



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Rock and a Hard Place

The pilot of an F9F-6 was catapulted at 2120 from one of our canted deck carriers for a routine dusk launch and a night flight into NAS OCEANA about 30 miles away. The weather was reported to be VFR. He arrived over the station and received an immediate clearance to land. Shortly after turning downwind, he flew into a rain squall, with violent turbulence and lightning.

He overheard a transport aircraft report that he had missed the field because of the low visibility and was going out to sea to start an orientation problem. With this information and the fact that the forward visibility was reduced to zero, the pilot of the F9F-6 also took a heading that would take him to a clear area.

The entire coast appeared to be a solid mass of thundershowers and because he couldn't contact NAS OCEANA or any other station on the radio, decided to return to the ship to get further weather information or to land aboard. The coastal weather was not too good and the pilot was finally told to land aboard.

It is to be noted that this pilot was not carrier qualified in the F9F-6 and was unfamiliar with the canted deck. He had a total of about 100 hours in the aircraft, 50 of which were in the past three months. It is noted further that the LSO had never before waved or seen an F9F-6 in a carrier approach. Add to this the fact that the weather had deteriorated around the ship to extremely poor flying conditions owing to lightning, rain and poor visibility and it makes for a good story.

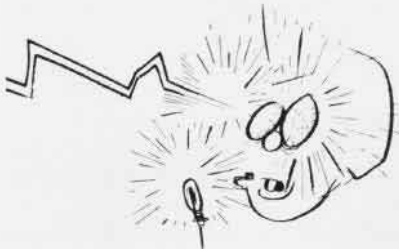
The pilot entered the carrier traffic pattern, received a "cut" and made contact with the deck on the lighted centerline. He didn't catch a wire, and as he saw the end of the deck coming up, added full power and became airborne. He then noticed that his arresting-hook-unsafe warning light was on. At this point, we pick up the pilot's story.



"The weather was getting pretty bad at this time. I was flying in and out of the rain squalls, and the visibility in the squalls was about zero. I checked my hook release as best I could and started another approach. I had trouble reading my radio altimeter as it was very dim. If I turned the rheostat up to where I could read the radio altimeter, the other lights in the cockpit were blinding bright.

"At my 90° position on this second approach, I was blinded by lightning, and with the rain falling, I was unable to see the carrier. This lightning forced me to turn my instrument lights up again, but the glare on the port panel was such that I was afraid it might blank out the LSO, so I turned them down again.

"I continued my approach on instruments and as the destroyer came in sight, I lined up with its wake. A few seconds later I saw the masthead lights of the carrier and lined up with the centerline lights, but I still couldn't see the LSO. It was raining hard now and when I could just see where the LSO was, I could not tell what signal he was holding for he seemed to be an illuminated ball of haze. Shortly, I was close



enough to recognize a 'Roger' and about five seconds later I received a cut.

"I touched down smoothly, but didn't catch a wire, and when the end of the deck came into sight, I added full power and took off again. The ship informed me at this time that my hook was definitely down. This was the best news I had had for some time, and I was confident that I would get aboard on the next pass.

"As I turned into the 90° position on my third pass, I leaned over to check my radio altimeter just as the lightning flashed, blinding me. Right after that the fuel-low-level warning light came on blinding bright, and I threw my left hand frantically across to try to turn it out.

"Just as I got the light turned out, the lightning flashed again and almost immediately I felt a sharp bump as if I had hit the water and bounced off. [He did. He tore his left wheel off. Editor.]

"I added full power, and now that I could see my instruments, I started to climb for altitude. I informed the carrier that I had probably hit the water and damaged my aircraft as it had a tendency to roll to the left. The only way that I could keep my left wing up was by full right tab and right stick.

"I was trying to get enough altitude to check the stall characteristics of the plane, but I soon entered the low clouds. I had already decided not to bail out, and after making several 'S' turns to keep the carrier in sight, I decided to try another landing.

"Just prior to entering the 90° position, I flew into a heavy rain squall and my forward visibility was reduced to zero. A few minutes later, I noticed a white streak on the water and recognizing it as the destroyer's wake, paralleled it and dropped to 100 feet (radio altimeter).

"I looked for the ship but still couldn't see it. I finally picked up the centerline white running lights and lined up with them, but I still couldn't see the LSO in the rain. I finally saw the LSO just as he gave me a 'cut'. I really pushed over this time and my hook caught a wire. The plane came to a stop on the right wheel and left wing. I was sure glad that flight was over."



Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Well, young fellow, I don't expect that you are the only one who

was glad that flight was over. Through no fault of your own, you got into a position that might be described as "between a rock and a hard place." Under the adverse circumstances, you deserve a lot of credit for making the best out of a bad situation. However, the next time you want a close shave, you better go see the barber.

You know, it may have helped somewhat if someone had cut the pilot in on the fact that there were only six arresting wires and that he was overshooting. This information was made known to the pilot after he finally managed to get aboard.

Controversial Issue

The pilot of an F9F-6 on his fourth FCLP pass received a "cut" and made a normal landing and a take-off. Immediately after take-off, the pilot noticed that his left wing was down and felt very heavy. He couldn't move the stick to the right and the rudder was no help in levelling his wings. He was still over the runway and, unable to level his wings, decided to land immediately.

The nose gear was sheared as he touched down on the runway and the plane continued on down the runway on its nose and main gear, coming to rest just off the end of the runway. The pilot was not hurt but the plane received substantial damage.

Believe it or not, the accident was caused by the pilot's relief tube falling out of the holding bracket located on the control stick and becoming wedged between the lower portion of the control stick and the side of the starboard ejection foot stirrup, holding the aileron controls in a left wing down position.

It was recommended that in order to prevent future similar accidents, the relief tube be removed from the aircraft and that future aircraft of endurance comparable to the F9F-6 not be penalized in weight and safety by an almost useless piece of equipment.



Grandpaw Pettibone Says:

Well, now, let's just slow down a minute, bub. There may be a point there, but I'll wager that whoever orders the relief tubes taken out isn't going to win any popularity contests among the pilots. It appears to me that the reasoning behind the recommendations may have been based on conjecture rather than experience. The most logical solu-

tion to the problem would be to either wire it to the control stick or to develop a satisfactory holding bracket to secure the relief tube in a safe place.

I said leave 'em in, didn't I?



Of the many causes of accidents in a jet, This one is quite novel—a relief tube, yet!

Improve the holding bracket, secure without doubt,

But, please don't take that relief tube out.

Be that as it may, this lad is to be congratulated on his presence of mind in getting his flying machine back on the ground at the first sign of trouble. Indecision at such a time has put many a good pilot six feet under.

Introducing 'Anymouse'

It has long been recognized that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". This is particularly true when applied to aircraft accident prevention. When you have to rely on statistics from actual aircraft accidents to show causes and trends before any corrective action can be taken, it's kinda like "locking the barn door after the horse has gotten out." The idea is to prevent accidents *before* they happen.



There just isn't anything that will beat *experience* to keep you out of trouble. The easiest way to get experience is to profit from the mistakes of others. Naturally, you can't profit from these experiences if you don't know about them. In that connection, the pilot "Anymouse" (hasty contraction of *anonymous*) reports fit the bill to a "T".

Although the idea has only recently been re-activated on a Navy-wide basis, the resulting "Anymouse" reports received to date are most encouraging and represent a lucrative and almost untapped source of material to be used in keeping aviators, young and old, in one piece.

"Anymouse" report forms and franked addressed envelopes have been distributed to all commands and should be available. Right now is a good time to sit down and write "Anymouse" about that near accident you had and what you did to avoid it. Who knows, your tale of a near accident today may save a life or an airplane tomorrow.



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Sometime ago I asked Navy pilots with over 5,000 hours, or with 500 carrier landings without an accident to write, giving me a brief resumé of the type of flying that had been done. At that time, a lieutenant commander with 7,831 accident free hours of flight time in the previous 18 years was the best I heard about.

As I go to press, I find another gent who doesn't top this record but who certainly deserves a few bouquets. He is a lieutenant commander with 6,623 accident free hours in the past 14 years. This is about the equivalent of flying nine months, 24 hours a day. What impressed me was his varied flight experience. He flew carrier-based scouting planes, ship-based seaplanes, dive bombers and fighters (operational), VP (seaplanes) and VR. One of the more ticklish jobs that he had was flying the Berlin airlift prior to Korea.