

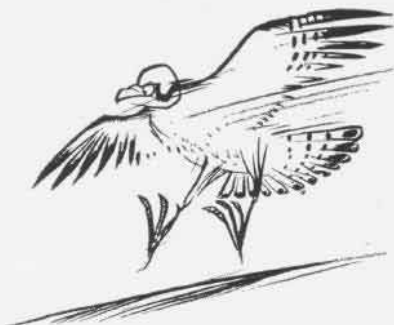


GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Quickest Way Out!

An F9F-6 pilot took off on his first familiarization flight accompanied by a chase pilot. A few minutes after becoming airborne, the chase pilot announced that the flight would return to base at once because his tail pipe temperature was fluctuating. A quick let-down was made and the two planes entered the traffic pattern. At this point, we take up the statement of the "fam" pilot:

"I kept a rather close interval on the chase pilot in order to familiarize myself with the traffic pattern. I lowered my dive brakes, wheels, flaps, and opened the dive brake override switch. At the 180° position, I reported my



wheels down and locked to the tower. At the 90° position I think I was a little fast. Longitudinal control felt normal except for a slight nose heaviness, which I trimmed out.

"Over the end of the runway I still seemed fast, but felt I was in a good position to land and commenced to flare out. I thought my nose was in a



proper landing attitude. I do not remember closing the throttle.

"On my first touch-down, I bounced back into the air slightly. When the plane bounced a second time, I felt I should take a wave-off, but elected to get it on the ground. From there on the porpoising became uncontrollable and I bounced a few more times. I decided to ground loop and hit full left brake. I remember pulling the emergency brake bottle control.

"The plane was now swerving to the left off the runway. The nose wheel and



right gear sheared off followed by the left gear. I noticed smoke and heat coming up from around the base of the control stick and my right hand was getting very hot. I was afraid the aircraft might explode so I decided to take the quickest way out.

"I actuated the prejection lever and pulled the face curtain. I remember going up in the air, but I don't remember hitting the ground."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Great Horned Toadies! I've heard of pilots bailing out at low altitude, but how much lower can you get and live to tell about it? This lad really used his old noggin, when he got 40 feet in the air and released his face curtain. He took one look at the ground and fainted.

This brings to mind one night years ago, when I had a bad dream. I was on top of a high cliff looking down. The next thing I knew I was falling through space at a terrific speed. There was only one thing to do to keep from being crushed on the rocks below. I woke up.

In this case the pilot took one look at the situation and decided to turn it into a bad dream. Lucky he did, too. Outside of six cracked vertebrae, cerebral concussion, contusion of the right kidney, and a few lacerations here and there, he came out of the nightmare in pretty good shape, for which we are all thankful. The irony of it all is that the aircraft came to a stop about two seconds later and the pilot landed about 30 feet to one side. The crash crew put out the fire in the aircraft.

This incident proves one thing to me. The thinking mechanisms of some of you lads will always be about two-tenths of a point behind the Mach number of your airplane until you realize that your best insurance is anticipation. Too many of you fail to anticipate the fact that you're gonna come down one way or the other once you get off the deck. Why not give yourselves the benefit of doubt and anticipate the procedures you'll be forced to use if something unusual happens?

In high performance aircraft especially, you'll sometimes find you don't have time to analyze the situation and pick a course of action. Split second decisions have to be made, but you're a dead duck if you don't make the right one. If you're lucky enough to be around after making the wrong decision, you'll no doubt kick yourself in the posterior for not doing something else. But hindsight isn't going to replace limbs or aircraft.

You can save a lot of trouble by sitting down in the Ready Room and steering the conversation from your favorite topic to reflexes, the type applied to aviation, that is. By deciding what your course of action would be in a projected situation, you are more apt to do the right thing if faced with that situation in reality.

I'm sure that hitting the panic switch at low altitude or on the deck wouldn't be too popular. That's too much like committing suicide to keep from getting killed.

The Wheel of Fortune

AN F8F-1 was cleared from NAS DENVER to Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, Nev., with an enroute weather forecast of scattered rain showers and snow flurries with icing in clouds and in precipitation. The pilot, who had a Special Instrument Rating, was given a VFR clearance to maintain 500 feet on top of a broken layer of clouds.



He was instructed to change his flight plan to IFR if the broken layer became overcast or if he couldn't maintain 500 on top. He was cleared to climb VFR to on top and let down VFR at his destination. He was not to proceed through the overcast because of the icing conditions.

Two hundred miles short of his destination and with 40 minutes of daylight remaining, the pilot made his decision. Las Vegas was 2,500 broken, 4,000 overcast, and 15 miles visibility with rain showers. The icing level was 9,600 feet. Below him was a field with a 7,500 foot hard surface runway, 4,000 scattered clouds, and 35 miles visibility. He requested and received an IFR clearance and reported 500 on top at 15,000 feet.

One-half hour later he called Las Vegas radio and declared an emergency with no amplification. Shortly thereafter and 100 miles short of its destination, the plane was seen to break through a cloud layer and hit the side of a mountain 4,700 feet above sea level. The plane may have been under control as the pilot attempted a power-on climbing turn to the right to avoid the mountain. He didn't make it.

 *Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

Confidence is a wonderful thing. But confidence coupled with haste in this flying racket is a combination that adds up to a high score . . . for the Grim Reaper. This pilot demonstrated haste right from the start. He was warned before he took off that there was possibly something wrong with his vacuum pump,

but he declined to have it checked as he was anxious to get in the air.

He was told not to fly into precipitation with an aircraft not equipped for icing conditions, but he probably thought why land at a dinky town in broad daylight when you can get to a place like Las Vegas shortly after dark? Besides, the joint ain't really jumpin' until the lights are turned on. (I can almost feel his urge to reach his destination, which completely overpowered his good judgment.)

That green card with the suction cup on the back stuck up there in the windshield means what it says, "Put the weather on it and I'll fly it." Sure it does and I'm a monkey's grampaw. The following message was intercepted that cold dark night from an unknown broadcasting station. Decoded it read:

The Wheel of Fortune was spinning around,
The call of the gambler, I was Las Vegas bound.
The tables are green, my ticket was too,
Rain, snow, or ice couldn't keep me from you.

This ditty I sing as I fly through the sky,
I've gambled my last, to do or to die.
My bet was laid down, my life in my hands,
Make my epitaph read: "He still lives who lands."

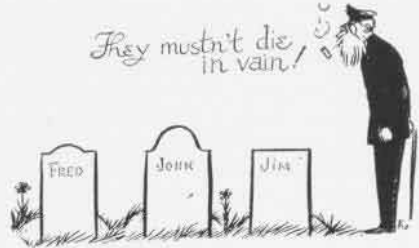
The Positive Approach

We are continually plagued with accidents for which there is no determined cause or the cause is unknown. On one hand, the Accident Investigation Boards are prone to give the pilot the benefit of the doubt and surmise that, inasmuch as the pilot was highly experienced, there must have been a malfunction of the aircraft. On the other hand, since there was no evidence of either pilot error or material failure, the Boards sometimes give up and advance no theory, probability, or opinion as to the cause.

Case No. 1. A TBM on a searchlight hop, no horizon, visibility about six miles, flew into the water at an unknown angle after completing several

successful runs. The large amount of oil and debris found indicated that the angle of entry was other than in level flight. The Accident Board offered the suggestion that material failure was involved because the pilot was a recent graduate of All Weather Flight School.

Case No. 2. During night carrier operations, a pilot was launched in an AF-2S. It was a black night with no horizon. After a steep climb to ap-



proximately 700 feet, he made a 180° turn and proceeded down wind. Just off the port beam of the carrier, he commenced a left turn gradually, steepening the bank and losing altitude. The Air Officer called him twice to level his wings and pull up, but no attempt at recovery was made and the aircraft entered the water in a steep left turn. The Board assessed the cause of accident as unknown and made no recommendations for prevention of a recurrence.

 *Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

Now come on, fellas, I know that accident investigations take time away from your regular duties. Like taxes and death, accident reports are inevitable whenever there is an accident. But this doesn't give you investigators the right to palm off a report just to get it out of your hair.

I'll grant you that few experienced pilots get vertigo when they are flying instruments. But it is a well known fact that the best pilots can get vertigo if they try to fly contact on a black night with no horizon. In my book a little mature judgment and careful analysis based on pilot experience (and I don't mean the pilot who has the accident), will usually unearth a logical opinion as to the cause of the accident. The Board can then make recommendations for local action.

I call this a "Positive Approach to Accident Prevention." Don't let pilots die in vain because you are not sure what happened, and haven't the nerve to point out a possible weakness in your safety program. Any approach to the prevention of an accident is better than no approach.