

GRAMP AW PETTIBONE

Friday the Thirteenth

Case #1

SNJ pilot landed on left side of runway at night and commenced a turn-off to right while taxiing slightly too fast. After a 15 degree turn the slipstream from the plane just ahead hit vertical tail surfaces of his plane and spun it around. Left brake was applied but the SNJ continued around 200 degrees at which point it came to a stop without any damage . . . so far.

However, at this moment a second SNJ was in the straightaway for a landing on the starboard side of the same runway. The runway duty officer flashed a red light at this plane. When the pilot did not take a wave-off he fired a red Very flare as the SNJ went by him at an altitude of about 50 feet. A signalman about 600 feet further up the runway fired two more red flares, but the pilot was "concentrating on a good approach" and didn't realize that the flares were intended for him.

He landed about 150 yards short of the SNJ that had ground-looped. The instructor in the first SNJ shoved the throttle forward as he saw the other plane coming towards them, but it was too late to avoid a collision. Impact speed was about 35 knots and both planes suffered major damage. Fortunately no one was hurt.

Case #2

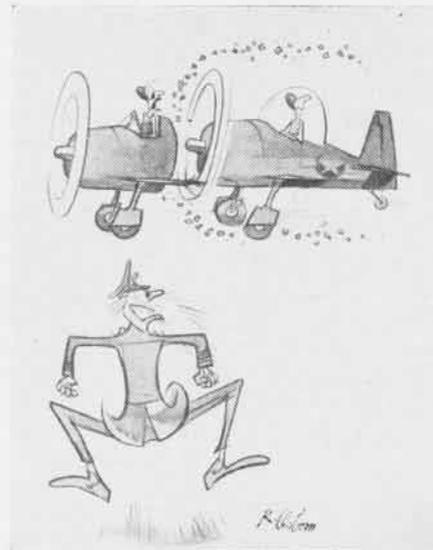
Pilot of an F4U-4 landed slightly fast and attempted a turn off at the center taxiway, which he mistook for the second taxiway. He was too fast to make this turn safely and groundlooped 90 degrees to the left dragging his starboard wing.

Case #3

The pilot of an SNJ landed following a night cross country training flight. During his roll out and subsequent taxiing he concentrated his attention to the right. He saw one plane turn off on the taxiway and assumed that this was the plane which landed immediately ahead of him. Actually the plane immediately ahead had landed on the left side and was not seen by the pilot of the overtaking aircraft until the moment of the collision. Again the result was major damage to both planes.

Case #4

The pilot of a TBM was taxiing out



of a tight spot under the direction of two taxi signalmen. When directed to make a turn to port the pilot hesitated but was given the all clear signal by the taxi director on the starboard side. He then turned and as he did so his starboard elevator went into the moving prop of a parked TBM.

Case #5

The pilot of an F6F-5N was taxiing towards the warm-up ramp prior to take off. As he approached within about 300 yards of the ramp he saw three TBM's move out of the spot and take-off, and noticed that an SNB was warming up alongside the TBM's. However, he did not see the SNB move.

At this time the pilot of the F6F was taxiing on the inboard side of the runway and he started angling to the right in preparation for swinging around into the wind for warm-up. This slight turn headed him directly for the SNB. He did not zig-zag for the last 200 yards and simply assumed that the SNB had followed the TBM's out for take-off. The F6F crashed into the SNB with the impact swinging planes together nose to nose. The SNB requires a major overhaul and the F6F suffered major damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

All these accidents occurred within the space of about 18 hours on Friday the 13th of May 1949. I'm not superstitious but this does seem to be an unusually large number of bonehead accidents for one day.

Any time you're in the straightaway for a landing and see a red flare, for gosh sakes take it around again. Maybe the flare is for the plane behind you, but it's better

to be safe than sorry.

Every one of these accidents could have been prevented by the use of common sense on the part of either the pilots, the taxi directors, or the control tower personnel.

Except in an emergency I see no use in permitting more than one plane on the landing runway at a time AT NIGHT. You may save a minute or two by a close interval landing but experience has proved over and over again that close interval landings at night will result in accidents of the type listed in Cases 1 and 3.

Target Fascination

An Ensign piloting an AD-3 took off on a routine dive bombing flight in company with five other planes. After four individual practice dives the planes joined up. At an altitude of 10,500 feet the flight commenced a dive bombing attack from a high speed break up to the left.

The flight had been briefed to begin dive recoveries at 3000 feet and the first five planes made normal recoveries. The Ensign was flying the last plane in the formation. He appeared to have been slightly off the target, and late in his dive he was observed to make a correction. He delayed starting his pull-out until he reached approximately 1500 feet.

The AD-3 almost made it.

It was in a flat attitude, but mushing when it hit the trees beyond the target. There was a cloud of dirt and debris followed by flames as the plane ripped through the brush for about 5000 feet.

The pilot was instantly killed.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

This type of accident has killed a good many pilots in past years, and it will probably result in fatalities in the future. Don't let it happen to you.

In older model dive bombers the rear seat man was usually instructed to count off the 1000-foot intervals during the dive. Now that the pilot is alone in the plane it is more important than ever that he pay particular attention to avoiding target fixation.

I understand that as a result of this accident the Bureau of Aeronautics and the Douglas Aircraft Company have conducted additional tests to determine the accuracy of the pressure altimeter in dives particularly with the dive brakes open. As soon as the results of these tests have been checked a Technical Note will be issued giving the exact amounts of altimeter lag that may be expected under varying conditions. In the meantime keep your errors on the high side.

Untimely Turn

The flight consisted of five SNJ's piloted by students in basic training. They were on their third gunnery hop and had completed four high side runs while on a southbound heading. At this time the flight joined up in column and turned back towards the beach. The flight leader had just signalled for a right echelon, when the instructor in the tow plane told him that his starting position for the next run was too close. The flight leader immediately made a rather sharp turn to the right.

In the ensuing melee the plane in number four position overshot the number three plane passing below and ahead. Just as this was occurring the pilot in the number three plane pushed over to avoid over-running the number two plane. As he did so the propeller of his plane cut off the entire empennage of the number four plane which by this time was directly below and slightly ahead.

The pilot of the tailless SNJ attempted to regain control of his aircraft but found no pressure on the stick. In a diving attitude and with the nose of the SNJ starting to tuck under, he unfastened his safety belt and was thrown clear.

After a brief parachute ride he hit the water and freed himself from the chute. He floated in his life jacket until rescued some forty minutes later by the search and rescue helicopter.

 Grampaw Pettibone says:

All the hot fighter pilots that I've talked to about this accident tell me that the flight leader should not get the blame. They argue he should be free to turn in any direction at any time and that if the wingmen had maintained the proper interval and step-down the accident wouldn't have occurred.

I'm not convinced that this is entirely true. In the first place these SNJ's were piloted by relatively inexperienced students—not by seasoned fighter pilots. Secondly, the right turn was apparently made while the formation was still in the process of getting squared away in right echelon. Some of the pilots had just added throttle to get into position. This created a situation where each plane had tendency to over-run the plane ahead, and in my opinion set the stage for the mid-air collision which followed.

False Economy

Recently a P2V-2 encountered severe back-firing during a let-down with the mixture control in the normal (lean) position. This resulted in an engine fire and extensive damage to the engine induction system.

Similar cases of back-firing during let-downs and landing approaches have been reported in several other type planes. The possibility of damage to

the engine induction system from back-fires far outweighs the minor savings in fuel consumption realized from use of the normal or auto-lean mixture control position during let-downs and landing approaches.

Technical Note No. 13-49 advises the use of RICH mixture control position during let-downs and landing approaches particularly at rates of descent or in climatic conditions which tend to overcool the engine.

The following types of aircraft have been reported susceptible to back-fires during let-downs in the normal or auto-lean mixture control position.

P2V	F7F	R5C	AD
PB4Y	F8F	R5D	AM
PBM	F4U	JRM	



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Let's pass "THE WORD" on this in a hurry. It's certainly penny wise and pound foolish to risk damaging these engines and planes by using lean mixture during fast let-downs. It's doubly dangerous to get in the traffic pattern for a landing with the mixture control in lean, because you never know when the tower may direct you to take a wave-off. If this occurs you'll want plenty of power in a hurry, and that means you'll want your mixture control in "RICH".

Weather Code Problems

How good are you at reading the teletype symbol weather reports? Try yourself out on these two . . . and check your answers on page 40. Watch that second one—it's tricky.

1. ORF W5@D21/2VR-H 177/75/74←14/
004 PRESRR VSBY VRBL 2 to 4

2. PHL S2 0808E 17@D10↓10/E120@ 9-D

\$655,770 Mistake

Problem #1:

A skilled mechanic makes \$12.00 a day, works five days a week, eight hours a day, and 50 weeks per year. How long will it take him to make \$655,770?

Answer:

218 years, 29 weeks, 2 days, 4 hours.

Problem #2:

If the same mechanic is seated in the cockpit of a P2V during towing operations and no one has bothered to put the safety down locks on the landing gear, how long will it take him to spend \$655,770 if he starts to raise the flaps and hits the landing gear lever instead.

Answer: About two seconds.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Don't think that it didn't happen, because it did. There were two chief petty officers involved in this accident—the plane captain who failed to put on the safety down locks, and the second mech on the

crew who pulled up the wrong lever.

Sure, there was something else that contributed to the accident. The landing gear control lever down lock solenoid grounding cup had backed out of its retaining support about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch. This little part is especially designed to prevent inadvertent retraction of the landing gear when the plane is on the ground. Had it been functioning properly the first two mistakes could have been made and the Navy would still have that particular P2V.

I see in the forwarding endorsement to the Administrative Report that appropriate disciplinary action has been taken. H'mm. Two hundred and eighteen years divided by two? Guess they'll take those leg irons off sometime in the year 2058.

Attention IFR Pilots

Several recent cases have been reported where pilots on instrument flight plans have flown at the altitudes which they requested in their clearance sheets rather than the altitudes actually assigned by ATC. Remember ATC cannot always assign you the altitude that you request, because of conflicting traffic. Control tower operators can help remedy this situation by requiring pilots to repeat back their ATC clearances and by paying particular attention to see to it that the pilots understand the assigned altitude.

The Navy has also received word from the Civil Aeronautics Administration of certain changes in the voice procedure in connection with holding reports. Formerly the controllers included in all clearances the words "report leaving ——— feet." To avoid radio congestion this will be discontinued. The report of leaving a previously assigned altitude is mandatory and should be made automatically.

If such a report is not received in the expected length of time the controllers will ask for it, but you should remember that it is your responsibility to initiate the report even though you no longer hear the old request for it.

The new voice procedures are discussed more fully on page 101 of the Flight Information Manual (February 1949 issue).

Real Cooperation

An SNJ became lost during a snow-storm between Whidbey Island and the Naval Air Station, Seattle. After hearing an aircraft which appeared to be in distress, citizens of Port Townsend proceeded to the local golf course and illuminated a fairway with the headlights of a number of automobiles. With this help the pilot was able to land safely.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

How friendly can people be! I hope this pilot remembers to send the Port Townsend Chamber of Commerce a "thank-you" letter.