GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Lame Duck

A flight of A-4C's landed at a West Coast NAS. One of the pilots had directional control problems during landing rollout because the starboard main gear shock strut remained fully extended. He shut down on the runway and the aircraft was towed to the servicing area without mishap.

The strut was serviced but, as the aircraft was being towed to the transient line, the strut "popped up" again. Maintenance personnel discussed the situation with the flight leader. He elected to have the air bled from the strut until normal extension was obtained and fly the aircraft back to home base for servicing by squadron personnel. The flight leader had more experience in the A-4, so he exchanged planes with the pilot who had flown the aircraft in. He knew he might have control problems on the next landing.

The flight back was uneventful, but as he came in to land, he realized the starboard strut was fully extended when the aircraft swerved to port and a waveoff was executed. During takeoff roll, the starboard wheel struck the midfield arresting gear chain damaging the wheel and brake assembly. With a fuel state of 1800 pounds, the pilot requested that the midfield gear be rigged and was advised there would be a five-minute delay. Approximately 20 minutes later, he was informed that the gear could not be rigged. By this time he was down to 1200 pounds of fuel. Unable to divert to another field with high speed midfield arresting gear, the pilot elected to utilize the abort gear which was 2600 feet from the end of the runway.

On the second pass, the hook engaged the gear on runway heading and about 10 feet to the left of centerline. The aircraft swerved across the unpaid out chain, shearing the port main gear and stopped 15 feet off the runway.

Disassembly of the starboard strut revealed it contained only one quart of hydraulic fluid instead of four quarts as required by the Handbook of Maintenance Instructions (HMI). In addition, the air pressure with the strut fully extended was 200 psi vice a recommended pressure of 25 psi.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! This sort of thing has got to go!

A few months ago, a gent on the other coast pulled exactly the same stunt. In both cases, the landing gear struts were improperly serviced. In both cases the pilots were fully aware of the questionable condition of the struts. Luckily, neither pilot was injured and both aircraft are repairable, but the Navy lost two good birds for several weeks and somebody could have got hurt.

The HMI is pretty clear on just how to service these shock struts and the A-4 NATOPS clearly states: "If at any time prior to landing, it is known that a directional control problem exists or a minimum roll-out is desired, a short field arrestment should be made and assistance of an LSO requested."

One of the endorsers on this particular mishap said, "Pilot education can not replace good judgment, but knowledge certainly augments it." I'll buy that 100%.

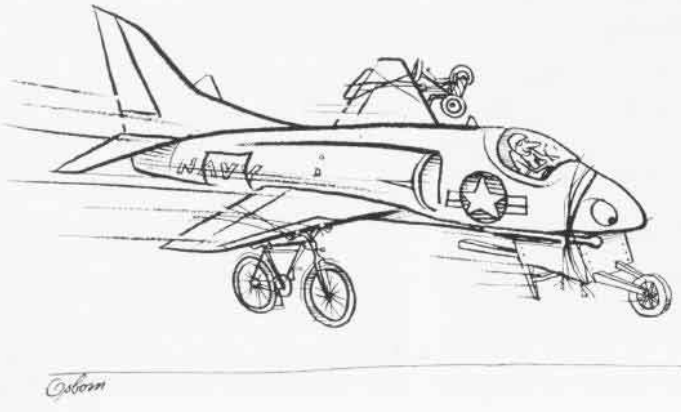
Hope this same gent made it his business to find out why that midfield gear couldn't be rigged.

So Long, Friend

An F-4B departed a West Coast NAS for a practice fire power demonstration flight. The pilot and RIO were told that if fuel and time permitted, after completion of the primary mission, they were to test the airstart capability of the ram air turbine (RAT).

After the demonstration, the pilot proceeded to an area just off the coast where he extended the RAT and secured the port engine. At an airspeed of 220 knots, RAT power was regained; port engine started normally.

While the pilot was waiting for



ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

the engine to accelerate to idle RPM, he informed the RIO of the progress of the test. After both engines were operating normally, the pilot switched the main generators back on. As he did so, the ICS, radio, AJB-3, and gear and flap indicators failed. The pilot immediately checked the operating instruments and determined that no immediate danger existed.

Knowing that the RIO would be concerned about the electrical failure, the pilot looked in the mirror and saw the RIO looking forward. He gave him a "thumbs up" signal with the left hand to indicate the situation was under control. The RIO returned the "thumbs up" signal which the pilot acknowledged by nodding his head. The pilot was watching the RIO in the mirror. Just after nodding his head, the pilot saw the RIO position himself for ejection and reach for the curtain!

The pilot was unable to regain the RIO's attention. The RIO ejected at 8000 feet, 250 knots. The pilot did not see the RIO after he ejected and, as his radio was inoperative, he returned to base for landing and alerted SAR.

The RIO experienced little difficulty during seat separation, chute deployment and water entry. He released the rocket jet fittings, swam clear of the shroud lines and entered the raft.

A C-54 was sighted in the area. The RIO was able to attract the pilot's attention by igniting a day flare. A rescue helo arrived in approximately 10 minutes and returned the RIO to home base.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Egads, lads! This little mix-up really didn't turn out too bad, but makes me break out in a cold sweat to think what could've happened if this bit of confusion had been in reverse.

This should be warnin' enough for you pilots and RIO's to get your signals squared away once and for all.

Crunched Crusaders

Two pilots on alert duty scrambled in their F-8's for a practice intercept mission under GCI control. While they were airborne, a rain shower moved across the field. As it was squadron policy to make Morest landings where the runway was wet, the squadron duty officer advised the tower to expect the two aircraft to make Morest landings.

After being airborne a little over an hour, the two *Crusaders* returned to the field. They were advised by the tower that the runway was wet but braking was fair to good. The flight leader elected to make a normal landing and the wingman took a normal interval after break.

The flight leader landed on the right side of the runway and during the roll-out, the tower cleared him for a right turn. Since the braking action was good, the lead aircraft was slow enough to turn off at the 6000-foot marker, but when he saw the de-arming crew on the left side of the runway, he announced over the radio that he was turning left.

The wingman touched down on the left side of the runway a little fast and started braking at the 4000-foot marker. In less than 1000 feet, the starboard tire blew. Realizing the other aircraft was still on the runway, the pilot applied heavy port brake. As the wingman neared the end of the runway, he suddenly saw his leader turn in front of him. He immediately applied right brake in an effort to pass behind him. Instead, the nose and port wing caught the tail assembly of the other F-8 and spun it around 180 degrees. Both aircraft were substantially damaged, but luckily neither pilot was injured.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Giminentlies! I've heard of a lot of ways to foul up your buddies but this takes the cake. Guess a lot of people have been laborin' under false impressions 'cause I thought everybody knew better than to turn across the path of the aircraft landing behind you.

This flight leader elected not to use the Morest gear even though it was squadron doctrine on a wet runway, failed to follow tower instructions in order to clear the runway safely, and then to really cap things off turned in front of his wingman rolling out behind him. I'll admit a lot of things have changed in the flyin' business the past few years, but tricks like this have been TABOO since the days of the open cockpit and streaming white scarf.