



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Wave Slapper

The air wing was in its second day of carrier qualifications prior to deployment. The RA-5C *Vigilante* launched from the host air station early in the morning and was recovered aboard the CVA in a routine manner. The A-5 was subsequently launched and completed four arrested landings before being hot-refueled and receiving a change of pilots.

The pre-launch check lists were completed by the new pilot. He was advised by the RAN (Radar Navigator) that on several previous launches, the other pilot had used 12 units of nose-up trim for the cat shot and experienced a slight settling. Consequently, the new pilot trimmed to 13 units nose-up and instructed the RAN to remind him to drop the hook immediately after launch to preclude bomb bay fuel transfer.

After a correct gross weight check on the cat and an observer's verification of a correct flap setting, the big *Vigilante* was launched.

As he rode down the track, the pilot applied full aft stick. Leaving the bow, he had the impression that the aircraft was settling and the nose was slightly below the horizon. When the aircraft had settled to about 30 feet with the nose still not above the



horizon, he told the RAN to eject.

The driver took his left hand from the throttles and moved it toward the left ejector handle while continually holding the stick full aft with the right hand. He then heard two explosions, saw an object flash by in the mirror (the RAN ejecting) and noted the nose moving above the horizon. (The other explosion was the aircraft's

tail impacting the water.) Satisfied that the sink rate had terminated, the cool driver decided not to eject. The A-5 commenced a rapid, healthy climb and proceeded to an overhead orbit.

Meanwhile the RAN, enjoying a very successful ejection, landed clear and was recovered by the helo.

The RA-5C, sustaining minor damages, was joined and examined by two F-4's prior to diverting to an uneventful landing ashore.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

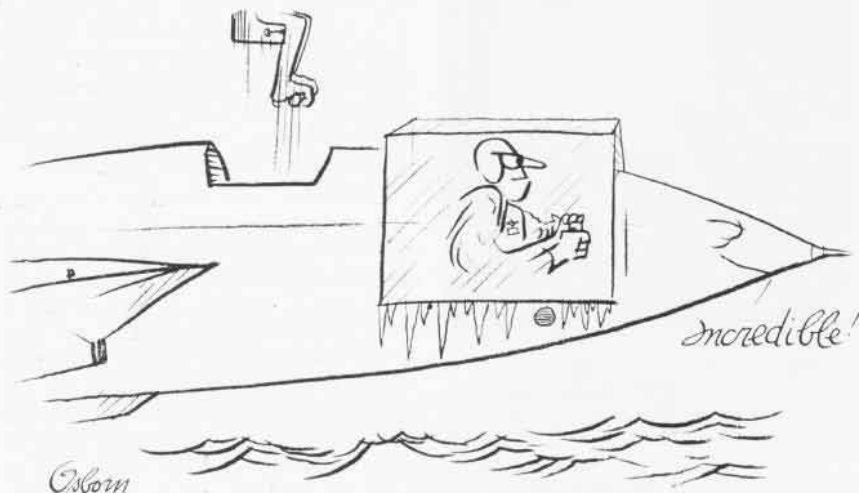
Wowee! That wasn't a close shave, but a hairline escape. Outside of pouring more acid on my achin' ulcer for lettin' that CG back him in the corner, I ain't got nothin' but admiration for this fella's "cool."

There ain't much doubt in my mind that this driver and those about him are gonna look pretty darn close at what they got and where it is from now on.

## Singled Up

The *Phantom* had just completed PAR (Progressive Aircraft Rework) and was scheduled for its initial acceptance flight. Following routine preflight, start and taxi, the F-4 executed a normal half-flap afterburner takeoff. A slight roll occurred at lift-off and the trailing edge flap showed a barber pole when the flaps were raised. After two tower fly-bys had been made to determine the flap position, the pilot (still in doubt as to the flap's position) elected to continue the test hop and climbed out with military power at 250 knots.

Shortly before the aircraft reached an altitude of 10,000 feet, the starboard engine fire warning light came on. The *Phantom* pilot retarded the throttle to 70 percent and the warning light went out momentarily but came on again in a steady glow. At that point, the driver shut down the starboard engine, commenced dumping wing fuel and decided on a single-engine approach to the nearby NAS.



At approximately the 90-degree position, the pilot noted some difficulty in maintaining the proper turn radius. On seeing that he would overshoot the runway, he elected a single-engine go-around.

But with no more options available, the committed driver was unable to arrest the sink rate sufficiently and instructed the RIO to eject. The RIO ejected posthaste. The pilot ejected just as the aircraft made ground contact at the point in time when the sink rate was almost negligible.

The RIO, unfortunately, was outside the envelope (excessive sink rate) when he ejected and was critically injured. The pilot miraculously escaped serious injury by ejecting the instant the sink rate had subsided.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

This particular mishap points out a darn good reason to follow the standard NATOPS procedures, but was a horrible way to prove the point. The manual lays it out loud and clear. If the single-engine landing procedure had been meticulously followed in this case, I'm sure things would've turned out better.

Whenever the supervisory types become complacent about enforcing NATOPS qualifications, they're askin' for trouble.

It might be considered a little nit-pickin' by the "kick the tire and light the fire" set when they are required to check out by the book before they fly, but the ole man and Gramps can shuffle the papers and breathe one heck of a lot easier knowing that pilots are, in fact, current and fully standardized.

## Bet Your Life

During a carqual period, the *Crusader* driver was aboard for his duty as LSO but, since night flying was cancelled this particular night, he obtained permission to fly ashore and RON. His aircraft was originally fueled to a gross weight of 22,500 pounds, so he requested a full load of fuel for a gross weight of 28,000 pounds. While the additional fuel was being added, he conducted a normal preflight inspection and manned the aircraft on the hangar deck. In turn the F-8 was taken to the flight deck where the pilot started the aircraft and completed a normal preflight check.

Pri-Fly called the *Crusader* jockey on UHF and asked for his gross weight, and he stated it was 28,000 pounds. (This information normally passed to the catapult crew involved was not relayed, owing to a breakdown in the sound-power phone communications.)

At this point in time, all other aircraft had been launched and the *Crusader* was taxied to the catapult. The weight board man saw the F-8 taxiing to the cat and he wrote 22,500 pounds on the board as that was the weight the F-8's had been using during carquals.

While he was taxiing onto the catapult, the driver looked at the board but was unable to see it. He finished positioning the aircraft on the cat, looked once more at the weight board and saw 28,000 pounds to which he gave a thumbs-up. The

weight board (which actually read 22,500 pounds) was shown to the catapult officer who, in turn, prepared to launch the aircraft at a gross weight of 22,500 pounds.

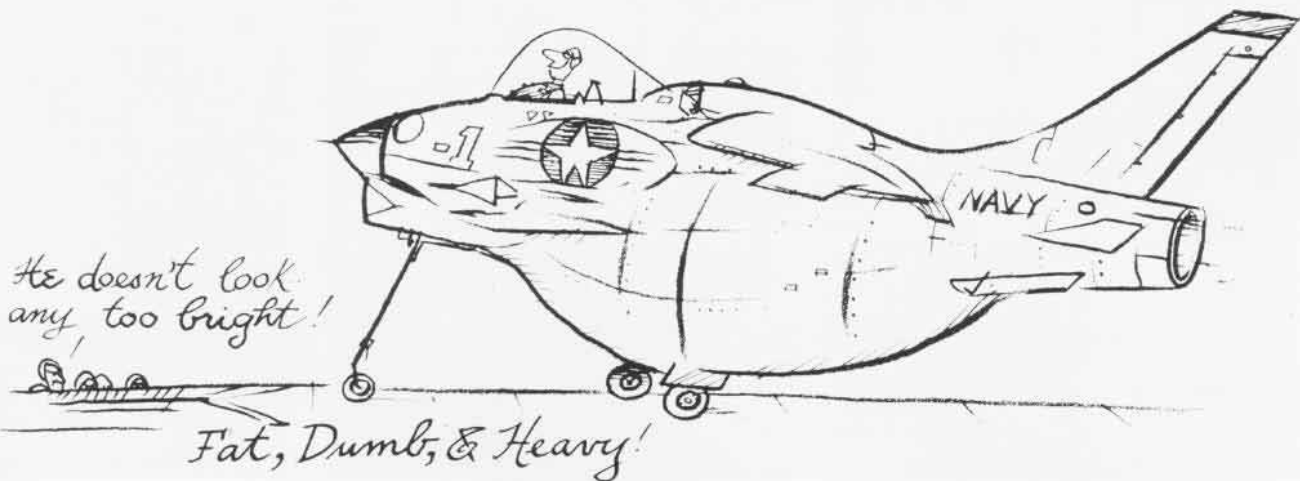
The catapult stroke felt about the same as the pilot expected for this class carrier, but he did notice some fishtailing. Immediately after leaving the deck, the *Crusader* rolled to the right, commenced a slow descent and crossed the bow from port to starboard.

Realizing he was in trouble, the pilot tried without success to level his wings and then lit the burner. The F-8 continued to settle. Acutely aware that he was about to strike the water, the rider ejected with the aircraft in a nose-high attitude, 30 degrees left bank, decelerating through 120 knots. The *Crusader* struck the water approximately 1,000 yards ahead of the ship and exploded. The pilot's chute blossomed just prior to water entry and he suffered moderate injuries. The plane guard made the pick-up in very short order and returned the pilot to the ship.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Holy mackerel! This fella wanted to get to the beach so bad that he was gonna read 28,000 on that weight board regardless. Wishin' just don't make it so and the real hard fact remains that you gotta take that extra time and effort to make absolutely sure everyone concerned has the word. Bettin' your own life (not to mention the *Crusader*) for one night on the beach is a pretty high stake in any man's league.



*He doesn't look  
any too bright!*

*Fat, Dumb, & Heavy!*