GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Head Up, Wing Down

A flight of four RF-8A's were briefed by the flight leader for individual departures through a low overcast. They were to continue individually for entry into the Mirror Landing Practice pattern at the auxiliary field. Vertigo and generator failure were discussed as well as other emergency procedures. All aircraft were fueled to 5,800 pounds and it was planned to shoot heavy passes from the estimated initial MLP weight of about 4,000 pounds until reaching maximum gross touchdown weight.

At about 30 miles out, our victim called for the current field altimeter and at 15 miles he received confirmation of the scheduled Charlie time. Approaching the break, the F-8 driver was cleared by the tower to shift to paddles frequency which he had previously set on the manual position. Unable to contact paddles, the pilot switched back to tower and was cleared to break and contact paddles downwind.

The break was executed at 1,500 feet and 300 knots. He reduced the power to 82% extended the speed brakes and rolled into 60° of bank. After 90° of turn and at 220 knots, the pilot lowered the landing gear,

shallowed the bank to 30° and turned his attention back to the field. Glancing back in the cockpit after 90° of turn, the pilot noted the airspeed approaching 170 knots. At this point he added power to 90% and again looked back to the field.

Shortly thereafter, the aircraft began to roll and pitch up mildly. The pilot attempted to level his wings with opposite rudder, noting the airspeed to be 130 knots and angle of attack at 22-25 units.

At this time he was experiencing disorientation and *thought* the aircraft rolled to about 60° right wing down. Passing 500 feet, he pulled the curtain and ejected successfully, landing in soft dirt.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! If this fiasco don't wilt the lily, nothin' will.

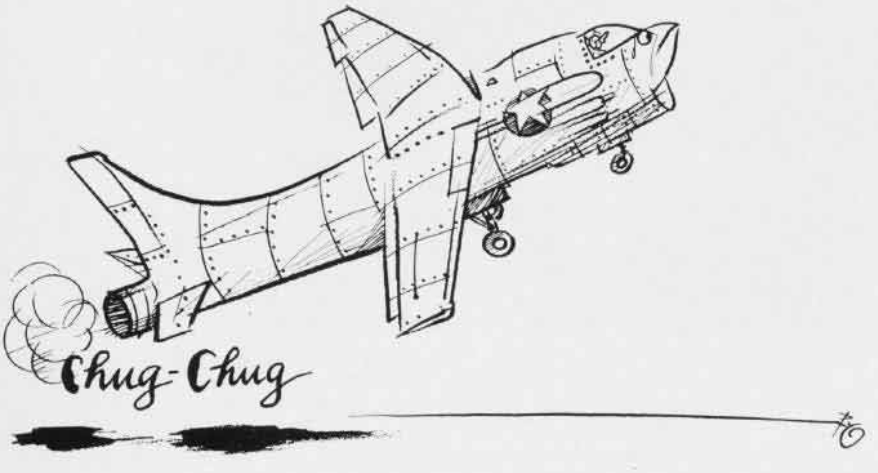
Here's a case of just plain doping off. Old Gramps has been out there at night and bewildered at times, but never enough to forget all the fundamentals of flying that bird in the dark. You've got to put that wing up for landing, Bub, or you darn well better have enough airspeed to stay airborne. Can't beat that checkoff list to keep you out of trouble—and alive. Not usin' that flip-top wing on the Crusader is like walkin' in the rain with a closed umbrella.

Spadango

A spunky *Spad* driver, field qualified and ready for his original carquals, hot-seated (changed pilots without shutting the engine down) his trusty steed abeam the island, completed the checkoff list and signalled his readiness to go. The handling crew towed him aft to the launch line (550 feet down the straight deck). Upon completion of a final check, he received the launch signal from the flight deck officer.

After releasing the brakes, this unsuspecting youngster was observed to add throttle hesitatingly in increments up to full power. Directional control was good initially, but deteriorated considerably after 200 feet of deck run. A hard swerve to the right, (which in no small way was hampered by full back stick) ensued and the A-1 proceeded in a nose-high attitude (main gear airborne) until the tail wheel struck the deck edge coaming. Continuing off the starboard side at an angle of 30° to the straight deck and 70 feet short of the bow, the game *Spad* became airborne.

The left wing began dropping as the nose continued to rise. At 90°



ILLUSTRATED BY Gibson

left bank and 30° nose up, the rider reduced power to idle. The nose dropped and the angle of bank decreased as the machine descended in a port turn, crossing the bow to the port side. The unguided missile struck the water about 100 feet forward of the port bow in a 20° nose-down and 5° left-wing-down attitude at an estimated 95 knots.

Following impact, the beleaguered pilot released his restraints and pushed himself out of the cockpit and 20 feet upward to the surface. The Angel was overhead and had the dunked but unhurt lad back aboard ship in six minutes.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

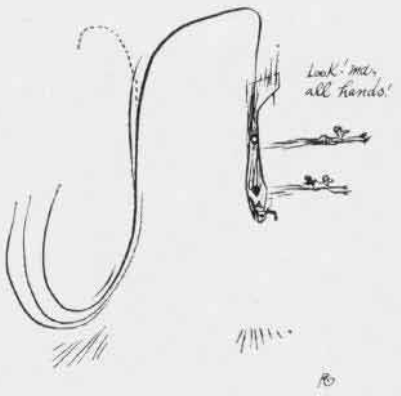
Fetch me another asprin tablet, 'cause this one made my port ulcer do nip-ups. This lad found out the hard way that the ole reliable Spad is like most of the birds we drive around in. You have to use a little influence on it sometime to make it go the way you want it to. You can't just sit there and let the cantankerous beast have its head without gettin' into more trouble than most people can handle. This lad made old Gramps' list but it's not the one you brag about.

FAM Folly

An instructor-pilot and his student manned their assigned A-6A *Intruder* for a scheduled day VFR familiarization flight. This was the student's first time actually to control the aircraft in the left seat. Following a normal start and checkout, both pilots were satisfied with the plane and they taxied out for takeoff.

Initial phases of the flight went as briefed and the instructor was well satisfied with his student's performance. After 40 minutes of flight a let-down from 10,000 feet was initiated to attain proper entry altitude for the half-cuban eight maneuver called for in the syllabus. This maneuver was attempted with slightly high entry speed and altitude, but with no greater than normal acceleration forces. Owing to a lack of precise lateral control during the pull-up, the flight path deviated from normal, and a 90° change in heading resulted.

After completing more than a half-loop, the pilot attempted a roll-out from the inverted position. The attitude of the aircraft at this time was approximately 40° nose down at an estimated altitude of 8-9,000 feet. The aircraft stalled and entered uncontrolled flight with abrupt side-to-side rolling accompanied by an increase in the nose-down attitude to vertical. A tight descending spiral ensued and, at 3,800 feet, indicating over 300 knots, heading straight down, the instructor issued orders to eject.



Estimated ejection altitude was between 2-3,000 feet for the instructor and less than 2,000 feet for the student.

Both aviators sustained minor injuries and were subsequently picked up by the station helo.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin Jehosaphat! What a waste of an expensive and much needed bird.

Old Gramps can't figger why a qualified instructor would sit idly by and allow the student to disengage his brain and shift control to the seat of his britches.

They came mighty close to losing two lives and it all points to supervisory error. It's a cold hard fact of life that every bird we lose hurts our combat readiness but, if a hopeless situation develops, the only logical thing to do is eject and not compound the loss.

Memo from Gramps:

Simple as it sounds and though it has only one syllable, the hardest word in the world to say is "NO." With each month that goes by, an accident report crosses my desk that says as surely as though it were listed in the conclusions of the AAR Board, "Somebody didn't have the guts to say No."

It doesn't have to be the C. O. Why should he always be the hatchet man? The Ops Officer, Training Officer, and Exec could have a little more iron in their backbones, too. Military flying is not a profession in which every man is trying to win a popularity contest.

We fly to train ourselves to FIGHT and to fight so well that no man on the other side, whoever he may be and no matter what the color of his eyes or skin, will EVER be our equal. The very nature of Naval Aviation and the fast mobility of our striking forces will almost always mean that we'll fight another guy who'll have numerical superiority so we have to be twice as good as the average pilot anywhere!

Someone has to cull over the flight schedule to make sure each man progresses normally toward attaining this goal and doesn't run before he's learned to walk. Someone has to keep the chargers from expending themselves needlessly. This then is the time for decision and the exercise of true leadership.

A pilot who flies an 0730 hop on Friday morning should never be cleared for a long "Nav Training" cross-country RON hop that night. Either the night hop is worth scheduling and worth bringing him on duty at the hour you'd normally have the night flyers come in or *it shouldn't go!*

A tired pilot's instrument scan all too often breaks down. He makes errors that would make a NAVCAD blush with shame. He forgets to check NOTAMS on his destination or en route radio fixes. Or he collides with his wingman, stretches his fuel too far, pushes his skill in weather and just plain takes too many darn fool chances!

The younger pilots think we have too many restrictions nowadays. Why ARE we restricted to military fields on cross-countrys? Ever see a set of field arresting gear on a civil airport? Or a military type crash crew? An AD pilot slowly smothered in his cockpit at a civil airport just a month or so ago while the local fire department tried to figure out how to raise the tail of his overturned bird. Poor flight planning and lack of experience put him in a spot he couldn't get out of. He wasn't ready for a cross-country. Someone should have said "No!"

For the new man, a "NO" is not a disgrace. Just work a little harder and earn your C.O.'s recognition as a man to whom he can say "YES." A really good professional fighting man can go anywhere, anytime, because he has the judgment to know when to say "NO" to himself. Then you've REALLY earned your wings!