

Conflicting Communications

An A-6 *Intruder* was inbound to NAS Green, which is located in the same geographic area as NAS Blue. Weather was clear. The duty runway, 24.

Approach Control asked the A-6 to report the field in sight. At 20 miles east, the pilot did so and was directed to contact the tower. No specific frequency was given. The BN dialed in a secondary frequency listed for NAS Green's tower in the IFR Supplement. NAS Green was not monitoring this frequency; however, NAS Blue tower was, and transmitted a garbled response to the A-6 after the pilot checked in.

The *Intruder* closed to 12 miles and requested clearance. NAS Blue said, "Continue for a straight-in to runway 29." The pilot requested clearance to runway 24. The tower replied, "Report the numbers, runway 29."

Meanwhile, NAS Green was aware the A-6 was inbound but couldn't reach the aircraft on its primary tower frequency or UHF guard. NAS Blue then asked the *Intruder* if it was a prop or a jet, and what type of aircraft. By the time this was determined, the *Intruder* was over the numbers for runway 24 at NAS Green. The A-6 was cleared to break by NAS Blue!

The aircraft broke and turned downwind for runway 28, believing it to be runway 29. The crew reported "Abeam, gear, full stop." NAS Blue



transmitted " . . . not in sight, cleared to land."

The tower at NAS Green saw the A-6, continued to broadcast on tower primary and guard, and gave light signals but communications were not established. Convinced the aircraft was going to land on runway 28, NAS Green issued a waveoff and warned all ground vehicles to stay clear. The *Intruder* came around and made a normal landing on 28.

The A-6 never called NAS Green specifically by name and NAS Blue did not identify itself by name, except on one of the final transmissions of this event.

The IFR supplement denotes runway 28 for emergency use only. Happily, the weather was good, the pattern was empty of other aircraft and vehicles were safely out of the way.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Confusin'? You bet. The players in this "episode" must have been dozin' off.

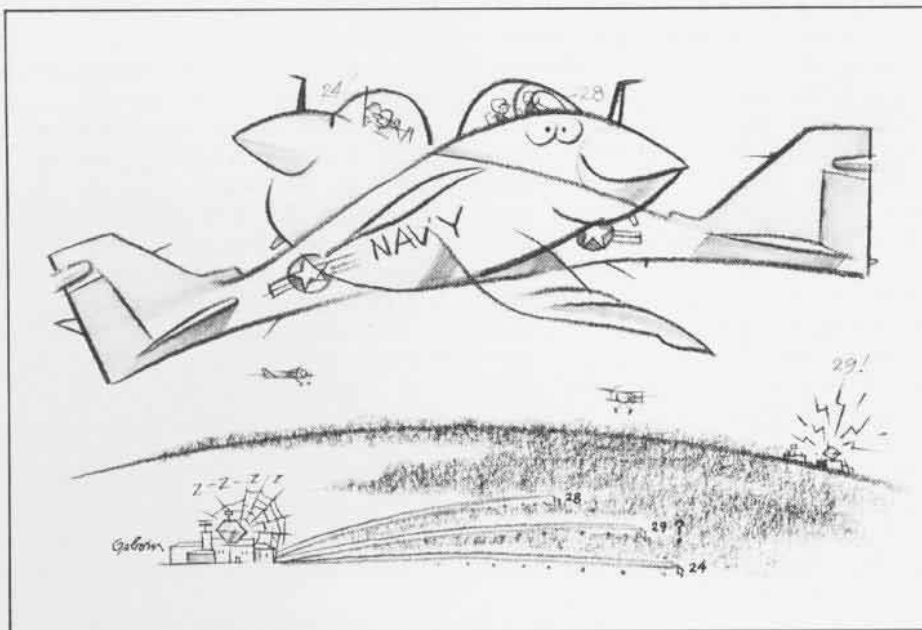
Most of you read about the airliner that landed at the wrong airport awhile back. Raised a heckuva fuss. In my younger days when airplanes had two wings, one above the other, and fresh-air cockpits so that scarfs streamed in the breeze, settin' down at the wrong airstrip was worth a few chuckles and a hearty toast to the grand and fearless spirits of aviation.

No more. In this case, lack of proper communication and double checks could have led to a disaster. Traffic was light, weather was sunshiny, and all seemed well with the world. The folks involved were lucky. The *Intruder* landed at the intended airport alright, but you'd have a tough time convincin' NAS Blue of that.

Back to Basics

A highly experienced pilot in a tactical jet was approaching the lead aircraft during a night rendezvous. The wingman's relative bearing appeared to be normal but he had difficulty affecting the final stages of the join-up. He could not seem to close the last distance to achieve proper formation position. After a time, he adjusted his scan pattern, checking in particular his altitude. He then realized he had lost height during the rendezvous and failed to recover it. Thus, his airplane remained well below the leader for an embarrassing length of time before he recognized the error and took corrective action.

In a similar case at night, a pilot joining on another sensed that he was pulling up into and banking precariously toward the lead plane. His gaze was mostly out of the cockpit. In reality, he was pulling down and away from the



leader. He departed the aircraft which then entered a spin. The pilot ejected safely.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Gol dang it! My whiskers are afire and asmokin'. There've been too many such reports lately. A trend is developin' and I don't like it.

We're forgettin' the basics — fly the aircraft, scan those instruments, pursue precision.

I know we've dropped the instrument RAGs, and that most training on the gages is done within the squadrons these days. Instrument flyin' ain't fun. It's 100-percent work. But it's the kind of work that can save your skin, not to mention a flying machine.

The pilots in the above cases didn't use their instruments. Sure you gotta look outa the cockpit. But cross-check *inside* the cockpit, too! They trusted in

the old Mark I eyeball and forgot what the gages could do for 'em. On top of that, demon vertigo had himself a fine time.

"Reasonable people know that the dials and pointers (in the cockpit) are put there to be looked at, according to a regular pattern adapted to what the aircraft is supposed to be doing at the time." Ole Gramps put those words to parchment in 1954, before a lot of you troops out there checked aboard. But the message still rings true. I said somethin' else way back then, and repeat it here:

"You were told at the very start that instrument flying can be summed up in terms of two attitudes: yours and the aircraft's."

Think about that. Pursue precision. Don't settle for 50 feet above altitude, or five knots fast, or 27 degrees angle of bank when you need 30. And scan, scan, scan!

found the remains of a four-pound salmon "wedged in near the forward door and the wing root."

The FAA inspector said, "There was no doubt about it; that was one smart bird! At that altitude, carrying a large fish was enough of a chore without taking on a 737." The eagle, needing extra lift, had surrendered his dinner to the airplane rather than risk collision with the metal monster.

(FAA World recounted this unlikely fish story.)

A small passengerless transport was 4,000 feet over water when the pilot turned the controls over to the copilot so that he could go aft and check a rattle in the stairway door. As he was examining the door, the aircraft passed through turbulence. The door flew open.

The copilot looked back, couldn't see his partner, and feared he had fallen from the aircraft. He declared an

Crazy Capers

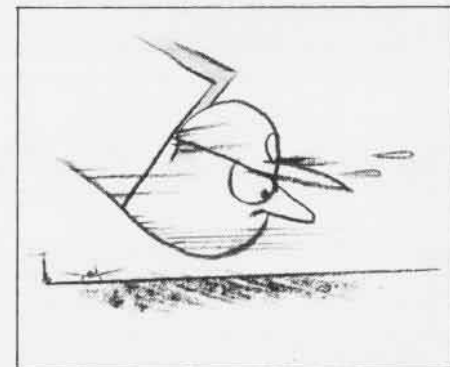
A 737 was climbing out to 10,000 feet after takeoff into the clear Alaskan sky. The crew spotted a large bald eagle circling forward and above the airliner. An air carrier safety inspector conducting an aircrew check noted, "I could see that we were going to pass under the eagle with plenty of separation but, as we did, we heard a large thump from the left side of the

fuselage near the forward entrance door.

"Did we hit that bird?" asked the captain.

The FAA man didn't think so, unless there was a second bird in the same airspace. The 737 was apparently unharmed so the flight continued to the intended destination, the crew alert to any malfunction that might arise from the "hit."

Landing was normal but, after shutdown, a perplexed maintenance crew



emergency and asked that the Coast Guard be informed. The copilot proceeded to the airfield, made a normal landing, and parked the aircraft. He was stunned and elated to find that the pilot had clung to the stairway door and was alive! Apparently, when the door opened, the pilot grasped the cable railings as he fell onto the steps. He held on for dear life, his body oriented so that his head was toward the lower step. It was calculated that during landing, with speed at 100 mph, there was a clearance of six inches between the pilot's head and the runway.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Once you think you've heard everything . . . you haven't!