

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Fatal Mistake

The pilot of an F6F had an engine failure at 500 feet shortly after take-off. He wrapped his plane up in a tight turn back toward the runway he had just used, called the tower for emergency landing clearance, and made a successful downwind landing. He got away with it, but his commanding officer cautioned him about turning back to the field at low altitude after an engine failure.

Three days later, after the plane had been given a thorough check in an effort to find the cause of the earlier failure, the same pilot took off again on a test flight. This time the engine began to mis-fire at about 300 feet, and once more the pilot rolled into a 60° bank to the left in hopes of making it back to the field. He held the steep turn until just before he crashed 300 yards short of the runway. The plane burst into flames on impact and was destroyed. The pilot did not get out.

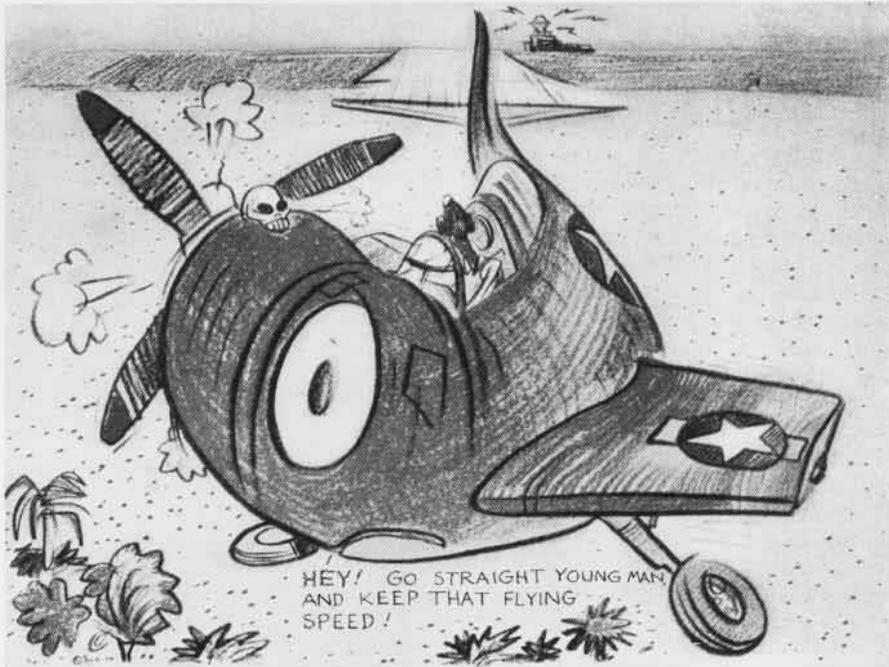
### Grampaw Pettibone says:

Once in a while you can get away with a stunt like this, but most of the time it ends just as badly as it did here on the second try. I know it's hard to resist the urge to turn back to the field when an engine quits, but you've got to resist turning back if you ever hope to be the oldest living naval aviator.

A controlled wheels up landing in the best area ahead of your plane may tear up the underside of the fuselage, but you can count on walking away from the wreck under your own power. When you try to reverse your course and get back to the field after a power failure, you are likely to spin or stall or fly into the ground on a wing tip, and survivors from such accidents are mighty scarce.

### "Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

"An instance recently occurred at NAS ALAMEDA which illustrates the importance of keeping log books up to date. Several SB2C-5 aircraft were being prepared for ferry to overhaul bases by this activity. The preparation involved examination of the log books to determine if there had been any unusual occurrences in the plane's history and processing of the aircraft under Local Process Specifications designed to meet the minimum requirements for ferrying of aircraft. As these aircraft have not had excessive time and have been reasonably well preserved during storage, disassembly and magnafluxing of



primary structural parts is not considered essential in the preparation of the aircraft for ferrying to overhaul bases provided the aircraft logs do not indicate that the plane had been subjected to hard landings, barrier crashes, etc.

"One of these aircraft, while being towed by a tractor in the process of being prepared for departure to the overhaul base, amazed all hands concerned by losing an engine. This engine did not lose power, manifold pressure, or RPM, but actually fell off the airframe. Re-examination of the log book of this aircraft, which incidentally was very haphazardly kept, did not indicate that the aircraft had been damaged in any fashion. However, the last hop which the plane made, as shown in the log, involved a night carrier landing. The airplane also gave some limited evidence of having experienced a barrier crash. The true history of the aircraft was not reflected in the log book entries. The inspection processes utilizing log book information were thus rendered unreliable and quite obviously this shortcoming could have serious implications.

"No action concerning the activities involved in the foregoing is feasible at this time as the activities believed to be involved have been decommissioned. However, we think you will be interested, Grampaw, and may desire to

publicize the matter in the interests of better log keeping."

### Grampaw Pettibone says:

Don't kill your friends, fellows. If you've jarred the living daylight out of a plane on a hard landing, put it down on the yellow sheet. Then the plane will be inspected thoroughly for possible structural damage and an entry will be made in the plane's log book. If you fail to report such an instance you are jeopardizing the life of the next pilot who flies that plane. If he is killed, according to Grampaw's understanding of the law, you then become an accessory before the fact and should be charged with PILOT SLAUGHTER!

## Accident Reports Due in 10 Days

Regulations in the BUAER Manual and in Aviation Circular Letters 119-45 and 113-46 provide instructions for the reporting of aircraft accidents. These reports should be submitted within 10 days after each accident.

That some directives are lax in following these directives is indicated by the fact that during the last year approximately 30 accidents were reported by despatch only. In other cases the AAR's were not received until several months after the accident.

The AAR is the principal source of information relative to the cause of aircraft accidents. If immediate action is to be taken to prevent similar crashes, these reports must be sent in promptly. Failure to do so may cost some pilot his life in an accident which might have been prevented.

## Frozen Selector Valve

Here's a yarn from an F4U pilot who set out on a cross-country flight from Norfolk to Miami and survived the rugged crash pictured to the right.

After take-off he shifted his fuel selector from main tank to right standby and climbed to 20,000 feet. Leveling off here, he planned to draw gas direct from his drop tank for the first two hours and then shift back to the main tank. All was well for the next hour and a half, and then . . .

"About 45 mi. north of Charleston my engine began cutting out. Since the transfer light had not come on and I hadn't expected 150 gallons of fuel to be used before two hours, I was very much surprised. I put the mixture control in auto-rich, switched on the emergency fuel pump, and attempted to switch the gas selector valve to main tank. The valve would not move from the Right Standby position. It was frozen in position, and with both hands I couldn't budge it. I tried to start the engine with prime, but it didn't work.

"At this time the fuel warning light blinked twice. I found my shoulder straps, put my belt on, and hoped like hell I'd be able to turn the selector valve at a warmer altitude. I had to leave the shoulder straps unlocked to work on the valve. The plane was flying crazily since I was using both hands on the gas selector and the control column was just in the way as far as I was concerned. At 4000' I decided that the valve wasn't going to turn, my hands were numb and bleeding from trying, so I looked around for a likely place to crash-land.

"The field I picked at 4000' developed a neat row of high tension poles when I got to 2000', so I decided on a dirt hi-way that seemed fairly wide and was into the wind. I'd jettisoned the belly tank and opened the hatch with some trouble, the safety latch was slightly up and would not allow the hatch to fully open. Remedying this and locking the canopy open, I again tried to turn the selector valve, it was still frozen, or stuck—or somethin'. I was turning in toward the road at about 400' and saw three people running down it in the same direction I intended to land. I cut the switches, locked my shoulder straps, and used both hands to cinch them up tight. It seemed inevitable that I would hit the three people who continued to run down the road ahead of me. I was sweating them out, and overshot the road slightly before looking over to the left too late to keep my left wing from hitting a pair of 65' gum trees. The plane began coming apart, and although I didn't get knocked out, I



don't know what happened after the initial contact was made.

"The cockpit stopped about 300' past the trees and about 30' from the road. I was inverted in the cockpit with my head touching the ground. I unbuckled my chute and noticed my little finger on the right hand out of joint. I put it back in place and undid my safety belt. I was making some progress at crawling out on the back of my neck when some farmers came and helped me the rest of the way out. I put my finger back in place again. The plane had broken at the main tank, about 2' behind the cockpit, the starboard wing was sheared off and port wing tip was gone. The engine and accessory sections were about 100' further up the road."



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Another orchid to the man who invented shoulder straps, eh, son?

As you doubtlessly know, the fuel system in the F4U-4 is designed so that you don't have to run directly off the drop tank. In fact, there are several good reasons for running with the transfer system on and the selector valve set on main tank. One is that the drop tank is not pressurized and you will therefore be likely to experience trouble when drawing gas directly from this tank at high altitudes. Also the booster pump is located in the main tank and is therefore of no use when the selector is on some other tank.

The Right Standby position is for emergency use in case the transfer system fails. Operation on this position should be checked on the ground during warm up.

The accident board was of the opinion that a slight amount of water in the drop tank caused the selector valve to freeze at high altitude. The valve worked normally when checked on the ground after the crash.

## At Last—An Honest Man!

My files are full of lengthy statements from pilots involved in wheels-up landings. Some of the boys even describe what they had for breakfast, how many push-ups they did at morning calisthenics, where they flew before the landing in question, and just about anything else they can think of to delay getting to the point where they have to say "I forgot my wheels." So, its refreshing—once in a hundred or so acci-

dents—to run across a pilot's statement like the one below:

"Following a cut on a FCLP pass in a TBM-3, I made the landing, then commenced the takeoff. I added throttle and with forward stick put the aircraft in normal takeoff run attitude. I then hit the flap control to retract the flaps. Just about a tenth of a second later I again reached down to check my flap control in the 'up' position. The aircraft was not as yet airborne and was acting as if the flaps were still down. I inadvertently hit the landing gear lever—the realization came immediately and I snapped the lever to the down position and added back stick pressure. The wheel indicator read just short of the halfway down mark, when the prop bit the deck.

"The aircraft finally ground to a stop. A small fire developed on the port side of the engine; it was extinguished by the crash crew.

"This was not an attempt at a 'hot pilot' takeoff, so-called. The accident could definitely have been prevented by total concentration on what I was doing, rather than automatically reaching down and heedlessly grasping the control lever.

"A pure case of 'doping off'."

....., Lt. (jg), USN



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

The compliments of "Diogenes" Pettibone to you, young man!

## "Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

"There has recently been an argument in this squadron regarding the glide ratio of an F4U Corsair. A Handbook was shown me, in which the glide ratio was quoted at 13 to 1. This was with a dead stick. Is this correct?"

....., Ens., USNR"



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Could be. In fact, in the clean condition and with no wind, it will glide about 15 feet forward for each foot down.



## Dilbert Was Here!

The F8F pictured above is waiting in the bone yard to be scrapped. Its back was broken when Dilbert failed to answer a "Low" signal from the L.S.O. and the plane hit the ramp. Fortunately it bounced up on the deck and Dilbert survived.