



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Ferry Fiasco

A flight crew consisting of a pilot, copilot, plane captain and second mech arrived at a mid-west naval air station late one bright morning to pick up a P-2F which was to be delivered to NAF LITCHFIELD PARK. This crew was assigned to a ferry squadron and therefore familiar with the details associated with acceptance and delivery of aircraft.

A VFR flight plan was filed to El Paso International Airport and the flight departed at 1725. After the P-2F was airborne, all in-flight checks were performed with all systems checking out satisfactorily.

The flight progressed routinely for approximately two hours when the pilot noticed the starboard sump light had come on. The flight at this time was cruising at an altitude of 8500 feet, 10 to 15 miles northeast of an Air Force base. The plane commander reduced power on the starboard engine and decided to make a precautionary landing at the nearby Air Force field.

After adjusting the power on the #1 engine and feathering #2, the copilot contacted the tower and informed them of the trouble. He also advised the tower the crew did not desire to declare an emergency as they considered the engine failure to be a routine matter. The tower operator



cleared the pilot into the pattern at an altitude of 2000 feet and advised him of the duty runway which was 13,500 feet long and 300 feet wide.

Things progressed normally during the first part of the approach and at the 90-degree position, the landing gear was lowered and flaps were set at 20 degrees. The pilot felt he was in good position, but as he turned on final at 500 feet with 115 knots and full flaps, airspeed started to fall off rapidly and the aircraft entered a pronounced right drift. At approximately 100 feet and 100 knots, the plane captain rolled in right rudder tab, as instructed. The copilot added waveoff power to try to stop the sink rate.

The aircraft continued to lose air-

speed and altitude and the right skid increased. Contact with the ground was made in about a 20-25 degree bank to the right at an airspeed of 85 knots. Full power was still on the port engine at time of impact and remained on as the aircraft continued across the field in a right skid before coming to a rather abrupt stop in a deep drainage ditch.

The crew immediately abandoned the aircraft and was taken to the base hospital by an Air Force ambulance. Only one crew member received minor injuries but the aircraft sustained strike damage.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great heavenly days! This plane commander worked like a beaver to booby-trap himself. It's not his fault that the entire crew didn't end up wearin' wooden overcoats.

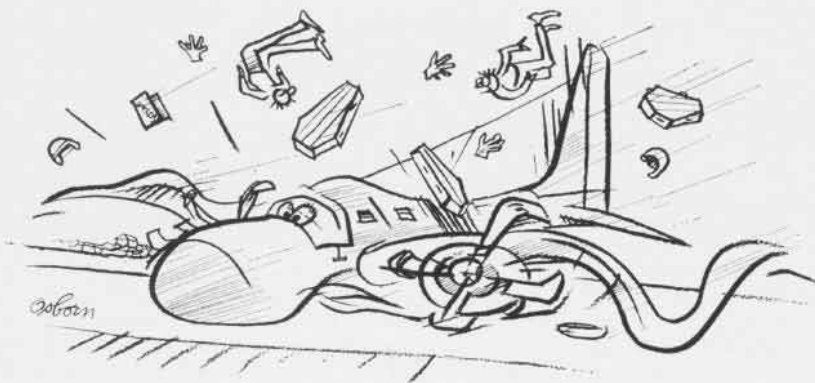
This lad clearly demonstrated that he's not too familiar with the single-engine landing procedures for this aircraft by gettin' himself into a position where it was impossible to execute a waveoff. This accident is a prime example of what happens to a pilot who fails to comply with NATOPS.

Additional evidence of the haphazard manner in which this flight was conducted is the fact that none of the crew was wearing a hard hat or flight gloves. Although plenty of time was available to prepare for the landing, the pilot and copilot failed to lock their shoulder harnesses. The plane captain and second mech didn't even fasten their seat belts. It's pretty easy to see that this pilot's lack of professionalism and judgment affected the entire crew.

Such things as seat belts, shoulder harness, hard hats, gloves, and all items of safety and survival equipment are provided for a darn good reason. Failure to use them is downright stupid. These lads were lucky to come out of this can of worms in one piece.

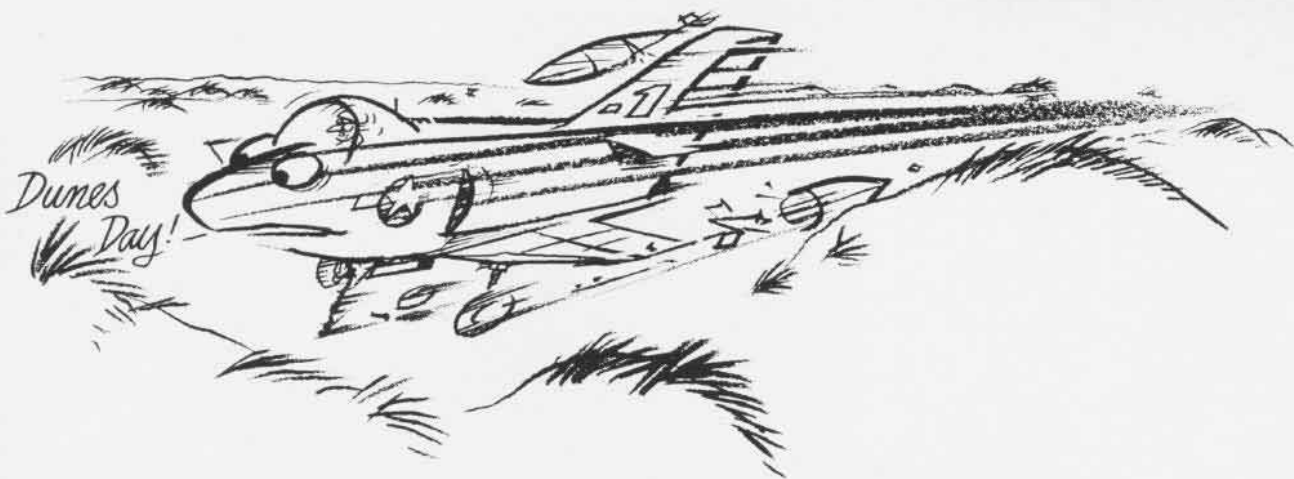
## Lucky Lad

A section of A-4B (A4D-2) Skyhawks on a cross-country flight stopped at El Paso International Airport for



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fuel. The pilots remained on the ground approximately two hours occupied with such routine activities as eating lunch, briefing the next leg of the flight, and filing a DD-175. After pre-fighting their aircraft, they started and called for taxi instructions.

Each pilot had computed his takeoff roll at 7400 feet—which was about right for that particular mid-summer day in West Texas. The tower directed the section to taxi into takeoff position on the duty runway which was 9000 feet. In the takeoff spot, each pilot checked the other's aircraft for flap setting, oil vapor and locked canopy, and after receiving a thumbs-up, the lead plane began his takeoff roll.

The wingman waited until the lead aircraft was approximately 1000 feet down the runway before advancing the throttle to the stop and releasing the brakes.

Initial acceleration of the little bird met with the pilot's complete satisfaction. At 5000 feet he observed his air-speed to be 120 knots so he began to rotate. The aircraft lifted from the runway and at this point the anxious pilot sucked in the landing gear, but as the gear retracted he felt the A-4B vibrate and start to settle back on the runway. He immediately placed the landing gear handle down, hoping he could possibly abort. In another few seconds, the aircraft was digging a path between sand dunes across the hot Texas desert.

After skidding several hundred feet both wing tanks were torn away and finally the aircraft dug a wing into one of the sand dunes and came to rest in a veritable flood of JP-4 fuel.

The shocked but uninjured pilot immediately got out of the cockpit and ran several yards before stopping to look at the wreckage. A small fire had started in the intake ducts and in a couple of minutes the seat cooked off and fire completely consumed the aircraft. Rescue vehicles arrived fast.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Great balls of fire! The little aircraft was really an innocent victim of a combination of circumstances over which it had no control—a full load of fuel, a high hot runway, an over-anxious pilot who over-rotated and completely disregarded the pre-computed takeoff distance and speed.

The pilot didn't indicate that he considered ejecting at all. The A-4B NATOPS is pretty clear that ejection can be accomplished on the ground at a speed of 90 knots or above. Rather than challenge those sand dunes, which were 8 to 10 feet high at near takeoff speed, he should have elected to eject rather than take the chance of walking away. It's hard to argue with success, but this lad is mighty lucky that the aircraft chose a path between those sand dunes instead of plowing into one. I'll just bet he has spent sleepless nights thinking about this one.

## Faulty Attention

On a bright California morning, two proficiency pilots in a trusty C-45 received taxi clearance to the warm-up spot for the north runway at a West Coast air station. During warm-up, the pilots were informed by ground control that wind conditions were such that they could use the west runway if they so desired. Due to the sun, the

decision was made to use the alternate runway. After being cleared, they taxied toward the takeoff end of the other runway. To expedite their departure, the copilot switched to tower frequency and requested takeoff clearance en route to the warm-up spot.

The tower cleared the aircraft for takeoff and both pilots hurriedly completed the remaining few items on the check-off list. Another C-45 was holding to the left side of the throat, to the runway perpendicular to the taxiway centerline. Both pilots of the taxiing aircraft were busy with last minute takeoff items and did not see the parked C-45 until their starboard engine contacted the starboard wing of the other aircraft. Both aircraft were substantially damaged but, fortunately, there were no injuries.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Well, now, if that doesn't tear the rag off the bush! Drivin' a bug smasher or any other aircraft around with a pair of eyes in the cockpit copying a clearance or doing anything else is absolutely ridiculous. The visibility in a C-45 is poor at best and even more reason to use extra caution during ground operations, but the same attention and caution is required regardless of the type of aircraft you're in. Maneuvers like this are gettin' to us at the rate of several hundred clams each year. There is just no defense for a guy who pulls such a trick.

This lad really didn't have a clearance problem as a United Airlines plane had just taxied around the parked aircraft. He just FAILED to INSURE that the area ahead was CLEAR. It's just that simple and to put it any other way would be a waste of words. Uncage the eyeballs, boy!