

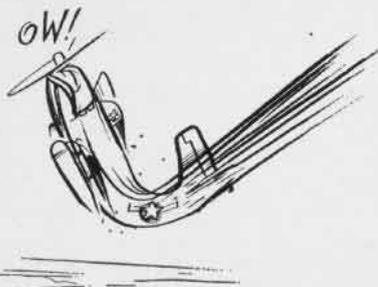


GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Fancy Pants

The pilot of an AD-4 made three 50° rocket firing runs. After each pass he pulled out at approximately 2,000 feet, continued his pull-up to a near vertical climb, performing a half roll to the left while climbing. He then let the nose of the aircraft fall through to the horizontal in an inverted attitude, at which time he completed a half roll to the right to attain level flight.

The pilot rolled into his fourth run at 7,500 feet and entered his dive. At approximately 5,000 feet four small pieces of wing skin were seen to leave the aircraft followed immediately by the starboard wing. The aircraft flipped over on its back and then made two complete slow rolls before it



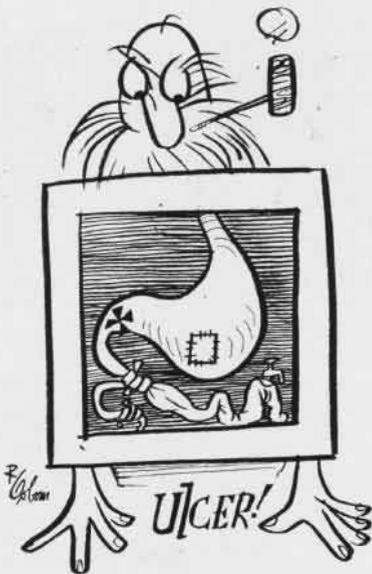
struck the water. The pilot was not recovered.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Sufferin' Sunfish! This one really takes the cake! Granted that this was an awful fancy maneuver, it certainly isn't conducive to long life. It may be news to some of you, but most airplanes have certain stress limitations and maneuver restrictions placed on them. These limitations are put there for your own protection. Continued exceeding of these limitations and the airplane is supposed to come apart. As a matter of fact, most of them do come apart as this one did.

If you are real bright, you will find out what the stress limitations and maneuver restrictions are on the aircraft that you are flying, and then stick to the letter of the law. Any time that you think you have overstressed your aircraft,



get it back on the ground and have it thoroughly checked. Do us all a favor and think of your buddy who may be flying the airplane on the next flight. Your buddy may be following the rules to the letter but because of your desire to be fancy, he may become the fall guy.

I believe that all squadrons who are performing maneuvers where there is a possibility of overstressing their aircraft should adopt a policy of periodic checks to see how the aircraft are holding up. What can you lose?

Like the man said "The life you save may be your own."

Deep Trouble

Four F9F-2 pilots were cleared IFR out of Alameda on a ferry flight to NAS MIRAMAR. El Centro was clear and was listed as an alternate. The flight was able to stay in the clear above all clouds at 28,000 feet. Daylight faded in the vicinity of Santa Barbara.

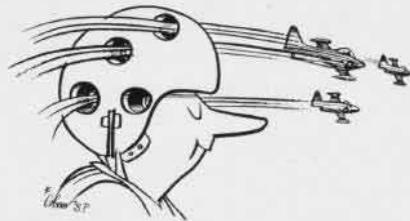
The flight leader, who was to report to Los Angeles Radio for further clearance, found he was unable to read any radio station. He turned the lead over to his wingman at Santa Barbara and they proceeded on course.

When the flight arrived over Los

Angeles, they found a solid overcast to seaward, but lights were visible east of the city through holes in the clouds. On instructions from the flight leader the wingman cancelled the IFR flight plan and the flight leader again took over the lead.

They proceeded in an easterly direction letting down from 28,000 feet through a hole in the overcast. At an alleged altitude of 8,000 feet, the formation unexpectedly entered a cloud layer. Almost immediately, a brilliant flash blinded the pilots causing each to pull up violently and become separated in the overcast.

Not long thereafter three of the shaken pilots landed individually at NAS MIRAMAR. As it turned out, that



blinding flash that the lads saw was the number four man flying into the top of a 2700 foot hill east of Los Angeles. His aircraft exploded on impact.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Those holes in the overcast must have somehow gotten confused with the holes in the head of the flight leader. The only thing that kept him from making a few more mistakes was the fact that the flight terminated. This is one of those cases where it is doubtful if we would have heard about it if the end hadn't been so tragic. It's just things like this that keep my old ulcers acting up.

This situation is kind of like that story that has its setting at the local bar. A few of the squadron boys had stopped by for a "short snort" before going home to the family. After about the fifth "snort," one of the boys spoke up thusly, "I don't know about you fellows, but I'm going to call up my wife and give her a piece of my mind. I'm gonna

ask her if dinner is ready. If she says 'No,' I'm gonna raise hell with her. If she says 'Yes,' I'm gonna refuse to eat it."

The moral being that if this gent did what he said, he was in for some deep trouble.

The four ensigns on this flight were also in deep trouble right from the beginning of this ill-fated flight. It wasn't enough that the flight leader busted most of the ferry regs—filing IFR and at night. He had to prove his lack of good judgment by cancelling his IFR clearance without checking his destination weather which was deteriorating. He even compounded these errors when he led his flight in a dive down through a hole in the overcast in a mountainous area, at night no less, with three wingmen who had never flown jets at night. I think that we can all thank our lucky stars that three of these lads got down safely.

About the only nice thing the accident board had to say about the flight leader was that he had one flicker of good judgment. But he didn't use it. Before electing to take the flight down through the hole, he had determined that everyone in the flight had plenty of gas to go to their alternate, El Centro, which was clear.

Under the circumstances, I believe I would have done just that. How about you?

Head Up and Locked

A pilot of an F9F-6 was returning to the home field after dark upon completion of an FCLP hop at an outlying field. From force of habit, he reported to the tower on base leg that his landing gear was down and apparently locked, with hydraulic pressure up. Just prior to touchdown, the pilot extended speed brakes to aid in slowing the aircraft down during the landing rollout. The touchdown was in a normal attitude but without wheels. When the aircraft was hoisted off the deck, the landing gear functioned normally.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

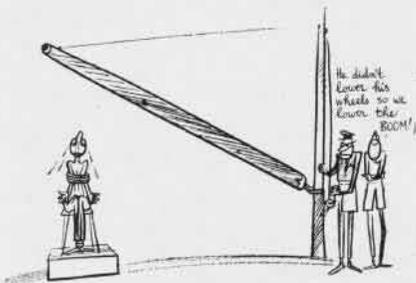
Ye Gads! Fetch me another aspirin tablet. Anyone who tells the tower his gear is down and locked when he doesn't even go through the motions just has no business being in an airplane. The taxpayers are mighty unhappy with you lads who find yourselves flying from force of habit. Do me a favor, will you. Either get that mechanical pilot off your back or introduce it to the check-off list.

This is the 37th pilot-caused wheels-up landing in the past three months. The



majority of them occur after an initial approach to a landing and a wave-off. The pilot retracts his gear and wraps up his second approach to line-up with the runway, and just never gets around to putting the gear back down. Either that or he does as this lad did—reports to the tower that the gear is down and locked without visually checking.

I think it oughta be standard policy after a wave-off, except in an emergency, to require the pilot to leave and re-enter the traffic pattern before beginning a new approach to a landing. This would give



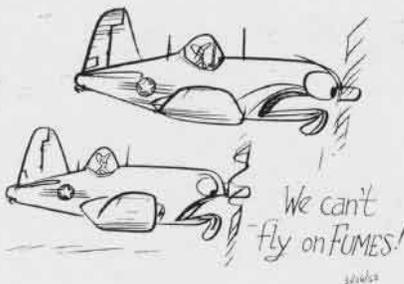
the pilot plenty of time to make sure that his wheels are down.

After such a costly mistake no words of wisdom will repair the damage, but I would like to offer the pilot's statement for those of you who wear the same size shoes. "In my opinion this accident could have been avoided if I had observed what the gear indicator read rather than just looking at the indicator out of habit and figuring they were down and locked. It was simply a matter of having my head up and locked."

Bub, I'll buy that statement.

Plan It—Then Fly It!

Two F4U-4's cleared out of Nellis Air Force Base IFR for Moffett Field at



about 0130, estimating Moffett at 0430. Although the weather enroute and at Moffett was VFR when they departed Nellis, they were required to list an alternate because it was an IFR clearance. They listed Travis AFB, a distance of 75 air miles from their destination.

Three hours and 20 minutes later, one of the F4U's wound up in San Francisco Bay sans fuel and pilot, and the other pilot made a dead stick landing just short of the runway at Moffett. The engine of the second F4U quit during the glide through the overcast.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

These lads proved only one thing to me . . . that there are still a few fatalists tooling around in the skies. They planned a flight which would require fuel consumption at the rate of 56 gallons an hour and then flew it at a rate of 72 gallons an hour. The weather at the destination 15 minutes before their ETA was forecast to be 800 feet overcast, eight miles visibility, yet they persisted in their original mental picture of scattered clouds at 1,000 feet.

They didn't consider the possibility of communication difficulty or a GCA approach, so did not give their fuel warning lights a second thought when they came on approximately 84 miles short of their destination. It wouldn't have required a slip-stick to see that at their current rate of fuel consumption, they had about 40 minutes of flight time left then, 28 minutes of which would be needed to reach their destination.

Had the possibility entered their helmets that the weather *could* sock in at Moffett in the middle of September during the wee hours of the morning and that they might be forced to fly to their alternate, they might have realized that they were supposed to be over their alternate five minutes *before* the fuel warning lights came on.

Well, it happened. By the time they got picked up on GCA, the airplanes did what any normal airplanes would do without fuel—they quit running.

I don't know how we can impress upon you fellows the importance of real honest-to-goodness flight planning. The written word apparently isn't enough.

Some of our more pessimistic aviators have evolved this theory. "There are only two kinds of pilots, those who have had an accident and those who are going to have an accident." Don't you believe it. You can go a long way toward disproving this theory if you plan that flight and then fly that plan all the way.