

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Full of Ping-Pong Balls?

Not long ago the dispatch board contained a report of the ditching of an RSD on a flight from Japan to Midway. The brief report stated that the RSD floated for four hours and that the seven-man crew had suffered no injuries.

Land planes have a way of going down mighty fast after a ditching, and at first it was thought that there must have been a mistake. "They must have meant four minutes."

When the amplifying reports came in, it turned out that not only did the RSD float for four hours, but also it finally had to be sunk by gun-fire from a PC boat to keep it from being a hazard to navigation!

The ditching was due to an almost incredible series of navigational errors which finally placed the transport more than 500 miles SW of Midway about two hours after it should have landed. When the crew finally became oriented and headed back towards the Midway, the plane had already been in the air for more than 15 hours. It was ditched about three hours later when down to its last 10 gallons of gas out of the initial fuel load of 3,200 gallons.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

No, it wasn't loaded with ping-pong balls!

It was just empty as all get out, and the ditching was made under nearly ideal conditions. The water landing was made into the wind and swells, with 30 degrees of flap. Wind was reported to be about five knots, the swells about four feet, and the visibility excellent. One prop was carried away on impact, and the cockpit lighting fixtures and magnetic compass broke from their mounts and were adrift in the cockpit; otherwise everything went according to Hoyle.

The final touchdown was made at a speed of about 80 knots. Two distinct shocks were felt on impact with the water, a slight shock when the tail wheel first made contact, and then a second, more severe shock.

When the aircraft was abandoned, it was floating slightly nose-down with the inboard roots of the wing just awash. The cargo deck was dry except for a little water taken aboard through the open escape hatches during the landing.

This crew had plenty of time to plan their ditching, because it was apparent for some time that they would not have enough gasoline to make up for their earlier navigational errors. In fact the search and

rescue plane from Midway had been sent out and was on station at the time of the ditching. Most ditchings are made with far less time to get everyone squared away for the impact, and conditions are seldom as good as they were in this instance.

How familiar are you with the ditching procedure for your plane? Does every man in your crew know exactly what he is to do in such an emergency—what items of equipment he is expected to bring with him when he leaves the plane? After all, it's only once in a blue moon that the SAR plane is overhead before the ditching, and most land planes sink in less than 3 min.



Cross Wind Landing Tips

*The winds that raise these fancy sights
Will also foul-up lots of flights.
It's March again, so here's the scoop
To help outwit the old groundloop.*

Take-off

*You'll find a check-list in your plane
Its constant use will save much pain.
If you forget your tail-wheel lock
Your plane will try to weather-cock.*

Landing Approach

*In this phase here's the vital tip
Correct for drift with wing-down slip.
Stay out of trouble in the Spring
By lowering your up-wind wing.*

Touch-down

*Keep that wing low till you touch-down,
Get ready, bub, here comes the ground.
You touch first on the up-wind wheel
Then listen for a warning squeal.*

Roll-out

*Don't let her swerve, you'll drag a wing
Just arc down wing and stop that swing.
Use rudder first, now use the brakes.
You've got control. That's what it takes.*

You Made It

*That cross wind did look rather tough
But not for you—you knew your stuff!
This rhyme is ending—don't despair
Just taxi back with extra care.*



Ensign McGee now
Strums on a harp—
His last buzz job
Was not too sharp.

Don't Undershoot

If you have to have an engine failure, one of the world's finest places for it to happen is right over your home field at an altitude of 10,000 feet or better.

Unfortunately, accident reports show that, even with such ideal conditions, a good deal of skill is required to make a successful dead stick landing in a heavy, high performance plane.

The most common error in such emergencies is undershooting the field altogether. As an example of this, let's take a look at a recent AD-2 crash.

The plane was flying at 18,000 feet in high blower almost directly over NAS PATUXENT RIVER, when the engine quit without any previous warning. Large volumes of light blue smoke poured out of both sides of the engine. Instrument readings were normal except for a slight drop in fuel pressure. (It was later determined that the turbulator supercharger had disintegrated.)

The pilot set up a gliding descent at 110 knots, switched off fuel, put the prop in full low RPM, and turned off the ignition switch.

Shortly afterwards he found that his radio was dead with the ignition switch in the OFF position, so he returned it to the ON position and reported the engine failure to the tower.

After some difficulty in lowering his landing gear, the pilot called the tower at 6,000 feet and asked for a gear check. Shortly thereafter the landing gear indicators showed the main wheels "DOWN and LOCKED" but the tail wheel still "UP". At this time the pilot decided to forget about the undercarriage and concentrate on a landing on the 9,700-foot service runway. Unfortunately, this decision was made too late in the game, and he misjudged his approach.

Coming out of the final turn, he found that his rate of descent was so great that he was in danger of hitting a sand cliff short of the duty runway. At the last minute he elected to make a 90-degree turn and ditch the plane in the river. The water landing was made in a fully stalled attitude with the wheels down. The impact sheered the main landing gear, but the AD-2 did not flip over. It came to rest in a slightly nose-down attitude and floated about a minute. The pilot sustained no injuries and was

picked up two minutes after the plane sank.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This case is far from unique. Of course, most pilots aren't fortunate enough to have a 9,700-foot runway to shoot at, but in several cases pilots have undershot 5,000 and 6,000-foot runways when their engine failures occurred within easy gliding distance of the field.

Once in awhile, though, I get news of a pilot who handles an emergency like this with real finesse. One such case about 14 months ago is of particular interest.

This pilot was flying an F9F on his second familiarization flight. He had only one hour of previous jet time, when he had a flame-out at 20,000 feet right over his home field.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts at an air start, he decided to concentrate on making a good dead stick landing. At 8,000 feet he had his wheels and flaps down (using the emergency hydraulic pump) and had established a glide at 150 knots.

This gave him time to get an accurate estimate of his rate of descent in relation to the amount of ground covered as he circled the field.

He was over the up-wind end of the runway at 5,000 feet, and started his turn from the 180-degree position at a normal distance ahead of the runway with 2,500 feet of altitude.

He came over the end of the runway with 60-70 feet of altitude and an airspeed of 145 knots, and touched down about one-third of the way down the runway. With moderate braking, the F9F was brought to a stop without any damage.

Remember, there are several things that you can do in a pinch to lose altitude, but nothing that you can do to regain a few precious feet when you are on the final with a dead engine.

Allow yourself more altitude than you

think that you will need. One way to do this is to imagine that you are aiming for the last half of the runway. Don't worry about actually hitting there, you won't. Nine out of ten times your plane will lose altitude a heck of a lot faster than you expect.

Fiestas, Siestas, Senioritas?

There must be something that makes most of the aviators who get lost on the trans-continental ferry route head for the Mexican border. Perhaps they figure that a forced landing won't be quite so bad in the land of sunshine and laughter.

The chart below gives a rough sketch of another flight that might well have made it across the border except for a slight shortage of gasoline.

These two intrepid aviators were ferrying a couple of F8F's from NAF LITCHFIELD PARK to Albuquerque, New Mexico, or at least they were until they got within 75 miles of their destination.

Prior to take-off they didn't check the Notams or refer to the latest edition of *Radio Facility Charts*, and thereby hangs a tale.

The north leg of the Albuquerque range had been changed slightly with a resulting change in all quadrant signals.

The flight was uneventful until the pilots passed Zuni radio, at which time they tuned-in the Albuquerque range. Since they were getting an on course signal, they continued on the inbound beam heading of 80°. After a few minutes they began to pick up an "N" signal, which according to their sectional charts put them on the left hand side of the beam.

The lead pilot then altered course 60° to the right to get back on the beam

and maintained this heading for 15 minutes. At this time the Rio Grande was sighted, and since they were still getting an "N" signal, they headed south along the river looking for Albuquerque which by this time was some 60 or 70 miles behind them.

After going down the river for another 50 miles, the pilots realized that they were lost and began calling for help. Holloman AFB answered their call, but had no DF equipment, and hence could not give them a steer.

By this time one pilot began to look for a place to land as his fuel warning light was on. He soon spotted a small abandoned field close to Tularosa, New Mexico. After dragging it, he made a landing in which he nosed up just enough to nick the propeller blades as he applied brakes to stay within the confines of the short runway. The other pilot made it to Holloman AFB a few miles away and landed safely—just a mere 125 miles south of his destination.

The flight leader later reported to the Accident Board that he left his flight log at Holloman AFB while the wingman stated that he had discovered right after take-off that his watch was broken and therefore couldn't keep a log.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Say, fellows, are you sure that you didn't eat those flight logs. After a fiasco like this, I can't say that I would blame you.

Despite the missing logs, I've tried to trace your flight path as best I could. It looks to me like you got almost within spitting distance of Albuquerque (wind and altitude considered) and then in the following 25 minutes really loused things up.

Surely when you made that 60° turn to the right you must have lost the background noise of the "on-course" and started to get a very solid "N"—and yet you held this heading for 15 minutes.

Now a word about fuel economy. You both gassed-up at Litchfield Park and yet the wingman's emergency landing occurred just an hour and 40 minutes later. Doesn't look to me like you gave much thought to cruise control.

Fortunately you came out of this rhubarb with whole skins and with only minor damage to one of the planes. You were plenty lucky!

Here's a little ditty that you can hum to the tune of the "Blue Tail Fly." Maybe it will serve as a gentle reminder:

*The North leg ain't where it used to be
They swung it slightly west, you see.
The "N" therefore was on my right—
I wish to hell I'd planned my flight!
Oh, please, kind Sirs, don't jerk my wings.*

*From here on out I'll read those things,
And before I next make-like-a-bird,
I'll make darn sure I have the "word."*

