



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Wobbly Wiggler

A Play

Place: Naval Air Station, West Coast

Time: Midsummer

Star: Proficiency Pilot

Flight: 3.2 hours thus far

Altitude: Varies (unknown to author)

Act I

(A T-33 is airborne, pilot in cockpit, oxygen mask over pale face. He looks ill. His fingernails are bluish. Pilot is 'wiggling' control valves, knobs, drawstrings, doors, hatches and ladders on the oxygen regulator. He is having a hard time breathing. Suddenly, a look of relief comes over his face, and he begins to breathe easily again).

PILOT

Finally got the d..... thing working again. Thought for a while it was broken. Must have been my imagination. Didn't want to have to come back for another flight this month anyway. Well, it's working now, might as well continue with the hop. Only a couple of hours left.

Act II

(On deck in line shack, pilot is writing on yellow sheet)

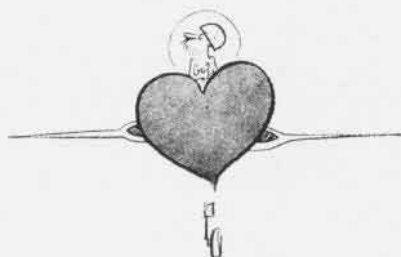
Check front cockpit O2 regulator. Hard to breathe on dilute (normal). Started feeling bad; blue fingernails, etc. Went to 100%. 100% O2 worked O.K. for most of hop. After wiggling all the knobs on regulator, it worked O.K. in 100%.

End of Play

Critic Writes:

Very poor performance by star. Shows lack of good judgment. Many improvements could be made by star. Other future stars take notice of the following suggestions in same type situation:

1. Land as soon as possible. You may have hypoxia.



2. Tell troubles on yellow sheet, completely.

3. Go to sick bay and let the doc check you over for hypoxia.

4. Get your flight time another day.

If this performance is not improved on by the star, the following people could suffer:

1. Mother, father, kids, wife—all would cry.

2. Commanding Officer—sad and angry at losing pilot and aircraft.

3. Safety Officer and Accident Board—mounds of paperwork and effort to find cause.

4. Ol' Gramps would have fits.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Fits, nuthin! I'm havin' internal rumblings and cataclysms. You just don't mess around with a thing like your oxygen system. You get the bird on the ground immediately and have an experienced man correct the trouble! The only thing this lad demonstrated on this flight was a gross lack of headwork.

This two-act play submitted by an experienced parachute rigger is an outstanding example of "what not to do." Sure makes Ol' Gramps proud to know that the author and thousands of other conscientious guys like him are genuinely concerned about problems we throttle jockeys face.

FMLP Hazard

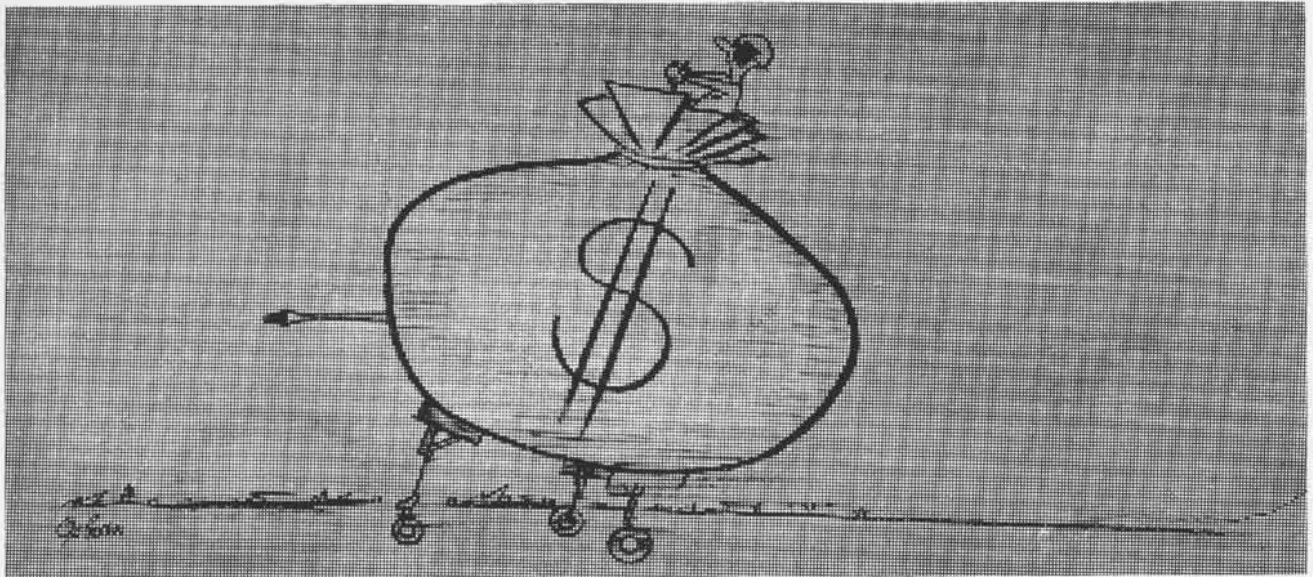
An A-4B pilot assigned to a Marine squadron was scheduled for his first FMLP flight at an air station in Hawaii. As this was the pilot's first MLP period at this particular field, special emphasis was placed on pilot technique, effects while on glide slope, and the landing area. The pattern and runway to be used were covered in the briefing, but the LSO failed to mention that portable runway lights were positioned on both sides of the left half of the duty runway. The right boundary of the FMLP area was, in actuality, the center line of the runway.

The pilot launched and proceeded to an assigned area where he practiced slow flight and burned down to landing weight before entering the FMLP pattern. He reported the 180° position and commenced his first controlled field mirror landing approach. The approach was normal in all respects except that the pilot was a little deep when he turned final. Just before the pilot's turning final, the LSO advised him to line up on the white line in the center of the runway.

The pilot picked up the meat ball and flew it to a landing. Just after touchdown, he added power. As he did so, he felt the landing gear contact an object on the runway. As the aircraft became airborne, the pilot asked the LSO what he had hit and was informed that the nose gear had collided with two of the six portable runway lights positioned along the right side of the FMLP landing area.

The pilot attempted to retract the gear but got an unsafe indication on the nose gear, so he then lowered the gear and got good indications on all three. He then made a low pass for inspection by the LSO. There was no apparent damage; normal landing was accomplished. The nose tire blew upon landing, but that was anticipated by the pilot. The aircraft was placed in a down status for a thorough inspection of the wheel wells for damage.

ILLUSTRATED BY *Osborn*



The pilot proceeded to the end of the FMLP runway to observe landings with the LSO and to familiarize himself with runway configuration.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Egad, lads! Somebody could have got hurt, not to mention the possibility of bustin' up one of Uncle's costly aircraft and all just because of an incomplete briefing and inattention to details.

In a situation like this, with obstacles on the runway, all pilots, regardless of the number of landings they have made, should be cautioned prior to each hop. This was the first FMLP period for the gent at this air station, yet no one thought to caution him of the boundary light in the center of the runway or tell him exactly what part of the runway was the intended landing area.

The accident board recommended that each pilot be required to observe at least one period of FMLP with the LSO prior to their first flight. I'll buy that 100% for more reasons than one, but just what is wrong with unplugging the portable lights and removing them for all daylight operations? Remember, accidents like this particular one don't just simply happen.

Memo from Gramps

In this business of taxiing, you're on firm ground when you avoid soft shoulders, concentrate on the area up front.

Costly Taxi

An A-4 detachment from a deployed VA squadron was temporarily based at an air station in WestPac while the carrier was anchored in the bay. Prior to coming ashore, all pilots were advised that ramp space was at a premium and extra caution should be exercised while taxiing. All pilots operating from the beach had flown at least one day hop before night operations and were aware that there were certain taxi hazards in the area.

The *Skyhawk* pilots were scheduled for a night tanker flight and a complete briefing covering all phases of the flight was conducted. After pre-flight, start and post-start checks were complete, the pilot of the A-4 tanker aircraft proceeded toward an unlighted parking area en route to the taxiway. No taxi directors were located beyond the immediate parking area. As the pilot reached the end of the squadron line, he used the taxi lights to sweep the darkened area for obstructions.

A turn was required to line up with the approach to the main taxiway, and the pilot used the taxi light but secured it after making the turn. He was cleared by ground control to the main taxiway. As he assumed he was properly lined up with the throat leading to the main taxi way, he secured the taxi light.

Shortly after the pilot commenced to taxi toward the blue lights, the nose

wheel of the aircraft struck the curbing of the island of a fuel pit. The nose wheel was sheared upon contact. As the aircraft continued ahead, the port main mount struck the curb but remained intact. The momentum of the aircraft carried it forward and down with the inflight refueling probe, nose gear door, refueling store and starboard external fuel tank striking the ground. The pilot informed ground control of the accident and abandoned the cockpit uninjured. Crash equipment and rescue personnel proceeded to the scene immediately.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! How many of these costly taxi accidents do we have to have before people get the word? This is the second taxi accident within a period of six months in this very area.

The pilot was aware that the area was hazardous for night ground operations, yet he failed to use his taxi light. The squadron was also aware of this but failed to provide taxi directors. The station was surely aware that taxi obstructions were inadequately lighted, but this combination got together and an A-4B was tied up in O&R for several weeks undergoing costly repair.

We are averaging about one of these per month. One a year would be too darn many. I'll admit that a taxi light is bright and a few additional minutes will be required to get fully night-adapted again, but it does light the way and can save needless embarrassment.