



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

20 Knots Over Mach

The spine-chilling paragraphs below are taken from the statement of the surviving member of a two-plane F9F flight which left NAS DALLAS for Maxwell AFB on a VFR clearance.

"Just west of Tyler, Texas, it became evident that we could no longer remain VFR because of the huge buildups and thundershowers ahead of us. We made a very large climbing 360 and refiled IFR. Before entering the clouds at 26,000 feet, I turned on pitot heat and cabin temperature to full hot. We continued climbing and at last check of altimeter read 38,500 feet. My ADF needle was making complete revolutions and MDF was nothing but static, no null or signal. Both ADF and MDF worked well before in clear weather.

"From then on it was all I could do to keep Captain in sight and stay on his wing. We never hit a clear or thin spot. After about 20 minutes at this altitude, I noticed the lead plane's canopy frosting up on top. A check of my own revealed the same thing, so I rechecked the temperature controls and went back to concentrating on flying wing.

"In a few minutes I could hardly see through the ice. I have reason to believe there was some ice on the outside. I lost sight of Captain and immediately began to wipe the canopy with the rough side of my glove but did not do any good. It took a few seconds to go from contact to instruments and I found I was in a right bank, maybe almost inverted. I leveled the wings and found my airspeed about 20 knots over the limiting Mach. I pulled the power off and tried to pull out but couldn't, so put the dive brake control in down position. This didn't seem to slow me like it usually does and I still couldn't pull out.

"At 19-20,000 until 13-14,000, I was in between two cloud layers and from what I could see, in a wings level steep dive. I re-entered the clouds and jettisoned the canopy. Decided I would bail out if I had not recovered by 4000 feet. By 8500 feet I was fairly level with 505 knots and no power. Went through a hole and did a steep turn to get back to it, where I orbited until I was down to 250 knots. Then I let down until I was VFR which was about 1800-2000 feet.



Sighted a small town to my left and made several low passes over it to identify it as Waskom, Texas. Barksdale AFB tower told me to fly 087 degrees but my magnetic compass was not settled and the G-2 compass was spinning—so I followed the highway to Shreveport.

"All the time I was going down, I had continuous lightning flashes on my canopy and very severe buffeting. My accelerometer read six positive and two point seven negative when I had recovered. Captain gave me instructions all the way down, and when I told him that I was going from a clear area back into the clouds and still could not get out of the dive, he told me to bail out. When I recovered, I told him so and he acknowledged it, but when I found I was over Waskom, I could not contact him."

This pilot subsequently landed at Barksdale AFB in a heavy rain storm. The flight leader who followed him part way down, also became disoriented. He finally reported that he was in the vicinity of Lake Providence, Louisiana, and was taking a heading for Jackson, Mississippi. Later he radioed that he was very low on fuel and was preparing to ditch. An extensive search has not discovered either the F9F-2 or the pilot.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

When I finished reading the wingman's statement, I felt like I had just been talking to a dead man who came back to tell us just "how it happened."

One fact that stands out in this accident is that each of these pilots could probably have gone through the storm had they not been in formation. Both were evidently well qualified instrument pilots. The wingman got into his initial difficulty by trying to stay in formation after his windshield and canopy had iced up. The flight leader's efforts to help him resulted in his getting lost and later losing his life.

In an emergency of this sort, it seems to me that little can be gained by a flight leader reversing course and remaining in the thunderhead, even though he is motivated by a desire to help his wingman.

When the weather conditions deteriorate to the point where ability to stay in formation first becomes doubtful, that's the time to take up a planned separation. Then continue on the original course "on the gauges" until breaking out in the clear. Any other course of action risks the possibility of a mid-air collision or a sudden, unexpected shift to instrument flying for the wingman. This is particularly dangerous if the wingman loses sight of the lead plane in a turn, because then he must fight against vertigo as he shifts to his instruments.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone,

The USS *Wright* (CVL-49) now has a total of 1,373 consecutive arrested landings aboard without an accident of any kind. We are quite proud of this and believe that it may have set some sort of a record. . . . Would appreciate your checking to see what the all time record number of consecutive accident free arrested landings is.

These landings were made while the ship was engaged in intensive refresher training and while taking part in the big Atlantic Fleet Lantflex 52 Operation. During the Lantflex operations the *Wright* took all emergency landings for her task group, took all the night landings, and still came through without a scar.

You might be interested to know that the *Wright* last week had its 40,000th arrested landing aboard, all without a single fatality. We think that, too, is something to be proud of.

Ensign, USN.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Your question is a tough one to answer. If you haven't set a record, you are well on the way. If any other carrier has a better record, we'll no doubt hear about it as soon as this gets in print.

Congratulations to the *Wright* on this

fine safety record. You might be interested to know that, according to the statisticians, the "average carrier" would have had approximately five accidents in that number of arrested landings.

Make Sure That It Fits

Last month the first of the new Mk-3 continuous wear exposure suits were shipped by air to squadrons in the Korean Theater. By the time you see this in print, distribution should be starting for stateside carrier type squadrons.

There's an excellent training film available to show how the suit should be individually fitted. This movie was produced by the Naval Photographic Center in the record time of a little over a week in order that it might accompany the first shipment of suits.

The movie number is MN7458, and the Technical Note dealing with the new exposure suit is No. 21-51.



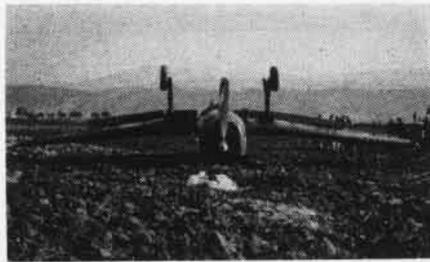
Grampaw Pettibone Says:

There are few items of equipment that have caused more gripes than exposure suits. I think you'll find the new model far more comfortable than you may expect. The outer suit is constructed of a "moisture vapor permeable, water impermeable coated fabric," which is a polite way of saying that your sweat won't have to collect around your ankles just because the suit is really water tight.

Vets Talk Combat

Eight Marine airmen, all veterans of more than 80 missions over Korea, recently passed along information to pilots of MAG-15, slated for future duty with squadrons overseas.

Profiting by someone else's experience is by no means an outstanding trait of humanity, but pilots of MAG-15 may save themselves many hardships through the experience of these veterans of a hard-bitten campaign. The battle-tested pilots stressed the importance of coordinated thought and action when disaster is imminent. They all pointed out the terrific job the helicopters are doing as a rescue team and felt that casualties would be far greater without their help.



No Smoking, Please

The pilot of the inverted F6F pictured here spent a very uncomfortable hour waiting for the arrival of a crane, so they could get him out.

Following a couple of barrel rolls which he began at an altitude of 8,000 feet, his engine began to misfire. It soon began to backfire so much that he was unable to maintain altitude. Despite changes of manifold pressure, RPM, and the use of emergency fuel pump, he was unable to get the engine to run smoothly.

Realizing that he wouldn't be able to return to his home field, he headed for a nearby airport. While some distance away, he saw that he was losing altitude too fast to make this field and that he would be forced to select a spot for an emergency landing. About this time he spotted a short dirt strip close by and decided to make a landing on this field. His engine quit completely at 900 feet and his position was such that he had to make a downwind approach.

He decided to try it with wheels extended. Although he touched down fairly close to the end of the strip, he was unable to stop and the F6F turned over on its back when it hit a ditch about 20 yards beyond the end of the runway.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I don't envy this chap hanging upside down for an hour while they brought the crane, but perhaps that was safer than attempting to dig him out. He wasn't injured except for minor bruises on his right arm. It was about ten minutes before some people arrived, and he had the presence of mind to warn them at once not to smoke.

The cause of the engine failure is not known. When a new prop was installed, the engine ran all right after considerable

priming. The accident board was of the opinion that the most probable cause of the misfiring and eventual failure was an air lock or vapor lock in the carburetor.

The pilot states that he was operating on the right main gas tank which had 55 gallons of gas. He did not shift tanks or make use of the primer in an effort to restart the engine.

His decision to land with his wheels down, although the strip was short and he was forced to approach from downwind, was motivated by a desire to avoid damaging the plane. Experience shows that this doesn't work very often in emergency landings.

A good general rule to follow is: In an emergency landing, if you have any doubt about the terrain, leave the wheels up. The ground is always rougher than it looks.

Don't Shoot Your Friends

There are societies for the prevention of just about everything, including one known as The Society for the Prevention of Disparaging Remarks About Brooklyn.

After an incident, which occurred not too far from Flatbush Avenue, I wouldn't be at all surprised to find that a S.F.T.P. O.C.T.T.P.* has been formed.

On returning from an authorized gunnery flight, the pilot of an F6F which had been used as tow plane noticed a couple of holes in the trailing edge of his starboard wing just above the flaps. Investigation revealed that these holes were made by .50 caliber bullets.

The pilot had been towing a 25A aerial target banner which was trailing approximately 900 feet behind the plane. During the gunnery flight, several course changes were necessary in order to remain clear of the gunnery flights. All of the pilots in this particular flight were sure that they were not in a position to hit the tow plane during their firing runs, and it is possible that the bullets came from a plane in one of the other gunnery flights. In any event, the path of the bullets through the wing indicates that they were fired from a position about 10 degrees off the stern and in a rather flat attitude.

*Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Tow Pilots.

