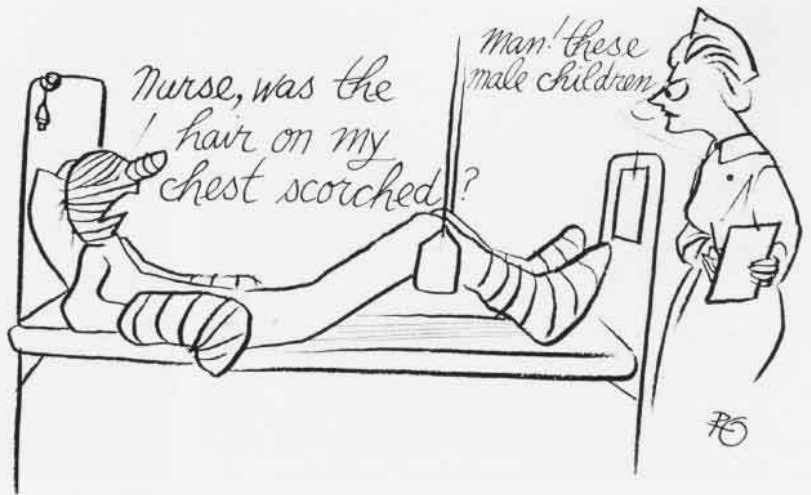
ILLUSTRATED BY *Osborn*

though it was to be a five-hour flight extending well past the evening meal hour, no effort was made to obtain box lunches. Furthermore, the pilot refused to allow the duty officer to send his DD-175 to base operations via the duty driver with the explanation that he would taxi by and have one of his passengers run it in.

The passenger who was to occupy the right front seat was an experienced *Skyraider* crewman, but the other passenger had never flown in the aircraft before. He was given a few quick bits of information and told to strap into the right seat of the rear passenger compartment. The test equipment had been loaded on the left side of the compartment with no attempt made to secure the gear.

The pilot informed the passenger in the right seat that no checks other than to insure the wings were spread and locked would be made in the chocks. Immediately after the engine was started, the pilot spread the wings and signaled for the chocks to be pulled. The aircraft was then taxied to base operations where the right seat passenger hurriedly delivered the DD-175 to the clearance desk.

Upon receiving clearance, the aircraft was taxied to the approach end of the duty runway where the pilot quickly went through the takeoff check list mounted on the instrument panel. Following a brief run-up and wing check, the tower cleared the pilot for takeoff. A rolling takeoff was made and the aircraft became airborne in a three-point attitude after an extremely short takeoff roll. A nose-high attitude was maintained for a few seconds, then the aircraft drifted left and started to slowly roll in the same direction. The pilot applied full right rudder and right aileron in an



effort to level the wings but the controls had little effect.

Shortly thereafter the aircraft entered an abrupt descending left roll at an altitude of 75 to 100 feet. The aircraft contacted the ground in a 90° bank shearing the left wing just outboard of the wing fold. The engine separated from the aircraft after the propeller blades sheared and the hub dug into the dirt. The fuselage slid to a stop in an unright attitude with the nose pointed slightly left of the line of motion. Almost immediately fire broke out on the left side and quickly spread over the remaining forward part of the aircraft.

The pilot abandoned the aircraft from the left side through the most intense flame and heat and was quickly followed by the passengers who got out on the right side. The passenger encountered difficulty in jettisoning the rear canopy but was successful on the second attempt.

The pilot was injured severely with second and third degree burns on his

face, neck, hands and arms. Both passengers, though not injured as badly as the pilot, suffered first and second degree burns on the hands and face.



**Grampac Pettibone says:**

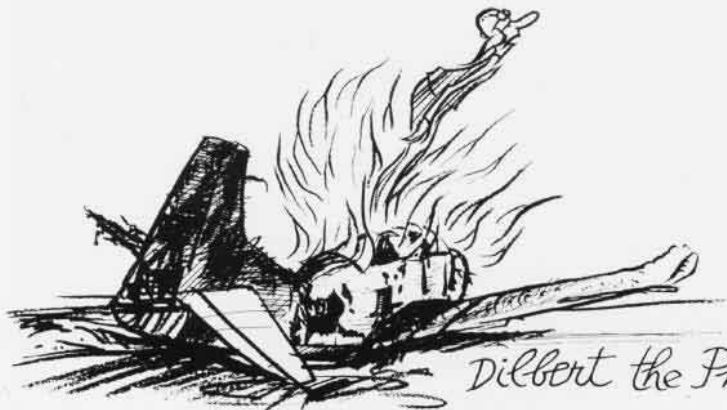
This lad broke almost all the rules in the book before he balled this one up. That he and his passengers are lucky to be able to tell about it is the understatement of the year.

The pilot was in such a hurry to get this little show on the road that he would not let the duty officer deliver his DD-175 to operations; failed to secure the cargo in the aft compartment; did not brief his passengers on emergency procedures; taxied at excessive speed; needed only seven minutes to taxi a mile, file a flight plan, conduct pretakeoff checks and become airborne; made a three-point takeoff following minimum ground roll and failed to recognize the left drift and slow left roll as stall warnings.

NATOPS procedures took a beating when the aircraft was not stopped on the runway, lined up and MAP increased to field pressure to heat the engine and spark plug cores uniformly. In addition, the aircraft was not allowed to fly itself off in a flat attitude but was pulled off in a three point attitude.

Just to insure that nothing connected with the fiasco would resemble a professional approach to flying, this lad was *not* wearing a *hard hat* and *none* of the three wore *flight gloves*.

NATOPS not only took a severe beating on this one, but so did pilot technique, good judgment and plain old common sense. You just don't pull boners like this without penalties. And this was a very high one.



*Dilbert the Phoenix!*