

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

One For the Books

A pilot with 1550 hours of flight time and more than half of it in *Corsairs*, took off on a cross country flight from NAS NEW ORLEANS to MCAS CHERRY POINT.

Due to a mechanical failure of the landing gear he knew that he would have to make the flight with the wheels in the locked down position.

His first stop was at Maxwell Field, Alabama, after a flight of one and a half hours with a power setting of 2000 rpm and 30".

When the plane was refueled, the mechanic stated that it took only 80 gallons. The pilot watched the mech as he put the gas in, but did not check to make sure the tank was full. He accepted the fuel consumption figure of 80 gallons and planned the remainder of his flight accordingly.

He cleared for MCAS CHERRY POINT estimating 3.2 hours enroute. His departure time from Maxwell Field was at 1810 CST which meant that at least the last half of his flight would be at night. He states that his gas gauge read "over 200 gallons at take-off" but that he believed the tank to be full. He continued to cruise at 30" and 2000 rpm.

About 60 miles northeast of Florence, S.C., the fuel warning light came on, indicating that there was approximately 50 gallons of gasoline left. The pilot realized that this was not enough to enable him to get to Cherry Point and reversed his course for Shaw Field which was nearly as far away. At 2037 CST he was given a steer by Shaw Homing, and 13 minutes later he passed over a town which he identified as Florence, S. C.

Realizing that he would be unable to make Shaw Field he asked to have the runway lights turned on at Florence, so that he could locate the airport. Before this could be accomplished, he ran out of gas and was forced to abandon the plane at an altitude of 1300 feet. He parachuted to safety, while the *Corsair* crashed in a cotton field about two miles from the municipal airport at Florence.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

This is one for the books. It reminds me of the story of the farmer who was trying to tell a stranger in town how to find the post office and after several false starts ended up by saying, "Hell, feller. You can't get to the post office from here."



For with the power settings he chose and the wheels locked down, he simply couldn't get to Cherry Point with a safe margin of fuel.

Although this pilot had permission to fly the *Corsair* back to Cherry Point with the wheels locked down, I doubt very much that the people who authorized this expected him to do it at night.

Surely, he should have known that an F4U would burn more than 80 gallons in the flight from New Orleans to Maxwell Field at power settings of 30" and 2000 rpm. With these settings he should have anticipated a consumption of about 115 gallons in an hour and a half flight.

With 950 hours in the *Corsair* he should have known that higher manifold pressure (34") and lower RPM gives more mileage than the setting he selected for his estimated flight of 3.2 hours to Cherry Point.

When his warning light went on, he still had a couple of good outs, assuming that he knew his approximate position. Since he was just about half way between Shaw AFB and Cherry Point, his estimate that he could not make the latter should have eliminated the former as an alternate. At the time his warning light went on he could have landed at Pope Field or Wilmington, N. C., either of which was within easy range.

It pays to take an occasional look at the handbook, and to do some sensible flight planning, particularly when you plan to operate a plane under conditions that are different from the ones you are accustomed to.

Knock, Knock, Who's There?

Ever hear of an intentional mid-air collision?

Two Marines took off in their F4U's for a scheduled instrument training flight with one pilot assigned as student and the other as instructor. The instructor, who was to fly the chase plane, states that he did not have time to brief the students thoroughly due to the rush of getting out on time. Neither pilot had occasion to use his radio while on

the deck, and one of the items that was not covered in the briefing was the possibility of radio failure.

When the pilots got into the air they shifted to channel number four but did not check their radios immediately due to the volume of traffic on that frequency.

When the instructor did call the student for a radio check, he received no answer. He then flew alongside only to discover that his student was already under the hood.

By this time the student was climbing out of the field area on a heading which would take him out over the Atlantic Ocean and directly into the aerial gunnery area. Other planes were in this area preparing to start their firing runs. The instructor pulled ahead of the student and attempted to lay down enough slip stream to get him to come out from under the hood.

When this didn't work, he decided that it would be best to fly up and tap the student's wing tip. After several unsuccessful attempts at hitting the wing tip, the instructor finally came up under the student's right wing and tapped what he thought was a light blow. The student immediately came out from under the hood and both planes returned to base.

The wing tap was somewhat harder than had been anticipated. Both planes required minor repairs.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Just about the time I think I've heard all the reasons for busting up airplanes along comes something new. Let's see, read what this fellow's Commanding Officer had to say. It's worthwhile remembering:

"Standard Operating Procedure within this squadron governing safety precautions for instrument training flights in F4U type aircraft requires the instructor to make a radio transmission to the student at least once every three minutes. If the student fails to receive a call at the end of this interval, he is required to lift his goggles or hood.

"In the event the instructor cannot contact the student in the face of oncoming danger, the emergency signal is for the instructor to fly in front of the student and give him "prop wash." This is the signal for the student to raise his goggles or hood immediately.

"It is believed that if the instructor had briefed his student properly as to the above procedure, this accident could have been avoided. Having by his failure so to do, permitted his student to get into a potentially dangerous situation, the instructor displayed good judgment and presence of mind in adopting the means of attracting the student's attention which resulted in the accident. Both of the above factors will be taken into consideration in marking Lt. _____'s next report of fitness."

Dear Grampaw Pettibone

You must have written up the weather problems in the August issue before you had your morning coffee. In the first problem you didn't give the height of the lower scattered clouds, and in the second problem you didn't indicate the means by which the ceiling height was obtained.

I notice that a good many pilots have difficulty reading the weather reports as they come off the teletype, so why not run a similar problem each month?

Sincerely,

— Lt., USNR.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Don't let any one tell you that you can put anything over on the Navy's rain-makers.

Many thanks to you and all the other sharp eyed weather-folk who wrote in about these omissions . . . and for the ONE PILOT who wrote in . . . a great big rousing cheer (I'm still wondering if an aerologist didn't tip him off).

Just to keep the record straight here are the corrected problems and answers. If they're not right this time I've got a Chief Aerographers Mate who checked them for me and he's going to eat all of next months "fan mail."

ORF W5@2@21/2VR-H 177/75/74+14/
004/PRESFR VSBY VRBL 2 TO 4

PHL S2 0808E M17@010 10/E120@ 9-0

Answers:

NORFOLK—Ceiling indefinite 500 feet overcast, 200 scattered, visibility 2½ miles variable, light rain, haze, sea-level pressure 1017.7 millibars, temperature 75, dew point 74, wind from the East 14 miles per hour, altimeter setting 30.04, pressure falling rapidly, visibility variable 2 to 4 miles.
PHILADELPHIA—Special number two, time 0808 EST, measured 1700 feet broken, with higher overcast, visibility 10 miles, wind from northeast 10 miles per hour. Higher overcast estimated 12,000 feet, thin scattered at 900 feet.

Don't Do This!

The pilot of an FH-1 inspected his plane before his third familiarization flight. He was assisted in this check by the plane captain and both noted that the wheel well doors appeared to be locked down. Neither actually made a manual check to see that the doors were locked down.

Shortly after take-off the pilot noticed that his landing gear indicator remained in the unsafe position and showed that the starboard wheel had not come all the way up. Subsequent events indicate that the wheel well door had not been locked down prior to take-off, and that the slipstream blew it up during the take-off run. The door thus pre-



vented the wheel from fully retracting.

After gaining some altitude and speed the pilot noted that the circuit breaker for the starboard gear had popped out, and assumed that this was the cause of his difficulties. LEAVING THE LANDING GEAR SWITCH IN THE UP POSITION, HE HELD THE CIRCUIT BREAKER IN TO SEE IF THIS WOULD BRING THE WHEELS UP!

This action burnt out the actuating motor for the starboard gear, rendering useless all further efforts to raise or lower that wheel.

The pilot dropped his belly tank and flew around until his fuel was down to approximately 400 lbs. He elected to make a landing with his nose wheel and port wheel extended and made a good approach and landing. The Phantom touched down at about 80 knots, and after a short run on the nose wheel, port wheel, and starboard flaps it began a turn to the right. The pilot held full left aileron and left brake, but the FH-1 turned about 300 degrees as it began to slow down.

Fortunately the damage was limited to the right inboard and outboard flaps, the wheel well door and the burnt out actuating motor.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holding in a circuit breaker when it wants to pop out isn't quite as dangerous as lighting a match to look inside a gasoline tank, but it's the sort of thing that can cause plenty of trouble. A circuit breaker is really nothing more than a fuse that can be easily reset.

At home, if your wife burns out a fuse trying to run the washing machine, waffle iron, and vacuum cleaner all on the same circuit, you usually disconnect something before putting in a new fuse. If you don't do this, you're still not in too much trouble because it will just blow out again. Leaning on a circuit breaker in an airplane is a different matter. That's like jamming a penny in the fuse box at home and saying—"to heck with the wiring!"

In this case the smart thing to have done would have been to return the landing gear switch to neutral or down before resetting the circuit breaker in the airplane.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

A Navy pilot recently cleared IFR in a single-engine airplane and after becoming airborne and on instruments, found that his gyro horizon had failed and had become completely inoperative. He returned to his base on partial panel and landed. For this he was reprimanded by a senior officer who said he should have continued the flight on the needle and ball. It is requested that information be published as to whether such is now the general policy of the Navy.

It is also requested that information be published as to whether it is now considered proper to proceed through known or anticipated icing conditions with and without de-icing equipment.

LCDR., USN.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

The basic peacetime policy regarding aircraft operations is well stated in a message from the Chief of Naval Operations to all Aviation Activities Ashore and Afloat (4 September 1945) which is quoted below:

"ALL AVIATION COMMANDS ARE REMINDED THAT SAFETY OF PERSONNEL AND CONSERVATION OF EQUIPMENT ARE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE IN THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF PEACETIME FLIGHT OPERATIONS. THEY SHALL BE STRESSED ACCORDINGLY."

Although this has been restated and re-emphasized in subsequent directives, its substance has not been modified to my knowledge.

As to the decision to return to base following the failure of the gyro-horizon while on an IFR plan, no one is in a better position to make this decision than the pilot involved. Nobody else, for example, is quite so likely to know whether or not the pilot can fly safely on needle-ball. A lot of old timers who learned their instrument flying before gyro-horizons were standard equipment, might feel, and might be, competent to continue the flight under the conditions you mentioned. Anyone who makes his living studying aircraft accident reports will tell you that this is not true for all pilots.

As regards your question on flights into known or anticipated icing conditions, the answer is given in ACL 46-49, a portion of which is quoted below:

"2. No flight shall be made through known or anticipated atmospheric icing conditions unless the airplane equipment provides adequate equipment against icing, or the altitudes assigned permit ice level circumvention."

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE SAYS

Your head may be shaped like a hub cap
But that's no sign you're a "WHEEL."