



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## F-8 Superdrone

The pilot was scheduled for his second familiarization flight (Fam 2) in the F-8H *Crusader*. A lieutenant commander was assigned as chase pilot for the afternoon hop and the brief was conducted accordingly.

Some thunderstorms were observed in the local area. The decision was made that the Fam 2 could be conducted within the necessary parameters (VFR conditions). The weather forecast for return was 4,000 broken, 25,000 unbroken, seven miles' visibility, winds at 140 degrees, 10 knots, and thunderstorms in the vicinity.

The pilot launched but, because of possibly deteriorating weather conditions, the squadron duty officer (SDO) was directed by higher authority to issue a weather recall to the Fam 2. Chase assured the SDO that the flight would have no difficulty returning VFR and requested permission to remain in the touch-and-go pattern, weather permitting. This request was granted providing winds were favorable for the Fam 2 touch and go's.

Chase decided the pilot could make some practice approaches to burn down to landing weight. He instructed the tower to inform him if the crosswind increased. Tower rogered and advised that the thunderstorm appeared stationary.

After about 10 minutes, touch and go's began. Runway 17 was in use and the wind varied from 220 degrees at four knots to 270 at 12. After several landings the wind was reported 270 at 16. Because of the crosswind limitation on the F-8H, chase informed the pilot of a possible field arrestment.

He then directed the pilot to make a low approach on his next pass to allow more time to evaluate the gusty wind conditions. The wind was again reported 270 degrees at 16 knots. The



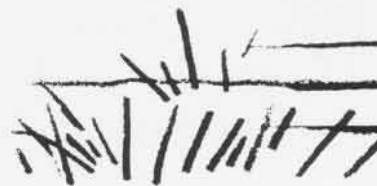
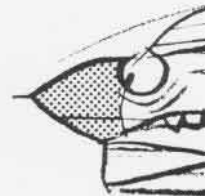
During the next approach, chase was flying on the starboard side at the four o'clock position approximately 100 feet aft. Because a short field arrestment was not briefed, chase found it necessary to refresh the pilot's memory on this procedure while airborne. With wind 270 at 14, the aircraft touched down approximately 500 feet from the first arresting gear. According to chase, the aircraft attitude appeared normal and approach procedures were satisfactory. The pilot stated that he left approach power on the aircraft during his ground roll. Once again, the F-8 bolted both wires.

Chase quickly directed the pilot to take it around. The F-8 became airborne well past midfield. The *Crusader* left the runway in a nose-high condition, fishtailing. Some witnesses said the aircraft was over-rotated. Others described the aircraft as on the edge of uncontrolled flight. The pilot said that he felt the aircraft start to settle

low approach was completed and the tower now reported winds 270 at 10. Realizing that winds were again within aircraft limits, chase directed the pilot to make a full stop on his next pass. The pilot commenced the approach with winds 270 at 16 and chase directed a touch and go vice a full stop. Following the completion of this touch and go, the chase pilot directed the next pass to be an arrested landing.

The duty runway had two approach end arresting gears and two long field arresting cables located at 6,000 and 7,000 feet from the approach end of the runway. The pilot commenced his approach and touched down approximately 500 feet short of the number one arresting gear and rolled into the gear. The *Crusader* hook skipped both short field wires and the pilot executed a go-around.

Those "pilots" failed me!



and, 17 seconds after the bolter call, he transmitted: "I've got something. This thing's not flying." in the same moment, the pilot selected afterburner and an estimated one second later, he ejected.

The aircraft rose 20 feet. The pilot ejected at about 15 feet. After ejection, the aircraft continued 600 feet, touched down and engaged the number four arresting gear, 1,000 feet from the end of the runway. The aircraft touched down approximately 30 feet from the number four arresting gear cable and came to rest near the

left side of the runway. The pilot's seat functioned normally. The pilot landed in a lake along the port side of the runway and was rescued uninjured. The aircraft sustained limited damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! This one takes the cake! I frankly must admit that this aircraft did a heck of a lot better without the pilot.

It was pretty interesting to note that field arrested landings were not

briefed because "they weren't in the book." In other words, "Do only the minimum required." Baloney!

What was "in the book" was that an "LSO should be on station during attempted arrestment." However, this was very quickly rationalized away. I don't recall seeing or hearing about a Natops change submission or a waiver request on the subject of LSO during field arrested landings. Seems to me that there is something called complacency in this squadron.

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