

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Seven Lucky Marines

Not long ago a JRB taxied into the parking area at Floyd Bennett Field after a three-hour flight from MCAS CHERRY POINT. The crew of three and the four passengers seemed particularly glad to be on the ground.

A few minutes earlier the plane had radioed for emergency assistance due to a strong odor of raw gasoline in the cockpit, a rapidly dwindling gasoline supply and increasingly bad weather as they approached the New York area. New York radio had instructed the pilot to take up a heading of 090 degrees and hold until contacted by GCA. He had been on this heading for 10 minutes when he spotted water below a break in the overcast.

Since he had only a few minutes of fuel remaining, he elected to dive through the hole. He pushed over at 4800 feet and broke out below the overcast at approximately 1300 feet. The pilot states that his indicated air-speed did not exceed 230 miles per hour in the dive.

Examination of the plane after the landing at Floyd Bennett revealed that three gas tanks were dry and the fourth contained only two gallons. The plane's fuselage was buckled; rivets were popped; and the right wing center section inner bulkhead assembly was broken, while the same support on the left side was buckled. The center section spar assembly was bowed down in the center, apparently due to a wing load beyond the elastic limit of the truss. This JRB will never be flown again.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Here are a few other facts on this accident which could very easily have resulted in seven fatalities. This flight was cleared CFR, although the weather map at the time of takeoff gave strong indications that instrument weather would probably be encountered in the New York area. The pilot possessed no valid instrument rating, and had less than one hour's instrument practice in the preceding three months, yet he filed his clearance as having "Standard" instrument qualifications.

When the odor of raw gasoline was first noted in the cabin and the pilot discovered that his fuel was dangerously low, he was in an area where contact conditions prevailed. Within a very few miles there were



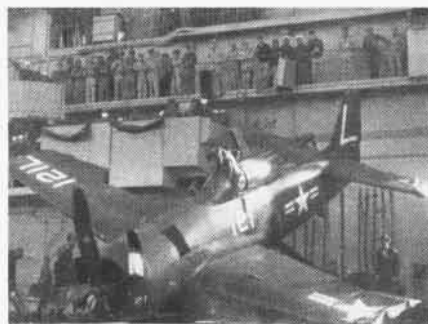
several large airports at which he could have made an immediate emergency landing. Instead he elected to continue into instrument weather, in an effort to get to his original destination.

This is an example of the *worst sort of judgment*. It indicates that the pilot had a complete disregard for the safety of himself, his passengers, and his aircraft. As a result of this accident, the pilot has been suspended from flying pending reclassification.

## Careless — \$25,000 Worth!

An F8F pilot returned to the carrier after a tactics flight and found that he was unable to extend the tail hook. After trying every known procedure without success, he was finally ordered to come aboard. The ship was turned into the wind and a wind velocity of 41 knots was built up across the flight deck.

The pilot was attempting to land as slowly as possible and began to settle slightly at the ramp. He answered a come-on from the L.S.O. and was "cut" in a normal position. The plane landed slightly wheels first near the number three wire, bounced, and floated slowly up the deck. It stalled out, left wing first, and crashed into the



barriers. The pilot was uninjured, but the plane requires a major overhaul.

Subsequent investigation revealed that this plane had been damaged the previous day when the plane handlers were spotting it on the deck. It had been pushed into a tractor with damage to the tail cone fairing, and the tail-hook rollers had been dislodged from the track. Maintenance personnel repaired the damage to the tail cone fairing and checked to see that the hook was not binding. They did not check the hook for extension nor discover that the tail-hook rollers were off the track.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This \$90,000 aircraft is not quite ready for the scrap heap, but it will have to go through a major overhaul, which with the replacement parts required will cost upwards of \$25,000—all because of plain, ordinary carelessness. The carelessness started with the plane handlers who caused the initial damage and continued right down the line through the maintenance personnel who made the incomplete repairs to the plane captain who did not give the plane an adequate pre-flight check. In addition the damage in the collision with the tractor was *not reported* to the proper maintenance authorities.

**THIS SORT OF NEGLIGENCE MIGHT VERY EASILY HAVE RESULTED IN A FATAL ACCIDENT.**

If you damage an aircraft in any way—on the ground, in the air, on a hard landing, or while pushing it around—report the damage at once. If you fail to do this, you may find yourself spending a lot of sleepless nights wondering if YOU were responsible for the plane that didn't come back.

## "Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

"I thought you might be interested in the following story of an embarrassing and expensive accident that didn't quite happen.

"One morning I took off from Quonset Point, R. I., in a JM-1, bound for Atlantic City. My co-pilot had about 150 hours as such in the plane, and had ridden with me previously on several occasions. A short distance down the runway there was a slight rise and fall in the runway where another runway intersected with ours, almost at right angles. We started our take-off run, and as was my usual custom on this runway, I pulled the nosewheel

off the ground a little more than usual to prevent it from digging into this rise, with the intention of lowering the nose after we crossed and continuing the take-off normally. We crossed over the little hill and started down the other side; some sixth sense suddenly indicated that the plane was lower than it should have been. I took a fast glance out of the corner of my eye and discovered the landing-gear handle in the UP position! I sweated blood for a few seconds while nursing the plane along into the air, unable to put the nose down an inch for fear of hitting the runway, and unable to pull it up for fear of stalling out. After a few seconds which seemed like a thousand years, the plane took hold and became solidly airborne. The co-pilot sat there looking pretty sheepish for the rest of the trip to Atlantic City, and admitted he couldn't think of a single reason for having pulled the gear handle up without any signal from the pilot. So we dropped the subject and completed our trip without further incident.

"We landed in Atlantic City and climbed out of the plane and stood around for a few minutes chewing the fat. Suddenly one of our mechs let out an exclamation and called me over to take a look. Every blade on the starboard propeller was flattened off about a quarter of an inch!

"I still have nightmares about it!

"Yours very truly,

LT. COMDR., U.S.N."



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Many thanks for this interesting contribution which certainly brings home again the necessity for proper indoctrination of all crew members. My files contain a great many similar cases where propellers were damaged because the wheels were raised too soon, but off-hand your case is the only one I can remember where the aircraft was able to continue flight.

Positive hand signals are the answer to eliminating accidents of this nature.

**Attention F4U Pilots**

Two recent wheels-up landings in F4U's were attributed to faulty functioning of the CO2 emergency system. In one instance a subsequent investigation disclosed that the pressure in the CO2 bottle was so low that it failed to actuate the emergency by-pass valve. As a result of this discovery all aircraft in this particular squadron were grounded until the CO2 bottles could be weighed.

It was found that on four planes the CO2 bottles had lost more than 50% of their contents. Since all the bottles had been checked for correct weight

two weeks earlier, the defective bottles were placed under water to determine the presence of slow leaks. Small leaks were found to be occurring around the safety disk and around the cutter disk at the rate of one bubble every five to eight seconds.



**Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

This looks like a mighty good opportunity to save needless damage to Navy planes. An investigation is underway as a result of the RUDM submitted on these defective CO<sub>2</sub> bottles. In the meantime smart maintenance personnel will weigh the CO<sub>2</sub> bottles in each F4U and test any that are low for the presence of small leaks.

**Shoulder Harness Saved Day!**



The picture above shows all that was left of an FR-1 after a spin accident during Field Carrier Landing Practice. The plane struck the ground in a steep left bank and cartwheeled on its nose. After shedding the tail section, aft jet engine, and forward engine, the cockpit section came to rest upright and facing 180 degrees from the original heading. The pilot was uninjured, because he had his shoulder harness and safety belt *tight and locked*.

**"Dear Grampaw Pettibone:**

"Here's one for you when you feel the urge for a dissertation on Lady Luck.

"It was one of those CAVU days at Kodiak, Alaska. During such weather there is no place in the world where you can see farther, or see more. A Lt(jg) in my command was flying a local hop in a *Privateer*, brushing up on the finer points of instrument flying in preparation for his Patrol Plane Commander Check on the following morning.

"Reaction in emergencies is a normal part of a Patrol Plane Commander Check, but this pilot couldn't anticipate the emergency arising when the life raft came out of its cradle in the fuselage of the plane and carried away half of his elevator controls. He was too busy getting the instrument flying

hood down, and trying to maintain control of his aircraft. Descending from 7000 to 3000 feet, out of control, the pilot and co-pilot were able, by using full 'up' tab, full power, and almost the full back pressure that both of them could exert on the yoke, to continue flight.

"After experimentation, it was found that with approximately half flap, the plane responded to controls at speeds in excess of 160 kts. In that condition the plane was landed. The fact that the brakes were burned out in stopping was expected; and everyone was slightly surprised that the pilot was able to hold the plane on the runway.

"Reaction in emergencies . . . EXCELLENT!"

SQUADRON COMMANDER"



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

I wish a long-standing policy could be altered to let me give this pilot's name, but I'm sure that at least his squadron mates will recognize the incident, and join me in saying "Nice going." That was certainly a heads up job of flying.

**Lock the Canopy Open**

A recent forced landing accident illustrates the importance of locking the canopy in the open position before take-off or landing. In this case the pilot gave his engine a thorough ground check and noticed no indication of malfunctioning during the run up.

However, when he reached an altitude of about 50 feet, and was near the upwind end of the runway, the engine suddenly failed. Observing that he would not be able to get back down on the runway, the pilot retracted his wheels, extended his flaps, and landed straight ahead even though the terrain out there looked pretty rugged.

The plane struck several small trees, skidded about 150 feet in the rough terrain, and came to a stop in the upright position. The cockpit canopy had not been locked open prior to take-off and it slammed shut on impact, inflicting slight head injuries to the pilot.



**Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

You handled this emergency like a veteran, son, and I am mighty pleased at the excellent judgment you showed in getting your wheels up, flaps down, and landing straight ahead. That's the correct procedure if you want to walk away from a low altitude emergency landing. However, if you had just remembered to lock the canopy open before take-off, you would have saved yourself some painful cuts.

In a similar take-off accident last month a pilot was *decapitated* when the cockpit canopy tore off on impact with the runway.