

## Dilemma of Documentation

Preflight and initial engine start for a helicopter flight proceeded smoothly. After the rotor was engaged, a line troubleshooter heard a strange noise and noticed that one of the blade tip caps appeared to be bent upward. The line troubleshooter immediately notified the LSE (landing signal enlisted) and the rotor was disengaged.

During the subsequent visual inspection, it was verified that the tip cap on the number two blade was bent and several screws were missing. No one was hurt but no one knew when and how the screws departed the aircraft.

During the follow-up investigation, it was learned that the damage had, in fact, been detected the night before during a maintenance turn-up by a lineman. The lineman had notified an aircrewman, who had told a plane captain, who had informed the line supervisor. Yet none of these individuals initiated a maintenance action form to document the discrepancy.

### Grampaw Pettibone says:

All four folks in the chain "thought someone else was going to take care of it." Each assumed the other would ensure that it got "written up." This quartet dropped the collective ball. They're lucky nobody got hurt.

Seems to Ole Gramps that if each of these people would look upon that whirlybird as his or her personal machine – like it was their own car – they would have reacted differently and made sure the aircraft got fixed. If they couldn't do that, then somebody better explain what "professional responsibility" is 'cause they sure don't know.

## Intruder Lament

An A-6E was on a daytime low-level navigation training flight in mountainous terrain. It carried MK 76 practice bombs for the strike portion of the flight. When the *Intruder* was late for its scheduled target time, the target



crew notified home base and a little later a search commenced. Weather prevented aircraft from sighting the A-6E the day of the flight, but wreckage of the bomber was spotted the next

day. It had struck the side of a relatively steep hill and was destroyed. The pilot and bombardier navigator (BN) were killed on impact.

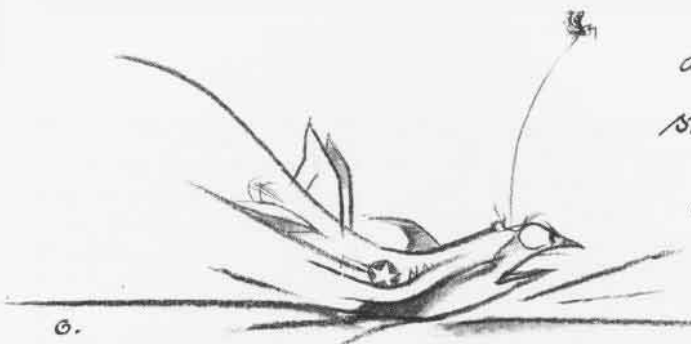
### Grampaw Pettibone says:

We'll never know for sure what caused this fatal crash, but the investigators determined that no mechanical failure was involved.

The crew flew most of the low-level route beneath an overcast using radar. Weather got worse and they probably began a climb to get out of it in order to stay VMC (visual meteorological conditions). The disposition of the wreckage indicated the *Intruder* was in a gentle, unhurried climb. Other data showed that the aviators were most likely unaware of the impending impact.

The pilot and BN had limited radar-only terrain following training,





a dumb  
show-off  
pilot  
& I  
die at  
great  
expense!

which may have been a contributing factor.

Both fliers seemed in good spirits before the hop. On the other hand, the pilot's wife was one week past due with their first child. The BN had experienced a distressing contact with a female friend on the previous weekend. Also, he had suffered from diarrhea the day before although he felt better the day of the flight. He had not sought medical help for his condition. And, the BN was scheduled to go on leave out of the area later that day. These factors were not considered to be directly contributory to the crash.

The pilot was known to be conscientious and not one to cut corners or bend the rules. The BN was also considered conscientious and known as a good low-level navigator.

Ole Gramps can only shake his weary head on this one, a terrible loss, which once again proves that Naval Aviation is a complex and demanding endeavor and those in it can't let their guard down – even for an instant.

### Demo Debacle

The pilot of an F/A-18 was scheduled to demonstrate the *Hornet's* pitch rate capabilities in a public air show. During recent practice sessions, the pilot had progressively lower apex altitudes, slower level inverted airspeeds, and consistently lower nose attitudes in the recovery phase of the maneuver. On the day of the air show, the aviator began the maneuver at a lower airspeed than specified. Similar to his previous practice run, he

purposely achieved a peak altitude which was lower than that prescribed – even though the published description of this maneuver stated that overhead maneuvers resulting in nose-down attitudes are not authorized. The pilot found himself very slow and low with his nose pointed at terra firma.

The pilot attempted to pull the aircraft through the maneuver, but his available airspace quickly ran out. The *Hornet* slammed into the ground and was destroyed. Although the pilot was seriously injured, he survived.

### Grampaw Pettibone says:

Reminds me of the time a young carrier pilot secretly altered the fusing on a 250-pound bomb he was to drop during a firepower demonstration for some foreign VIPs. Instead of exploding "in" the sea, the weapon blew up above it, spraying shrapnel in all directions. A chunk or two plunked onto the "roof" where the VIPs were seated. Miraculously, no one was hurt.

"Why did you do it?" the JO was asked.

"I guess I wanted to be more spectacular," he answered.

He was that, all right. But he sure scared a lot of people in the process of "goin' his own way."

This *Hornet* flier went his own way, too. He deliberately modified the maneuver. It cost an airplane and almost his life. Pros produce procedures for such maneuvers based on experience, careful study, and evaluation. Short of an urgent combat or lifesaving situation, I can't for the life of me accept a reason for not following them to the letter.

The crowd got a heart-up-to-

the-throat thrill watchin' this *Hornet* pancake into the dirt. But that's not the type of excitement we want to convey to Mr. and Mrs. Public and all their offspring.



### Former Gramps Writer Dies

Capt. Andrew W. Bright, USNR(Ret.), died of heart failure on January 18, 1990, at Bethesda Naval Hospital, Md. As a Naval Aviator during WW II, he flew land-based antisubmarine patrol aircraft. During Washington, D.C., tours in his 22-year career, Capt. Bright was the voice of "Grampaw Pettibone" in *Naval Aviation News* from February 1945-January 1953 and January-March 1956 – the longest period of time for any Gramps writer.