



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

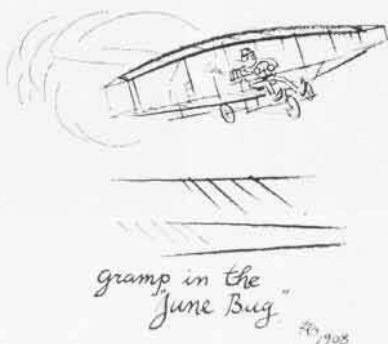
## Overconfidence—

### Inexperience

Three F-8 pilots launched for a scheduled advanced tactics flight. The lead pilot and his wingman (number 2) were to simulate separate sections with the third pilot acting as bogey.

At an altitude of 15,000 feet, the lead pilot called a 90° turn to port and, while in the turn, called a bogey. At this time, the number two pilot spotted a bogey which he immediately recognized as an F-9, crossing from right to left. The lead pilot, thinking the F-9 could possibly be his bogey, informed his wingman that they would continue for an identification pass.

During the 90° port turn, the wingman allowed himself to get sucked out of position and selected afterburner to close up. The lead aircraft rapidly overtook the F-9, passed him on the right and pulled up. The wingman, who was now in burner, trying to close his position, thought his section leader had overshot. The anxious wingman saw the F-9 pilot begin a



*gramp in the  
June Bug* ©1998

moderately tight descending right turn and immediately he became convinced that he had accepted the challenge to hassle a little.

Since he was closing the F-9 at an extremely rapid rate, the eager *Crusader* pilot executed a high side yo-yo with a roll to the inside to avoid overshooting and proceeded to dive on the F-9. At an airspeed of about 350 knots while trying to match the F-9's radius of turn, the pilot experienced heavy airframe buffet and immediately lost control when the F-8 snap-

rolled to the left. He quickly neutralized the controls. The F-8 stabilized for a moment, then once again entered uncontrolled flight.

About this time, the pilot became rudely aware that he was in a spin and quickly initiated spin recovery procedures. He retarded the throttle and, while reaching for the droop control, noticed the altimeter unwinding. With the aircraft in an extreme nose-down attitude, the pilot ejected at an altitude of approximately 5,000 feet.

The ejection sequence was normal but, in attempting to fasten the para-raft lanyard to his torso harness, the pilot pulled the release for the seat pack. Upon entering the water, he became entangled in the shroud lines. He finally freed himself by cutting the lines with his survival knife. He was unable to reach the shroud cutter in the survival vest as it was under the inflated Mk. 3C. The para-raft was lost during the struggle with the shroud lines, but he managed to save the smoke flares and dye marker. Luckily, the pilot was a good swimmer and in excellent condition as he was not rescued for over two hours.



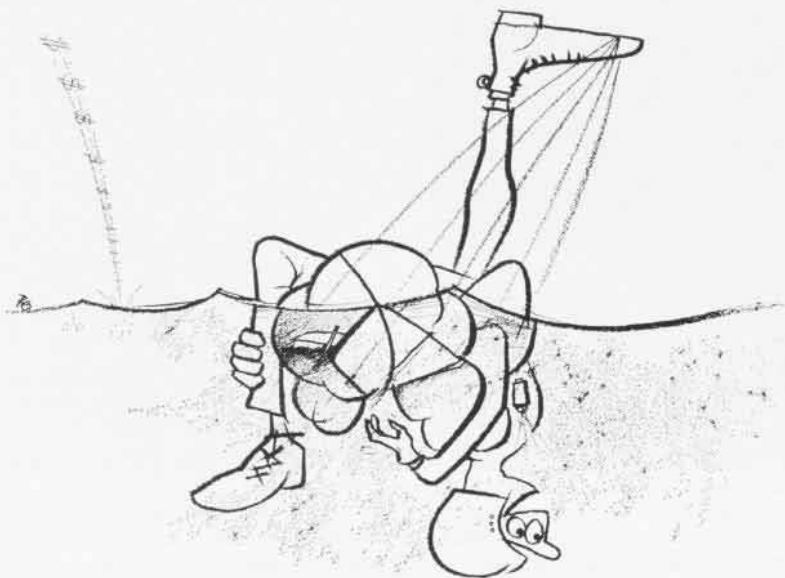
### *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Oh, my achin' ulcer! I have no idea how the flight leader briefed this hop, but it's for sure that the bogey wasn't supposed to be an F-9. When a wingman goes toolin' off on his own, it's just pure and simple poor flight discipline.

This lad didn't have too much experience in the *Crusader* and he proved it the hard way. Confidence is great if based on knowledge and spirit is commendable if tempered by experience, but overconfidence plus inexperience is a sad combination.

## Low and Slow

Two young aviators in A-4C's filed an instrument flight plan from an East Coast MCAS to an Air Force base approximately 200 miles away. The training flight progressed nor-





mally to the AFB and, after the pilots cancelled instruments at 20,000 feet, the flight entered traffic for landing. The lead pilot broke and landed on the left side of the runway.

After taking a normal interval, the wingman hit the 180° position at 1200 feet and continued in his approach reporting his gear down turning final. At about this time he experienced a short period of turbulence and immediately noted an excessive sink rate. He added power to stop the sink rate but did not go to full power until he realized he was dangerously low. Immediately, after going to full power, the left wing of the aircraft struck a power pole, barely cleared a warehouse and then touched down 700 feet short of the approach over-run.

The little *Skyhawk* bounced back into the air and continued in a climb to 5000 feet. During the climb, the pilot, seeing the left wing and aileron were damaged, leveled off and checked the aircraft for slow flight. Since damage did not appear to be too severe with near normal control response, a straight-in approach was made to a landing. Shortly after touchdown, the pilot realized the left brake had failed. He immediately informed the tower that he would take the arresting gear; a successful arrestment was made. After the aircraft came to a stop, the pilot climbed out uninjured. The aircraft sustained overhaul damage.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Great balls of fire! This lad's just plain lucky to be here. He came within a foot or two of ending up in a warehouse with an A-4 around his neck.

Now, I know darn well this lad's been told hundreds of times what

can happen when you get low and slow in a landing approach, yet he gets himself into that shape with no trouble at all.

After getting away with this one, I'll just bet, this young man can give us all a few thousand well chosen words on speed, attitude, and altitude control in the landing phase.

## Blast Off

Early one bright afternoon, a pilot and RIO were briefed for an O&R pre-induction test flight in an F-4B. Pre-flight, start, taxi and takeoff were normal with no apparent discrepancies noted. The pilot climbed to 40,000 feet performing various checks en route, then descended to 10,000 feet to check the Ram Air Turbine

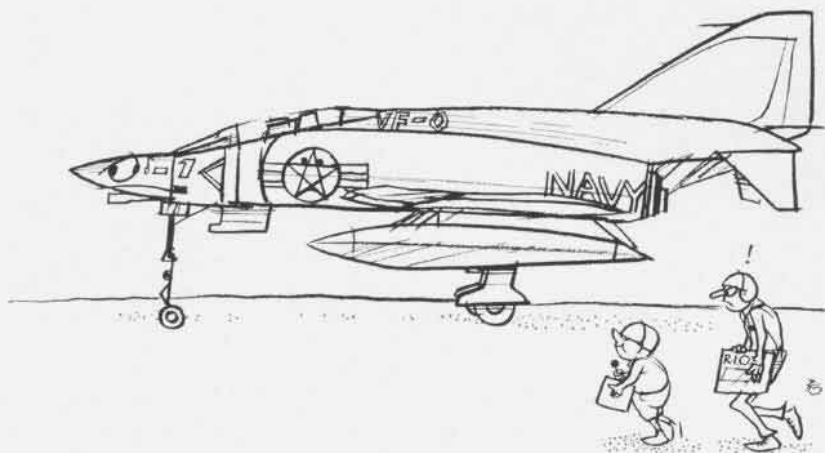
throttles and simultaneously a severe pitch-down, short period oscillation occurred. During the pitch-down and under negative "g" force, the RIO ejected. A nose-up pitch followed immediately and the pilot ejected.

While descending, the RIO observed the F-4 roll to the left and crash in a nearly vertical attitude. The pilot and RIO landed approximately 200 yards apart in densely wooded, marshy terrain. The pilot was bruised and scratched from contact with the trees during landing, but the RIO suffered a fractured ankle and back injuries.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Holy cats, if that don't wilt the lily, nothin' will! This gent has



(RAT). The RAT functioned normally and the pilot continued the descent, RAT extended, to check the radar altimeter.

The pilot decided not to do an angle of attack check owing to the amount of fuel aboard, but elected to consume the excess fuel by performing an over-the-shoulder (immelman) maneuver in afterburner.

The aircraft at the time was at an altitude of about 800 feet and at a gross weight of over 32,000 pounds. The pilot initiated a gentle climb of approximately 500 feet per minute and then selected afterburner. Passing through 2,000 feet at an airspeed of 450 knots, he experienced a one-cycle, nose-down oscillation (nibble). The aircraft returned to level flight momentarily before another longitudinal oscillation was experienced.

At this point, the pilot retarded the

over 1,400 total flight hours, but very little time in afterburner/high performance aircraft and only 11.5 total pilot hours in the F-4B, spread over a seven-month period. With a logbook like that, he was barely qualified to start the aircraft much less be sent out on a test hop.

If there ever was an accident with supervisory error in it, this is it. Just how in the world could a pilot so completely unqualified be scheduled for a test hop? To ignore NATOPS and the other directives dealin' with pilot qualifications and readiness is not only costly but also downright foolish.

I really don't know how many hours of flight time this pilot needs to start playin' the game like a Pro, but it's pretty plain that 1,400 didn't do the job. Sure hope he's learned by now that there's a lot more to flyin' these birds than just strappin' one on and blastin' off into the wind.