



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Russian Roulette

The pilot of an F4U was cleared for an air/ground demonstration which included simulated dive bombing and rocket runs. He entered his first bombing run at 40-50°. As he started to pull out, he noticed a spongy effect in the elevator controls and as he increased the back pressure on the stick, the aircraft pulled up abruptly, making the climb out abnormally steep.

At this point we pick up the pilot's statement: "I decided to make a shallow diving entry on my next pass to test the plane at various 'G' stresses before continuing on the flight. My



second run proved that I would be unable to dive at steep glide angles as I got the same effect as on the first run, except that the snap effect was a bit more pronounced, and left me climbing out at an angle of about 75°.

"On my third run I leveled off high and pulled up with the same effect as on the previous runs. I decided to make one more pass before returning to the base. I entered the fourth run in a shallow diving turn. On pull-out I applied back-stick pressure gradually as I was hesitant to pull back sharply because of the trouble I had had previously. I was losing altitude rapidly and it looked as if I was going into the trees. As I pulled the stick back all the way the plane once again pulled up sharply, but not before hitting the tops of some trees on top of a ridge.



"The plane came out of the trees nose-high and snapped to the left on its back. I completed the roll to the left and had difficulty stopping the roll. I pushed the nose over and applied full throttle and although the plane was shuddering, it would fly. I needed over 160 knots to maintain flying speed.

"At this point I noted a large hole in my left wing. I started a shallow climb to get some altitude to test the stall characteristics of the aircraft before returning to the base. Almost immediately my oil pressure dropped to zero and my engine quit. As the engine quit, the plane rolled to the left. I had difficulty in getting out of the cockpit, but finally managed. As I reached for the rip cord I was struck violently in the back (he probably hit the plane's horizontal stabilizer) and almost lost consciousness. I pulled the rip cord and the chute opened just before I struck the ground."



Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Holy Smokes! You finally got on the ground with a whole skin, but I didn't think you were gonna make it. Son, if you were so all-fired anxious to play a game of chance, why didn't you drag out your old "38" revolver and play a little game of "Russian Roulette." That would have made about as much sense as your antics in this case.

It's beyond me what you expected to gain by making that third and fourth run since you had already decided that you shouldn't continue the flight. Any time that you're in the air and something



goes wrong with your plane, you're asking for a heap of trouble if you don't head for the nearest landing strip and find out what's wrong. If you don't believe me, you oughta read the epitaphs of a few other aviators who were just about as hard to convince as you are.

Since the plane was demolished on impact, they haven't found out yet what was wrong with the controls, but it's a cinch that the control column trouble had nothing to do with the engine failure.

Anyway, from here in I'd say you better be pretty careful, as there's little doubt that you've forced your guardian angel to take a "rest cure."

Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Brakes should be left off when airplanes are parked in very cold weather to prevent them from freezing tightly in the locked position.

Plenty of Rime—No Reason

A flight of five F8F's were cleared on a local IFR training flight. The weather at the time was estimated to be 600-800 feet, eight miles visibility, with the top of the overcast at 3500 feet. Light rime was reported in the clouds. The weather was expected to deteriorate to 400 feet with the visibility decreasing to one to two miles.

The Organized Reserve pilots were briefed to climb through the overcast, form a stack on the range station, and make a range approach and a GCA run prior to final landing. Each plane was given individual clearance for climb out at timed intervals.

The flight leader was cleared to climb out and report over the range station at 3000 feet. When the flight leader reported leaving the range station and descending to the GCA pattern, the number two man in the flight received the same clearance. The other three aircraft were cleared through the overcast to maintain four, five and six thousand feet respectively.

The flight leader made two GCA runs before he landed. Upon landing, he noticed that the plane's stalling speed was very high and that he had one and one-half to two inches of rime ice on the leading edge of the aircraft's wings. The other members of the flight were so informed.

During this time the number two man in the flight became lost in the overcast. While making a left turn at 3000 feet and 130 knots, the plane stalled and entered a spin to the right. He recovered from the spin on instruments but he struck a 10-inch wooden high tension pole before completing his recovery, causing considerable damage to his plane (and no doubt to his peace of mind). He climbed to 2500 feet, received a DBF steer back to the field and landed with about 300 feet of wire dragging behind the plane. He

also had about two inches of rime ice on his plane.

Meanwhile, the remaining three F8F's became lost above the overcast. They were brought back to the field by DBF, put into the GCA pattern individually and landed without too much trouble. The weather at this time had deteriorated to a variable ceiling of 200-500 feet with a visibility of one to two miles.



Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Gee whiz, fellows, everybody knows that flights under actual instrument conditions are essential in the development of a proficient instrument pilot, but did you have to crank in the rime ice and deteriorating weather on a single engine training flight to prove the point? You're pretty lucky that the flight turned out as well as it did.

Under the prevailing weather conditions, it appears to me that the person who cleared the flight was just "asking for it," particularly since none of the pilots had any recent instrument experience, although they all held valid instrument ratings. The pilot of the plane that hit the high tension pole hadn't flown an instrument flight in four and a half months. He had flown only 5.8 hours of flight time in the preceding three months. Under the circumstances, I think he deserves a lot of credit for remaining calm in his emergency when panic could easily have cost him his life.

There oughta be a law requiring a certain minimum amount of instrument training each quarter for pilots holding instrument ratings. It's a cinch you shouldn't be flying under minimum weather conditions if you haven't flown instruments for four or five months.

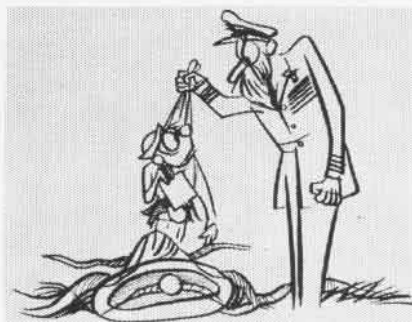
Climb and descent through an overcast is excellent training, and if the flights are properly controlled, is the safest form of instrument training. Let's play it safe, and when you're flying on instruments in an aircraft not equipped with de-icing equipment—either avoid icing areas or plan your flight to minimize the time spent in icing areas.

I still have a sneaky feeling that this accident might have been avoided if the tower operator had followed his instructions and cleared all of the planes to "500 on top" before the pilots began their range approach.

Non-Scheduled Flight

Just about the time I think I've heard all the reasons for busting up airplanes, along comes something new.

About midnight one dark night, an



SNJ was started and observed to taxi away from the parking area. The plane continued to taxi, making numerous changes of heading and came to a stop on the end of one of the unlighted runways on the field. Attempts to contact the plane by radio were unsuccessful.

During the take-off, the plane was observed to swerve 90° to the left, become airborne for a short time, stall out, and hit on its left wing and begin to cartwheel. The landing gear sheared off at this time and the plane skidded backwards for about 120 feet before coming to rest. The occupant was uninjured.

Not that somewhat similar accidents haven't happened before, but just listen to this:

The plane was being maneuvered by a seaman apprentice (he had never flown before) who decided that patrolling the ramp on watch was a little dull and thought that a little joy ride would break the monotony of it all. He started the airplane and taxied out to an unlighted runway and attempted to take off into a nice black night. You've already heard the rest.



Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Believe me, I've been tugging on my beard for many a day over this one. The ISIC in his endorsement on the accident report states: "It is considered that this accident is an isolated case in which no trend or pattern is discernible and that the possibilities of a recurrence of this type of accident are highly remote."

Well, for goodness sakes, let's hope so!

Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

If the hatch or other opening is left open when a plane is parked in very cold weather, air is allowed to circulate. This prevents formation of frost on the inner side of the windshield.

