

# GRAMP AW PETTIBONE

## Dead End Kid

A Volunteer Reserve pilot with four hours of flight time in the past three months took off on an authorized local flight in an SNJ. Weather conditions were marginal and on his way back to the field he intercepted the north-east leg of the Long Beach range. He misinterpreted the beam signal and turned in the wrong direction. Heading towards mountainous country he attempted to maintain contact flight just below a solid overcast. After a few minutes he turned into a valley which looked familiar to him.

As the flight progressed the valley became entirely foreign. It also became quite narrow, and in the words of the pilot—"numerous alterations of course were necessary to keep from hitting the sides." Suddenly the valley came to an abrupt end. Horseshoe-shaped hills lay directly ahead and there was neither room nor time to turn around. The pilot pushed propeller, throttle, and mixture controls full forward, and lowered his flaps for additional climb, as he pulled up into the overcast. Lacking sufficient power to clear the sharply rising terrain, he flew into the slope of the mountain in a steep climb. The heavy mesquite stopped the plane about 50 feet after the initial impact. The pilot and his passenger, a pharmacist's mate, climbed out of the wreckage uninjured.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Shades of Dilbert!

Just about the time I think that I've heard of all the dumb stunts that can be pulled in an airplane, you come along with a brand-new suicidal angle.

When I got to the part of the report where you were going up that valley under a solid overcast with your clear airspace getting smaller all the time, the hair really stood up on the back of my neck. "This fellow," I said to myself, "is going to need more than first aid. He should have an undertaker or maybe a brain surgeon in the back seat—not a pharmacist's mate."

And then you survived. Well, let's add up the errors and see what the score was:

First, you should have remained close to the field on that flight in view of the marginal weather conditions to the south and the limited amount of flying that you had done in the past three months.

Second, when you picked up the Long Beach beam on your return, you should have taken time to orientate yourself, so that you wouldn't have started off in the



wrong direction. Also a little knowledge of local geography would have afforded you several good indications that you were not heading towards the station.

Your last error—going up that valley beyond where you could safely turn around—reminds me of a statement that I came across in an accident report many years ago. At that time 60 miles an hour was considered mighty fast flying speed. The pilot in this accident reported: "Weather bad, went down low and decided to follow train. Ceiling lowered to 100 feet. Train went in tunnel. Not enough room for plane to follow."

## Gremlins At Work?

An 18 kt. wind was blowing against the unsecured tail surfaces of an SB2C. This caused the elevator to be moved up and down, which in turn moved the control stick in the cockpit forward and backward. The motion of the control stick caused it to bump against the wingfold handle, moving it to the spread position. There was just enough pressure left in the hydraulic system to cause the right wing to drop to the extended position. Unfortunately the plane parked on the right was turning up and the wing fell against its moving propeller.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Take it easy, fellows. After all, Rube Goldberg gets paid for figuring out situations like this and we don't want to compete with Rube.

Next time make use of the control locks.

## Who's Got It?

The SNJ pictured above was flown back to the field with a sizable portion of its wing missing, by two pilots who carried the 'Alphonse and Gaston' routine a little too far. Each thought that the other had control of the plane, and when they both decided that it was time to pull out of a diving spiral which had started at 3000 feet, the plane was too low and mashed into some power lines which were approximately 35 feet high.

The rear seat pilot wished to transfer control to the pilot in the front seat and thought that his intentions were understood. After the plane went into the diving spiral the pilot in the rear seat tested the controls as they passed 1500 feet to determine whether or not his message had been understood. Evidently the resistance of the controls at high speed led him to believe that the pilot in the front seat had control. At 500 feet both pilots made an effort to recover, but the power lines cut off the starboard wing tip, including the pitot tube.

Fortunately they were able to climb to 5000 feet where the front seat pilot tested the stall characteristics carefully and decided that a safe landing could be made.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

You fellows had better read up on the proper method for exchanging control of

an aircraft. *BuAer Manual, Article 6-104* states:

1. The pilot desiring to be relieved, or pilot desiring to take control, shall shake control stick or column.

2. Pilot taking control shall shake control stick or column.

3. Pilot being relieved shall hold both hands over head and observe pilot who is relieving him.

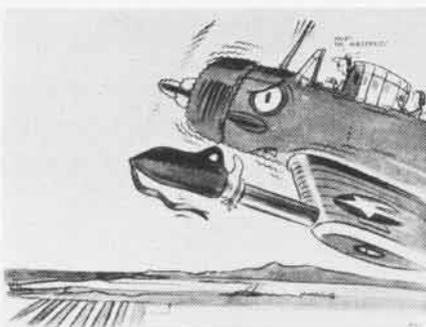
4. Pilot who has taken controls shall signify this fact definitely by placing his hand on his head while the other pilot is looking at him. The pilot originally in control will not consider himself relieved until (4) has been executed, and responsibility for the aircraft rests upon him until this has occurred.

5. In aircraft where sight contact between the two control positions is impossible or unsatisfactory, shift of control should only be attempted when an operative interphone system is provided. A positive simple voice procedure should be utilized to establish the transfer of responsibility. As in (4) above, the pilot originally in control is entirely responsible until the relieving pilot has accepted control of the aircraft, verbally."

### Covered Pitot Tube

Two Reserve pilots on their 14-day annual training duty were scheduled for a familiarization hop in TBMs. Shortly after takeoff they joined up and headed north from the field. At this time one pilot mentioned on the radio that he had no airspeed reading but would remain in formation. Approximately 15 minutes after takeoff the planes became separated while climbing through clouds. Nothing further was heard from the plane with the airspeed indicator out, until about 45 minutes later when witnesses heard and saw a TBM aircraft flying very low and under conditions of extremely poor visibility and ceiling. The engine of the aircraft appeared to be functioning normally.

A few minutes later the aircraft was seen again, this time flying to the east just above the tree tops. Immediately afterwards the plane was seen to collide with the ground in a flat attitude with wheels and flaps up at a speed estimated between 150 and 200 kts. The aircraft ricocheted into the air, again collided with the ground, then bounced into the air, and was disintegrating and on fire as it disappeared over a small ridge. While in the air the engine detached itself from the rest of the plane and was found about 400 yards from the point of first impact. The tail section and after part of the fuselage crashed into a house, while the right wing and remainder of the fuselage came to rest in flames a short distance away. In examining the wreckage the pitot static tube was found with the cover still attached.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

In another part of this report the pilot's injuries are described as follows: "Multiple and extreme, including carbonization of entire body." What a price to pay for not being willing to land immediately after it was discovered that the airspeed indicator was not functioning.

I have no words to express my thoughts concerning a pilot who would attempt a climb through the overcast with his plane in this condition, but perhaps this tragic example will make other pilots more safety minded.

### A Tale of Two Seamen

If you look closely at the picture below, you can see the results of one of Spoiler's record achievements. An FR-1 has just been cut in two and an F8F and a TBM are badly damaged.

It happened when one SI/c took it upon himself to check-out another SI/c in the starting and warm up procedure in effect on the line for the F8F airplane. The seaman who was getting checked out had just completed a tour of mess cooking followed by some leave and it was his first day on the line.

His "instructor" who, by the way, had never been authorized to give instruction or to check-out anyone in any phase of aircraft operations, had the recently retired mess cook sit in the cockpit and showed him how to start.

No one was manning a fire bottle during this time and when the engine began to torch, the "instructor" jumped off the wing to get a fire bottle. The ex-mess cook who was left in the cockpit, knew nothing about the controls and had no notion of how to shut off the engine. He states that he tried to, but—"When the fire got pretty hot on my face, I jumped out of the cockpit via the starboard side. As I fell off the wing I sprained my wrist, cracked my elbow and skinned my left thigh." He was confined to the hospital for five days.

With no one in the cockpit of the F8F and the engine turning over at about 2500 RPM, the plane broke loose from its moorings, jumped the six inch chocks and headed towards a group of parked airplanes. At this precise moment an FR-1 was being towed down a taxi lane two rows ahead. The F8F cut the FR-1 in two, and with the aft section and jet engine of the FR-1 dangling about its port landing gear, the F8F angled off to the right and crashed into a TBM. At this point a fuel line broke in the F8F and it came to a halt.

Inspection of the F8F disclosed that No. 18 exhaust stack was broken and this contributed to the impression of the engine being on fire on the initial start.

A preliminary estimate indicates that the total damage to aircraft exceeded \$100,000.

*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

This is one for the books. I concur fully with the Commanding Officer of the Squadron who comments:

"This disastrous accident was the product of misguided initiative, inexperienced personnel, violation of a squadron order, and disregard of squadron instructions, all combined with uncanny perfection."

