

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Illustrations by *Ted Wilbur*

Gramps from Yesteryear

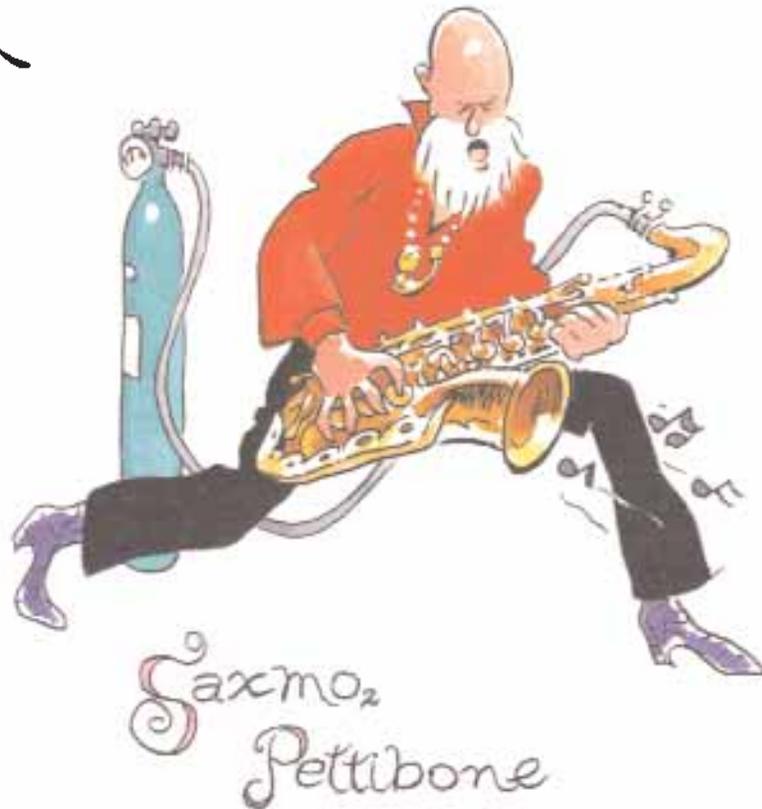
Some Gramps Philosophy

We are gathered here for the pure purpose of flying—and enjoying it! I would like to take this opportunity to point out just how much akin this flying game is to entering into a marriage agreement.

First of all, you gotta get down on your bones and beg the old man for an airplane, as scarce as flight time is today. Then comes the license counterpart where you energetically bounce into maintenance control to review the yellow sheets. Keep in mind when you sign that you are saying “I do” or “I’m gonna” for the duration of this flight. And in signing, you have solemnly promised to love, honor and cherish the bird in sickness and health for as long as you both shall live/fly. The latter terms are not necessarily interchangeable since some flights are of much shorter duration than intended or desired.

Then, we get to the part in the program where the man says, “Should any person here know any reason why this team should not be joined, let them speak now or forever hold the pieces.” This is where you come in, Skipper, or you, Safety Sam, or Quality Assurance, Maintenance Chief, Supervisor, Plane Captain and, even you, Aircrewman. More than one wise partner has backed out at this point—a temporary disappointment, perhaps, but they lived to fly another day.

Now, for the preflight. Unlike marriage, you should insist upon a thorough inspection of the machine to ensure that “what you see is what you get,” and that all of the vital parts—whether they be something old, something new, something borrowed or something blue—will remain attached during the performance of the entire mission. If, for any reason, you are not certain about some of the parts, you’d best consult the birds or



the bees. To you, that’s the Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization manual, maintenance pubs and/or the wise old maintenance chief. Like any protective parent, the chief takes a mighty dim view of fliers who, after an improper preflight, have the gall to bring the machine back to the line sans panels or vital parts. You just try returnin’ a new bride to Momma or Poppa with missing panel or parts adrift, and you’ll likely be lookin’ down both barrels of a double muzzler. Should your trusty steed not be ready for flight, another word of caution lest ye be tempted. Fellow aviators take that same dim view of a wingman who lays lustful looks upon their flyin’ machine.

Like marriage, the rewards for those aviators who perform these rituals with tender loving care (professional planning and execution) are most satisfying. Additionally, they foster longevity and, if nothing more, avoid confrontation with the most dreaded panel of scrutinizers: the mishap board and its potential divorce decree.

Ole Gramps wishes these unions every success for long and pleasurable relationships. But they can be attained only through dedicated efforts and attention to detail. We can ill afford an aviation divorce rate comparable to that of today’s society.

