

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Costly, Eh?

Ever have a friend walk up and hand you the Hope Diamond, the Star of India, \$200,000 in currency, plus the deed to a 20-room-3-bath house, and the title to a new Cadillac convertible?

If you were asked to keep an eye on this stuff for a few days you'd probably want to rent some bunk space in the vault of the Chase National Bank, or set up housekeeping in the basement of the U. S. Mint.

But remember, when you push the throttle forward for take-off in any one of several new jet fighters, you've been entrusted with something just as valuable. If you start thinking of "Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair" or why you drew to that inside straight the night before, and forget to watch your fuel consumption, you can make Jesse James look like a small time operator in very short order. You may find yourself looking at a cool half-million dollars of wreckage.

Similarly, if you're detailed to service one of these platinum-coated babies, it's a job that demands your very best attention. If you're not sure of the smallest detail, be sure, before you sign the yellow sheet.

A few weeks ago a group of 9 FH-1's stopped at a Naval Air Facility, refueled, and continued on their cross-country flight. An hour after take-off both engines stopped abruptly on one FH. A few minutes later the left engine stopped on another. Ten minutes later both engines quit on a third plane. These jets were at 20,000 feet and about 50 miles at sea when the first failure occurred.

A well conceived and perfectly executed squadron doctrine was responsible for minimizing the resultant damage. Two planes peeled off from the formation and escorted the first stricken plane towards the beach. One of the escorts pulled ahead as they neared the shore line and searched for a suitable landing area. A safe wheels-up landing was made on a sandy stretch of beach, and this plane was later repaired on the spot and flown out a few days later with the assistance of JATO.

The other two planes which were closer to the beach when their engine failures occurred were escorted to safe "dead stick" landings at nearby airfields.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the planes had been refueled with a



mixture of gasoline, water, and sludge. A sample from the plane that landed on the beach contained 70% water, while a quart sample from one of the other planes that made a dead stick landing was the color of orange juice and contained only the slightest amount of gasoline. Sludge and water comprised approximately 95% of this sample.

This mistake could very easily have cost the Navy close to \$2,000,000. Fortunately a real "heads-up" performance in the emergency held the damage to one class D accident. Congratulations to VMF-122.

## Use It All

The pilot of an F8F landed after eight field carrier landings to receive instructions from the L.S.O. He re-manned his plane and took off after a routine check, starting his take-off roll abeam of the landing signal officer's platform. After a run of about 1000 feet and at an altitude of 20-30 feet his engine failed completely. The pilot placed the landing gear lever in the up position to avoid rolling off the end of the wet runway and made a satisfactory belly landing.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

This lad showed good judgment in retracting his wheels rather than run the risk of going over on his back off the end of the runway. However, his take-off was started more than 1000 feet from the down-wind end of the runway. After the plane skidded to a stop there was nearly 1000 feet of runway remaining. If he had taxied down to the end of the runway

before take-off and USED IT ALL, he would have had plenty of room to make a safe emergency landing after his engine failure.

## Ever Been Run Over?

The following pilot's statement describes a ditching in an F4U immediately after a carrier take-off and the subsequent helicopter rescue operation:

"It was a deck launch with a full belly tank, with 27 knots of wind on the deck and 380 feet of deck run. My mags had checked out at about 50 and 50 and I was in all respects ready for take-off (hatch locked open, shoulder straps tight, and chute unbuckled). On the signal from the flight deck officer, I applied full throttle and started my run.

"After about 50 feet of deck run the engine began to backfire and lose power. The loss of power became more and more pronounced and about 50 feet from the bow, I retarded throttle to a point where it seemed to run more smoothly. As the plane left the flight deck I pulled up the wheels and decided to maintain an attitude just a little less than three-point, even if the plane did lose some altitude, because I knew that my speed was critical. I eased on a little more throttle but the engine began running rougher.

"Suddenly the right wing went down. It didn't snap. It just began to drop. Full corrective controls had no effect and I had to nose over to regain control of the plane. It seemed like I was in a very steep dive toward the water before I regained control. Then I just had time to pull the stick back into my lap before the impact.

"I remember nothing about the crash until I realized that I was in the water going down. I reached down with my left hand and unbuckled the safety belt and shoved off with my feet. I had no trouble leaving the plane and with a few strokes of swimming was on the surface, where I saw the fire and the tail section of the *Corsair* still afloat.

"Just when I was beginning to feel good about the whole thing, I saw the carrier bearing down on me. It was about 50 yards away when I saw it and heading directly toward me. I kept waiting for it to turn, but it never seemed to turn a bit. The last minute I threw myself away from it and tried to fend it off with my feet, but it plowed right on through and the exact center of the bow hit me very hard right on the buttocks and between my legs. I felt myself sliding down along the hull and then after a few seconds I seemed to be rising so I began swimming again and popped to the surface right under the island. I saw people lining the catwalks and waved to them to let them know that I was all right.

"Not too long after that the helicopter

descended over me with harness hanging down. I was waiting for it, feeling pretty good, although occasionally I would be ducked by a wave. I was having no trouble staying afloat even though I did not have my Mae West inflated. I felt pretty good although I was rather dazed, I imagine, because I thought that if I really needed the thing I would jerk the strings, but as for now I was getting along OK. The same reasoning applied to my parachute. Although it was never buckled, either legs or chest straps, it came out of the plane with me as it was looped over my shoulders. After that I just kept it with me because it never actually hindered me. It was a little bother but not enough to make me shrug my shoulders and get rid of it.

"The first attempt of the helicopter to pick me up was not successful because after I had gotten into the loop, he came lower and the iron that weighs the rope went under the surface and dragged me under with it. I got panicky and started to get out of the harness when it came out again and he started to lift me up. I had only one arm well secure so I motioned to the crewman to let me down again; so they let me back into the water. Later I figured out that the helicopter altitude had been steady enough, but that the waves which I estimate were four to six feet high, moved me up and down so I should have expected to be dunked at least once while climbing into the harness.

"The helicopter made another circle and this time the pickup was successful. However, I made one mistake which caused me some discomfort and should be emphasized to all pilots who are ever liable to have such pickup. The pilot must be sure to get into the loop or to twist around once he is in it so that the strap is across his shoulder blades in the back, comes up under his arms and up in front of his face. I went in head first with the band across my chest and the lines up my back. I was secure enough but I had to keep constant pressure on my arms to keep from falling off. Then when I got up to the height of the cabin and reached my hands forward to get a hold, the band could have slipped right off my arms.

"The helicopter pilot also stated later that it would have been easier to make the rescue if I had put out some green dye marker. We had been briefed to do that, but for some reason, the idea never entered my mind since he was there so quickly and seemed to have no trouble staying over me."

**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Well, son, you can't say you've never been run over now.

Thanks for this very descriptive account of your rescue. While we're on this subject I'd like to recommend that every carrier pilot make it a point to talk to the helicopter pilots aboard and examine the type of harness used in rescue operations. Remember you're likely to be dazed or very cold when the helicopter arrives to save you from a watery grave. That's no time to get checked out on how the harness works and how the pick-up is accomplished. If you've talked to the search and rescue pilot and know just how the harness works, the rescue will be easier for both of you.

## High Speed Turn

The pilot of the F8F-1 pictured below made a normal landing and decelerated at a constant rate until he reached an intersection where he wished to turn off the service runway. He unlocked his tail wheel and started a turn to the right while still traveling at a good clip.

The result was a tight ground loop during which the propeller struck the runway. The F8F ended up on its nose headed almost 180 degrees from the direction of the landing.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

How hot can they get?

This type of accident is so unnecessary that it really gets my goat. The F8F will require a new propeller and an engine change. The prop alone costs over \$2000, and the engine will have to be torn down to see whether or not it was seriously damaged.

All because this fellow was in too much of a hurry!



## No Aileron Control

Immediately after take-off an F4U commenced a sharp turn to the right. The pilot started to level the wings, but with full left aileron and left rudder the plane continued to roll to the right. At this time the pilot had about 25 feet and was still gaining altitude. He realized that he would have little chance of surviving if the roll continued to the inverted position. At about 40 feet and an airspeed of 100 knots he cut the throttle. By this time the plane was approaching a 90 degree bank.

The F4U struck an intersecting runway on the right wing tip and slid 200 yards to a stop. The right wing was shredded, the fuselage buckled, and the engine and propeller badly damaged. Fortunately the pilot had his safety belt and shoulder straps tight and climbed out of the wreckage uninjured.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the ailerons failed to respond to movements of the control stick. A small bolt used to connect the upper end of the push-pull rod to the control stick torque tube was missing. The bolt was later found in the fuselage; however the nut and cotter pin were not located.

Apparently the bolt, minus the nut and cotter pin, joined the push pull rod and torque tube during taxiing and some portion of the take off run until vibration allowed it to back off and thus destroy all aileron control.

Maintenance personnel of two squadrons had worked on the aircraft earlier in the day in connection with the incorporation of Service Change 251.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

In aviation maintenance a job that's only half-done is worse than one that isn't done at all.

This pilot had a close brush with death because the provisions of BuAer Manual, Article 5-502—"Maintenance Inspection," were not complied with. Had these procedures been followed the discrepancy would have been discovered and the necessary steps taken to insure proper operation of the flight control system.



## Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

To end considerable controversy, would you please explain in your column under what circumstances Co-Pilot time would be logged in the Aviator's Flight Log Book, Form NAVAER-4111 (Rev. 9-44), for a naval aviator.

C.O. \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

As the operations officer in a Jet Transitional Squadron, I have seen the entries of many an experienced aviator's log book. I can't help but notice the various and conflicting methods of logging Instrument, GCA, Night, Combat, and Range Let Down flights in all the colors of the rainbow.

As we are unable to locate any directives on the use of colored ink in the logging of flight time, it would be appreciated if you would give us the ungarbled word of some accurate references.

Major \_\_\_\_\_



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

There was an old pilot named Brink  
Who said, "Why raise such a stink?  
Some like red for their night time  
And green for straight flight time  
But I do the whole thing in pink."

His good friend Rodger De Pew  
Made all of his entries in blue  
Till the day of his ditching  
When he knocked off his bitching  
And used a pale lavender hue.

Actually the only directive that I know of in regard to logging pilot times is contained in Aviation Circular Letter #97-47. Section 135 of this ACL explains when copilot time may be credited as pilot time, and lists the symbols for various types of flights. From here on out you're on your own. You may use the other columns for a detailed breakdown of your flight experience, and there is nothing to stop you from doing the job in technicolor if you like.