



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## With Their 'Switches' Down

An SNB-5 departed Chincoteague on an instrument round robin training flight. Shortly after takeoff the ADF was noted to be erratic and finally, after about an hour and a half, it failed completely. Little consideration was given to this inasmuch as the ADF had been reported to be unreliable and had failed previously.

The pilots proceeded to Patuxent to make simulated GCA runs. Upon arrival attempts were made to establish radio contact with Patuxent tower on VHF and MHF, but without success. Noting that the weather at Patuxent was deteriorating, the pilots decided to proceed to Washington. Upon tuning in the Washington radio range station, it was noted that the reception of signals was very weak. Attempts to contact or tune into other range stations in the area were unsuccessful and it was finally determined that all radio gear was inoperative.

While returning to Chincoteague, the pilots noted that the oil pressure gauge had dropped to 60 pounds and the fuel quantity gauges indicated that an excessive amount of fuel was being used. At this point, the co-pilot decided there must be something a little wrong—maybe with the electrical system—but when he checked the battery switches, they were on.

The pilots after buzzing the tower at Chincoteague received a green light to land. The landing gear switch was placed in the down position, but nothing happened. The landing gear clutch was depressed, and the gear was manually lowered until the crank could not be moved any further. One throttle was retarded and the landing gear warning horn did not blow. The wheels were visually sighted. The gear warning light showed neither red nor green.

After touchdown on landing just as the pilots were congratulating each other on their astuteness in handling their emergency in such a commendable manner, the landing gear collapsed.



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

Great Balls of Fire! How fat, dumb and happy can you get? All you had to do was turn your generators *on!* I thought maybe you were gonna make it there for a minute when you checked your battery switches, but I guess that was a little too much to expect.

There's no doubt that many aviators have neglected to turn their generators on but fortunately most of them are able to determine their oversight "pdq". All indications pointed to voltage exhaustion, the source of which is the batteries which in turn are supported by the generators. Why such an elementary deduction could have escaped both these pilots while they played "footsie" for 2.4 hours is beyond me.

It's no wonder the landing gear warning horn didn't blow or the landing warning lights didn't register. The battery probably didn't have enough juice left in it to set off a cap pistol. The moral



to this story is not to get caught out without a charge in your battery.

Granted that visual sighting of a portion of a wheel is a morale booster, it's no sure sign that your wheels are down and locked. Since these lads took off with a full load of gas, it wouldn't have taken much figuring to determine that there wasn't too big a hurry to get on the ground.

If you want to save yourself a lot of embarrassment, just be sure that you rock that hand crank a little to ensure that the landing gear clutch is seated the next time it becomes necessary to manually lower the wheels in the *Beechcraft*. If you have never manually operated the landing gear in a *Beech*, it would be a mighty good idea to get your maintenance officer to put one of his *Beechcraft* on the jacks and personally cycle the gear so that there is no doubt in your mind about the correct procedure to use in case you ever get in the bite.

That old saying "What you don't know won't hurt you" just doesn't apply to aviators. These lads didn't know what their trouble was. Not only that—but they didn't know they didn't know.

## Strike Three—You're Out

An AF-2S made a forced landing away from home because of intermittent loss of power. Maintenance personnel were sent from the squadron to correct the discrepancy. A cowl speed ring was found obstructing fuel flow into the carburetor, the backfire door was found loose, idle mixture was too rich. Discrepancies were corrected and the engine ground checked O.K.

The next day after preflight, the aircraft was test flown by another pilot. When power was reduced after take-off, the engine began to run rough with propeller surges. An emergency landing was made and discrepancies given *verbally* to a second class mech. The pilot *believes* he told the mech of both discrepancies.

The propeller governor was changed and the same pilot test flew the plane after a satisfactory ground check. There was no propeller surge, but the engine



ran slightly rough. A climb to 1500 feet was completed and power reduced to cruise. The engine *quit* and did not restart until the prop was placed in full low pitch in the emergency approach. The pilot verbally reported all indications normal on instruments during both flights and recommended an engine change.

On the third day the supercharger drain valve was found broken and was replaced. The engine ground checked O.K. and the crew *decided* that this replacement corrected the trouble.

A third pilot test flew the aircraft for two circles of the field. He found a slight rough running range at 2400 RPM but *decided* that the aircraft was O.K. and headed for home. Five minutes later backfiring and vibration were encountered at all throttle and pitch settings and the engine finally quit. The pilot was forced to land in a pea patch and luckily escaped injury. The plane didn't make out as well.

 **Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

Son, you were batting .000 when you came up to the plate. However, it looks like your whole team was playing against you on this one. It's just another



case where the right arm doesn't know what the left arm is doing.

Any maintenance system that doesn't require explicit written discrepancies and detailed description of work performed is all wet. It's a lead-pipe cinch that a maintenance man can't be expected to correct a verbal discrepancy incompletely given. "Engine running rough" or "Cylinder temperature too high" even when written down just isn't going to do

the trick as you can plainly see.

By giving more explicit symptoms of trouble, the pilot not only helps the maintenance crew but enables the next pilot to check for these symptoms to determine if the trouble has been corrected. In this case, O&R still hasn't pinpointed the real trouble with this engine.

It's high time somebody impressed upon you test pilots that the purpose of a test hop is to see if the plane is functioning properly and to determine if the previous reported trouble has been corrected. You certainly can't do your job if you don't know what the previous trouble was.

In my book, two circles of the field certainly doesn't constitute a test hop and in this case proved a little more foolish than somewhat. That old thumb rule about staying within gliding distance of the field on a test flight isn't outdated yet, either.

A word to the wise is usually sufficient.

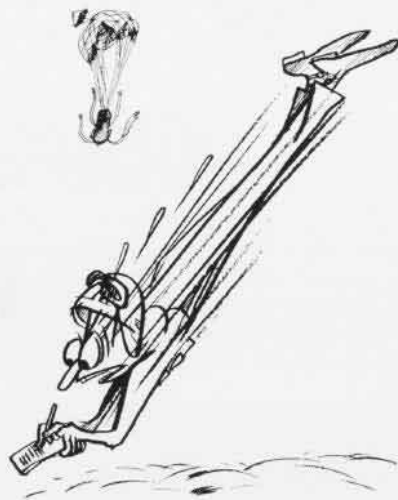


### Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

During recent maneuvers on a local rice plantation, I stumbled upon some debris consisting of nylon oddments, buckles and webbing. Nearby was a small pad of lined note paper covered with a fine irregular tracing which cryptographers have identified as Gregg. Transcription revealed it to be a message of which you are the addressee. The text, under an undecipherable heading, is as follows:

Grandfather Pettibone:

It is my unfortunate duty to confess and admit that you were right and I am so wrong. I am, I was, I mean I have always been a careful and deliberate aviator. I have used my check-off lists with care. I have planned my flights well, with great attention to small details. I always buckled the leg-straps of my parachute at the first hint of trouble. Today there was no hint. There was a flash and a shudder and my



beautiful aircraft was gone, demolished. Cravenly I took to the silk.

I am now at Angels 12, my parachute is at 7 o'clock high. I am not in it. Sir, this is hard to take.

If other aircraft were in sight, a report would be made that another pilot had fallen from his harness. I am alone, so the responsibility to report is mine. Other aviators must learn from my experience that a parachute should furnish service, not demand it, in time of need. There is no check-off list in an emergency.

Fortunately I am expert at short-hand, indeed (if I may take the time to boast) I headed the inter-office competitions at Bretton's before I was recalled to active duty. In the few thousand feet which now remain I wish to stress the urgency of this report, so that others may be spared this embarrassment. If this should reach you, please give it the very widest publicity. I am not one to employ the superlative loosely but this is most disconcerting!

At this point the paper has been pierced and the lower portion torn away.

 **Grampaw Pettibone Says:**

Many thanks for your interesting story. I'm right impressed with your lively imagination. It reminds me of many of the pilots' "hindsight" statements that I read—when they try to explain how an accident happened. If we could just figure out some way to harness the imagination of these same lads at a time like this and apply it to preventing accidents before they happen, we'd about have the problem licked. If anybody has any ideas along this line, I'd sure like to have them. There's little doubt that everybody, particularly the taxpayer, would be in better shape financially.