

Arizona Adventure

This story is based on a long-lost report, dated 1953, recently discovered among some misplaced papers.

The pilot of an FG-1D (prop-driven, WW II-vintage *Corsair* fighter) was cleared for landing at NAF Litchfield Park, Ariz., while on a ferry flight from the West Coast to the East Coast. The tower advised the pilot to land on runway 20 and that there was a variable crosswind at 15 to 20 knots. There were also intervals of blowing dust when the sky was partially obscured.

At the abeam position, the tower reported a 30-degree crosswind. The pilot descended and made a three-point landing (conventional landing gear) on the first third of the runway. About 2,500 feet down the strip, the *Corsair* commenced a ground loop to the left. Two other FGs were taxiing north of the east taxiway, about 400 feet apart. Both stopped when they saw the landing FG begin its ground loop.

The pilot of the landing *Corsair* applied power and passed between the two FGs. He was headed for the hangar but altered course to miss it. paralleling the hangar, he passed between a row of aircraft, then made a 90-degree right turn, passing between an R6V and a P4Y.

Just before becoming airborne, the *Corsair's* left wheel was knocked off when it struck an embankment. Tower personnel could not see the aircraft as it disappeared behind the hangar.

As the aircraft came around for another approach, the tower notified the pilot he had lost the left wheel. The pilot had used the air bottle to lock the wheels in position and later attempted, without success, to raise his landing gear. Therefore, as instructed, he made a one-wheel landing without flaps, resulting in considerable damage to the aircraft. The pilot was not hurt. The aircraft was a "strike."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Ole Gramps hasn't seen one like this in a long while. It sure doesn't



The old Bird Watcher

make me pine for the old days.

This fella only had five hours in model in the last three months and most of that was logged on the hop, which ended with his omni-directional dust-up at the base in the desert.

Plus, the *Corsair*, bein' a tailsitter, shoulda been landed with the tail up a bit – and with less than normal flaps.

Glad a crash like this couldn't happen nowadays. Right?

Fatal Vision

Three FA-18 *Hornets* launched from the NAS on an ACM (air combat maneuvering) training flight with an "opponent" section consisting of an F-14 *Tomcat* and an F-4 *Phantom*. The *Hornets* proceeded separately to the working area.

The *Hornet* leader began a left turn to establish a southerly intercept heading, with number two on his left wing and number three on the right. A moment later, number two (the section leader) called, "Let's come right," to reverse the section to the right, accomplish a 270-degree turn, and establish an 8 to 10-mile trail position on the division leader. Number three said, "OK," and maneuvered his aircraft from a right wing position to cross above and to the left of number two in the turn.

Passing through a southeasterly





heading, the section leader called, "Three not visual." (The last time the section leader had visually sighted number three was at commencement of the division leader's left turn.)

The section leader next said, "Two's at 22,000."

"Roger," acknowledged the unseen number three.

The section leader reported his position "on the western side of the ridge."

"Looking," said number three.

The section leader said he was "nine miles in trail [of the flight leader]."

Number three transmitted, "Roger." At this point, three left his position 2,000 feet above and to the left of the section leader in a descent, southward.

After a few more seconds, number three collided with the section leader, nose section to tail section. There was heavy damage to number three's nose section and to the aft underside and nozzle area of the section leader. Altitude was about 22,000 feet at impact. The pilot of number three was subjected to direct exhaust blast from the section leader's engine and sustained fatal injuries when cockpit integrity

was breached. The aircraft crashed one minute after the midair collision.

The section leader's *Hornet* was marginally controllable, the aft portion of the engines and airframe damaged. He headed for a divert airfield. The situation worsened as other systems failed to operate properly. The flight leader joined on him and saw flames, approximately the length of the FA-18, emanating from the left engine area, and reported same to the pilot. Shortly, the section leader was unable to maintain altitude or airspeed. He realized he could not reach the divert field and prepared for ejection. He radioed the divert field about his intentions but got no response. He successfully ejected just above 4,000 feet.

Parachute descent was normal and the pilot was ambulatory after landing. Search and rescue procedures were initiated and the pilot communicated with the flight leader circling overhead, using the PRC-90 emergency radio. Ground parties arrived as helicopter assistance was en route. The pilot was taken to a nearby hospital. He suffered minor injuries.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Gol dang it, this is a heartbreaker! Troops, you just gotta maintain safe separation distance, specially when you're movin' those high-tech machines around out there. Havin' the best equipment in the universe won't help if you drop your guard even for an instant. The basic rules of safety don't change.

We don't know why the pilot descended through the section leader's altitude. Maybe he misunderstood the geographic position call. Whatever, 'pears he got a couple of thousand feet above and maybe even ahead of the other Hornet in the turn and couldn't see him. He made some adjustments, came down at a good clip, then slammed into the section leader's tail - with tragic results.

The decision to descend, without seeing the other aircraft, was critical. Remember that...and keep your distance...PLEASE!