



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

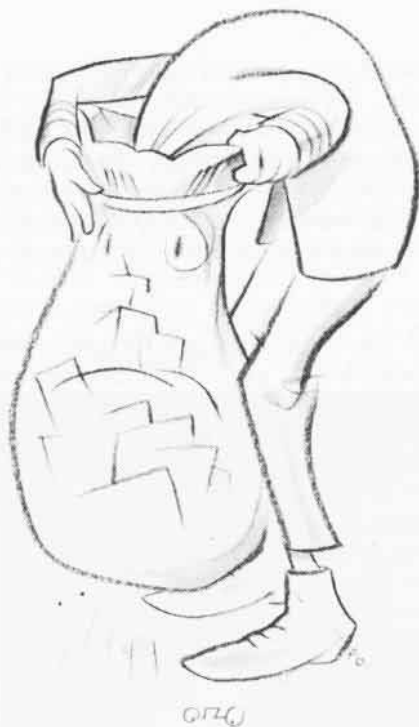
Pistol Packin' Pilot

Soon after a night catapult launch and just under a 2,000-foot broken cloud layer, an A-4 pilot was forced to eject when his aircraft went into what appeared to be uncontrollable left rolls. Because of the low altitude there had been little time to try much in the way of recovery measures and no Mayday call had been made.

The seat and chute worked perfectly but, as he swung in the harness while descending, he began to worry about no one knowing of his ejection. Deciding to signal before the ships in the formation went by, he pulled his unloaded .38-caliber pistol from his shoulder holster, removed his gloves and put them in his G-suit pocket. He was attempting to load the pistol in the darkness when he suddenly realized the water was getting pretty close. Shoving the pistol back in the holster, he stuck the cartridge in his mouth, grabbed the rocket jet fasteners on each parachute riser and hit the water almost immediately.

He was able to release the right fastener, but not the left and, since there was a 30-knot wind, he found himself being dragged through seven-foot waves on his back. He swallowed some salt water and was beginning to panic when he finally got the left riser fastener to release. After taking a few quick gulps of air and inflating his MK3C life vest, he followed his life raft lanyard down to the inflation bottle. There was no toggle on the bottle, so he raised the aluminum lever, and the raft, to his immense relief, started to inflate. Although it only partially inflated, he decided to climb in anyway.

Something was wrapped around his legs, and he was forced to cut himself



free with his survival knife. He then climbed into the raft and inflated it with the oral inflation tube!

Still working hard at survival, he loaded five rounds in his pistol and fired them off at about two-minute intervals.

Seeing a destroyer heading his way, he started to reload, but was unable to eject the expended cartridges from the cylinder. Looking up, he noted that the rescue vessel was closing at a startlingly high rate of speed. Fortunately, he put the pistol back in the holster and decided to await a more opportune time to reload, for the destroyer went roaring by at about two feet and flipped pilot, raft, and all end over end!

After struggling back into the raft, the pilot loaded the remaining empty chamber and fired his pistol once again. Alert lookouts on the destroyer spotted the tracer. As the ship heeled over in a fast turn, the

now weary pilot decided not to take any more chances, put away his pistol and fired a flare from his life vest. The destroyer came alongside, one of the ship's officers dove into the heavy seas with a line and he was helped aboard, safe at last.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! This feller really had a pistol fixation, but it *did* save his bacon! Dozens of people saw the tracers, but he was firing them at such an angle that no one really pinpointed him.

The survival equipment officer in this squadron better get with it! The .38 cartridges were corroded, hence wouldn't eject; the raft had no toggle; and the pilot obviously hadn't had enough dry runs on use of his survival gear. There are some procedures you **MUST** follow prior to water entry if you're gonna have a chance at survival. You've got to **KNOW** your survival gear to use it properly!

Ever try blowing up a life raft by the oral inflation tube, while you're sitting in it? It's a killer, believe me! (Reprint from *NANews*, September 1960.)

Upright Upright End of Flight

An instructor pilot (IP) and two student Naval Aviators (SNAs) briefed for a morning round-robin radio instrument flight in the T-44A *King Air*. The flight was to include an instrument departure, multi-approaches and landings at a strange airfield where the students would exchange positions and return to base. The flight was uneventful until approach for final landing back at home plate.

GCA reported the aircraft crossing the landing threshold to be 20 feet

above glide path. The SNA reduced power almost to idle. An excessive sink rate developed and the IP commanded "Waveoff!" The SNA rapidly advanced the power levers but the slow engine response failed to arrest the sink rate. The aircraft slammed onto the runway and bounced back into the air. Asymmetric power response caused the aircraft's nose to yaw left and up. It then rolled left with the left wing dragging the runway for about 20 feet. The aircraft continued a modified barrel roll to the left and impacted the runway inverted. The port engine was driven into the right wing, rupturing the fuel tanks. Instantly, the right side of the aircraft became engulfed in flames. The aircraft skidded on its nose, flipped over, and came to a smouldering stop in an upright position on its main mounts.

The SNA pilot and IP were knocked unconscious. The SNA observer unstrapped and opened the main cockpit door, assisting the now conscious but dazed student pilot and IP from the flaming aircraft.

 Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! This is enough to singe more than just your

whiskers, gang. This could have been a trip to crispy critter city for this trio.

On the surface, this may appear to be simply a pilot error mishap. The SNA established such an excessive sink rate with the large power reduction (near idle) in a 17-knot crosswind that a waveoff could not be effected. A flight instructor who values his hide must not allow a student to place the aircraft in a position from which he cannot recover. This was the IP's first flight following 17 days of TAD and old Gramps wonders if he was mentally prepared to get back in the instructor's saddle.

Post-accident investigation revealed that this SNA had a history of reducing power early and had difficulties with crosswind landings. After all, an accident is not the most appropriate time for an instructor to review his student's areas of difficulty.

The fact that *King Air* engines accelerate unevenly is well known in the T-44 community and, in fact, Natops advises pilots to advance power levers to 70-80 percent to allow props to stabilize for normal takeoff and touch-and-go procedures. This smash and crash was far from a normal touch-and-go.

Old Singed Whiskers smells a morsel of maintenance meat-loading in this

menu, and views with concern the fact that this particular aircraft had eight previous engine discrepancies involving slow port engine acceleration. Two of the discrepancies were within six days of the accident (third and second flights prior to this flight). The last two discrepancies noted 2.0 to 2.5-second lag in port engine acceleration from low power setting. The maintenance actions performed in each case were to adjust the fuel control dome, the last adjustment being the fourth. Maintenance directives required fuel control replacement, should a fourth adjustment be necessary. The manufacturer of the fuel control has revised the adjustment procedure to allow for more than three adjustments. It might well be that this procedure is acceptable but Gramps has difficulty swallowing this logic. When the machine doesn't perform within specifications, is it wise to change the specification to fit the machine? These gents needed power within the hour to avoid receiving flowers (i.e., pushing up daisies). The business of slow and/or asymmetrical engine spool-up leaves a lump in my throat and may have been the contributing culprit in other T-44 incidents. I feel it could do with a little more looking into. Over to you, Mr. Goodwrench.

