

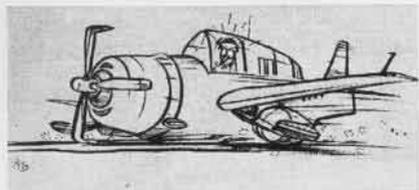


GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Mental Block?

A Weekend Warrior in a TBM-352 was completing a VFR cross-country night navigation training flight from a local Reserve Station. Arriving at his destination, he called the tower for landing clearance and proceeded as directed for a landing on Runway 22. Turning base he called "gear down and locked" and received final clearance to land.

The landing was normal in all respects, so the pilot reached down to raise the flaps. Shortly thereafter the



EEK! a Freak!

starboard gear collapsed, followed immediately by the port gear, and the aircraft slid to a stop with loud and unusual noises emanating from beneath the fuselage. A spot check of the flap handle revealed it to be in the "gear up" position.

The pilot states, "The above accident could have been prevented, in my opinion, by further cockpit separation of the operating levers for wheels and flaps. I remember definitely grabbing the outboard lever and operating it in belief that it was the flaps handle. Why would a pilot with over 700 hours in type pull such a trick?"



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Well now, that's a new approach to an old problem. It sorta leaves you up in the air searching for an excuse, rather than pounding the table and shouting, "Why did you do it?" The question reminds me of a switchman on a local railroad years ago. For 15 years he opened and closed switches to put cars on and off sidings. For 15 years he wondered what would happen if he should pull the switch when a car was half on one track and



half on the other. The last I heard of that fella he was putting in his last few years in the baggage room.

But getting back to the accident, there are many reasons why a pilot will pull the wrong handle at the wrong time. Habit is one of them. You can fly out of one field for several months, and everything gets so routine it gets monotonous. You get so used to doing things without thinking that you begin to believe you'll never make a mistake. Then one day you find yourself coming into a strange field at night.

Everything is different. The Tower Operator has an accent, the runways don't look the same, the field elevation is 800 feet less, you wonder if there are any obstructions on the final, you even give a passing thought to taxiing and where you'll park. In other words you are forced to think a little, and it disturbs you for a while as Old Man Habit has been taking care of everything up to now. You even wonder if you have forgotten something and maybe, just maybe, you'll cheat a little and take a peek at the check-off list to make sure you're ready to land.

When you touch down and find yourself rolling along in good shape a weight lifts from your shoulders and you mentally sneer at yourself for such elementary thoughts. But the feeling is so good you get brazen, and do something you would never think of doing back at the home station. You reach for the flap lever. You know you shouldn't, but then that CNATRA instruction about not raising flaps was written for those hundreds of pilots who inadvertently raised their wheels during the landing rollout. Besides, no one could see your flaps in the dark. All you have to do is grab the wheel on

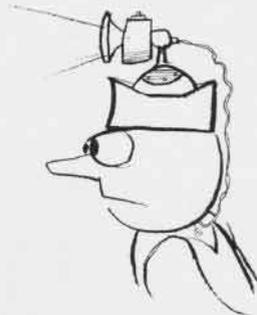
the lever on the left, pull the safety lock aside and the flaps come . . . ooooOOPS!

How can an experienced pilot pull the wrong handle? It's easy son. When a pilot is in the act of doing something he *knows* he shouldn't do, ANYTHING can happen.

To the Rear . . . March!

Once in a blue moon an accident occurs which has no rhyme or reason. Such a one is quoted below exactly as written in the report:

"On the date of the accident, the SNJ-6 was being towed by a line tractor. The tow lines were connected to the two (2) main (front) wheels of



the plane. The tractor was approximately six (6) feet in front of the propeller. Speed of the tractor was approximately four (4) miles per hour. The driver states that while towing the plane he felt a 'thud' which caused him to stop his tractor. On investigation he found an injured man lying on his abdomen approximately two (2) feet behind the left wing of the aircraft. The time of the accident was 1825. The area was not well lighted. There were head lights but no tail lights on the tractor. There were no lights on the plane. It is noted that there was a heavy fog at the time of the accident. Improved lighting is recommended. This may be accomplished by putting flood lights on the rear of the tractors."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This will no doubt make it easier to find the bodies.

The Trusting Soul

An F9F-6 pilot made a landing at the Philadelphia International Airport recently. Now, an emergency landing is ordinarily made because of malfunction or failure of some system in the aircraft. In isolated cases, emergency landings are made when it becomes evident that in the event of an emergency, the emergency system set up for the emergency will not function. These are called precautionary landings. But it is anybody's guess what type of landing this was as the pilot stated he landed "because of a bouncing seat."

It appears there had been a slight delay in getting his plane ready for the flight, and he had expressed his impatience in no uncertain terms. Whether his impatience had any effect on what followed is unknown. However, it indicated haste on the part of the pilot, and he soon found himself in the air in the most unheard-of situation imaginable. The quickest and safest way out of the unusual situation was to get back on deck as soon as possible, which he did.

A check of the aircraft revealed a few major discrepancies in the ejection seat such as (1) the upper trunnion

bolts fastening the seat to the catapult were not lock-wired, (2) the catapult firing mechanism was not screwed down tight against the cartridge face, (3) the firing head mechanism was improperly aligned, (4) the catapult holdback jaws were not engaged. This latter condition results in the revolting development of the seat and pilot not being fastened into the aircraft.



Grandpa Pettibone Says:

Great Balls of Fire! If I hadn't seen the official report on this, I would say somebody must be pulling my leg. How he ever got away from the line in the first place was not made known, but it's a lead pipe cinch that he didn't bother to pre-flight his airplane properly or he'd have discovered something wrong. He knew the mechs were installing the seat yet he asked no one if the job was completed. He didn't check the yellow sheet to see if it was written off as completed. In fact, I'll bet a ream of AAR forms he didn't even SIGN the yellow sheet.

This lad is a good example of the "Trusting Soul"—who gets away with everything in everyday life, but around airplanes he is like a giraffe. His neck is out all the time.

He knows he has an ejection seat and how to use it, but that is as far as his knowledge of the seat goes. He either thinks he will never be forced to eject, or he feels that when the time comes all he

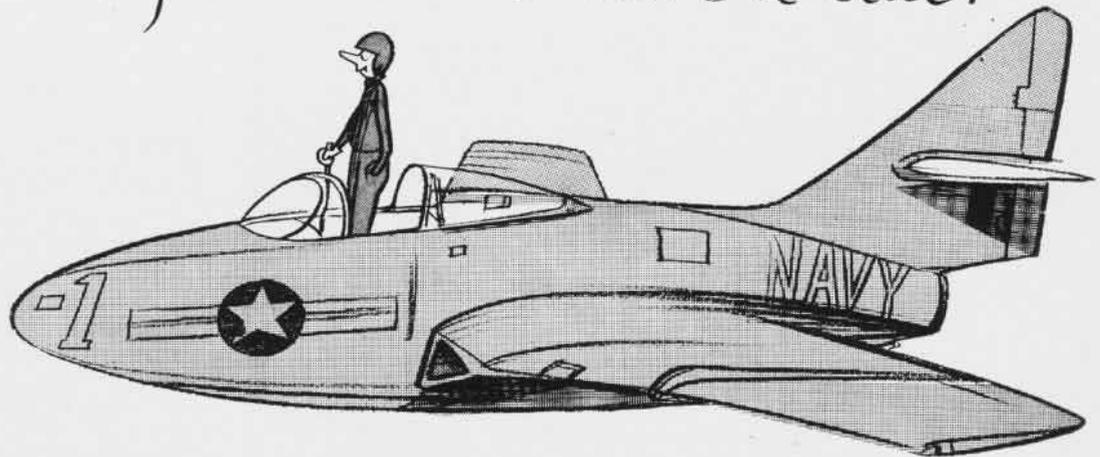
has to do is pull the lever and the curtain and out he goes. He doesn't want to clutter up his mind with incidentals such as how to make sure the seat will work in case he has to use it. Being an airplane driver he feels that his job is to fly the guns around, not maintain them.

With modern airplanes this is a dangerous attitude. You don't just set her down in some farmer's pasture any more when something happens and get by with a scratched wingtip. The modern plane is too heavy and too fast—not to mention the fact that the wingtip probably costs as much as the old time airplane itself. You have to know more than just enough to get by when flying jets, but that itself isn't such a large order.

If you know WHAT you have in your airplane and HOW to use it, all you have to do is make sure it is going to work when you need it and that is done in a pre-flight inspection. Of course, if you are from the new school you may think that it's getting so a pilot learns less and less about more and more until he knows nothing about everything. For the "Trusting Soul" that is probably true. But for the aviator who values his life and has enough pride in his airplane to want to bring it back in one piece, you can bet he is going to do a little checking around before he takes off.

He'll make sure someone else didn't overlook something, not that he doesn't trust them, but just as an added precaution. Besides, it's squadron doctrine. It is not how little you know that gets you in trouble, it's believing that what little you know is enough to keep you out of trouble that puts you behind the eight ball.

*Emergency!
This plane doesn't have a seat!*



F. Colom