



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Haste and Waste

The flight schedule squeezed one more bombing hop out of this ill-fated *Intruder* prior to its departure for PAR. Returning to homeplate to drop the racks and tanks, the driver (also scheduled to deliver the bird to PAR) noted intermittent nose gear steering and no wingtip speed brakes or flaperon pop-up. He taxied to the line area. As he waited in the chocks, the air was released from the port tire because of overheated brakes. He shut the port engine down but kept the starboard turning. It was noted that the port brake was fused, so he shut down completely and returned to the ready room while the brake was changed and the racks and tanks were dropped.

The ferry flight to PAR was to be a short one, so the pilot dismissed his Bombardier/Navigator. When the aircraft was ready, the *Intruder* driver remounted the bird, fired it up and commenced taxi without performing the normal end-of-the-line preflight control checks. The wings, still folded as he taxied from the line, were observed to spread as he approached the duty runway.

After holding for approximately one minute, the A-6 took the duty, commenced the takeoff roll and became airborne. At about 75-100 feet, the left wing was seen to fold slowly with the aircraft in a nose-high attitude. It then rolled left through the inverted position and continued at an increasing rate of roll. As he passed through the upright position, the starboard wing also began to fold. (At about this point, the ejection seat was observed leaving the aircraft.) The *Intruder* continued to roll and in a nose-down, inverted, port-wing-down position hit the ground, disintegrated and burned.

Although pushing the limits of the seat, the drogue chute deployed, the main chute partially



deployed and pilot-seat separation occurred just prior to impact. The seat struck the ground three feet to the right of the point of pilot impact, bounced and came to rest 90 feet from the point of initial contact. The pilot bounced off the ground and came to rest 45 feet from that point.

Although badly injured, the pilot was attended by medical personnel within three minutes, taken to the dispensary and is now on the road to recovery.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Carelessness, pure and simple. Forgettin' the check-off list is about as sensible as lettin' your premiums go on your insurance. Maybe a ferry flight ain't very glamorous or excitin' but, when you get bored on any flight, you're lookin' for trouble and you'll find it.

My knees still feel a little weak after reading this one. You can bet I'll go over my checkoff list before I make my next move.

Between a Rock

After concluding a three and one-half hour brief, the young photo jockey was catapulted into a typical VFR tropical evening to complete a mission for the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). Im-

mediately after clearing the bow, he noted he could not retract the wheels of the RF-8C in a routine manner and received an electrical shock from the gear handle. Actuating the emergency down lock release switch, he managed to retract the gear and elected to continue on the assigned mission.

The flight was flown as briefed. Upon its completion, the anxious lad cycled the gear and experienced the same difficulty he encountered after launch. Nevertheless, he elected to return to the ship in order to get the film back for processing. Checking in with the ship, he was given marshalling instructions and an approach time of 1945. He commenced on time; however, his distance was eight miles in excess because of a spinning DME. He hit platform at 1952 and was instructed to dirty up at 1954. He did this without difficulty.

At 1959 he called the ball with a state of 2,800 pounds and was waved off for lack of an approach light. The second pass with a state of 2,500 pounds resulted in a bolt-er. During his third pass, the *Crusader* driver reported the loss of his RMI. CCA responded by starting and stopping all turns. This pass was waved off owing to line up and he turned downwind with 2,100 pounds of fuel remaining.

He called the ball on the fourth pass with 1,800 pounds and bolt-ered. After this fourth attempt, he cleaned up, commenced a climb and departed the pattern.

His composure regained, he called CCA, reported his state at 1,600 pounds and requested "Bingo." He received a negative on the Bingo and was told to return to the pattern. He re-entered the pattern with 1,500 pounds and was informed it would be two minutes before he could be tanked. Did he still desire the Bingo? The persistent youngster replied negative and would attempt a trap. He was then

given a turn onto final and shortly thereafter had an electrical failure. As soon as he had extended the RAT, he informed CCA of his plight and requested a tanker. (Fuel state at this time was 1,400 pounds and Bingo required 1,500 pounds.)

Rendezvous with the tanker was accomplished without difficulty at eight miles from the ship. The plagued driver advised the A-4 tanker pilot that he would require a tanking speed of 190 to 195 K as he was unable to clean up. All attempts to "plug in" met with failure although they tried every conceivable combination of flaps and approaches.

At 2033 the *Crusader* flamed out with an indicated fuel state of "zero." At that point, the pilot pulled the curtain.

The Martin-Baker performed normally. The wet pilot was retrieved and deposited back aboard.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! Just the right number of ingredients came together to stew this photo bird. First of all, the pilot didn't cut anybody in on his gear troubles till he was committed. Secondly, the detachment didn't have a rep in CCA to advise the decision makers as to this lad's capability and, thirdly, all information was not passed on to the responsible people.

A little diggin' showed this pilot was real shy on carrier experience, had never tanked at night and, needless to say, never in 'a dirty configuration. Besides that, he hadn't had a day or night trap in over 20 days. Somebody should've culled him off the schedule. Some pretty savvy gents decided a long time ago that things work out a lot better if you give a lad a day build-up landing after a lay-off.

Torn Tiger

An instructor and his student in F-11 *Tigers* had separated at 34,000 feet and were engaged in section tactics. They turned inbound to one another at two miles for their initial pass and crossed head-on at about 30,000 feet. While reversing and making a descending turn with an "estimated" $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 G's at 25,000 feet, the student pilot experienced a sharp explosion. He was thrown forward in the cockpit. His first thought was the canopy

had exploded. This was not the case and, upon checking, he noted nothing unusual except a hydraulic system failure. Another check of the engine instruments showed normal readings. He informed his instructor of his experience, noting also that his altitude had rapidly deteriorated to 15,000 feet.

The startled student, looking in the mirror, noted shreds of metal that seemed to protrude out of the area around the starboard gun bay door. For a moment, he thought the door had blown off. Upon further inspection, he found to his utter dismay there wasn't any wing to be seen on the starboard side. A visual check to port revealed the absence of the port wing also. (He could not recall how much of the wing normally was discernible from the rear view mirror.)

In desperation, the young *Tiger* driver asked his instructor how much of the wings was remaining but, owing to their separation, the instructor was unable to check visually. During these harrowing moments the student applied his prior training, aimed towards homeplate and applied military power. (He was at 12,000 feet, indicating 325 knots and 20 miles out.)

Without more ado, he declared an emergency, explaining his difficulty in controlling the aircraft (rudder and elevator only) and requested a straight-in. About this time, he tried to slow down to get into the landing configuration, but found he could not maintain control at any speed below 300 knots.

He decided to extend the flaps but after actuation noted no appreciable difference. (Rudder and nose trim were surprisingly effective.)

When he was about three miles out at 6,000 feet and forced to maintain 300 knots for controllability, he realized that a landing would be extremely difficult. At about this time, the tower, being helpful, notified the distressed lad his wings were missing.

Hearing this transmission (which confirmed his suspicions) the *Tiger* Tamer broadcast his intentions and summarily pulled the curtain. The initial jolt was rough. However, the seat and chute performed as advertised and delivered this youngster to terra firma.

After the ejection, the wingless *Tiger* entered a steep dive, rolled to the right and exploded on impact in an uninhabited area. Within a matter of minutes, the helo arrived at the scene and retrieved the slightly injured student.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! What a terrible way to get rid of a real game old bird. The ole *Tiger* was put together real good, but like every other airplane we fly, it too has its limitations. At the great revelation, it wouldn't surprise Gramps to find this youngster got carried away a little bit tryin' to impress his instructor. Just remember, pushin' that "G" envelope is like trying to make second base on a single or wearing an undersized girdle—it all depends on what happens in the stretch.

