

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## How's Your Life Expectancy?

One thing I've noticed about most aviators is that they're always sure that they won't be killed in next week's fatal aviation accident. They know that accidents occur; they know that "flight pay" is directly related to the extra hazards of duty involving flying. But it's always the "other fellow" who's going "to get it".

This outlook is fine for morale and certainly there is not much to be gained by brooding on the hazards of one's occupation.

Just the same, once in a while it's a good idea to give some thought to your life expectancy and in particular to what you can do to increase it. The retirement benefits for military personnel are mighty fine, and they compensate to some extent for the modest pay which goes with a career in the Army, Navy or Air Force. But these benefits don't help a bit if you wind up in a pine box before you finish your first 20 years.

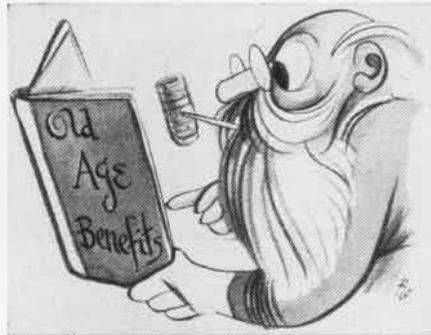
The statisticians across the hall tell me that they've been keeping records for close to thirty years, and that aviators on the average can expect to live about 11 years less than their non-flying friends. In other words, when you "won your wings" you also cut down your life expectancy at age 20 from about 48 years to 37 years.

Another way of saying the same thing is that out of a 1000 naval aviators who start flying at age 20, only 770 will live to reach the ripe old age of 35.

Which group you fall in will depend pretty much on what you know about your airplane, how well you navigate, how thoroughly you plan your flights. If you're ready for an emergency when it occurs and know just what to do—your chances of being in the "live" group will be a heck of a lot greater.

Remember—you haven't chosen a particularly safe way to make a living. Don't increase the hazards of flathatting, flying into instrument weather on a VFR plan, or failing to use the safety equipment that is provided for your protection.

Be like the Ensign who looked up while examining a safety device and said, "You know this gadget will be worthwhile if it only saves one life—particularly if it happens to be mine."



## Scratch One Beechcraft

The pilot of an SNB was returning to Corry Field following a simulated instrument flight. As he entered the traffic pattern a rain squall was approaching the field from the Northwest. The ceiling was 1000 feet and visibility 1 mile, but as he continued his approach and was turning on the final he entered the squall which reduced ceiling and visibility considerably. Lining up with runway 16, the pilot noticed a definite drift to the left for which he corrected, and presumably made a normal slightly tail-low, full flap, landing. Immediately upon landing, the flaps were retracted and the pilot applied brakes to arc down wind.

Observers state that during the roll out he was losing speed very slowly and seemed to be having trouble in getting the tail down. When the pilot realized that he was going too fast to stop normally, he attempted an intentional ground loop to the right. The plane changed its heading about 90 degrees but continued in a skid along its original course of approximately 140 degrees. It crashed in a drainage ditch to the left of the runway and suffered strike damage.

The plane was landed at an indicated speed of about 70 knots and traveled 3000 feet from the initial touchdown spot to the point where it came to a stop. During this landing attempt the wind shifted from 270 degrees to 315 degrees with gusts of 20 knots. The SNB was going almost directly down wind at the time the pilot was attempting to slow down the landing roll-out.



### Grampaw Pettibone says:

Looks to me like this accident was caused by a combination of over-confidence and poor judgment. The pilot had over FIVE THOUSAND HOURS, of which 1050 were logged in SNB's. I'm surprised that an aviator with this much

experience would try to land just as a squall was passing the airfield . . . particularly in the Pensacola area where so many other fine fields are available.

One of the worst commercial transport crashes last year occurred during a take-off attempt under just such conditions.

It simply doesn't pay to try a landing or take-off right at the moment that a rain squall or thundershower is approaching the field. You will almost invariably encounter a strong wind shift.

Play it safe. Under such conditions land at another field, or fly outside the rain squall until it is well past the airport at which you wish to land.

## Seven Minutes to Eternity

An F4U-4 pilot (total time 1180 hours) took off and joined the FCLP pattern. His first pass was normal and he received a cut. He made a fair landing, bounced about three feet, and added take-off power. The plane settled to the runway with the left wing low and then veered about thirty degrees to the left. The pilot chopped throttle, attempted to level his wings, and correct his heading.

Before his wings were level and his heading corrected, he again added take-off power and pulled the F4U into the air. Upon becoming airborne the left wing continued down and the nose came up to an extremely high position. The plane continued this steep roll to the left until it reached the inverted position. It crashed into the ground nose down from approximately 50 feet. The pilot had been airborne seven minutes. He died one hour later.



### Grampaw Pettibone says:

When you let two thousand horsepower and six tons of airframe get out of control—watch out! Torque, produced by sudden application of full throttle, combined with low airspeed caused this pilot to lose control of his plane.

Take my advice and do this for your own protection. Take your plane to a safe altitude and demonstrate to yourself its stalling characteristics at low speeds. Any plane will go on its back under certain circumstances and any plane can be prevented from going on its back. It is up to you to know just where the stalling speed is under varied conditions.



Here lie the bones of Ensign Wright  
A little late for a scheduled flight  
He didn't bother to check his tanks  
Now he's flying in haloed ranks.

## The Deep Six

The crash pictured here occurred during the landing of a TBM-3E which had previously reported a rough running engine and a slight oil leak. The pilot radioed this information to his flight leader and the message was intercepted by the ship. For this reason the TBM was being brought aboard first and the LSO had been informed of the emergency condition.

A heavy swell existed at the time of the landing and deck had a 30 to 50-foot pitch. The TBM came up the groove and began to settle just as the deck reached its highest point of pitch. The LSO gave the pilot a "low" and an urgent "come on" signal. As a result the pilot had on almost full throttle and was climbing at the time of the "cut". By this time the deck was going down and this combination left the plane quite high in relation to the deck. The pilot accepted the "cut", began to settle, and then applied full throttle in an attempted wave-off.

The TBM continued to settle with the left wing going down, and struck the deck as shown in the second picture. It then rolled over on its back and hit the water nose-down at about an 80 degree angle.

The shoulder harness was effective in preventing serious injury on impact. Both pilot and passenger cleared the plane and floated to the surface. The pilot discovered a hole in one side of his life jacket, and the passenger lost his life jacket a few moments after escape from the aircraft. He had been properly checked out in the use of his equipment but believes that he neglected to fasten the buckle on his life jacket.

By clinging together and treading water the pair managed to remain afloat until picked up by the plane guard destroyer 17 minutes later.

The pilot states that he did not consider his engine trouble sufficiently serious to constitute an emergency, and therefore had not reported it to the ship. Had the LSO known that the TBM could safely take a wave-off, it is probable that he would not have given a "cut" on this pass.

The accident board was of the opinion that the pilot could have landed aboard safely or at least with less serious results if he had not decided to try a wave-off after taking the "cut."

**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Once you get that "cut" signal, it's MANDATORY to land the airplane. In this case there was some confusion as to the extent of the engine trouble in the TBM, and the pilot was probably surprised to receive a "cut" in such an un-



favorable position. Nevertheless, he really stuck his neck out a mile when he accepted the "cut" and then changed his mind half way down to the deck.

Let's all pay more attention to the use of our safety equipment too. These fellows had a second narrow squeak when both of them had to remain afloat on half a life jacket.



## Over the Bow

The pilot of an F6F made a fine carrier pass, received a cut, and caught the number 5 wire on a CVE. The arresting cable pulled out about 15 inches when the tail hook broke loose, allowing the plane to continue up the deck. ALL FOUR BARRIERS WERE DOWN.

The F6F crashed into three planes and went over the bow of the ship carrying a parked F4U with it. The pilot of the F6F was not recovered, and it is

presumed that his exit was blocked by the F4U which fell on top of the F6F as both planes went off the bow.

**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

A life lost because someone didn't get the word. One of the barrier operators had been verbally commended by the Admiral in Command of the Carrier Division a few months before for lowering his barrier early on one occasion thereby avoiding contact with a plane which had caught a late wire. He was operating the number 2 barrier and he instructed the men on the number 3 and number 4 barriers to lower their barriers as soon as they saw the arresting hook engage a wire.

The number 4 barrier operator had been criticized over the loud speaker for being slow in the operation of his barrier. He was trying to speed up his operation by watching to see exactly when the plane caught a wire. In this instance he saw the plane catch a wire and dropped his barrier. When the tail hook broke off he attempted to re-raise his barrier. It was only partially up when the plane's wheels struck it, breaking the shear pins and allowing the barrier wires to pass under the wheels without engaging the plane.

In their efforts to speed up operation these men defeated the whole purpose of the battery of barriers.

Let's not try to save seconds at the expense of lives. At least two barriers should remain up until the plane landing has come to a full stop.

