



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Brakes Break

This *Intruder* flight, scheduled as an engine acceleration test, had all the outward appearances of a routine hop. The pilot had previously accumulated enough time in this model to be well qualified, but his B/N (bombardier/navigator), also a pilot, was experiencing his first ride in the A-6.

Upon completing the pre-flight inspection, the pilot briefed his B/N on ejection seat procedures. While doing so, he noted the B/N did not have the proper oxygen mask. After they strapped in, he also noted that the B/N did not have a torso harness adapted for the A-6. After a little improvisation, they decided the flight could be conducted safely if they remained at a low altitude.

Start, taxi and takeoff were uneventful so they climbed to 28,000 feet in order to log military rated thrust (MRT) time on the engine. Next, they made an idle descent to about 2,000 feet in the vicinity of an uninhabited island. A run was made over the island from the south at approximately 1,500 feet altitude, between 325 to 350 knots, preparatory to low-altitude, accelerating runs at MRT.

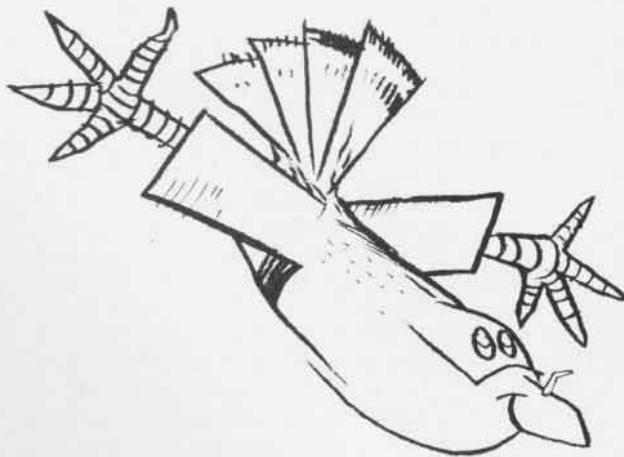


As they passed over the island, the pilot pulled the nose of the airplane up, selected speed brakes out and reduced power to idle. During the decelerating wing-over maneuver, he lowered flaps and elected to commence the high-speed runs on a southerly heading over the bay at 500 feet. The rate of descent was approximately 1,500

feet per minute and air speed about 150 knots. As he approached his desired round-out altitude of 800 to 1,000 feet, he brought the nose up to the horizon and simultaneously added power he considered adequate for level flight. The sink rate was reduced slightly by the increased nose-up attitude but, as the air speed decreased another 10-15 knots, it became apparent that the desired response was not present and the pilot selected maximum power on both engines of his *Intruder*.

He next selected flaps up to reduce drag but completely forgot that the speed brakes were fully extended. He signalled immediately for the B/N to eject and the pilot himself ejected. (At this point he realized the extended speed brakes were causing the deceleration but it was too late to do anything about it.)

The ejections occurred at approximately 100 feet altitude, 120 knots, with the aircraft descending about 600 feet per minute in a wings-level attitude. The plane continued to settle, hit the water, tore off the underhanging fuel tanks and slid up on a marshy island. The two pilots landed about 30 feet and 100 feet to the right of the aircraft. Sustaining moderate injuries, they were recovered in short order and heloed to the hospital.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Oh, my achin' bones! The fog count in the cockpit must'a been pretty high. It's a pretty well-known fact in *Intruder* circles that the bird don't hold level flight so good with the brakes out and, even without a brake position indicator, the message should'a come through loud and clear.

There ain't much doubt in my mind that these fellas pushed their luck envelope to its limit, I'll bet they do more than kick the tires and light the fires next time.

## Phantom Phable

The flight briefing commenced at 0715. Ens. Nugget (newly designated Naval Aviator) informed his instructor that he had difficulty with ground controlled approaches on his previous instrument flight, so a considerable portion of the brief was devoted to the technique of flying a GCA pattern in the F-4.

He was briefed to concentrate first on heading and get it under control within two degrees. The second step was to lock airspeed after the aircraft was in the landing configuration. During the transition to landing configuration, he was not to worry about precise altitude control but concentrate on heading and airspeed. Airspeeds on final were briefed to be 145-50 knots on the first approach and 140-45 on second. Ens. Nugget made written notes on this technique. This portion of the briefing was conducted in about 20 minutes.

The RIO's (radar intercept officers) joined the briefing and the conduct of the flight was outlined. The flight was a canned (pre-planned) IFR round-robin with a penetration and GCA to a missed approach at an en route Air Force base.

The flight did not commence well. Ens. Nugget dropped full, vice half, flaps for the section take-off which caused his wingman to reduce power to 90% to avoid over-running. Airborne at 0903, the flight turned left and headed directly for a restricted area. (Nugget said he was unable to synchronize his compass.) A frequency shift to center control and heavy radio traffic hindered the instructor getting his student to turn and the restricted area was thoroughly violated.

The climb and cruise portion of the flight with the exception of rough nose and altitude control was O.K. and, after an hour and ten minutes on simulated instruments, the flight arrived at the initial penetration fix and commenced a TACAN penetration with GCA to the en route Air Force base. Altitude and azimuth control was good; however, airspeed was varied between 160 and 130 knots.

Approaching 600 feet on glide

slope, Nugget was reminded by his RIO to remove the instrument hood at 500 feet. As the driver started to remove the hood, he noted that he was at 600 feet vice 500 and attempted to re-install the hood. As he was doing this, the F-4 slowed and the nose abruptly came up. The *Phantom* stalled, the right wing and nose dropped, and the instrument hood fell over the instrument panel.

The RIO called "Attitude-attitude," on the ICS while the chase pilot called "Power-power." Ens. Nugget responded by adding military power and initiated recovery.

Meanwhile, in the rear cockpit, the helpless RIO, noting 25° nose down on the attitude gyro, initiated the ejection sequence by reaching for the face curtain. The pilot recovered to a level attitude and notified the RIO all was well a microsecond prior to the latter's ejection from the aircraft. Too late.

Almost simultaneously with the RIO's departure, the *Phantom's* nose came up and again entered a stalled or nearly stalled condition. A second recovery was effected and a positive climb established. (Both stalls and recoveries were made with the instrument hood covering the panel; the final recovery altitude was estimated to be 200 feet.)

The instructor joined his student, climbed to the landing pattern altitude and coached the lad to a normal landing at the Air Force base while initiating and directing SAR (search and rescue) efforts.

The RIO, who sustained moderate injuries as a result of the ejection, was promptly picked up by

a helicopter and flown directly to the hospital.



*Grampac Pettibone says:*

Holy mackerel! This one really shakes the dew off the lily. I ain't about to say that instrument hood is the neatest thing since sliced bread, but I will say this youngster and his instructor RIO could've had a little better working agreement. One heck of a lot of F-4 drivers use that hood and their RIO's don't walk home. Nugget mistook the prep signal for an execution, but it didn't have to turn wormy right then.

A little more coaching from the rear seat, an absolute minimum airspeed, and just a little more vigilance from all hands could've prevented this revoltin' development.

## Memo from Gramps

There once was a 'Torn Tiger' (NANews, December 1966, p. 5) and he made a forced landin' right on Gramps' head. Wowie, it smarts! As it should be, Gramps enjoys a certain amount of academic freedom as well as anonymity. In writin' up that tale, Gramps was torn betwixt handin' out orchids to the pilot or servin' up homily à la Pettibone. Homily won the toss. But it's been "homily grits" ever since, with many, many people tellin' Gramps that structural fatigue was the *real* reason for that Tiger's downfall. Okay. Gramps, with bloodied ears and an achin' ego, admits his fryin' pan was on the wrong burner. But, honest injun, all he wanted was to impress on our youngsters the fact that old flyin' machines, like old china, can't take G's like they could when they were new. As Gramps' favorite song says, "That's life! I've been a pawn . . . and a king."



*He'll probably get it too!*