

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Strike Three:

Four SNJ's departed Barksdale Army Air Base on a routine ferry flight to Hensley Field near Dallas. The departure time was 1730 and according to the lead pilot's calculations this would allow the flight to arrive in Dallas about 13 minutes after sunset. As the group approached the Dallas area the pilots observed a thunderstorm moving in from the northwest.

The flight leader attempted to call Hensley Tower for landing instructions, but was unable to communicate because of static on his radio. Darkness had, by this time, greatly reduced the visibility, and the pilots were unable to locate Hensley Field. The lead pilot then turned back with his flight toward Terrell, Texas, 30 miles to the eastward, intending to land at the airport there. They had passed over Terrell airport about a half hour earlier, but when they returned, they were unable in the gathering dark to locate the unlighted field.

With about 30 gallons of gasoline remaining the flight leader again turned toward Dallas. At this time the group ran into heavy rain and severe turbulence. After about ten minutes the leader circled what he believed to be Clearview airport, a small grass field south of Dallas. On receiving a white flashing light he broke up his flight for a landing.

There were no runway lights, and in the heavy rain the leader lost sight of the field on his approach. His plane was buffeting badly in the heavy winds and he hesitated to take a wave-off for fear of spinning in. A sudden flash of lightning showed him that the ground ahead was level, so he landed, rolled across the field, and sheared one wing off on a telephone pole at the far end.

The other planes fared only slightly better. The number two man overshot Clearview, and saw that he was going to hit the trees at the end of his landing run. Fortunately he had just enough directional control left to aim his plane between a couple of sturdy trees. The SNJ was badly wrecked, but the pilot climbed out uninjured. The other two pilots decided to stay in the air a little longer hoping that the storm would ease up. However, they became sepa-



rated, and one finally made a wheels-up landing in an open field with "strike" damage to his aircraft. The fourth man succeeded in locating another airport south of Dallas and made a normal landing.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

When a fellow decides to disobey regulations, the least he should do is start figuring on alternatives in case things don't go so well. NATS Atlantic Wing Operating Instructions state: "with probable winds and weather considered, ferry flights will be completed 30 minutes before local sunset at point of destination."

The lead pilot disobeyed this directive, and, as a direct result of this violation, his flight became lost after dark with the result that three of the four planes failed to make safe landings. Seems to me that he should have been thinking all along the route from Shreveport to Dallas about what he would do if he ran into bad weather or darkness. Had he been doing this the chances are that he would have landed his flight at Terrell when they first passed that field while it was still light. The one thing that should have been on his mind was to get that group on the ground before it got dark. From the looks of the chart for that area, he passed up several opportunities to do this during the last few minutes of daylight.

ComNATS has convened a formal Board of Investigation to report on this extremely costly and most unnecessary accident.

Dear Grampa Pettibone:

On a training flight out of Mustin Field I landed my SNJ at Syracuse airport and discharged my passenger, a yeoman striker. Before the return flight I inspected the rear seat with what I

thought was reasonable precaution, and insured that the parachute was secured tightly in the seat by means of the safety belt and shoulder harness.

After take-off and climb I attempted to lean the mixture out at approximately two thousand feet, but found that the control could only be moved a very small distance. After landing I consulted with the line chief and plane captain concerning my inability to lean out the mixture. We discovered the difficulty in short order, and I'm not certain whether my face indicated relief or embarrassment. The passenger had removed his head phones and hung them on (of all places) the throttle quadrant in such a manner that it was impossible to operate the mixture control. Perhaps it was only luck that they hadn't been so placed as to prevent take-off power.

Which brings to mind the very true saying: "There is no greater safety afforded the pilot than that which he gives himself by careful inspection of engine and flight controls."

Sincerely,

Comdr. _____ USN.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

You can say that again, friend, because it's certainly true! My accident files are full of cases where the pilots didn't check their planes with sufficient care before take-off. Thanks for your letter; it may save some other pilot from a serious accident.

Practice What You Preach

A pilot with 836 hours, who was under instruction in Landing Signal Officer's School was practicing carrier landings and take-offs in an SNJ. On one approach he received a come-on in the groove, followed by a "cut." The pilot answered the "cut" and the plane hit the deck at about the No. 2 wire and bounced slightly. The hook then engaged the No. 4 wire, but just at this moment the pilot felt that he was going over the side and applied full power in an attempted wave-off. As a result the plane pulled out the wire and went into the port catwalk.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Shame! Shame! It's bad enough when DILBERT pulls this stunt, but I'm really surprised at a future L.S.O. who forgets that the "cut" and the "wave-off" are mandatory signals in carrier flight operations.

Dilbert Was Here

Dilbert showed up last month disguised as a Lieutenant Commander who needed some flight time. He arranged for a local hop in an SNJ, but of course didn't bother to read the pilot's handbook, even though it had been quite a long time since he had flown one. After all, anybody can fly an SNJ!

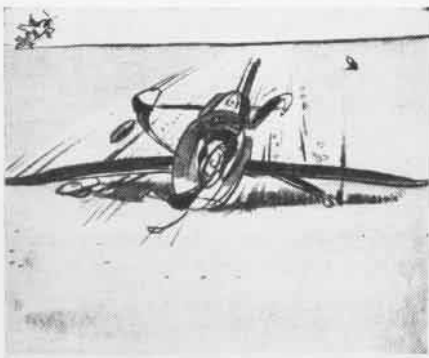
Shortly after take-off he called the tower reporting zero hydraulic pressure and inability to get his wheels up. The tower checked the wheels and verified the fact that they were still down, so Dilbert requested landing instructions, made a normal approach and landed. The wheels folded upon contact with the runway. When the crash crew arrived, the landing gear control lever was in the "UP" position and the warning horn was sounding. The crash crew hoisted the plane and extended the gear which locked down. The plane was then towed to the hangar for inspection. The hydraulic reservoir was found full and the landing gear and flap operation were normal in all respects.

The pilot had apparently forgotten to push the "Power Control" button before trying to get his wheels up. Naturally no pressure was indicated on the gauge. He then came around for his landing, forgetting to return the landing gear control lever to either the "DOWN" or "EMERGENCY DOWN" position, thereby preventing the engaging of the locking pins.

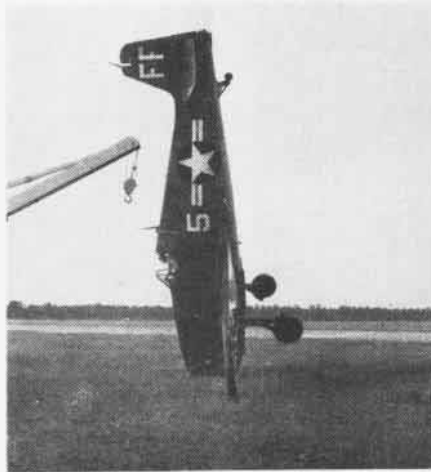
The plane requires a new propeller and a major engine overhaul, and replacement of both wings.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

You were batting .000 on this one, friend. I can understand how you could forget to push the "Power Control" lever. That was due to your lack of familiarity in the plane, and your negligence in failing to study the pilot's handbook. But how you could forget and leave the wheel lever in the "UP" position for the landing after you knew that you were having trouble of some sort, beats me. Of course, I guess it would really be expecting too much to think that you might know of the emergency down lock position.



Apparently Dilbert failed to CHECK that his landing gear was LOCKED down!



Neat Balancing Act

The pilot of the F6F above is waiting for the crane to hook on, before he can get out of his delicately-balanced plane. A few minutes earlier he made a fast landing on the last half of a 5000 foot runway that was still wet from a recent rain shower.

The wet surface reduced the effectiveness of his brakes and he ran off the runway and hit a shallow ditch, and nosed up.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

I'll bet you couldn't do this again if you tried. But don't bother—next time remember to land on the first third of the runway.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

HERE'S SUMPIN' WE'RE PURTY PROUD OF WAY DOWN HYAR IN TEXAS. Clipping from *Corpus Christi Caller* for October 2, 1947:

"Naval Air Training Bases Complete Year Without Fatal Aircraft Crash."

The Naval Air Training Bases here yesterday completed a full year without a fatal aircraft accident involving flight instructors or students in flight training.

Only three students were injured during this period. Each of these injuries was minor, and each was the result of a parachute jump. One student broke his leg in a parachute landing after he had been accidentally thrown from his plane, and another received minor abrasions from the chute harness while coming down.

A cactus patch caused the third injury, after the student's shoes came off in the snap caused by the opening of his parachute. His feet were cut when he landed, barefooted, in the cactus thorns.

Instructors and students at NATB have flown more than 169,000 hours during the past year, while other types of flights, including aircraft tests, proficiency hops, and transportation flights, brought the year's total to more than 200,000 hours."

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Congratulations on a fine safety record. I know that this splendid record could only be achieved through careful

planning and operation of the training syllabus, and excellent aircraft maintenance. I'm counting on you folks to keep up the good work and go right thru next year with flying colors.

Do Something!

The man on the flying trapeze didn't have much of an edge on the pilot in the F8F pictured here as he floats high above the carrier deck, clearing the barriers at a height of 20 feet.

The aircraft was slightly high and fast when given the cut signal. The pilot dived for the deck and hit wheels first at about the number five wire. The F8F bounced, and the pilot then held back on the stick and floated over the barriers.



Flying speed was lost abeam of the island and the plane fell off on the port wing and crashed among a group of three F8F's parked forward of the barriers. An aviation ordnanceman near the second plane in the line was fatally injured when hit by the falling aircraft.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

I've seen a lot of pictures of planes floating on carrier landings, but this chap looks like he's trying for an altitude record. After his initial mistake of diving for the deck, he doesn't appear to have made any effort to get down on the deck again. From the looks of his elevators in the enlarged pictures, he was really trying for the world's highest bounce.



Here lie the bones of Pilot Knight
Who said the straps were too darn tight
His harness loose—when the engine quit
He set her down, but his head was split.