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## **Bendix Air Races Collection - Naval Aviation News, [2nd copy w/front cover], July 1961**

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[[image]] GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

[[image]]

Bullseye

A A4D squadron was busily engaged in competitive exercises after three hard weeks of bombing practice. Competition was keen and, of course, every pilot wanted to be the "top man."

On this fine autumn morning, a low level napalm lay down was scheduled for a desert target. The run in was briefed for 500 knots at 50 to 300 feet altitude; the target a 29-foot-high "billboard" bullseye.

One young pilot, who was known to the range as the "one who flew lowest of all," had expressed his theory for getting bullseyes to his roommate as "fly low and pickle late." He maintained that if you came in lower than the target structure, the bomb could not possibly go over and had to be a bullseye. At 500 knots and with a 29-foot target, this can get hairy.

This particular morning the young pilot seemed to be proving his theory. His first run was a bullseye! On the second run, he came roaring over the desert at an estimated 20-foot altitude with the target boresighted. The bomb released, the A4D started to pull up and exploded with a roar as it hit the top of the "billboard." Disintegrating in a huge fire ball, bits and pieces were scattered for almost a mile beyond the target. His theory had failed.

[[image]] Grampaw Pettibone says:

This was a terrible waste of a good man and a little elementary arithmetic on a blackboard could have shown him the errors in his theory. At 500 knots and at 50 feet altitude (which clears the target), the bomb-sight setting of 26 mils puts the "pickle off" point only 592 feet and 0.7 second from the target. By the flight surgeon's figures, he had 0.47 seconds reaction time to pull up on the stick in his low run-in. This left him with a .2 or .3 second margin for error. He cut it too thin!

We've lost quite a few pilots on extremely low runs this past year. Maybe they missed the blackboard session too. You're not "Top Gun" if you fudge the rules to make a score.

Real Lash-up

Once in a while an aircraft accident report crosses Ol' Gramps' desk that really deserves a solid analysis and some soul searching on the part of the squadron C. O. who let it happen!

An experienced pilot (he had a total of 5500 hours, give or take a few, in many models) was scheduled to fly an F11F on a refresher flight. He had previously flown 18.5 hours in the F11F, but not in the last 17 months. In fact, he had only 3.5 hours of jet time in the last 12 months!

Prior to flight he had a "cockpit checkout" on emergency procedures



from a qualified pilot and was cleared to go.

Take-off and climbout to 5000 feet with afterburner were seemingly normal, then the burner was cut and climb continued in basic engine to 10,000. The burner was cut in again and he climbed to 21,000 feet, cut out the burner and checked the F11F in slow flight. The plane seemed sluggish, and acceleration, slow. Afterburner was tried again at this point but it wouldn't light off.

Another hour of just cruising around

ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

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