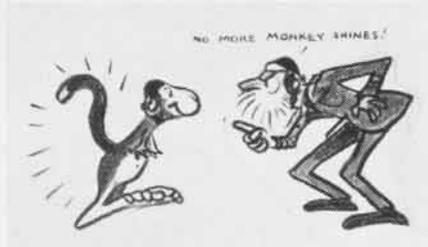


GRAMPAW PETTIBONE



Dry Tank Plague

At the end of 1½ hours of touch-and-go landings in a TBM-1, the engine quit and a serious forced landing resulted. The fuel selector valve was found on center main which contained only one gallon of gas. Both wing tanks were full.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Torpedo plane pilots have no monopoly on this sort of carelessness. And mark you well, wherever found, it strongly indicates a single-track mind which is a dangerous failing in any aviator.

Attention Instructors

Here is the flight history of a certain aviation cadet:

(a) He received six "NG" checks and was twice granted squadron board time in primary training.

(b) In the intermediate training he again received six down checks and twice more was given extra time by that squadron board.

(c) His record is studded with pages of remarks such as "very slow to react," "headwork weak," "poor coordination," "not safe for solo," "no aptitude," and similar comments.

(d) One day in operational training he made a tight turn during a division join-up at 1,500 feet and went into a spin. The plane came out of the spin very rapidly, but then pulled up and fell off into a second spin. Again a quick recovery was made, but for the second time the plane was pulled up radically and fell off into a third spin from which no recovery was made. The plane crashed into the water at high speed.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

What do you think was the underlying cause of this progressive stall and spin? To me, it is a perfect example of what might be expected when a soft-

hearted board keeps giving a student extra time when his record definitely doesn't warrant it. This is just the reverse of kindness, and it is cases such as this which have made it necessary to definitely limit the amount of extra time that a board can give to any one student.

There seems to be a question of psychology involved in the joint action of a board as compared to that of a single individual. It is only natural that each person on a board feels less responsibility for the result of the board's action than if he had to make the final decision alone. It is, therefore, less strain on the conscience to give a student another chance.

A word to the instructors: No student will ever appear before a flight board unless you impartially discharge your duties and call your shots as you see them.

Hope none of you instructors and board members have bad dreams. Twenty years ago I stretched my conscience and gave a student an "OK" after an unsatisfactory check hop. Never again! I've felt a personal responsibility for his safety ever since. All these years I've kept my fingers crossed.

Upon coming to the Bureau, I got a chance to look up this officer's accident record and found that my worries were fully justified. He has had far more than his share of crashes and most of them are listed as "pilot error." Fortunately for both of us, none of them turned out very serious.

This officer should be an admiral soon now and I will be glad when he reaches retirement age, so I can breathe easy again.

He Didn't Turn Back!

A careful bit of piloting, performed by a Marine lieutenant when the propeller on his F4F-4 went out, is reported as follows:

"The take-off was normal and the pilot had no indication that anything was wrong until he had reached an altitude of 200 feet. The landing gear was almost retracted and the pilot was preparing to join up with other planes in his division when the propeller went in to full high pitch.

"In spite of maximum throttle, the

air speed was dropping off when the altitude was maintained. The pilot let his landing gear down, used full flap, and prepared for an emergency landing in a farmer's field. Realizing that he was falling short of the field, the lieutenant dropped the nose of his plane, bounced the wheels on the ground and mushed over a 15' irrigation ditch into the field.

"Unfortunately, as the plane rolled to a stop, the soft ground caused it to nose up, bending the propeller, and as it fell back to a three-point attitude, the tail wheel assembly was damaged."

Pilot Error Plus

Marine Base Defense Aircraft Group 42 submits the following report covering flying activities for one month:

"A TBF-1 taxied out, and its wing collided with another because the pilot had failed to notice the plane ahead had stopped. . . . Another pilot in an SNJ was taxiing out for a take-off. He



reached for the mike to ask the tower for take-off instructions, forgetting to watch where he was taxiing. The plane swerved to the right, hitting a parked truck. . . . A TBM-1 crashed because, according to the report, it was landing

too fast, the interval was too close, and the brakes were used excessively. . . . A Corsair flew too low over the ocean. His prop dipped into a wave. The engine froze. The plane was lost at sea. . . . Three FM-1's groundlooped all because of 'pilot error.'

"More serious, however, was the crash in which a Wildcat pilot lost his life. He radioed the tower and said he was coming in for an emergency landing, and then added, 'there's no hurry.' He was cleared into the traffic pattern at 1,000 feet. He made a circle of the field above the pattern and then came in to land. He crashed a mile from the field on his downwind leg.

"Another pilot, in an SNJ-4, lost his life when, in bailing out at night, his pilot chute shroud lines became tangled, for some unexplained reason, about his legs. Failure to familiarize himself with

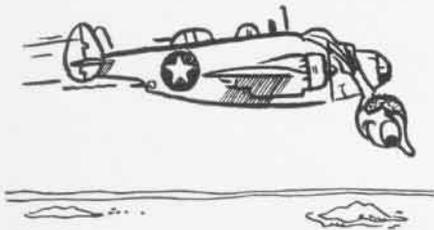
HOW'S YOUR WIND?



the country around the field, although he had been here for several months, was largely responsible for the fact that he became lost on a night flight, and with the gas running low had to bail out. He became confused when he noticed the autos on the coastal highway making a 90-degree turn to the right. The 90-degree turn is only 20 miles away from the field and had he been familiar, he could have easily followed the coastal road to the station."

Torpedo Chasing

While concentrating his attention on marking the position of an expended practice torpedo, the pilot of a PV-1



stalled his airplane in a steeply banked turn and crashed.

The report on the investigation of this accident recommended that this type airplane not be used in torpedo recovery operations or in similar operations that require steeply banked turns at low altitude.

COMMENT—Airplanes with high wing loadings are not as suitable for torpedo recovery work as other types. If it is essential that such planes be used for this work the pilot should be impressed with the danger involved.

While torpedo chasing is not considered dangerous, there is a tendency in this type of flying for a pilot to become so engrossed in watching the torpedo that he neglects to give sufficient attention to the control of his airplane. Most of the accidents occur as the result of loss of airspeed in a turn. It must be remembered that in a turn a plane has an increased acceleration and will therefore stall and spin at higher than normal speed. Planes must, therefore, be flown at increased speed in a turn, to compensate. The higher the wing loading, the more essential increased speed becomes.

Solo Flight

A cadet pilot landed at an outlying field, retarded throttle, set parking brakes and left his N2S-4 unattended, while he walked over to chat with two other pilots. The little "yellow fighter" took in the situation and considered the time opportune to make a dash for freedom. Its throttle began to creep forward, the brakes became disengaged and the plane began to move. The cadet, observing the motion, ran to his plane

and grabbed a wing, but by this time speed had increased so that he was unable to do more than just hang on, causing the plane to commence a series of ever widening circles. Speed continued to build up and the cadet lost his hold, admitting defeat by turning tail and scampering over a fence to safety.

The other two students also joined the chase, *also leaving their planes with engines running, unattended.* The contest proved too much for these last two entrants and they were forced to return to their own planes and taxi them out of danger. By this time the renegade N2S was pretty mad, digging a wing into the ground now and then just to show its temper. At last the little "fighter" apparently became weary of the sport and decided to spread its wings. Speed was sufficient, so that when coming into the wind the last time the plane straightened out, took off, climbed normally until reaching an altitude of about 50 feet, at which time it apparently decided to make a steep turn and zoom the field downward. But like so many foolishly piloted planes before it, this trainer stalled in the turn and dived to earth.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Wasn't that funny! I smiled too, but the thing that wiped the smile off my face was the realization that an airplane was completely wiped out because a pilot deliberately disobeyed orders. The money value of this plane was approximately \$10,000, but money won't replace the loss of critical matériel and labor involved.

Are Your Fittings Fastened?

Two primary trainer crashes have occurred recently as a result of baggage compartment doors coming open during aerobatics. Motor and cockpit covers spilled out and lodged in the tail section, blanking out controls.

Inspection after these crashes showed the baggage compartment rotary stud fasteners to be in perfect working order. Pilot and plane captain



were considered equally responsible ("carelessness") for not making careful pre-flight checks of these fittings to insure that they were properly secured.

The stations concerned are conducting drives to make all hands conscious of the importance of, and the necessity for, careful pre-flight checks.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

And just to show they don't trust anybody, one station has ordered all covers removed from aircraft during local flights. That is sound aviation practice, however, on the principle that any hazard removed prior to flight cannot cause an accident.

Final Warning

A list of names, recently posted on the bulletin board of a squadron at Harlingen (Tex.) Army Air Field, was accompanied by these terse instructions: "The following enlisted men will pick up their Good Conduct Medals at the supply room this afternoon. Failure to comply with this order will result in disciplinary action!" [Air Force.]

For Comfort and Safety

DEAR GRAMPAW PETTIBONE:

In the December 1 issue of NANews you have a discussion regarding the neglect of pilots to wear shoulder harnesses. In this discussion you attribute the pilots' neglect to stupidity, false pride, and fatalistic ideas.

The shoulder harness in the F4U and F6F have always been most uncomfortable to me. I have found myself in the final approach to landing fighting frantically to keep the shoulder straps from slipping off my shoulders, like some woman having trouble with a various assortment of ill fitting straps, harnesses, etc.

In this squadron our parachute man has attached a strap which crosses the back of the shoulders and prevents the harness from slipping off the shoulders. This arrangement gives a snug, comfortable fit and is widely acclaimed by all our pilots, who, for a short time, flew with the unmodified harness in the F4U.

It is firmly believed that if shoulder harnesses were made, or as in our case, modified, with some thought of the pilot's comfort, a case of a pilot getting caught with his harness down would be a rare event.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 532

Grampaw Pettibone says:

This connector strap IS a good idea and does make the shoulder harness more comfortable. The use of this strap was recommended in Technical Note 28-43.

The reason these straps are not tacked on at the factory is that shoulder harnesses are used under varying conditions and by different size pilots, thus necessitating considerable variation in adjustment.