



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

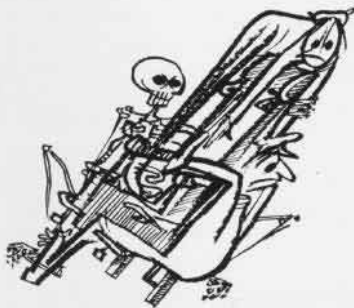
Whammo!

Two mechanics working on an F9F-2B were injured when the ejection seat was inadvertently fired. Both are recovering rapidly and are off the serious or critical list, but one man was blown into the overhead of the hangar deck, turned over twice on the way down and landed on the wing of an AD. He suffered a broken wrist, a gash in his leg, and a four-inch slice in his scalp. The other chap who was leaning over the seat, didn't get quite so much of a ride, but received multiple fractures and lacerations of the face.

These men had removed the canopy and had commenced the removal of the ejection seat to gain additional working space in order to repair a circuit breaker in the electrical panel in the right hand side of the cockpit. The cabin pressurization and oxygen hoses had been properly disassembled, and the drogue gun firing cable had been disconnected from the gun release key.

It was then decided that the work could be performed without removing the seat, and efforts in this direction were abandoned.

Immediately prior to the explosion,



one man was kneeling on the seat facing aft, while the other was standing on the flat part of the cockpit, looking down at the seat.

Evidently the safety pin had been removed in the firing mechanism although the pre-ejection lever had not been actuated and the canopy dump bottle was still fully charged, and the firing curtain in the stowed position.



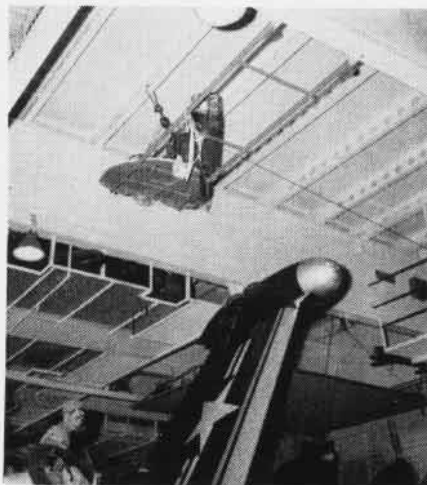
With the safety pin out, it is possible to fire the seat by inadvertently grasping or leaning on the firing cable or its housing. This has sufficient "give" to actuate the firing cam.



Gram Paw Pettibone Says:

The safety pin in the firing cam is very strong, and it requires a good pull to remove it. If you want to live to enjoy your retirement rights, **LEAVE THE SAFETY PIN IN PLACE** when working on the ejection seat. If it is necessary to remove the canopy, disconnect the spring clip fitting used to attach the safety pin to its operating cable.

As far as I know, this is the first case of inadvertent firing of an ejection seat. Let's make it the last! Remember, the seat is just like a loaded gun. You probably wouldn't look down the barrel of a loaded gun even with the safety on. Treat the ejection seat with the equal respect. The safety pin is plainly visible from the outside of the airplane. If you like your face—leave the pin in place.



EJECTION SEAT CAUGHT IN BASKETBALL CAGE

A Christian Now

With winter behind us once more and summer just around the corner, let's take a look at some of the "stuff" you may run into during months when the weather is supposed to be good.

The excerpts below are from the statement of a VR-3 plane commander who didn't have an accident, but found the last half of a transcontinental trip mighty rough.

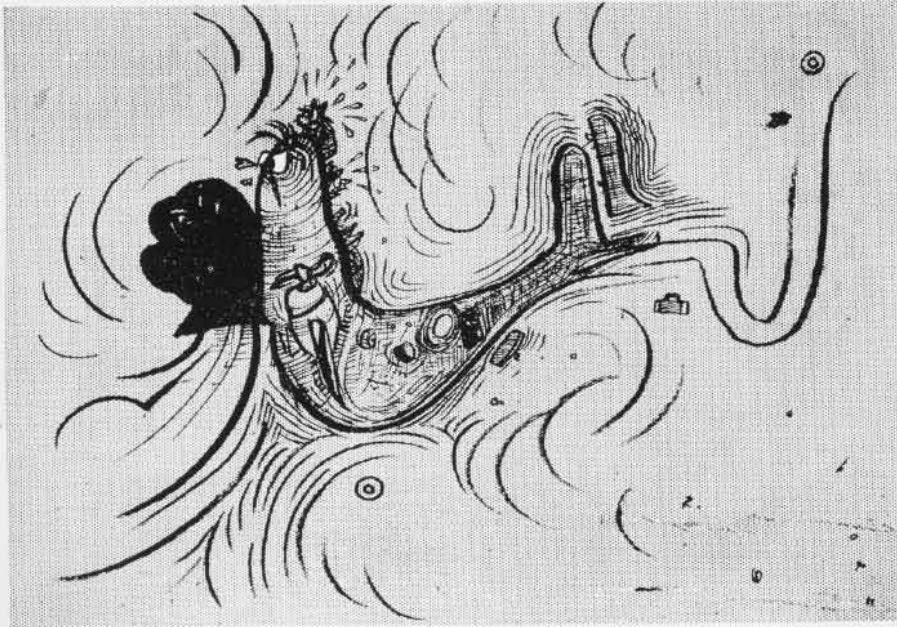
We pick up the flight after it passes Omaha. Weather had been CAVU up to this point. Thunderstorms were predicted to be building up between Omaha and Cleveland, and a troughline was reported to extend between Kansas City and Chicago, but was forecast to be very weak and of little consequence:

"Upon approaching Des Moines at 9,000 feet, a line of towering cumulus clouds, which appeared to be perpendicular to our course, was observed directly ahead. On checking over Des Moines, the CAA radio was reporting thunderstorms south and north of Des Moines, and also, gave the Moline weather, which was about the same. Prior to entering clouds, the word was passed to prepare for rough flying. We had 15 passengers aboard but no cargo.

"Ensign —, who was flying in the right seat, and myself prepared the cockpit for rough weather such as: mixtures rich, bypass down, gear handle up position, pilot heaters on, reduced power to give about 140 kts, and instrument lights full on (local time was about 1900 CST). For about the first 30 minutes after entering the storm, the turbulence was only moderate with rain and occasional lightning flashes. At times, we broke into the clear and managed to dodge a few of the build-ups.

"Twenty minutes before reaching Moline, the turbulence, rain, and lightning began to increase with the airspeeds reaching as high as 200 kts and as low as about 110 kts. The power was varied in accordance with these airspeed readings but continued flying by attitude using the artificial horizons. Before reaching Moline, I requested Ensign — to find out from CAA if there were any pilot reports on the weather between Moline and Chicago. CAA advised there were none.

"On checking over Moline (by using the radio compasses which continued to point to the tuned-in station), the



turbulence had reached what I considered to be severe. I might add at this point that no radio signals could be heard on any of the radio equipment except the VHF which continued to work perfectly. However, as I said above, the radio compasses continued to point to station selected (which was done by frequency setting only). At this time, it was decided to try a lower altitude. ATC granted our request for 7000 feet. It took a good 20 minutes to reach 7000 feet, with the turbulence and lightning continuing to be severe.

"By this time, it became quite apparent that something had to be done to reduce the amount of strain being put on the airplane and passengers, not to mention the crew. I instructed Ensign — to ask ATC for any heading that would take us out of the storm area. ATC returned with: 'Chicago Weather Control advises make a 180° turn. Thunderstorms in the Chicago area are unpenetrable.' With this an immediate 180° turn was made. Upon completing this turn, and after half way settling down on a 270° heading, the magnetic compass was observed to be still reading approximately 090°. The electrical disturbance was apparently great enough to cause this error in the magnetic compass.

"After about one-and-a-half minutes on a heading of 270° the compass suddenly swung around to our gyro heading. Rather than re-fly what I had already flown, I decided to attempt a landing at Moline which was estimated to be about 30 minutes away. Moline CAA advised the weather was clearing over the field. Before landing, the wind direction changed twice, but held steady during my final approach.

"We checked at the weather office to

see if there might be any chance of re-routing our flight to bypass the storm area. The forecaster thought there was a good chance of us going south to Peoria and then to Terre Haute on East via green four. But the question was getting through the storm area to Peoria. The forecaster said he thought we would have about 15 to 30 minutes of thunderstorms to fly through and then be out into the clear. With this weather information, we decided to give it a try. I might add that four passengers decided that Davenport, Iowa was closer to their destination than Westover, and declined further air transportation.

"The first 15 minutes of our flight to Peoria was VFR at 5000 feet with continual lightning flashes in all quadrants. However, very shortly we were back in the thunderstorms with Lt. — at the controls and me in the right seat. Again the radio compasses did their job and we managed to arrive over Peoria. My report to Peoria was, 'Estimate to be over Peoria, varying altitude between 7000 and 3000 feet supposed to be at 5000, will not be able to check over Pontiac intersection since static is too great, will proceed on direct course to Chanute.'

"They returned with, 'ATC advises you can maintain any altitude you desire, no IFR clearance in the area.' After about one hour and 30 minutes of flying through the worst turbulence that I have



ever encountered, we broke into the clear just west of Indianapolis. Needless to say, it was certainly a welcome sight to see clear skies ahead. The remainder of the flight went very smoothly.

"Knowing what I know now about this particular storm area, I would have certainly flown it quite differently, namely:

"a. Landed at Omaha, refueled, filed a new flight plan that would have taken me around this storm area to the south.

"b. Or landed at Omaha and waited for the storm to clear before proceeding.

"In conclusion, I might pass along what I intend to do before encountering any such future thunderstorms.

"a. Obtain all possible information on the storm area by requesting pilot reports, forecaster information, and CAA Weather Central forecasts.

"b. If the storm is over a large area and cannot be circumnavigated with fuel aboard, I will land, refuel, and refile a flight plan around the storm area.

"c. If the storm appears to be a rough one and the above things cannot be accomplished, land at the nearest suitable airport and wait for the weather to clear.

"d. Never believe that all thunderstorms are flyable. I have generally had this opinion from past flying experience, but I have certainly changed my mind.

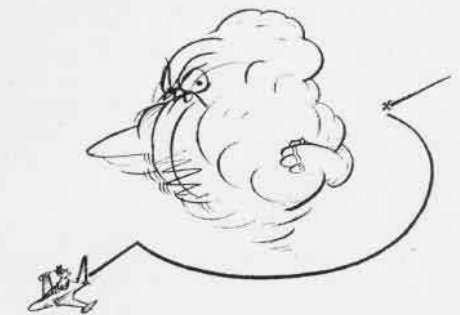
"e. If the thunderstorms have to be flown, fly at the lowest safe altitude over flat terrain. In mountainous country, I suggest plenty of reserve altitude."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Just reading about a trip like this curls my beard and makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck. The flight had a definite "Christianizing" effect on this crew, and I don't have much to add to the excellent advice contained in the Plane Commander's list of resolutions.

However, I'll pass on a tip which has helped me live to such a ripe old age. When you see a line of thunderstorms ahead, and find that you can't go OVER, UNDER, or AROUND, then ask yourself: "Is this trip necessary now?"



If you can find any way to arrive at a negative reply, land and treat yourself to a short beer for being safety conscious. Nine times out of ten the weather will be fine the next morning, and those towns nobody lands at often prove interesting.