GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Crash and Go

Student, 1st Lt. Luckystud, reported to the squadron at 0600 and was briefed at 0630 by his instructor for a carrier qualification syllabus flight. Due to delays at the ship, takeoff time was moved back from 0800 to 1045. The student performed a normal preflight on his TA-4J *Skyhawk*. The start and post-start checks were normal, followed by takeoff at 1045, number four in a flight of four.

The flight climbed to 13,000 feet and, upon arrival over the ship, was instructed to hold. After 20 minutes in that pattern, the flight was cleared to descend and enter the ship's traffic pattern. 1st Lt. Luckystud's first pass resulted in a waveoff for overshooting, not enough power in the middle and settling at the ramp. His second pass was graded as "fair, long in the groove, not enough power all the way, come down low-flat at the ramp, touch-and-go."

On his third pass, his *Skyhawk* hit the ramp. The pass, which was supposed to be a touch-and-go, was graded as "not enough power in close, settle at the ramp, no response to three power calls, waveoff lights, and waveoff initiated just prior to impact with the rounddown."

The aircraft hit the aft edge of the flight deck, ten feet right of centerline, shearing the two main landing gear struts at the point where they join the upper strut assemblies and breaking off the aft section of both drop tanks. The aircraft continued up the flight deck and *became airborne abeam the island.*

The LSO then told 1st Lt. Luckystud that he had sheared his main landing gear and the tower advised him to return to home base. The safety pilot who was orbiting overhead was called down to return to home base with the damaged *Skyhawk*. He noticed that the aircraft was leaking fuel from the port wing and had damage to the port flap. After another minute, the fuel leak stopped and the flight continued.

As the flight leveled off at 10,000 feet, the safety pilot witnessed half of the aircraft's port flap fall away. About 75 miles out of home base, the safety pilot switched to local approach control and requested that the runway be set up for an emergency landing.

The student was advised to land hook-up, on the foamed runway (on which the arresting gear had been removed). The landing was executed with only limited damage to drop tanks, nose cone and main landing gear doors. As the aircraft came to a stop, Luckystud egressed with no injuries. The crash crew was on the scene within seconds to assist him.

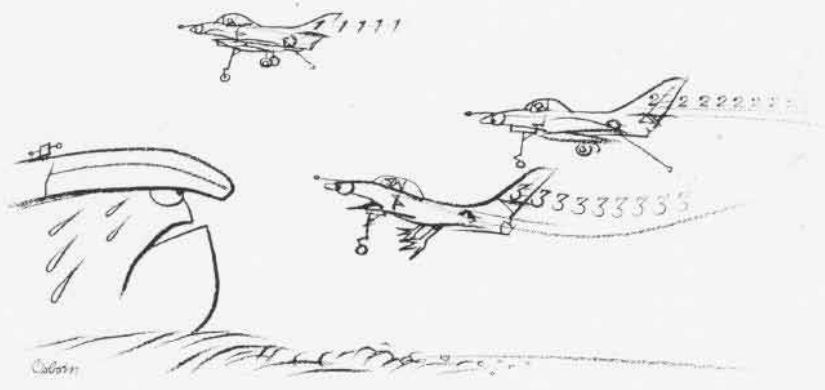
Grampaw Pettibone says:

Hairy hairies! Ain't many aviators that conducted a "crash-and-go" on a ship and were then able to return to base?!? There's more to this story than meets the eye. This gent had expressed his dissatisfaction with his own performance to another squadron LSO just prior to this fiasco. However, the LSO chose to take the remark no further and didn't even notify the controlling LSO! Then, to top it all off, they sent this lad back out to the ship the next day; fortunately, the LSO refused to work him — Bravo! A good decision for a change. Seems to me someone is in an all fired hurry to get students qualified!

For Lack of a Nail

Two lieutenants were scheduled for a two-plane daylight training flight in their A-4E *Skyhawks*. Pre-mission activities were normal in all respects with the weather scheduled to be VFR in the training area. Takeoff and climb to altitude were uneventful.

Approximately ten minutes after takeoff, the wingman transmitted that his low oil light was on and that he was turning toward home base. The leader passed the lead to his wingman. The leader, now the wingman, did not observe smoke or oil coming from the



ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

aircraft. The troubled A-4E commenced a gentle climb and our new wingman called the flight to switch to tower frequency. The new leader acknowledged and also transmitted the fact that his oil pressure was now zero. The wingman switched frequencies but could not contact the other *Skyhawk*. At this time, he observed the lead aircraft slow down. The wingman, assuming he had flamed out, transmitted a Mayday call on tower frequency, which was acknowledged, and then switched back to the assigned working frequency.

Shortly after oil pressure dropped to zero, our pilot felt his engine chug and heard two or three loud bangs. His RPM started to decay and he assumed a flameout and deployed his emergency generator. The RPM dropped to about 60 percent, then rose again to 80 percent. Shortly thereafter, the engine started to chug and bang again, and then unwind. The pilot attempted a quick re-light but was not successful. He then read over his ejection checklist and initiated a successful ejection. The aircraft subsequently crashed at sea.

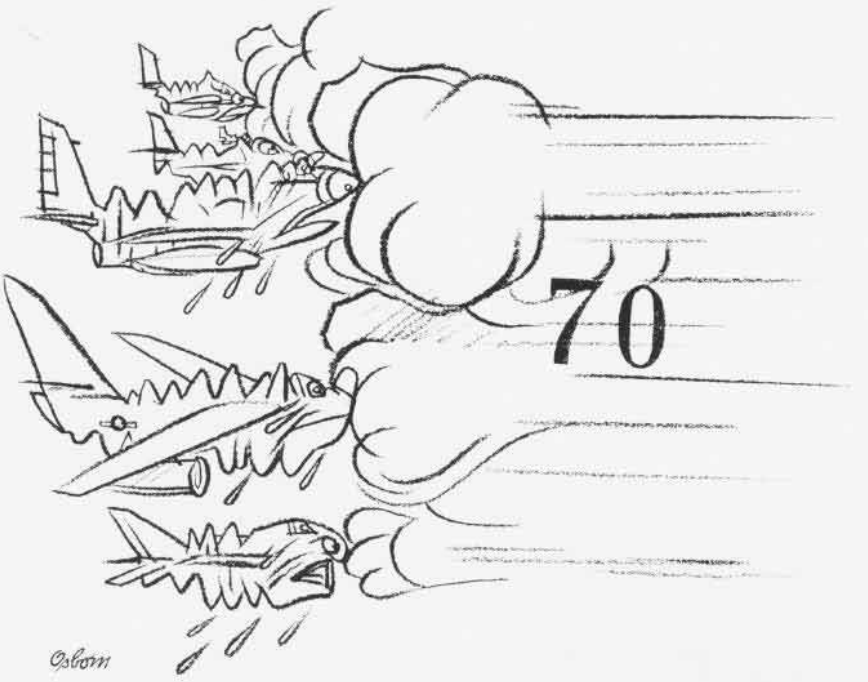
The uninjured pilot was rescued 30 minutes later by a ship in the vicinity. The accident board concluded the most probable cause to be oil starvation caused by the lack of a safety wire on an oil drain plug.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Egads, lads! Somebody coulda got kilt! This all got started when the line supervisor assigned two airmen to take an oil sample — a simple enough task. After they got the oil sample, the airmen informed the line supervisor that they needed somebody to replace the safety wire on the oil drain plug. The line supervisor eventually called this discrepancy to the attention of a maintenance control PO1 who, thinking the aircraft was airborne, assured the line supervisor it would not affect the flight of the aircraft!? Scratch one A-4E!

How Dry I Am

Four F-4J *Phantoms*, one A-7 *Corsair II*, and one KA-3 *Skywarrior* were to depart a California air station for NAS Island. The accompanying KA-3 was to act as "pathfinder," giving navigational assistance, and was capable of



"giving away" approximately 8,000 pounds of fuel, if necessary.

Preflight planning allowed for a minus 50-knot wind component, although the forecast wind was for a minus 30 knots. Flight planning indicated that, at arrival, the F-4s would have 1,800 pounds of fuel remaining. Following a thorough briefing which included route and profile, divert fields, tanking procedures, abort criteria, emergency, weather and divert procedures, the flight was airborne with no unusual occurrences.

The winds during the initial portion of the flight were as briefed. The KA-3 aircraft began venting fuel; the pilot attempted to rectify the venting and loss of fuel; however, his efforts were to no avail and 6,000 pounds of fuel were lost over the side. Since the winds were as forecast, the flight continued toward destination.

Shortly after the aircraft passed the equal time point, the head winds increased to a minus 70 knots. As the flight proceeded, it was determined that two of the F-4s would require additional airborne refueling in order to make their planned destination. However, the flight leader stated that all aircraft could reach the primary divert field with adequate fuel reserve — without additional airborne refueling.

The KA-3 pilot requested that an emergency tanker be launched from NAS Island to provide airborne refueling support. A KA-3, which had arrived at the NAS a day earlier, responded and was launched with 4,000 pounds of "give away" fuel for a rendezvous with the F-4s approximately 165 miles east of the divert field. In order to reduce drag, three F-4s dropped their external tanks prior to the rendezvous with the emergency tanker. One F-4 received 1,800 pounds of fuel and another, 1,000 pounds. The remaining two F-4s did not tank nor did they request fuel. The KA-3, located approximately 80 miles behind the rest of the flight, advised the emergency pathfinder that he would not require airborne refueling. All aircraft landed at their original planned destination with the exception of one.

The amount of fuel remaining at landing was as follows: KA-3, 3,900 pounds; A-7, 3,000 pounds; and the F-4s, 1,200 pounds, 1,800 pounds, 1,500 pounds and 1,000 pounds.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Gulp! There were so many *ifs* in this one, it's unbelievable. But this was an easy lesson. Fortunately, steps have been taken to preclude a recurrence; namely, making an airborne tanker standing by at destination mandatory!