

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

VJ-13 Swears This Happened

"One of our pilots was making touch-and-go landings at night (a practice which is frowned upon and no longer permitted in VJ-13, even in the daytime) in an SBD. On his first landing which was greased in, he reached for his flap lever—got the landing gear lever instead, and as luck would have it, he was just on the verge of being airborne again; consequently, when his wheels went up the plane only settled about a foot. Believe it or not, this pilot succeeded in very neatly machining about 1½" off the tip of each propeller blade—using the runway as a machine tool.

"By this time the plane was back in the air, but since strange noises were heard and many sparks flew, the pilot was aware that something was wrong. No vibration was evident and the pilot reasoned that something must have happened to his landing gear, so he called the tower for an emergency crash landing clearance. When he came in, much to his surprise, the landing was effected in a normal manner. The pilot taxied to a stop, got out and made a thorough inspection of his plane—engine still running. After finding nothing wrong, he climbed back in, took off and *flew around for forty minutes longer.*

"The stubby props were discovered shortly after the plane came in! *Total cost: One prop and one bottle of smelling salts for the pilot.*"

SNJ Landing Gear Collapse

The student pilot of an SNJ-4 lowered his wheels for a landing, but the warning horn continued to blow. He raised the gear and lowered it again, but the horn continued sounding. He then assumed that the horn was faulty and, upon receiving the signal to land, did so. The right wheel collapsed when he turned off the runway at the end of the landing run.

The Trouble Board stated that an inspection of the landing gear revealed the locking pin for the right wheel strut was worn, preventing it from going into place.

►COMMENT—There are several angles to this accident. Of course, the underlying cause rests with the maintenance crew for failing to make proper inspection of the locking pin and for not keeping it in good working order. The immediate cause, how-



ever, was considered to be pilot error in failing to use the emergency procedure for engaging the locking pin. It wasn't clear from the report whether the pilot was, or was not, familiar with this mechanical equipment on the SNJ, but it was clear he didn't use it. No one should be checked out in this plane until he knows exactly how it works. If there is any pilot now flying SNJ's who doesn't know exactly how this mechanical locking device works, he shouldn't wait for a personal invitation to correct this deficiency.

An error in operating procedure was also involved in this accident. Note that the right wheel didn't collapse until a *turn* was started at the end of the landing run. In a large percentage of cases where the landing gear fully extends, but will not lock, it will not collapse until a turn is made. For this reason, the following procedure should always be followed when trouble of this nature is experienced:

- Pilot should notify tower of difficulty.
- Tower should control the landing, as necessary, directing pilot where to land and warning him *not* to turn at end of landing run, but to stop and await crash crew.
- Crash crew should be sent out to make an immediate inspection of the locking pin. This simple procedure will often prevent extensive damage. (It is equally applicable to all airplanes in which the landing gear is lowered laterally.)

One other safety measure has been provided to prevent this type of accident. Bureau Changes (SNJ-2, 3, 4 and 5, Nos. 18, 24, 23 and 6, respectively) provide for a transparent cover plate over the locking pin to permit the pilot to make a visual inspection before landing. This change should be incorporated as soon as practicable and pilots instructed as to its use. These inspection windows should be replaced when they become scratched.

Remember Your Life Raft Lanyard

An F6F recently went over the side during a carrier landing. The pilot was

seen to clear the cockpit, but was dragged down with the plane when it sank.

Investigation disclosed that the pilot, who was wearing a seat type chute with life raft attached, had unfastened his parachute harness, but had failed to unsnap the life raft lanyard from his life jacket. When the parachute pack or the harness became fouled in the cockpit, he was dragged down by this lanyard.

►COMMENT—In order to avoid this hazard, pilots using this particular equipment should remember to unsnap their life raft lanyards when they unfasten their parachute harnesses prior to making carrier landings.

However, when the life raft might be needed if there is a dunking, pilots using this equipment should leave the parachute harness and life raft lanyard securely fastened until clear of the plane. This procedure would apply to any carrier landing where an escort vessel is not immediately available to pick up the pilot. Of course, it also applies to all forced landings made outside of the immediate vicinity of a rescue vessel.

Parachute Technique

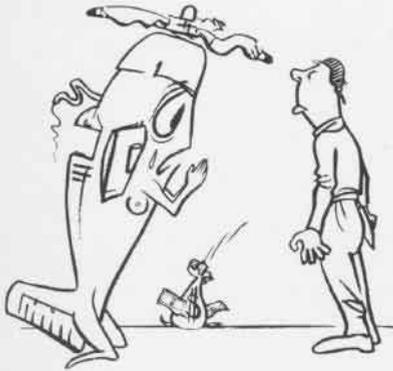
During gunnery practice, an FG-1 pilot reported loss of oil pressure and his engine immediately began to smoke. He was ordered by his flight leader to return to base but soon thereafter his engine froze completely. At 8,000 feet he parachuted and descended safely but did not get out of his chute upon striking the water. A sixteen-knot wind caught the parachute canopy, billowed it and dragged the pilot through the water, causing death by drowning before rescue craft could reach the scene. It was discovered that the pilot had inflated his life jacket under the parachute harness, thus apparently making it impossible for him to unfasten his chest strap and to extricate himself from his chute harness.

►COMMENT—Personnel should insure that parachute chest straps are unbuckled before life jackets are inflated.

Parachute chest straps and even leg straps can be unbuckled before striking the water if there is sufficient altitude. Where this is attempted, however, great care must be taken to insure you are not spilled out before you get down. Review your *Parachute Manual* and the pamphlet *Parachute Sense* for more complete information.

Engine Trouble (?)

After rendezvousing at 11,000 feet for gunnery practice, an F6F pilot with total flight time of 544 hours radioed the flight leader that he was having engine trouble and requested permis-



sion to return to base. Permission was granted. He then descended to a low altitude and proceeded toward base, *doing slow rolls*. A few minutes later he crashed and burned at a point six miles from the field.

Put It on the Yellow Sheet



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Do you make a notation on the "yellow sheet" after each flight stating any material defects you observed?

Word occasionally trickles through that this is not always done. And some fatal accidents can be traced to this neglect.

How can you expect defects to be corrected if you don't report them? A word to the mech when you land isn't enough. Put it in writing. And if it is serious enough to probably ground the plane, talk to the engineering or maintenance officer about it.

Don't shirk your responsibility in this matter. Give your squadron mates the same consideration that you have a right to expect from them.

If you neglect to report defects on the yellow sheet, you may be indirectly or directly responsible for getting somebody bumped off; and since you may possibly fly the same plane again yourself, you may even be the one that gets bumped.

Then you would be sorry!

Look How Smart I Am

The irate engineering officer of a squadron at an advanced naval base in the Pacific submitted the following report when one of his planes was damaged beyond local repair facilities:

"The pilot with 260 hours in SBD's made a normal take-off, but retracted his wheels too soon. In his effort to show his admiring friends how quickly he could get off, he neglected to gain sufficient flying speed and as the wheels of the SBD-4 retracted the plane settled to the runway. This plane accident was one hundred percent cockpit trouble."

Night Low Level Bombing Accident

During a practice night low level bombing attack, a TBM was seen to fly into the water.

The squadron commander made the following comments in his administrative report of this accident: "In view of this and other similar accidents, it is possible that improper technique is being employed by torpedo plane pilots during low level bombing. They may be setting the elevator trim tab controls for level flight for the approach speed condition of the airplane. As soon as the bomb bay doors are open this speed is reduced and the nose of the plane starts dropping shortly thereafter. Pilots are generally attentive to the target at this particular time and may lose altitude unknowingly in spite of the absolute altimeter warning light."

In his forwarding endorsement, COMFAIR West Coast stated that squadron commanders have been directed to impress their pilots with the importance of attention to instruments in night work, and to be alert to counteract the bomb bay effect which occurs when the bomb bay is opened at high speeds.

Self-Analysis

An SBD pilot, operating from a CVL during a shakedown cruise, had what he termed "quite an experience." We agree. His report, which is interesting as well as instructive, is quoted in part:

"Because of several deck wave-offs, mine was the last plane in the air. My engine was heating up from excessive use of full power, and I kept my cowl flaps open, except while approaching the ramp. On my last approach I neglected to close the cowl flaps, however, and that contributed to my losing sight of the signal officer just prior to the cut. When I again saw him, I realized it was too late to take the cut as I would have landed on the planes and men on the fore deck. Perhaps I was wrong, but I committed the unpardonable sin of attempting a wave-off after a cut. I knew as soon as I poured on the coal that she wouldn't take it;

and torque, cocked up attitude, and lack of speed, all contributed to my spinning over the port side.

"The plane struck the water in a vertical position, flipped over on its belly, and sank in three pieces. I went down with the plane but was able to extricate



myself without much difficulty, and popped to the surface much to the captain's relief—not to mention my own. I suffered only a cut chin, a skinned knee, and an injured pride.

"There are three lessons, it seems to me, to be learned from my mistakes.

"First, and what I consider most important: I had my shoulder straps on and secured as tightly as I could jam them, which is the only reason that I survived the crash. It is evident that since the engine was broken off, since the plane was split through the gunner's cockpit, and since the full length of the leading edge of the wing was pushed back like an accordion for at least a foot and a half, my head would surely have been smashed against the gunsight or instrument panel if I had not used my shoulder straps to their best advantage.

"Second: though 'cowl flaps' is not on the check-off list, I should have been aware that they were obstructing my vision somewhat, and perhaps I would not have lost sight of the signal officer, had I realized this fact. This can be chalked up to lack of brain work.

"Third: I did not have my parachute shoulder straps removed, though the chute was unbuckled, so that when I left the cockpit the chute went with me. However, this did not hamper me to any extent, for which I was probably just fortunate."

F4U Hydraulic Failure

The hydraulic system of an F4U failed after take-off before the tail wheel had been fully retracted. The pilot thought of lowering the gear by means of the emergency release, but he couldn't locate the proper lever and was forced to make a belly landing.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

A good dose of *Pilot's Handbook* and a cockpit checkout prior to soloing this F4U would have saved the Navy thousands of dollars and a badly needed plane.

