



By Lt. Brian Beck

**W**e were flying Ghost 600 from Point Mugu to Lemoore for an out-and-in. It was a hot day as we headed to the initial for a break to 13L. I thought we were flying a little slow for a master jet base, so we stood on the power levers. That's where things started to go wrong.

About the time I was to break, we heard a loud noise. The Hawkeye shuddered, as the nose drifted right. Our operations officer, sitting in the CICO seat, immediately said we had a fire on the right engine. As my copilot looked to confirm the fire, I pulled the T-handle

# *A* **Rough Day** *at* **Lemoore**



E-2 photo by Matthew J. Thomas  
Photo composite

and pushed the fire-extinguisher button. My copilot declared an emergency over the radio and requested an arrested landing. We confirmed the starboard prop was feathered fully and the fire was out.

We finished the memory-checklist items, and I started a turn to set up a left downwind for 13L, figuring that's where tower would send us. I was wrong. The tower cleared us for a right turn to enter the right downwind for runway 13R.

Controllability wasn't yet much of an issue, since we had feathered the prop at a high air-speed. But, as we slowed to the downwind gear speed and finished the single-engine procedures, the plane became a handful. Feeling comfortable that we had enough single-engine power and knowing we had almost a full bag of gas, I dropped the gear, flaps and hook and started the landing checks. I then realized I rapidly was running out of rudder authority. What next? My copilot calmly pointed out I still had six degrees of rudder authority selected—an oversight I corrected by selecting 20 degrees on the max-rudder switch. How had I missed that?

With that problem fixed and the landing checks completed, I started our approach turn. We flew around the turn toward the 90, but something didn't seem right. My radalt showed 800 feet, and my altimeter was swinging through the 500; we seemed low. My copilot reported we were approaching 200 feet AGL—field elevation was over 200 feet MSL.

We rolled out on short final, and I went to full power and slowly arrested the descent. We set down 800 feet before the arresting gear, 300 feet short of target. I maintained a nose-up attitude

until we were in the wire. Once stopped, we shut down and quickly cleared the aircraft, in case the fire flared up again.

Once the plane was declared safe, we found oil covering the starboard nacelle. The engine had leaked oil into the compressor section and the buildup eventually caused a compressor stall and, subsequently, a five-foot flame out the tail-pipe. Because the maintainers couldn't arrive until the next day, we began a six-hour, rental-car ride home. We had plenty of time to digest all that had happened.

So what did I learn? Where do I begin? Though not specifically stated in NATOPS, we briefed any engine shutdowns past the hold-short would be performed with both pilots' concurrence. What would have happened if I had T-handled the wrong engine?

Don't make assumptions. In my haste to get on deck, I started turning to the left when tower had different plans for me.

Once you start a checklist, complete it. If I had selected 20-degrees rudder when I was supposed to, my copilot wouldn't have had to remind me I was approaching an emergency.

If I had been sharp on my systems knowledge, I would have known with an engine secured, the radalt loses power because of the generator bus tie.

Finally, I wasn't at home field. Lemoore's field elevation is different than Mugu's. If I had kept this difference in mind, I wouldn't have driven dangerously low at the 90. I fortunately avoided putting an \$80-million plane into the deck, just short of the runway, with four of my squadronmates aboard. The excellent crew coordination and backup by my copilot and crew saved the day.

Looking back, I realize my actions were driven by my rush to get on deck. The engine was secured, the fire was out, and the plane still flew. If I had taken my time and been more methodical, I wouldn't have made so many mistakes. Emergency procedures should be executed in a timely manner, consistent with the nature of the emergency. Don't sacrifice proper execution and crew coordination for speed. 🦅

Lt. Beck flies with VAW-112.



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