

GRAMP AW PETTIBONE

Some Ride, Eh?

A Reserve Ensign took off from NAS ATLANTA recently for a short familiarization flight in an SNJ. In the rear seat he carried an aviation machinist's mate who had come along for the ride. After flying for about an hour the pilot headed back toward the base and ran into light rain—and a few other objects on the return trip. The following excerpts are from the pilot's and passenger's statements:

Pilot: "I started through the squall as it seemed quite small, but due to excessive radio interference caused by lightning I was unable to get the beam. I then made a 180 degree turn but became disoriented due to the darkness."

Passenger: "The light rain suddenly changed to a terrific rain with heavy winds. The pilot called back and said that he had lost the beam. There was a lot of static, and lightning was popping quite frequently."

Pilot: "I let down to look for landmarks, and had to go quite low in order to recognize anything due to the squall."

Passenger: "He asked me to look for landmarks and names on signs or buildings. It was raining pretty hard when we had the collision."

The collision referred to was the severance of four high tension cables midway between suspension points located on the ridges on opposite sides of the Chattahoochee River. The cables were approximately 60 feet above the river and some 200 feet below the adjacent ridges.


Passenger: "At first I thought that lightning had struck the plane. Then the pilot called back and said that we had hit some wires and asked if I was O.K. . . . and asked me to check the tail surfaces. I called back and said that there was no damage to the tail surfaces that I could see."

Pilot: "I immediately climbed to 2500 feet and checked the plane for damage. The flight characteristics were unchanged except that the plane shuddered under 100 knots. The landing light on the port wing was knocked out and the starboard wing had a cut about two feet long from the leading edge to the trailing edge at about the center of the wing. I thought that I was north of the field and a little west so I took a heading of 150 degrees. The beam was still incomprehensible."

"Finally I flew over Monroe and



identified it by a sign. I did not know the exact location of Monroe in respect to Atlanta. I first flew further south, but the jumbled beam seemed to get weaker, so I flew northwest. I saw a plane going in the same general direction and followed it for a few minutes and finally saw Stone Mountain. I could not understand the NAS ATLANTA tower but they must have read me. I asked for a green light if the landing gear appeared O.K. and they flashed a green light as I flew by the tower in low pitch. I landed at 1419 without further mishap."

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

"I'm still trying to figure out why you still had your passenger with you when you got back—maybe you never got high enough for him to jump?"

I guess by now you realize that you flew right smack into a thunderstorm and that once you were in it you did just about everything wrong.

The weather reports show that this cumulo-nimbus cloud was about 50 to 60 miles NNE of the station at the time of your take-off and was moving towards Atlanta at about 30 to 35 miles per hour. It actually passed the airfield just four minutes before you landed. Now let's add up your mistakes:

1. You apparently didn't recognize what you were getting into, but you at least should have known that you were on a contact flight plan and that you should have turned back or gone around the squall. The rule is: "If you can't go around a thunderstorm, find a place to land and sit down and wait for better weather."

2. The next rule that you forgot was: "Don't turn around once you get well into a thunderstorm." Had you remembered this you would have broken out in the clear in a matter of four or five minutes of rugged straight and level flight.

3. You had plenty of gas left for two or three hours of flight, but you got excited

when you realized that you were lost and went down to 60 feet above the terrain in heavy rain to look for sign posts.


4. Even after you discovered that you were over Monroe which is within a 50-mile radius of Atlanta, you didn't know which way to fly. A lot of smart aviators solve this problem by carrying charts with them.

My advice to you is **STAY ON THE GROUND UNTIL YOU LEARN A FEW OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTELLIGENT FLIGHT PLANNING.**

Slow Down Boys!

Case #1. Pilot landed JRF-5 on glassy water in slight crosswind at a speed of 80 knots. Approximately 50 feet after the plane landed the nose began to dig in and the plane water-looped to port so violently that the starboard wing tip float, struts and strut fittings were torn off and the float was carried through the aileron and the trailing edge of the starboard wing.

Case #2. After failing to raise the tower for landing instructions pilot came in downwind for landing. Sea was calm with 7 knots ESE wind. Area was clear and no other planes on the water at the time. The JRF was held off the water at about 80 knots; throttles were closed. After contact with the water the aircraft began to yaw first to the right and then to the left. In rapid succession the left wing tip float was torn loose and then the right wing tip float was shorn off, damaging both wing panels.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

While both of these accidents resulted from multiple pilot errors, I think that the major error in each case was in landing the airplane too fast. In the second case, the fact that the airplane was landed downwind increased the speed at which the aircraft contacted the water by 14 knots over what it would have been had the landing been made into the wind. The pilot certainly displayed poor judgment in continuing his downwind landing after he approached the water close enough to determine the wind direction.

Technical Order 96-42 (par. 5) concerning restrictions on the JRF is quoted below:

"Reports have been received of a porpoising tendency of the JRF airplanes under certain conditions. It is believed that this trouble can be avoided if the speed of water contact is kept as low as 70 knots. Since these airplanes have good lateral control at the stall, the landing range from 57 to 70 knots is desirable and should present no difficulty to the pilot, even under overload conditions."


Poor "Batten" Average

A *Corsair* pilot hurriedly changed planes after the rest of his flight had left the line and accepted the second plane without visually checking the control surfaces. He adjusted the rudder pedals and taxied to the rocket loading area where four rockets were loaded on the left wing of his FG-1D.

On take-off he was number four in a flight of six. During the early part of the take-off run he noticed a strong swing to the left, but thought it due to slipstream and with added throttle managed to get airborne. At an altitude of 10 feet the yaw to left became so strong that the pilot realized that he could not control the plane.

He chopped the throttle and munched into the ground, wheels down, about 50 yards to the left of the runway. The aircraft struck on the left wing. The rockets were knocked off and fortunately did not explode. The left wing and fuselage were crumpled, but there was no fire. The pilot loosened his shoulder harness, discovered that he had suffered only minor leg scratches, and climbed out of the wreck after cutting all switches.

It was then that he discovered that he had attempted a take-off without removing the rudder batten.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Looks to me like a lot of people must have been sleepy-eyed that morning. Better get those battens painted a bright red color and tie a few streamers on them to increase their visibility. I'll tell you another thing you can do to make up for banging up that nice new fighter. Get yourself a wallet-size picture of that crumpled *Corsair* and every time you show it to other pilots, tell them about those "wonderful shoulder straps."

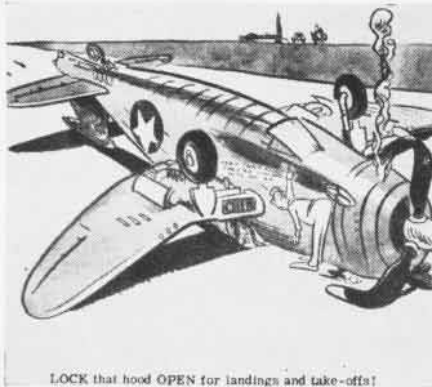
Another Propeller Fatality

The plane captain of a PBY-5A was standing on the wing after cranking the port engine manually. When the engine started, he attempted to climb down over the leading edge of the wing to enter the plane through the navigator's hatch. He slipped on an oily surface and fell through the port propeller to the ground.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

The PBY handbook advises entering the aircraft from one of the two waist gunners' blisters when the engines are turning up. Common sense should indicate the hazard involved in trying to climb down between the whirling propeller and the leading edge of the wing into the navigator's hatch. There's room enough to do it, but no room for error.

By the way, my old accident files contain several instances of pilots who have lost two or three fingers during a buoy approach while signaling from the pilot's



escape hatch. It's been some time now since the last instance, but perhaps a warning is in order. Watch where you swing your arms. Those propellers are still mighty effective slicing machines!

Glamour Boy!

The daring young flier whose lower extremities are pictured below isn't about to take off on a flight over the jungles, despite the wicked looking weapon strapped on his left leg. Actually he's standing on the wing of an F8F-1 just after the landing gear collapsed on his return to NAS EL CENTRO, California after a night tactics flight.

The landing was normal, but shortly after touching down the right tire blew out. During the vigorous application of left rudder and brake necessary to keep the plane rolling straight, it is believed that the handle of the knife hit and released the locking plunger allowing the up-tensioned lever to fly to the "UP" position.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

That's a glamorous looking getup, son, but I'm glad your squadron now has an order prohibiting the wearing of articles strapped to the lower left leg while flying in F8Fs. By the way, just about a month ago a PV pilot ran into the same difficulty when he inadvertently retracted his landing gear with a bulky article, which was stowed in the right knee pocket of his flying suit.



VA-6A Safety Record

Attack Squadron Six-ABLE reports the following safety record for the past eleven months.

- (a) Hours flown—3810
- (b) Carrier Landings—440
- (c) Catapult shots—110
- (d) Accidents—NONE

The commanding officer comments that this record involved some luck as evidenced by the following incident which occurred during the eleven-month period. We quote from Ensign "DILBERT'S" statement following an emergency landing in a TBM:

"We were joining up Southwest of Point Loma at approximately 3,000 feet. My power settings were 2050 rpm and 39" mp. My engine started cutting out intermittently. I called the other planes and informed them that I was going back to the field for an emergency landing. I then switched to the tower frequency and called the tower informing them that I wanted to land downwind on the four ball course, because this was straight in.

"I checked all instruments and everything was normal. I found that by increasing the rpm to 2400 or above and adding manifold pressure to 35" or more, the engine would run OK. When I learned this I was nearing the field so I came on in for a landing downwind. I touched the wheels when the plane was going 90 knots about halfway down the mat. Realizing that I couldn't stop without ground looping or raising the wheels, I added power.

"It took full power normally so I left full power on it and held the plane on the runway building up excessive speed and then pulled up over the planes at the end of the mat. I continued on out over the bay then made a nose low left turn into the upwind runway and landed. The engine would not run throttled back so I turned off the runway to the right and stopped.

"In my opinion I made the following mistakes: The engine started cutting out at 3000 feet. I should have tried to hold my altitude thereby having time to bail out in case of fire and also I should have come into the field high so that I could have picked a better runway into the wind or at least cross wind. I shouldn't have added power to go around in preference to ground looping even though the engine had checked OK at high power settings during let-down.

"Before take-off I made an idle mixture check and a mag check and a full power check. All of these checked out OK."

"John Dilbert,

Ens., AV-H, U.S.N."

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Well, John, I'm mighty glad you made it. Right now you're just an associate member of the "I WENT AROUND AGAIN WITH A BAD ENGINE CLUB," but watch out. Next time you pull a stunt like that you're likely to qualify for the wings and halo that go with a full membership. Congratulations to Attack Squadron Six Able for an outstanding safety record despite your rigorous flight operations.