

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Sometimes I Wonder

The pilot of the SNJ pictured below took off from NAS WILLOW GROVE at 2041 on a round robin night flight and arrived back in the immediate vicinity of the field at 2335 with his scheduled flight completed. He then proceeded to a local area without further clearance and practiced wing-overs and climbing and gliding turns.

At approximately 2400 he turned east to intercept the northwest leg of the Willow Grove Radio Range. It took what he describes as "a long time" to cross the beam and he concluded that he was much farther from the station than he had realized. Since he was down to 20 gallons of fuel, he decided to look for an alternate field rather than attempt to locate Willow Grove, and headed in the general direction of Easton, Pa. When he thought that he was in the vicinity of Easton, he blinked his landing lights and called over the radio requesting runway lights. This proved to be useless inasmuch as there were no airfields in that immediate vicinity which were equipped with radio or lighting facilities.

With 10 gallons of gas left, the Ensign notified his passenger of the situation and of his intention to make a forced landing rather than abandon the aircraft. The passenger elected to stay with the plane rather than bail-out. A small amount of ground fog made the selection of a suitable area difficult, but the pilot turned on his landing lights and located a flat field. After dragging the area the pilot tried to make a 180° turn to the left, hold this heading for about a mile, and then make another 180° to line up his approach. Evidently one or both of these turns was somewhat short of 180 degrees, because he came over the selected area at an angle as shown in the diagram.

Suddenly he saw a group of trees ahead and realized that he would be



unable to clear them. At this time he lowered wheels, cut the switch, and turned off the gas. His landing lights picked up a house directly ahead. In an effort to avoid hitting the house, he put the plane in a 45° bank and collided with the trees in that attitude. The SNJ spun around approximately 180 degrees at an altitude of about 40 feet and then hit the ground. Both pilot and passenger miraculously escaped injury. The aircraft received strike damage.



### Grampaw Pettibone says:

Son, you must wear a horse shoe under each arm pit to get away with a stunt like that!

The errors in this flight are so obvious that I hesitate to go over them. After completing your assigned night flight, you decide to leave the vicinity of the air station and put on a little show for your passenger. Then you forget to keep a close check on your fuel supply. Finally you discover that you've managed to get lost right in your own backyard. At this point I question your judgment in deciding to try a landing at night in unfamiliar terrain and I'm certainly surprised that your passenger was still there. In his place I think I would have bailed out long before.

## Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Your article "Generator Trouble?" in a recent issue reminds me of a similar experience with a happier ending which I had in a JRB in the summer of 1945.

Returning from Hamilton Field in the afternoon to Oakland on a Special NATS flight, I discovered that the wheels were not fully retracted and that the switch had not been returned from the UP position to the neutral position.

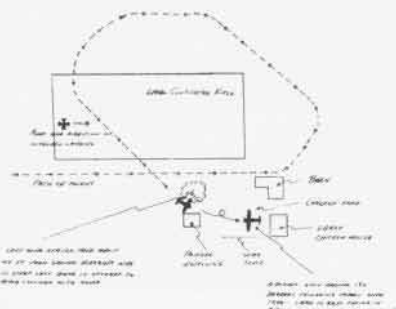
I tried to lower the wheels at reduced speed and could not notice any difference in their position or any effect on the performance of the plane. Nearing the field rapidly I released the clutch and wound down the wheels with the hand crank. After several turns the crank became stiff and I was unable to crank any more although the warning lights still indicated an unsafe position of the gear. At this point I started to check the electrical system as best I could. Generators were on and all fuses seemed to be O.K. I even switched lights in the indicators but the red light stayed on.

I buzzed the tower and asked for a visual check and was told that the gear appeared to be fully down. Passengers being aboard prompted me to ask the "Meat Wagon" to stand by. After consulting the copilot, passengers were told of our plight and I started in for my landing.

I came in fast and when I cut the throttles the horn blew. Having a flash view of an inquiry board and a scalding article by Grampaw Pettibone, I poured on the coal and took a "go around." After all, I had plenty of gas and perhaps I could force the gear down with a few "G's."

Wingovers and tight pull-ups proved fruitless, so I released the clutch and found I could get three more turns of the crank. The green light came on and a check of the horn indicated "Gear down and locked." I notified the tower, got a Roger and came in for an uneventful landing.

After rehashing my experience with the boys I was reminded that the clutch should remain *in* while turning the crank. My real embarrassment came the next morning when the plane was hoisted up for a check and it was found that the circuit breaker was open and the only thing necessary to restore functioning of the gear was to push the circuit breaker reset button under the seat.



Apparently the cause of failure was leaving the gear switch in the "UP" position too long before returning it to neutral. And the now obvious remedy was the circuit breaker reset button.

I agree with you when you say you need more stories with happy endings, as they may show more light on the probable causes of many accidents.

Sincerely

Lt. A1(L) (Inactive)



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thanks for this story of a near accident. In the past couple of months there have been three more wheels-up landings in JRB's and SNB's caused by failure to turn on generator switches. Maybe the solution will be to secure the generator switches in the "ON" position with light safety wire.



### Uncage Your Eyeballs!

This picture of two *Bearcats* nose-to-nose tells the story of a pure bonehead accident which stopped a flight before it ever reached the runway. A young Ensign in one of the F8F's, Number 8 in the flight, having seen seven other F8F's taxi out to the ramp, rushed out to join his group in the warm-up area. On the way out he ran head-on into an eighth F8F standing by on the far corner of the ramp. When questioned about his part in the accident the Ensign stated: "Sir, I simply didn't uncage my eyeballs."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

How true, how true! You certainly explained the situation clearly and concisely, but you should have uncaged that wooden head on top of your shoulders too. Let this accident be a lesson to you and to others who may get caught in similar situations. The latest batch of taxi accidents shows that the Navy still has in its fold a few throttle-jockeys, brake-stompers, knuckleheads (no relation to swivelheads), and oh yes, a pilot with caged eyeballs!

### Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Here is one I thought might interest you as it is a little out of the ordinary. Recently a plane of this squadron came in for a hard landing nose down. It bounced back into the air and it was clear that the nose wheel had suffered a badly broken leg.

This looked bad! It could mean a major overhaul or at least a minor over-

haul when the landing was effected, but not the helicopter Navy. The pilot came to a hovering position at about 10 feet and lowered his crewman by a mechanical hoist carried by all HO3S helicopters. The pilot hovered lower and the crewman pulled the damaged wheel completely off the plane. Then the pilot circled while the crewman erected a barricade 2 feet high, 4 feet wide and 2 feet thick out of 8" by 8" planks and sandbags. These sandbags were not actual sandbags, but sacks of flour, as sandbags were not immediately available and time was at a premium. Following this a normal landing was made utilizing the barricade on the ground in place of the nose wheel.

All this took place 200 miles away from the home base at a small civilian airport. However, flight safety was observed throughout. Due to the initiative of the crewman, the city fire truck and a civilian doctor were in attendance in case of a mishap. After refueling, the plane proceeded to the home base where another safe barricade landing was made, as shown in the enclosed pictures.

Commanding Officer,

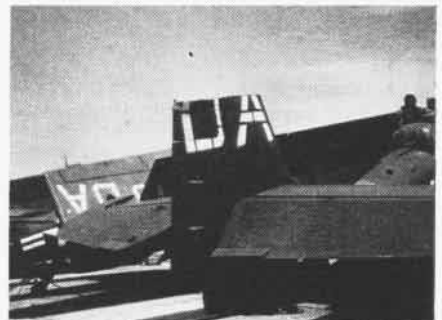
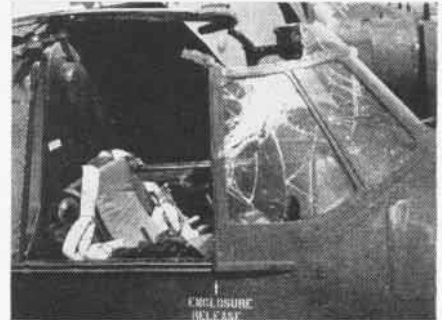
Helicopter Utility Squadron Two.



### Hey, Where's My Head?

A group of TBM's had completed one simulated glide bombing attack on the western tip of a reservoir in accordance with the briefing for a coordinated attack. When permission was granted to make a second low level attack, the leader of the second division of TBM's started his attack run from the North. Upon reaching the lake, he changed his course to East to enable his division to fly the full length of the lake. At an altitude of approximately 250 feet, he hit a high tension power line strung

across the narrow part of the lake between two bluffs. The cable hit the canopy about 4 inches below the top and shattered the windshield and tore a part of the canopy off. In addition, the top half of the vertical stabilizer and rudder were sheared off. The wingmen who were flying in a stepped up position missed the cable.



Flying glass from the impact with the cable cut the pilot's chin, nose and lips. He was wearing a helmet and goggles which saved his eyes from injury. His first impulse was to make a water landing straight ahead, but on discovering that his engine was still running and that he hadn't really decapitated himself, he headed for a nearby emergency strip. The strip looked "Awfully small," and after dropping his wheels and preparing to land he decided to return to his point of departure 100 miles away!



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Looks like you almost became "The Headless Wonder." I think that the blame for this accident can be divided between you and the person responsible for the pre-flight briefing. Although you were not aware of the existence of the cable across the western end of the lake, you should have exercised greater vigilance when you led your division into that area.

In view of the damage to your plane and chin, I think it would have been wiser for you to land at one of the fields nearer the scene of the accident, rather than attempt the 100 mile flight back to your home base. After reading your accident report and looking at the pictures, one of my assistants added this:

There was a young fellow named Bill Who said, "How's this for a thrill? If you think that I'm slipping Take a look at this clipping I'm one guy who's real hard to kill!"