

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Night Ditching

The following statement is quoted from a pilot's account of a ditching on a dark, moonless, night in an F4U-5N:

"At approximately 0310 I received a 'Charlie' and broke off from the AD and started my pass for landing. On the upwind end of the pattern at about 140 knots, I completed my check off list for landing with the exception of full low pitch and opening the canopy. When abeam of the ship proceeding downwind at an altitude of 150 to 175 feet and a speed of 100 knots, I called Primary Fly giving wheels down, flaps down and hook down check and at the same time advanced the propeller to full low pitch. The propeller went into full low but immediately thereafter, there was a crunching sound accompanied by a terrific twist or jerk and the engine stopped.

"My first impression was that I had hit the mast of a ship. I immediately flipped the wheel lever to the 'up' position and held the attitude of the aircraft as it was until I hit the water. The aircraft hit in a flat attitude and I consider the landing to have been very smooth and easy. I immediately opened the canopy after experiencing some difficulty releasing the emergency canopy lever. I got out of the plane and before I could swim to the end of the wing, the plane nosed down and sank.

"I inflated my life jacket and attracted the attention of the USS *Bailey*, the rescue ship, by using the distress whistle attached to my Mae West and was picked up at about 0335. Prior to using the distress whistle, I attempted to use the night distress signal flare attached to my life jacket. After reading the instructions by the aid of the one cell flashlight also attached, I pulled the 'D' ring on the flare and held it over my head. When it ignited there was a flash of red light which temporarily frightened me to the extent that I dropped the flare in the water. Investigation disclosed that my life jacket did not contain a second flare."



Grampaw Pettibone says—

Congratulations! Your ditching technique under adverse conditions was excellent.

Now a word about that night distress signal flare—the time to learn how your safety equipment works is before you need it, not while you're bobbing around in the water hoping that someone will find you.



I imagine that there are a lot of pilots who have never actually fired one of these flares. If a squadron doesn't have enough spares for every pilot to practice firing one, then the aviator's equipment officer should get all the pilots together for a demonstration of how the flare works and what it looks like when it ignites.

Not long ago I read a report of a night accident in an AD-1Q in which the pilot and crewman were extremely lucky to get out after shearing a wing off on the carrier ramp and hitting the water inverted. The pilot was 30 or 40 feet under the water before he managed to extricate himself from the broken cockpit. When he got to the surface, he heard the crewman shouting his name and swam over to find that this fellow's life jacket wouldn't inflate.

In this case the pilot was able to support the crewman who blew his whistle continually until they were spotted by a boat from the plane guard destroyer. It was later determined that the crewman's life jacket failed to inflate because the cap was missing on one CO₂ cylinder release and too loose to function on the other.

Think how carefully you would inspect each piece of equipment if you knew in advance that you were going to have to use it. You never know when you may need your safety equipment, so inspect it and learn how it works beforehand.

Fatal Error

After failure of both engines while on an overwater flight, the PPC of a PV-2 told the two crew members to prepare for ditching. During the descent, the plane captain sat with his back to the closed radio compartment door. The other crewman, a Chief Ordnanceman, sat near the cabin exit and

held onto the life raft.

Neither man thought to provide for a quick escape after the ditching by wedging the cabin door open or by removing the astro-dome. A good water landing was made in the Gulf of Mexico, and no one was injured on impact.

The two pilots escaped through the cockpit hatch and right window. Meanwhile the two crewmen struggled unsuccessfully to open the cabin door. When the water was waist-high, the plane captain started forward to open the door to the flooded pilots compartment.

The Chief sat down on the floor under water, got his back against the radar station and kicked the cabin door until he could see a little light through the crack. He then came up for air and reversed his position. With his back against the door and his feet on the radar station, he managed to force himself out.

The plane captain went down with the PV-2.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

I wonder how long it had been since this crew held a ditching drill . . . or if these men had ever been instructed in the correct procedures. Certainly they forgot two very important items.

If you are a Patrol Plane Commander, make sure that everyone in your crew knows exactly what he is supposed to do in an emergency. Insist on the wearing of life jackets on overwater flights. Check your survival equipment frequently. You may fly for years without ever needing this stuff, but when you do need it, you'll need it bad—and you'll be too busy to give detailed instructions during the emergency.

Smoky Ride

The pilot of an F2H-1 had been airborne on an instrument practice flight for about an hour and was cruising at 31,000 feet. He was under the hood and had a chase pilot following when suddenly the cockpit filled with thick blue smoke.

The pilot immediately went contact and pulled his emergency oxygen bailout bottle to prevent suffocation. His instruments showed that his port engine had flamed out and his starboard engine had dropped to 70% power.

He cut all switches to the port engine and noticed that the smoke was pouring out of the throttle quadrant.

He then called the chase pilot and told him that he had a fire in the cockpit and asked the direction to Lake City, thinking that he might make an emergency landing there.

At this time the aileron boosts went out, so the pilot cut off all electrical circuits including the radio. He added throttle to the starboard engine but was unable to get an increase in power over 70%.

At this time he decided to shut down the starboard engine and cut all switches except the engine masters. He held an airspeed of 200 knots which gave him a relatively slow rate of descent.

After a few minutes the smoke began to clear up and at about 20,000 feet, the pilot turned the battery switch to "EMERGENCY" and started the starboard engine. After ascertaining that the starboard engine was functioning properly, he started the port engine. With both engines operating at about 70% power, he turned on the generators and the warning light showed that the port generator was not functioning. The gas gauges and wheel and flap indicators were fluctuating. By this time, the pilot was over NAS JACKSONVILLE and had reported a deferred emergency. After slowing down to 150 knots, he made repeated unsuccessful efforts to lower flaps. The wheels also would not operate normally, but were lowered by the emergency system.

The pilot requested permission to land on runway 9 which afforded him a better approach than runway 13 which was in use. The tower operator granted this request and noted that the wind was from the SE, 5 knots.

The approach was made at an airspeed of 125 to 130 knots. Both engines were cut just before reaching the runway and the F2H-1 touched down very close to the approach end.

At this point the pilot made the mistake of thinking that his troubles were over. When the jet crossed the hump at the intersection of runway 9 and runway 1, it bounced back into the air. The pilot pushed forward on the stick, reloaded the plane, and applied brakes, but the jet ran out of runway and the wheels were sheared off when a ditch was encountered about fifty yards off the end of the runway.

During the approach the wind had shifted so the landing was slightly down-wind.

 Grampaw Pettibone says:

This boy was really cooking with gas right up to the time he touched down on the runway. He handled the in-

flight emergency like a veteran, kept his head, and brought his plane safely back over the field. The tower operator contributed to the accident by not warning the pilot of the wind shift and suggesting that he try runway 23 or 27. The pilot admits that he thought he was "in" when he touched down and that he didn't have his brake pedals adjusted so that he could apply maximum pressure.

The Flight Surgeon tells me that he is right proud of this fellow for getting on 100% oxygen when the cockpit filled with smoke, but says that it would have been better for him to have simply closed the diluter valve on the main system rather than use the bailout bottle. Although the bailout bottle supplies pure oxygen under pressure, it only lasts about 10 minutes. If the fire had increased to the point where ejection or bailout was necessary and the pilot was still above 30,000 feet, he might have needed the emergency bottle in his descent.

It was determined after the accident that this plane had suffered an electrical fire in the same general area some months earlier while in the custody of another squadron. This occurred when an attempt was made to start the plane with an APU with reverse polarity.

Although the plane functioned satisfactorily after the repairs necessitated by the earlier fire, it is believed that some of the wiring insulation was weakened and that this contributed to the short circuits which caused the second electrical fire.



Perfect Balance!

The pilot of the plane pictured above was on his first flight in an F8F-2. Sometime during the flight his port tire went flat. When he came in for his initial landing, he noticed a strong steady pull to the left. The pilot applied opposite brake, but was unable to maintain enough pressure to stay on the runway. The *Bearcat*, however, had lost most of its forward speed by the time it turned off the runway and ran down a slight incline.

When the main gear hit a small ditch the plane nosed up and balanced on the prop which had almost stopped rotating.

FASRON-110 turned in a careful and expeditious salvage job and had the plane back in service the next day.

Toot Your Own Horn

Who is the Navy's safest pilot?

During the war years when we had over 50,000 pilots on active duty, it was necessary to suspend the recording of individual flight time. Under the new flight time reporting system, we will soon have information which will enable us to see who has piled up the greatest number of accident free hours.

In the meantime I'd like to hear from pilots who feel that they may be a candidate for the title of "U. S. NAVY'S SAFEST PILOT".

Do we have anyone, for example, who has flown over 6000 hours without a pilot error accident? Is there a pilot who has made over 500 carrier landings without a barrier crash?

If you have accomplished either of these feats, break out your fountain pen and write me a short note. Be sure to include some information about the different types of flying that you have been engaged in, and don't fudge on minor accidents.

We have 41,000 individual accidents recorded by name and date of occurrence. Of course, we may not have a card on that wing-tip you scraped 14 years ago, but some squadron mate may have a memory like an elephant—so be honest with me!

Which Way Is Up?

Who didn't get a copy of *Vertigo Sense*? Routine distribution of this safety pamphlet was made recently, but experience shows that some pilots get left out. This pamphlet is fun to read and contains some advice that may save your life.

If you would like a free copy just fill in the coupon below and stick it in an envelope or on a penny post card and I will see that you get one by return mail.

Grampaw Pettibone
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Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Grampaw:

I want to live to be as old as you are.

Please send me a copy of "VERTIGO SENSE".

Name _____ Rank _____ Corps _____

Address _____

P. S.

Just to show you that I'm a right guy, I won't even stick my nose into instrument weather when on a VFR plan. I'll turn around or file IFR.