



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

The other day I overheard a couple of aviators discussing a recent GCA practice flight they had flown. They had been making visual practice runs and had missed the runway several times and gotten pretty low on a couple of passes. The gist of their conversation was that they certainly were glad that they had found out about that lousy GCA crew before they had to make an approach in actual IFR weather.

I have flown a lot of instruments and that lousy GCA crew they were talking about has brought me down in all kinds of weather when without them I doubt if I could have made it.

I can remember the time that I felt just about like these two aviators, but that was a long time ago when the equipment wasn't as good and the GCA operators were not as well trained as they are now. Why is there still so much difference of opinion among aviators about the value of GCA?

CDR, USN



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Your letter reminds me of that story about the young lad of 16 who thought that his father was mighty ignorant, but when he was twenty years old, he was amazed at how much knowledge his old man had gained in just four short years. It takes a complete knowledge of GCA procedures and a lot of practice and cooperation on the part of the pilot with the GCA to make those "perfect" GCA approaches. I've seen some pilots pull stunts that make the job of the GCA crew much more diffi-



cult in addition to fooling themselves. Some of the best known types follow.

LITTLE HELPER—Some pilots, while practicing visual GCA approaches and coming down the glide path, will try to help the final controller. Oftentimes they will take up a new heading, on their own hook, so as to line up with the runway. They don't even give the final controller a chance to give them a correction. This is a noble gesture, but! The final controller can only assume that the pilot is holding

the headings he has been given and any subsequent movement of the blip on the scope is an indication of wind drift. Consequently, the final director will give a heading correction to compensate for the presumed drift. A vicious cycle is then set in motion with the result that the aircraft is given a waveoff by the final controller because it is out of the GCA azimuth limits for landing.

AZIMUTH EXPERT—There are others who have little or no trouble with the course in azimuth. Usually they start out by informing the GCA crew that they will fly the glide path at 100 knots. Rapid mental calculations considering the factors of a wife, two children and a low ceiling are converted into 10 knots each, raising the airspeed to 140 on the glide path. The GCA controller operates considering the proper descent for the particular glide path based on the intended airspeed. (Nuff said on that point.)

THROTTLE BENDER—Then there's the throttle bender who on the final approach uses everything from power off to war emergency instead of constant power settings to remain on the glide path and establish a constant rate of descent. The only time he gets on the glide path is in passing through it from one bad position to another.

True, I've exaggerated a bit but these are the pilots who put the blame for poor approaches on the GCA crew. It's a good idea to watch a few GCA approaches on the scopes so that you will have a better understanding of some of the problems of the final controller before you go blowing off a lot of steam.

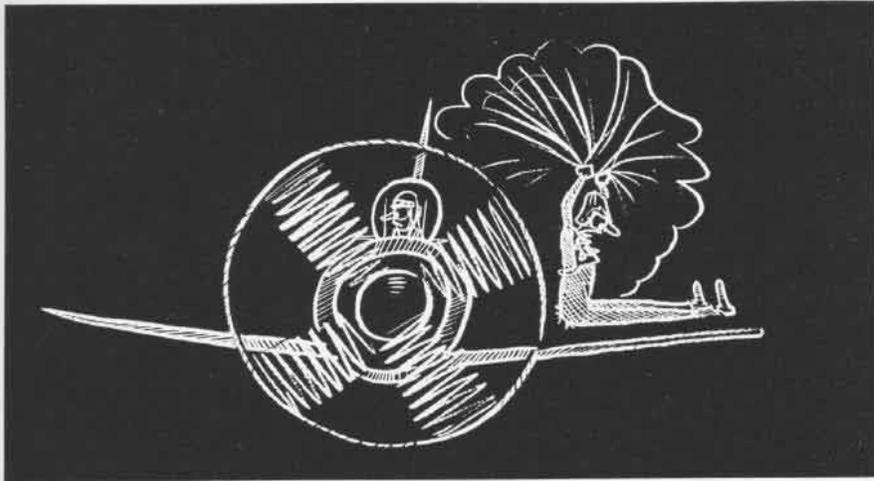
When the chips are down, GCA is one outfit devoted to keeping you in one piece, so why not take out that free insurance policy on your life and cooperate with those fellows on the scopes?

Runaway Prop

Five pilots flying AD-3's took off on a scheduled night rocket and miniature bombing flight. On the fourth bombing run one of the pilots noticed that his tachometer registered 2600 turns during pullout. The RPM returned to normal but shortly after entry into the fifth bombing run he heard the propeller overspeed again, exceeding 3200.

Recovery to level flight was made, throttle retarded and the propeller pitch control set to full high pitch. He turned to a heading that would take him back to his home field and another member of the flight joined up on his wing to act as an escort. The RPM remained at





2500 in level flight in full high pitch, but the oil temperature began to rise steadily and the engine began to run rough and cut out.

The engine finally quit entirely and the pilot bailed out 10 miles short of his home field. The wingman didn't see the pilot bail out, but he did observe the plane crash and proceeded to circle the area of the crash. It was determined that the accident was caused by material damage and subsequent engine failure.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I have a feeling that this lad might have made it back to his home field if he had started back at the first indication of trouble. Aircraft accident statistics show that any time that you have a runway prop, you better start looking for the nearest place to land, as this condition is generally followed by material damage and engine failure.

In addition, this accident shows that the bailout trainer is paying off in a big way. This pilot used the same procedure he had recently learned in the bailout trainer. He stated that when he decided to bail out, he didn't feel a bit uneasy, even though it was a mighty dark night.

However, while descending in his parachute he had several close calls when his wingman began circling the area of the crash. Under similar circumstances, it's a good idea for the escort to maintain a safe distance and altitude from the lead aircraft so that he doesn't endanger the pilot in the parachute in case he has bailed out.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone—

I have been flying more than 22 years and am pushing 6,000 hours experience, but had to wait until now to almost get booby-trapped by this situation!

At one of our largest air stations, I received preliminary taxi clearance from Ground Control to runway 28 which was a mile away. Enroute, Ground Control commenced giving my instrument flight plan clearance, but I cut him off, using 4495-323 kcs. A little later, my SNB

having passed clear of most local ground traffic, I told him to go ahead and, following receipt, immediately started a repeat back. Suddenly on the edge of runway 23, which had to be crossed enroute to runway 28, I looked up to discover that it was active for landing while 28 was being used for takeoff only. A plane on its rollout was bearing down rapidly, all too close. It passed clear.

Naturally, I mentally kicked myself in the posterior portion of my anatomy for my head-down-and-locked condition while transmitting my IFR flight plan. But not until return, did I discover the other contributing factors.

The taxi clearance had omitted mention of runway 23 being active. It appeared that late frantic "hold position" orders had been issued by the control tower during my repeat-back. Tower's voice recorder later naturally gave no indication that *all my receivers were inactivated by my own transmission*. My tail being toward the tower, visual signals were useless and nothing but my belated look around prevented a class "A" accident.

The moral of this story is that *two* pilots have plenty to do in safely moving their planes from *here* to *there* on the ground without the concurrent handicap of copying and originating long transmissions. I strongly recommend that IFR clearance handling be reserved for the warm-up spot at the head of the runway.

.....
Captain, USN

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Many thanks for your interesting letter. It tends to prove that old adage "Never too old to learn."

It's a cinch a pilot can't afford to let his attention be concentrated on any one thing for more than a few seconds even on the ground, or he's leaving himself wide open for trouble. I heartily concur with your recommendation concerning IFR clearance handling.

What we need is a little more honesty

such as yours, and a few more stories of "near accidents" that have a happy ending. Anything that will help *prevent* an accident is worth talking about. If you lads can learn to profit by the mistakes of others, you stand a mighty good chance of staying on the right side of the statistics ledger.

Quick Thinking Saves Four

The pilot of a TBM-3 was making a full power turn-up prior to a catapult shot. He was checking his instruments before giving a catapult officer the "ready" signal when he realized he was rolling down the deck. Too far down the deck to stop, he added full power in an attempt to become airborne. Immediately after clearing the deck, he raised the landing gear and began to settle rapidly. He hit the water in a slightly nose high, wing level attitude.

The plane was lost, but the pilot and three crewmen got out immediately and broke out the large raft as well as the pilot's para-raft. They did not inflate the rafts as they were rescued at once.

Cause of this accident was material failure. The tension ring of the hold back unit failed, allowing premature release of the aircraft. BUAER reports that testing has been completed on a "D" shaped hold back and tension ring and modified hold back head to be used with it. This new assembly will eliminate the need for a tension ring retainer and prevent rings from "cocking" and breaking prematurely as this one did. Change kits with the "D" ring and new hold-back head will be issued to the Fleet soon.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This TBM pilot deserves a lot of credit. He made his decision quickly when indecision could have been disastrous.

What impressed me more than anything else when reading this report was the orderly manner in which the crew ditched the aircraft. No panic! No confusion! Well trained in "emergency procedures," they were ready for trouble when it happened.

Right now is a mighty good time to break out that old "dusty" squadron ditching bill and bring it up to date. Standard ditching drills should be an integral part of each squadron's doctrine.

It's a lot easier to use an ounce of prevention now and be prepared for any emergency, rather than to use a pound of perspiration later writing letters of condolence to the next of kin.

