



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Late Night Dip

It was carrier qualification time for 24 new replacement pilots in the A-7 training squadron. Some were embarked aboard before the CVA left port; the remainder were scheduled to fly out in increments and complete their CQ periods.

A certain Ltjg. among the fly-on group arose that morning at 0545. He was briefed and ready to go by 0845 and launched at 1015, with a wingman, in his A-7B *Corsair II* for a VFR routine flight to the carrier. At his approach time, the new pilot proceeded into the landing pattern for a touch-and-go, followed by two wave-offs and seven trapped landings. He was finally shut down at 1250.

Knowing it would be a late night, he tried to get some sleep in the afternoon but, with his stateroom directly below the landing area, he was unable to do more than rest for a while.

After preparing thoroughly for his first night period, he hotseated (manned an aircraft already turning up on the flight deck) an A-7 at 2215 but was delayed and eventually shut down because of catapult problems.

He again manned the aircraft at 15 minutes past midnight and was launched into the black, clear night at 0035.

Because of remote compass difficulties, in the pattern, his scan broke down, the rudder shaker came on, and he had to recover the aircraft from a near stall. Informing the ship of his problems, he was given a no-gyro approach, calling the ball at 600 feet. The *Corsair* became low on the glide slope, and the LSO called for power. The Ltjg. still felt uncomfortable, and so he initiated his own wave-off.

The next pass was much better. The approach power compensator checked out properly on the downwind leg and was used for the ap-



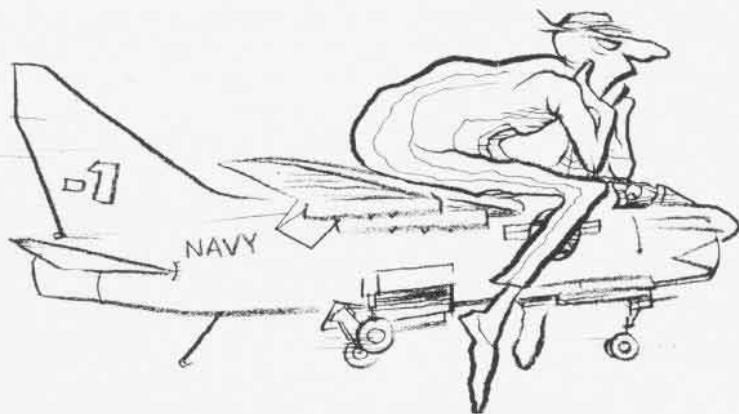
proach. He received a line-up call from the LSO but, after correcting, everything looked good. However, the left wing dropped and the craft landed 20 feet left of the centerline with a left drift. As the aircraft neared the end of rollout, the left main landing gear hit and rolled over the port deck edge into the catwalk. The nose gear soon followed. The *Corsair* teetered for a moment, resting on several life rafts,

then slowly nosed down over the side of the ship, shedding the cross deck pendant on the way.

The pilot thought the plane was going to stop in the catwalk and, by the time he realized it wasn't, the attitude was too steep for ejection. He decided to wait until he was under water to try to get out.

The *Corsair* entered the water inverted, nose down and, after a one-second delay, the Ltjg. ejected using the alternate handle. The equipment worked, and he found himself free in the water. His mask had pulled away from his face, and he was experiencing severe back pain but was able to follow the stream of bubbles to the surface. He was right alongside the inverted airplane, so stood on the UHT while inflating his MK-3C life preserver.

The helo pickup went relatively smoothly, and the pilot was deposited on the carrier deck at 0100 and then taken to sick bay for treatment of a cracked vertebra.



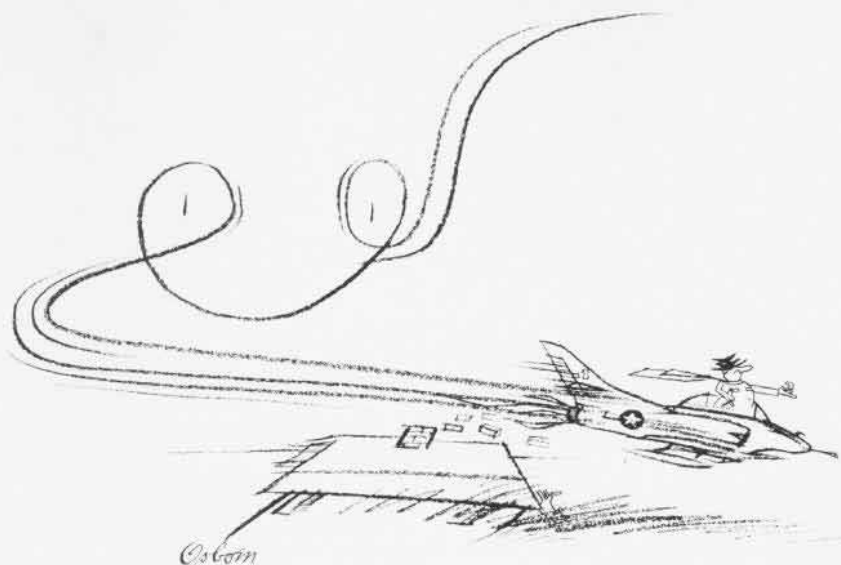
Fatigue is a poor passenger!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thunderation! Wha' hopped?

This flight sure went to worms in a hurry. Sure and it's pilot error, but why? He dropped his left wing while concentrating on the ball so hard those last few seconds. Fatigue has got to be kept to a minimum at times like these. Skipper, is it really necessary to keep the guys goin' for so many hours in one day? I'm fresh outta' other suggestions to stop this sorta' accident. The replacement pilot woulda' had a better chance if he'd followed NATOPS - pulled the canopy interrupter and used the face curtain when ejecting under water.



To the Victor Go the Spoils

Subj: Investigation, Alleged violation of flying regulations concerning Lt. H. P. SIZZLE, USN, 942179/1310

Lt. Sizzle had completed his second combat tour as a well disciplined and professional photo-pilot. The be-medaled young man had successfully flown all his missions and never lost an aircraft. His peers and superiors respected his outstanding airmanship, good sound judgment and aggressive spirit.

As soon as things had settled down after the usual hubbub of homecoming, H.P. was transferred to shore duty with the replacement instrument training squadron at his home station and quickly completed transition to the TA-4F *Skyhawk*. After accumulating about 40 hours in type, he submitted a cross-country request to his commanding officer via the operations officer. It was for a multiple-RON flight to the other coast. He would, in addition to building his instrument proficiency, get some airways navigation training and be able to visit with his family and fiancée - who lived near his requested stopover. The cross-country flight was quickly approved for the following weekend.

The flight across the nation was executed on Friday evening with typical precision, including a mid-continent fuel stop. Lt. Sizzle arrived at his destination before midnight and the three-day holiday weekend which followed was thoroughly enjoyable.

Late Monday afternoon, our intrepid Naval Aviator filed his flight

plan and departed the AFB for return to homeplate. Within 15 minutes, the base operations officer, base security office and two local village police departments began receiving a flood of complaint calls regarding a jet aircraft which had made three low passes over a nearby shoreside residential area. One complainant tentatively identified the aircraft as an A-4; others said it flew so low that it blew up a cloud of sand from the beach, turned over patio chairs and swayed a TV antenna.

The base operations officer noted that Lt. Sizzle's aircraft was the only one in or out of the base that evening. He also determined that Lt. Sizzle's family owned a summer home within one block of the area where the jet had made its low flights. A message to the pilot's home air station launched a Judge Advocate General's investigation which circumstantially placed H.P.'s aircraft as the only known aircraft in the vicinity at the time. The investigating officer recommended against disciplinary action since it could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that Lt. Sizzle was the pilot involved. But, as a precautionary measure, he recommended that H.P. be restricted from cross-country flights to that area for a period of six months.

Endorsers in the chain of command, however, had a different point of view. Each, in turn, was convinced that Lt. Sizzle was indeed the pilot involved and that he had violated federal air regulations and OpNav general operating instructions. In addition, the pilot had shown a marked lack of maturity and judgment.

The type commander felt that the cost would be too great to warrant trial by general court martial. He issued a letter of reprimand to Lt. Sizzle and directed his commanding officer to make appropriate comments and markings in his next fitness report.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Consarn it! It's about time them young whippersnappers were brought up short. Within the same three months, there were two other planes involved in flat-hatting accidents which destroyed the aircraft, killed the pilots and created considerable ill will for the Navy.

This uncaged tiger got his just desserts. If'n more cases like this were publicized, mayhaps we could save a few more lives and a few more airplanes.

Most people desire the results of safety but do not wish to pay the price of prevention.