GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Shouldn't Have Happened

Two lieutenants in a JRB-6 were cleared for an IFR cross country instrument training flight. The weather at their destination at the ETA was predicted to be 2500-foot overcast, one mile visibility with fog and smoke.

Following a supposedly uneventful flight, a GCA letdown was begun at the point of the first intended landing. At this time the weather had deteriorated to a ceiling of "indefinite, 300 feet, visibility ½ mile with fog and smoke." This local weather was reported to the pilot and his alternate was reported to be 2500 feet with three miles visibility. He acknowledged the weather report

but elected to continue his GCA approach.

The final approach was fairly steady except for numerous corrections to heading. When the pilot was informed by the GCA final controller that he had reached the GCA minimums of 200 feet and ½ mile, he evidently did not have the runway in sight for he initiated his own waveoff. During the waveoff, both engines were heard to cut out intermittently and within a few seconds the plane crashed three miles from the field, killing both occupants.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Here's another of those unfortunate accidents that should never have happened. This fatal accident might have been prevented had the pilot elected to land at

his alternate. In addition to his alternate there were *two* other airports within 20 miles of his destination that were reported to him to be VFR!

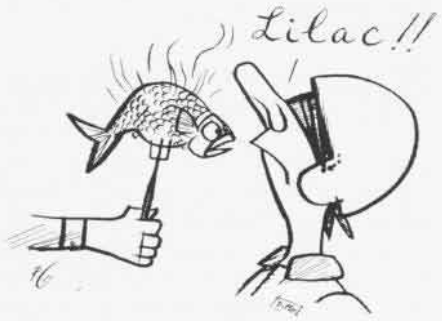
The plane was demolished and the accident board was unable to determine the exact cause of the reported engine malfunction, although carburetor icing and fuel starvation were considered the most likely possibilities.

However, the thing that impressed me when studying this report was the fact that this pilot with very little recent instrument experience elected to make an approach to a field near GCA minimums when there were three airports nearby that were VFR. He held a current standard instrument qualification, but had flown only 12 hours of actual or simulated instruments and a total of 117 hours in all types of aircraft in the preceding twelve months. He had flown 5.9 simulated instrument hours in JRB type aircraft in the past three months but had made no GCA approaches during this period.

Confidence in your ability as an aviator is mighty important, but there comes a time when good old "horse sense" must draw the line between confidence and foolhardiness. There is no practical means for a *clearance official* to ascertain your real ability to fly in actual weather conditions. You must carefully evaluate your own limitations when requesting a clearance. It's mighty foolish to request a clearance under weather conditions which tax your capacity; it not only risks your neck but the lives of others as well as the loss of costly government property.

If you're in a position where you can't maintain your peak proficiency, nobody is going to criticize you for raising your weather minimums a few hundred feet to fit your actual state of training. It's a mark of good judgment. Remember that the *best* safety device lies directly between the ears.

It's a lot better to be able to fib to your grandchildren in person about your prowess as an all weather pilot rather than have them hear about it second hand. Besides, it's a *lot* more convincing.



How's Your Sniffer?

A keen sense of smell is not one of the requisites for physical fitness of our pilots, but it might not be a bad idea.

Tests have been made to test the sense of smell by wafting an opened package of cigarettes in front of a blindfolded pilot. In one such test undertaken recently with a group of pilots, the answers were quite amazing—one reported that the smell was soap, another said figs, another thought that he smelled perfume, and others recognized the smell as tobacco.

In light of the large number of reported "smoke" conditions in aircraft, it might prove to be an added safety feature in pinpointing potential trouble for pilots to put in a litle nose time learning to distinguish between different types of smells—hydraulic fluid, fabric, rubber insulation, electrical, etc.

Anyway, it smells like a good idea.

Blind Leading the Blind

An instructor and a student officer who was on an initial check-out in the SNB were cleared on a VFR flight plan from Denver to NAS OLATHE, Kansas, with the student at the controls. The

take-off was started and, after traveling a distance of approximately 700 feet, the aircraft swerved to the left.

The student overcorrected for the swerve, and the aircraft swerved about 30 degrees to the right of the runway heading. The aircraft left the runway on this heading 1400 feet from the point of take-off, proceeded about 1700 feet into the boondocks and became airborne—for a short time, that is. It seems that at some time during the prairie run the instructor co-pilot lowered ½ flap in an effort to become airborne.

The plane was airborne for about 200 feet, again contacted the ground and bounced another thousand feet before coming to rest upright in a drainage ditch. The impact with the drainage ditch was sufficient to separate the engines from the fuselage, rupturing the fuel tanks in the process. Fire followed immediately and the two pilots left the aircraft but not before sustaining major injuries—first and second degree burns, bruises and lacerations. Naturally, the aircraft was a strike.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Here are two lads that are mighty lucky they aren't pushing *up* daisies instead of cutting them down. About the only kind thing the accident board had to say about them was that evidently they had no trouble taxiing. They were doing fine—except for a few items—(1) the check-out was being made by a pilot unqualified as an instructor; (2) the aircraft had brakes only on the student's side; (3) the takeoff wasn't aborted as it should have been—either before the plane left the runway or shortly thereafter; (4) half flaps were added to assist in becoming airborne. The SNB handbook indicates 11° or one-fourth flap is optimum for minimum takeoff. Anything over that will induce a drag effect. And (5) shoulder harness wasn't being used by either pilot.

From all indications, it appears that the ground loop started when the student pilot allowed, or forced, the tail wheel off the ground before the airspeed built up to the point that directional control could be maintained with rudder. Also, the instructor either didn't recognize or correct the situation in time. It's a little difficult to ground loop the SNB on takeoff if you keep the tail wheel on the ground until you have directional rudder control.

Tail wheel up fast, 700 feet,
Swerve to the left, not so neat,
Correction applied, swerve to the right
Clear off the runway, better sit tight,
Throttles bent forward, mighty rough roll,
Look at me, daddy, no directional control.
Half flap added, it's in the bag
Oops, I'm sorry, that creates drag,
Back to the ground, short time airborne,
Now here I lie, all tattered and torn.

Careless Type

A lieutenant (junior grade), pilot of a TBM-3E, cleared for a cross country RON, took off from NAS OAKLAND and landed at Burbank at 0830. He didn't refuel his aircraft at Burbank because of the high price of commercial gas—anyway, he still had 200 gallons. Since he was eager to return to Oakland in order to attend school the next day, he decided not to remain overnight and took off from Burbank at 2238 for Oakland.

The pilot became very sleepy, he says, and after passing Fresno he dozed off owing to a combination of having the heater on and of being very tired. When he awoke, he realized that he was lost and low on gas and, seeing a lighted field nearby, decided to land. He landed hard and too far down the runway on his first pass and dragged his port wing tip while taking a waveoff for another approach. He made a normal landing on his next approach and bought 50 gallons of gas from the night watchman at the airport (Stockton, Calif.).

Without checking his aircraft for damage, he took off from Stockton at 0225 and landed at Oakland at 0245. He didn't realize that the aircraft had been damaged until after he had taken off from Stockton and the plane felt left-wing heavy. The port outer wing panel and aileron assembly required replacement.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I wonder just how careless you can be and still get away with it? This lad is mighty lucky that he isn't pushing up daisies. Among other things, he wasn't using oxygen while flying over 5000 ft. at night as is required by OpNavInst 3710.7. This probably had a direct bearing on his sleepiness.

There may be some extenuating circum-

stances that I've missed, but it appears to me that this lad used questionable judgment all around:

1. When he continued to fly even though he was very tired and had been awake for better than 20 hours.

2. After he realized that he was sleepy, he didn't land when he had the opportunity instead of continuing the flight.

3. When he failed to examine his plane thoroughly following the hard and near crash landing.

If this young fellow's thought processes don't improve mighty soon, I think he better start looking for a different occupation before it's too late—one in which the consequences for making a mistake are generally not so final.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

A check of the incoming accident reports reveals that some activities are still submitting AAR's using ACL 63-50 as the requiring authority. *OPNav Instruction 3750.6* dated 19 November 1952 cancelled ACL 63-50 and is the present requiring authority for the submission of aircraft accident, aircraft damage, and forced landing reports.

It's mighty important that these reports be submitted promptly and accurately. If this is accomplished, the cognizant office in the Office of Naval Operations and the Bureau of Aeronautics can take speedy action to implement the recommendations and to correct any indicated deficiencies in material, operations or flight training.