

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Gas Line Air Locks

While cruising at 3,000 feet, the engine of an SBD-1 failed but started again at 300 feet after the pilot had shifted fuel suction several times. Upon regaining altitude to 600 feet, the engine again failed and a forced landing was made during which the airplane received major damage.

Investigation after the crash revealed that the left main tank was empty, but the right main tank was full. No defect was found in the fuel system. It was the opinion of the Trouble Board that: *a.* the accident was caused by loss of fuel supply occasioned by air locks in the fuel system; *b.* the air locks were caused by the pilot running the left main fuel tank dry and then shifting suction back and forth between the left and right main fuel tanks in his efforts to keep the engine running.

**BUREAU COMMENT**—When switching tanks after fuel exhaustion from one tank, make the action definite. Switch to a tank you know is full and work the wobble pump until fuel pressure is regained. Never haphazardly shift the fuel selector valve back and forth from a full to an empty tank because, as in this case, you will cause air locks to be formed. The pilot in the above case apparently was not sure which tank was full and which tank was empty. Don't let this happen to you.

## Poor Judgment Complicates Rescue



Without waiting to analyze the situation, the pilot of a J2F-5 landed immediately when he sighted an overturned scout seaplane with the crew sitting on the main float. This was a commendable display of zeal and prompt action, but under the circumstances, a rather poor display of grey matter. The sea was choppy, with a 25-knot wind blowing. The port wing tip float of the J2F was carried away on landing and the airplane capsized, leaving 5 men, instead of the original 2, to be rescued.

Two very good reasons why this landing should not have been made, in

LOOK  
BEFORE  
YOU  
CRASH!



addition to the state of the sea, were that there was a destroyer only 15 minutes steaming away and the scout crew were in no immediate danger. This error in judgment resulted in the loss of one badly needed J2F-5 and, under slightly varying circumstances, might have resulted in the loss of all personnel involved.

## Buckle That Safety Belt!

NATC, PENSACOLA.—Pilots in a patrol squadron at the air station here buckle their safety belts carefully since a solo student was thrown from the seat when his PBY waterlooped and practically was demolished.

The pilot said that when the plane started to waterloop to starboard, he kicked it to port and was thrown from his seat, the plane then completing its uncontrolled turn to the left.

When the plane stopped, both engines had been torn from their moorings, one resting in the navigation compartment and the other ripping through the starboard side at the radio compartment and falling to the water. Fortunately the occupants of the plane were not seriously injured and escaped in a rubber raft.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

One buckled safety belt probably would have lessened the severity of this accident. This is a good time also to repeat the warning about insuring that patrol plane crews are wearing life jackets and are safely stationed on all take-offs and landings.

Some people can learn only the hard way: by experience. Unfortunately, in aviation you don't always get a second chance.

## Tie a String Around Your Finger

During dive-bombing practice, an SB2A pilot commenced a dive from 14,000 feet with his diving flaps closed. He failed to notice his error and continued in the dive until he reached the normal pull-out altitude, at which time he began his recovery. There was insufficient altitude to regain level flight, however, and the airplane crashed at high speed.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

There have been several accidents similar to this—all with the same result. A pull-out begun at normal altitude, from a dive made with dive flaps closed, is seldom completed above ground. The reason for this is that the speed increases so much when the diving flaps are closed that at least twice as much altitude is necessary in which to recover.

Wide-awake shipmates will check each other's dive flaps and warn a careless pilot over the radio, but the danger is too great to depend on this. It is your neck and it is your responsibility. This is such a simple thing, but it is terribly important, so get it firmly fixed in your mind.

OPEN DIVING FLAPS BEFORE EACH DIVE



**UNORTHODOX LANDING.**—This is what happened when a primary student failed to look out of both sides of his cockpit when he was coming in for landing. Your ball, instructors!

## Torque Danger

The pilot of an SB2A-4 was making an approach for a landing. His left wing dropped at an airspeed of approximately 80 knots when the airplane was 50 feet above the ground. Full throttle was immediately applied to regain control, but this resulted in a

violent nose-down turn from which the pilot was unable to recover.

The Trouble Board considered the underlying cause of the crash to be due to the inexperience of the pilot and the immediate cause to be the reaction of the airplane to a sudden application of full power. This tended to roll the airplane to the left (due to torque), and at low speed there was not enough control to overcome this.



#### **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

That's right and it is much more serious to have your left wing drop than the right, because torque, due to the propeller rotation, always pulls to the left. In fact, torque would tend to pull up the right wing, if it were down.

This torque effect is especially noticeable in high-power airplanes and there isn't any easy cure for it. The best thing to do is never to let yourself get into such a predicament, particularly at low altitude. There is no need to be stalled in your landing approach 50 feet in the air.

A spot that requires special attention in this regard is carrier approach. Throttle and speed are reduced at this time and control is easily lost if a radical maneuver is attempted. Therefore, in a wave-off, be sure to e-a-s-e on your throttle and make your pull-up and turn-away as smooth and shallow as possible.



Regarding carrier landings, remember if your approach is lousy and you feel your position is dangerous, there is no disgrace in taking a voluntary wave-off.

But whatever you do, don't decide to take a voluntary wave-off after you get the "cut" signal. That used to be the unforgivable sin in carrier landings, but the number of trouble reports now listing this as the cause of the accident indicates this is no longer considered a crime. What's the matter!—the results of these accidents indicate that this rule is as important today as it ever was.

## **Grampaw Pettibone on Life Jackets**

This is one item of equipment which is usually thought of as being just about foolproof and simple enough for a baby to operate. That's the bunk! This sort of thinking only leads to carelessness, and that *always* leads to trouble in aviation. Here's an example to prove it.

An SBD-4 went in off the carrier during a landing. Both pilot and passenger were wearing life jackets, but nothing happened when they pulled the toggles. One CO<sub>2</sub> bottle had been improperly seated and failed to function. One previously used CO<sub>2</sub> bottle had not been replaced. The oral in-

flation tubes on the other jacket had been left open and the CO<sub>2</sub> went right on out through these vents.

These easily preventable malfunctions resulted in one death and one near-miss. Believe me, life jackets are only as "fool" proof as the people who use them. A little indoctrination and well-placed pressure should insure that they are properly serviced, inspected and handled; and thus ready for use when needed. A life jacket that won't function may well become a death jacket.

## **One for Ripley**

A pilot was seen to bail out of an F4F-4 at approximately 175 feet altitude. He didn't pull his parachute rip cord, but the parachute opened anyway and thereby saved his life.

Here is how it happened. When the pilot bailed out he was struck by the airfoil balance of the rudder. This balance ripped open the parachute pack, allowing the chute to stream. The airfoil balance was later found entangled in the parachute canopy which was ripped across the top.



#### **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

The usual statement about living on "borrowed time" doesn't apply in this case—this is stolen time.



While we're talking about parachute jumps, I'd like to issue a warning against standing up in the cockpit and pulling the rip cord before jumping. This has occurred several times, usually with fatal results; either the jumper is killed by the tail of the airplane or the parachute hangs up on the tail and the pilot crashes with the plane. This sort of thing doesn't happen because people don't know any better; it happens because some people get excited in an emergency and do the wrong thing.

The way to insure against this is to hold mental emergency drills. First, figure out the best method of getting clear of your particular type airplane under varying conditions. Then, when you are flying along with some extra time on your hands, hold mental bailing-out



drills; imagine a serious fire, with the airplane in a right spin, and visualize in detail exactly what you would do. Then imagine other predicaments (collisions, etc.) in which you might have to jump—and mentally jump.

That's what the smart guys do, not only with parachute jumps, but with every other kind of emergency. Such drills are interesting, they keep you on your toes and help pass the time away—and, boy, how they pay off when the real thing happens!

## **Faulty Technique Following Oil Leak**

While engaged in section tactics at 6,000 feet, the engine of an F4F-3 began losing oil. The pilot attempted to reach a nearby field under full throttle, but the engine froze and an immediate forced landing resulted in the complete destruction of the aircraft.

**BUREAU COMMENT**—This pilot made a serious error in applying full throttle after he realized oil was being lost. Normally, a reduction in r. p. m. and manifold pressure will allow more time for a forced landing. High r. p. m. and manifold pressure will hasten the depletion of the remaining oil and thus cause an early failure in the engine. When loss in oil pressure is experienced, an increase in throttle should be resorted to only in cases of emergency.

## **Sonnet to a Sap**

*Dilbert is so dopey that his mind stands still.*

*Very short on talent; awful weak in skill.*

*When he flies a Catalina or a swift Corsair*

*He's never in formation, he's in his C. O.'s hair.*

*His take-offs are erratic, his glides too steep.*

*All the time he was in training*

*He kept instructors straining,*

*But they thought their plan of braining*

*That dumb cadet named Dilbert*

*would have to keep.*

*So Dilbert's instruction was more than ample.*

*In any maneuver he'll give you a sample*

*For what it is worth: an awful example!*

*Better men than Dilbert is, have laughed at his mistakes*

*While learning not to make them. And that is what it takes.*