



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Unnecessary Risk

The pilot of an F7F took off on a check-out ride after a careful briefing on various emergency procedures and a thorough cockpit check-out. A few minutes after becoming airborne, he called the tower for landing instructions and was cleared to land on runway 18.

After turning into the final approach he called the tower to say that he was going to take it around again as he had a rough-running engine which he wanted to "straighten-out". He then cleared the traffic pattern and climbed to about 5000 feet. Shortly thereafter he again called for permission to enter the traffic pattern, and repeated the procedure of letting down into the pattern, lowering gear, and taking a wave-off in the final approach.

He called the tower a third time and requested permission to make a wide final approach to runway 18 stating that he had a deferred emergency and was at 5000 feet over the field.

Witnesses noticed that the right engine was feathered during this circuit of the field and that the left auxiliary tank had been dropped. The right auxiliary tank was still attached. Approximately five miles east of the field and at an altitude of 500 feet, the F7F rolled to the right and hit the ground in a nose down attitude. The aircraft exploded on impact and the pilot was killed.

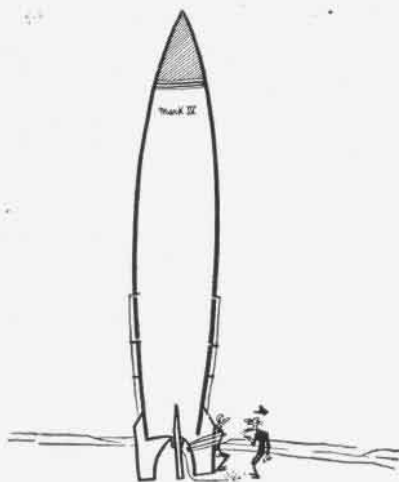


Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Total time in type—one hour—and this fellow decides he's a test pilot. Twice he was all lined up for a landing and each time he took a wave-off to experiment with a malfunctioning engine.

A well qualified test pilot would have landed and let the mechs start looking for the source of the trouble, but this chap decides to "straighten it out" in the air. When he finally had to feather the right engine he was in a critical spot—not much altitude—not much airspeed—and to add to his troubles, his right drop tank apparently failed to release. When he added full power to his good left engine, the plane rolled to the right with insufficient altitude for a recovery.

There's darn little that you can do in the air to correct a malfunctioning engine that can't be done with greater efficiency and safety on the ground. Land at the first opportunity and let the mechs go to work, before you get yourself into a situation that you find you cannot handle.



WORD ABOUT WHEELS

You have just taken off on a two hour training flight and find that you can't get all of your wheels up. Using either the normal or emergency system you succeed in getting a satisfactory indication that they are down and locked.

What should you do now? Try again and see if you can retract them?



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Perish the thought! I've just finished reading three recent cases in which pilots did just that and had to make belly or one wheel landings later on because they were unable to get all of the wheels down at the same time again.

If there's something the matter with your gear and you are fortunate enough to get it down and locked, for gosh sakes leave it there! Fly around and burn up some gas if you're overweight for landing, but leave the gear alone once you get it down and locked. When you get back on terra firma the mechs can drop check your landing gear and find the source of the trouble.

A wheels-up landing costs Uncle Sam anywhere from \$3000 to \$100,000 depending on the type of plane and extent of damage. In the first eight months of this year we've had 65 of 'em.

Real Safety Record

Just a little over a year ago Fleet Logistic Air Wing, Atlantic/Continental was established. During this period over 80,000 passengers have been carried well over 60,000,000 passenger miles. In addition more than 6,000 tons of mail and cargo have been flown from Patuxent to such far away spots as Istanbul, Athens, Rome, Port Lyautey, and Naples.

The Wing has operated without an accident of any sort in its transport operations. VR-1, VR-22, and VR-24 are the three squadrons that set this remarkable first year record for the Wing.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

You can take my word for it, a safety record like that doesn't just happen. It is the product of team work on the part of all hands. Pilots, navigators, crewmen, maintenance personnel, and those who plan the far-flung operations all have to be right on the ball to accomplish that much flying without an accident. Take a bow, boys. Keep up the good work.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

(Attention: Green Card Pilots)

It's a lot better to be John Doe, a little late, than the late John Doe.

Numb With Fear

The following excerpts are from the statement of a pilot who crashed on his first take-off in a service-type plane. He had been recalled to active duty after being out of the service for nearly five years. His total flight time was 301 hours, of which 7.1 had been acquired in an SNJ following his return to active duty.

"I reported to the squadron and was informed that the field was open and that I would go for my first hop in an F8F. I went immediately to my locker and changed clothes and then went into the pilot's ready room where I was told to go downstairs and check out for my hop. This I did and spent the next 15 minutes familiarizing with the parachute and the new crash helmet.

"While waiting for my plane to be assigned to me I went over my flight instructions briefly. . . . When the mech came out to help me start the airplane, I asked him to come back in about 15 minutes as I said I wished to go over once again a simulated blindfold cockpit

checkout. I did this, learning all the controls accurately with closed eyes. . . . I adjusted and connected my shoulder harness and safety belt. When the mech returned I started the plane without much difficulty.

"While waiting for the oil to warm up to 40 degrees, I visually checked the operation of all controls, rotating the stick in a circle and testing the rudder for full play. They all checked satisfactorily. I then checked flap operation . . . hydraulic pressure, super charge, carburetor heat and prop pitch . . . and gave the signal to taxi out. . . . I checked my mags at 2100 rpm, noting a satisfactory drop off of rpm . . . again checked my prop pitch. Referring to my flight instructions again, I went over the detailed check-off list for take-off.

In the meantime, the F8F in front of me had taken off, and since no planes were behind me I remained in the standby position for about five minutes checking everything . . . then requested and received permission to taxi onto the runway and hold. As soon as I was lined up I locked my tailwheel, rocked my rudders and while making another visual check of all my levers I received permission to take-off.

"With the rpm still at about 1500 I released the brakes and started. I immediately throttled to about 35 inches. Pushing forward on the throttle as gradually and evenly as possible, I throttled to about 40 inches at which time I began to notice what was to me an unusual amount of noise. About this time, with the stick held in a neutral position, without any effort whatsoever the tail came up, and as I throttled to 54 inches I felt my head move back and the force of the engine pulling the plane forward. I made a straight and uneventful take-off, and as soon as I could see that I was definitely airborne, I reached down to retract the landing gear.

"I experienced considerable difficulty in pulling out the spring lock on the landing gear, and found it necessary to glance down into the cockpit to ascertain if anything was wrong. Eventually I succeeded in raising the landing gear and then looked up to see that I was very low and was not in the climbing attitude which I had expected to be in. The stick was very difficult to pull back, and so I reached down to use the elevator trim tabs to help me raise the nose. It seemed to have no effect so I left it where I had moved it and throttled back to about 40 inches.

"Almost immediately before I throttled back, I noticed myself being thrown to the left side of the cockpit. I reduced my rpm to about 2400 and at

the same time noticed that the ball was clear over to the left side of the bubble, all this time still feeling myself being thrown to the left side of the cockpit and still not seeming to be gaining altitude as I had expected. I tried moving my rudders, but they seemed very tight, and it seemed as though almost any attempted movement of the stick or rudders threw me into an abnormal attitude which was detectable immediately by increased force throwing me to the left side of the cockpit.



"About this time I noticed a great deal of wind and noise entering the cockpit. At the same time the nose seemed to be turning to the right and all controls seemed frozen. The force of the skid made my plane vibrate and swerve violently in about a five degree arc from side to side. Also it shuddered. I remember thinking it might be due to turbulent air. I still did not seem to be gaining any altitude and was approximately 150 feet above the ground. This is only a guess. I was very busy trying to ascertain the cause of the abnormal attitude of my aircraft.

During all reference checks to the cockpit, I kept glancing over the side and noticed that there was no change in my altitude until I felt myself going down and turning more violently to the right. I could not raise the nose, either with tabs or stick. I had lost all reference to my location at this time, and seeing that I was losing altitude rapidly and turning and swerving and skidding violently, I chopped the throttle completely. I do not know why I chopped the throttle just at that time except that I was losing altitude rapidly and had, I suppose, subconsciously decided to go in.

"After chopping the throttle, and until the time when I hit the ground, is a period which I do not recollect at all clearly. I believe that fear had gripped me so as to make me numb, and yet I know that I consciously swerved the plane to the right to effect a reasonably unobstructed landing. Just before I hit the ground, I saw a large mound of dirt and loose gravel some 500 yards ahead of me. When I hit, I immediately noticed the blades of my propeller stop and saw that they were curled. There was

no violent up and down movement but rather a great noise and the appearance of debris flying on each side of me.

I remember yelling like an Indian while all this was going on. Then the mound of dirt appeared, and I hit without any pain. One hundredth of a second after I had stopped, I yelled "emergency—emergency" and cut the ignition and battery switches. I then remembered the possibility of an explosion and vaulted out of the cockpit."

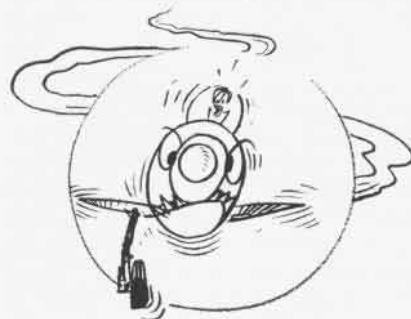


Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Now that you've read a slightly shortened version of the pilot's statement, what would you guess to have been the cause of all his difficulties?

Investigators checking the F8F after the accident found that all controls moved freely and operated perfectly. What caused the accident?

In the period right after take-off, while the pilot was trying to find out how the spring lock on the landing gear handle worked, he was flying with full throttle on in a level attitude. By the time he got the wheel lever in the up position, he had picked up so much speed that only one wheel came up. This caused the F8F to go into a skid which got worse as the airspeed continued to build up. With power settings of 40 hg. and 2400 rpm, one wheel down, and the canopy open, it is little wonder that the F8F began to buffet.



At this time the pilot needed an anti-panic suit, but bad. The violence of the skid, the cockpit noise, and his apparent inability to correct the condition, caused him to trip the panic switch, chop the throttle, and prepare to go in.

Actually as the plane decelerated, the landing gear came up, and the F8F came out of the skid shortly before the impact with the ground.

Five years is a long time to stay away from flying and then get into an F8F with only eight hours of SNJ refresher time. It's hard to predict all the jams that a fellow can get himself into, but it is possible to anticipate a lot of them. In this instance, an experienced F8F pilot, familiar with the feel of the plane and the force of the controls, would have recognized the trouble, slowed the plane down enough to let the other wheels come up, and been on his way without any further difficulty.

As far as I know, this is the first time this particular set of circumstances has cost us an F8F. Let's hope it is the last.