


GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Tower Troubles

Not all accidents are the result of pilot error or material failure. In this month's group of accidents a TBM was returning from a night towing mission and requested landing instructions. The tower informed the pilot that runway 28 was the duty runway but had no lights and instructed the pilot to use 04 saying that he would have a 12 knot left crosswind. He did not tell the pilot that only the last third of runway 04 was lighted and that the green and amber end of runway lights were inoperative. After three passes at the runway the pilot finally landed with approximately 1,000 feet of runway ahead. He was unable to stop and in the nose-up beyond the end of the runway, his crew member received a slight head injury.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

There must have been a tense acey-deucey game going on in the tower for the operator to allow a pilot to make three passes at the field without even giving him the minimum information which he needed to make a safe night landing. If the wind was down runway 28, it would have been better to instruct the pilot to land on runway 22. Beside being more nearly into the wind, he would also have had the advantage of having the first third of the runway illuminated instead of the last third. You boys in the tower have a mighty important job to do, especially during night operations. The pilots are depending on your judgment and on the accuracy and completeness of information you give out—DON'T LET THEM DOWN.

F4U Fatal Rates Drop

Grampaw Pettibone's chest is out these days as a result of the recent drop in the number of fatal accidents in the F4U type aircraft.

During the first six months of 1946 the F4U had the highest fatal accident rate of any Navy plane in general use. There were 51 fatal F4U accidents in this period and Grampaw hit the ceiling. An all-out campaign to eliminate unnecessary accidents in this type aircraft was set in motion.

It was recognized that the F4U was a fine, high-performance combat aircraft, but that it required top-notch flight technique for safe operation. By restricting its use (except in Advanced Training) to pilots with previous fighter experience, and by emphasizing to these



pilots the necessity for a thorough understanding of all pertinent Technical Orders, the fatal accident rate was cut in half during the next six months. The number of fatal accidents was reduced from 51 to 19, despite the fact that the F4U was employed extensively in carrier operations in the latter period.

Tail Hook Tied Up!

An F4U pilot writes of this experience:

"Returning to the carrier after a routine simulated strike, I found that I was unable to lower my hook. . . . After raising and lowering the lever several times and getting three waveoffs, I left the pattern and joined up on another plane for a visual inspection. This inspection showed nothing, so I pulled the CO₂ bottle to see if it would help lower the hook. This also failed. I landed aboard as I had only 40 gallons of gas left and the nearest land was 150 miles away. The approach and landing were normal and I used brakes to attempt to stop, but engaged the #4 and #5 barriers.

"Upon examination after the crash, the hook was found to be tied up with 21 thread line. This probably occurred when the plane handlers were moving the plane and the hook was down due

to a lack of hydraulic pressure the previous day."

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

They're still looking for the character who pulled this one, and the plane captain and pilot of that F4U have a brand new understanding on what a pre-flight check consists of.

Because of the limited time allowed for manning planes aboard a carrier, pilots must depend on their plane captains to perform a thorough check prior to each flight. A pilot is responsible for his plane, but if he personally checked everything before each flight, he would rarely get in the air on time.

Incidentally, whenever a hook is tied up for any reason, a red flag should be attached to it.

F4U Stalls in FCLP

Survivors from spins and stalls at low altitude are few and far between, but last month an F4U pilot lived to tell about this one.

"I was the first airplane in the FCLP pattern and at 1408 I started my turn into the crosswind leg of my first approach. My airspeed must have been insufficient because the plane just settled to the ground. There was no violent action such as the airplane dropping off suddenly on the left wing. I applied some throttle, and tried to bring the nose up but to no avail."

The plane struck the ground on the left wing in a nose down attitude, crumpling the wing and almost tearing the engine and nose section away. The aircraft then cartwheeled on its nose, and ended up sliding backwards on its belly as the landing gear carried away.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

This accident is an example of what can happen even to an experienced pilot when he neglects to maintain proper flying speed. This pilot had close to 1800 flight hours of which 450 hours were in the F4U, and he had logged 49 successful carrier landings. He "doped off" for a minute in a routine operation and, except for a sturdy cockpit structure and proper use of his safety belt and shoulder harness, he wouldn't be here to tell about it.



The day was foggy, damp, and cold
But our boy Pete was feeling bold.
He didn't remember to use pre-heat
So beneath this stone lies Ensign Pete.

SNAFU

While orbiting the carrier waiting to come aboard, a section leader noticed oil coming from the oil breathers of his wingman's SB2C. He notified the division leader who obtained permission from the ship for the plane experiencing the engine trouble to land first.

The ship signaled "prepare to land" and being number one to land, the Ensign left his formation and followed standard carrier procedure, breaking into the landing pattern well ahead of the ship. At this time engine instrument readings were normal.

The ship had been landing planes previously and there were other aircraft, both SB2C's and TBM's, in the landing pattern. As the Ensign started his downwind leg, the oil pressure dropped from 84 to 40 pounds and he notified the ship that he could not take a waveoff. As he approached the groove, the TBM ahead was landed and he was given a waveoff because of a fouled deck.

During the waveoff the prop governor failed and the oil pressure read 35 lbs. RPM was reduced manually and the ship was informed that a landing must be made immediately. At this time the ship instructed all other planes by radio to clear the landing pattern until after the emergency.

The Ensign was abeam the ship on his downwind leg and so informed the ship. Oil pressure was now zero. Another SB2C with radio not operating properly was in the groove and received a cut from the LSO who thought that this was the plane in trouble. Due to a fouled deck a second waveoff was given to the plane with the oil leak.

As throttle was added the engine failed and the plane settled into the water before the wheels could be raised and flipped over on its back.

Lady Luck got the pilot out without a scratch.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

It looks to me like more than the deck was fouled here. A radio is a big help in handling an emergency but it should not be depended on to do the whole job. The Yoke flag should have been hoisted at the ramp to notify all planes other than the one in trouble to clear the landing circle immediately. In addition the pilot should have identified himself visually to the LSO by rocking his wings. By the way, fellow, I think you were stretching your luck pretty far to attempt that second approach after the oil pressure went to zero. From there on your engine was operating on borrowed time—you knew it was going to quit, but you didn't know just when. I think that prudence and good judgment would have dictated an immediate water landing, wheels up and into the wind, rather than making another approach.



The Unbreakable Pilot

TWO F7F-2N's took off on a contact night navigation training flight. En route both planes encountered rain and poor visibility. After one pilot decided to return to base, the second plane continued on alone. This plane gradually drifted off course and as the ceiling continued to lower, the pilot found himself on solid instruments. After a time he was able to climb out on top.

At this point he was receiving a

GRAMPAW'S SAFETY QUIZ



ALL AVIATORS should know the answers to these questions. In the air, the penalty for not knowing may prove fatal. If you miss an answer on the ground, penalize yourself by looking up the reference.

1. What should you do first, if you find yourself in an inverted spin, in an F4U?
2. In the event that you are unable to lower your wheels as a result of a hydraulic system failure in an F4U-4, you should next try (a) the CO₂ system; (b) the hand pump.
3. What is the difference between normal rated power and take-off power?
4. If you are in position to take off and receive a red light from the tower, what should you do?
5. Now that the war is over Naval Aviators can expect to live about as long as the average civilian. True or False?

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clear off course signal from the range station at his destination. Instead of requesting permission to orientate himself and perform a standard instrument approach, he continued in the general direction of the station looking for a break in the overcast. Unable to find a hole, he decided to drop down below the overcast and look around. Breaking through at 4,000 feet indicated, but actually only 900 feet above the surrounding terrain, he started a wide circle to the right.

Just at this point the gasoline tank that he was running on ran dry. While he was endeavoring to switch to a full tank and restart the engines the aircraft crashed at a speed in excess of 200 knots. Observation of the terrain at the scene of the accident revealed that the totally destroyed aircraft hit the ground in an almost flat right turn.

The right wing on initial impact leveled the attitude of the plane whereupon it bounced for 200 yards shedding parts as it went. Miraculously, the cockpits, although severed from each other, remained intact and the pilot and passenger suffered only minor contusions and lacerations.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Boy, what a guardian angel you must have. As a child I'll bet you used to jump out of third-story windows just to test your luck. Of course, in this case you destroyed a high performance fighter which cost the Navy well over \$100,000 and you also demonstrated that you lacked the necessary "gray matter" to be a Naval Aviator. Well, maybe you can get a job with the circus. They probably have to hire an occasional replacement for the fellow they shoot out of the cannon and with your luck you'd last indefinitely.

Keep the Stick Back

Case #1. F8F pilot taxied out for take-off, turned to a crosswind position and started mag check. At 2350 RPM the tail left the ground and prop hit runway.

Case #2. TBM-3E pilot parked 45 degrees out of wind, checked mags and then revved up to 32 Hg for power check; tail came up and prop hit runway.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

These are just two out of more than 20 similar accidents in the past year. Propellers for today's high performance planes often cost upwards of \$2000.00, so don't forget the rules you learned in primary flight training. Before checking mags, turn as nearly as possible into the wind and hold the stick all the way back. Look behind to make sure that your slipstream won't embarrass somebody else. If the tail starts to rise, reduce throttle immediately and, if clear ahead, release brakes to allow the plane to roll forward a few feet.