



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Hot Machine, Cool Head

A Marine major with considerable experience in jet aircraft was scheduled to fly an A-4C *Skyhawk* from an MCAS to an NAS, both on the West Coast. At 1710, the major filed an IFR flight plan and proceeded to his aircraft. Preflight and start were uneventful, as were the taxi and engine run-up.

The *Skyhawk* was cleared for take-off and, during climbout, the major switched from departure control to center frequency. Passing 11,500 feet, he received a radar vector to his next radio facility. Commencing the turn, he noted passing 13,500 feet and, at that instant, he experienced "a series of violent chattering shudders and chugs and the engine started to unwind." He made one attempt at emergency communication but the radio had faded. He deployed the emergency generator. The fuel transfer light was on; the RPMs were passing 60 percent; the EGT was normal; however, the fire warning light was on.

The pilot glanced in the rear view mirror and noted flames from the fuselage. He turned toward the ocean and elected to remain with the aircraft until clear of populated areas. During the turn, the entire master caution panel became illuminated and control response became sluggish. In a nose-down attitude (estimated 15 degrees), the aircraft oscillated "much like a



falling leaf" and the pilot was unable to control it with rudder or ailerons. The pilot then saw flames "over the top of the canopy extending to the windscreen."

Because of large G forces, he made no attempt to reach the face curtain and instead ejected while inverted, using the alternate firing handle. (His helmet subsequently came off during the ejection sequence.) The pilot feels he lost consciousness momentarily and recalls nothing prior to the opening of the parachute. While descending, he saw the aircraft, on fire, on its way

to the water. Water entry was normal, his chute collapsed and he immediately inflated his life vest. No attempt was made to release the parachute. He was spotted by a helicopter and other light aircraft and shortly thereafter was assisted from the water by a police boat.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Leapin' lizards! I've read a few reports about busted flyin' machines and "drivers" in my day—but this fella behaved like a real pro! Stayed with his aircraft to avoid a populated area until he wore out his welcome in the cockpit.

Guess we'll never know for sure why the machine quit flyin' right, but once it got "mighty warm" in the cockpit, this gent remained cool as a cucumber! Well done! Makes you proud to be a Naval Aviator.

No Oil

A lieutenant junior grade who had just completed his day carrier qualifications was scheduled for his initial night carrier qualifications in an A-7E *Corsair II*. During the day he flew two arrested landings to prepare for his night work.

That evening, following an uneventful preflight and launch, he was vectored to final approach and flew an average pass to a number-three-wire engagement. His first pass was flown at dusk with a good visible horizon.

The next catapult shot was five minutes later under actual night conditions. The lieutenant junior grade flew a good pass and called the ball on lineup slightly below glide slope. He settled further below glide slope and was told to add power and bring the aircraft up.

The aircraft began to make the correction, then rapidly started to go low again. As the *Corsair* continued its rapid descent, the controlling LSO transmitted "Altitude! Power! Wave-off!" and turned on the wave-off lights.





To the LSOs, a ramp strike appeared imminent and they immediately cleared the platform. No aircraft-to-ramp impact was observed by either the LSOs or the air boss and the aircraft appeared to have executed a successful wave-off.

Turning crosswind, the lieutenant reported that his master caution light had illuminated and that his oil quantity indicated one-half. He then was vectored for another pass, the decision being to attempt the approach and if he waved-off or bolted, the aircraft was to be binged.

On his next approach, the aircraft landed in the wires but hook-skipped the #3 and 4 wires and the aircraft was binged to the closest shore station. The initial vector given by the CCA controller was 357°/73 nm from the ship. The *Corsair* began a climb to 20,000 feet on this vector and switched to departure control. The pilot was unable to contact anyone on that frequency and as his oil pressure started to drop, he switched to guard channel and activated emergency IFF in an attempt to regain radio contact.

A TACAN lock-on could not be obtained on his field, so he continued on his heading. At 20,000 feet with oil quantity indicating low and oil pressure, zero, the engine seized. After the seizure, the lieutenant declared Mayday and broadcast his intentions to eject. He was asked for several short counts so that aircraft and ground facilities could pinpoint his exact position. He turned toward the lights of a nearby large city and then paralleled the coastline. With the aircraft passing through 7,000 feet, the pilot ejected and the aircraft impacted the water.

The uninjured pilot was rescued by

a ship after approximately three hours in his life raft. The accident board concluded that the hook had struck the ramp during the wave-off and was deflected upward, causing damage to the oil lines.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! This lad just doesn't heed the LSO's instructions quick enough for my money — one of the most dangerous situations in "postage stamp" operations is not taking quick positive action in response to the LSO!

Of course, once this lad "looked" as if he was going to hit the ramp and then appeared to the LSO that he didn't (when he really did), while reporting an "oil quantity" problem — it's time to be "a suspicious cuss" and send the lad home. I ain't saying that the engine wouldn't have quit anyhow — I just don't think it's smart to continue qualifying an inexperienced driver in a machine that just reported a discrepancy.

Set-Up for a Crash

The SP-2H *Neptune* had just completed a five-and-one-half-hour, day, overwater training flight. The patrol plane commander (PPC), a lieutenant with considerable experience in the aircraft, was in the right seat. A lieutenant, the pilot-under-instruction (PUI), with 11 hours in type, was in the left seat. For training purposes, the lieutenant with the limited experience was to make the home-field final landing.

The tower was contacted approximately ten miles from the field and clearance was given for a straight-in approach to a 6,000-foot runway. The weather was good with light and vari-

able winds. The necessary checklists were completed and the PUI was briefed on the approach and landing by the PPC. The *Neptune* commenced the approach, the PUI reported the wheels down, and the PPC noted about five knots' excess airspeed. Touchdown was 1,200 feet from the approach end of the runway.

The PUI experienced some difficulty in applying reverse thrust but, when he did, the aircraft seemed to accelerate. The PPC, with 3,000 feet remaining, took control of the aircraft. Braking began and the main-mount tires blew with approximately 1,400 feet of runway remaining. The PPC, realizing he was going to overrun, set the emergency brake. The *Neptune* continued rolling and departed the end of the runway with approximately 50 knots of airspeed and continued for 600 feet before coming to a stop. The crew exited the aircraft with no injuries; however, the *Neptune* sustained substantial damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! I got so darned mad when I read this here report — I call this a set-up for a crash. First of all, this fella was a "little fast"; secondly, he landed long; and thirdly, he tore into the reverse like it was trying to escape him! May I inquire — where was the PPC during these "build-up" events? Oh yeah, he took over the aircraft once things were so screwed up that even he had no choice but to ride the machine through the strawberry patch! Poor, very poor, indeed.

Corrective action in this case is obvious — take it around again if you're going to land so far down the runway that reverse is necessary to make a safe stop, and don't wait too long to take over a fast buildin' catastrophe!