GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Couldn't Believe It

Following an RON at NAS . . . the pilots of an SNB-5 filed for an IFR return to MCAAS BEAUFORT. They estimated three hours and 30 minutes enroute to destination, 50 minutes to alternate field of NAS JACKSONVILLE, and gave fuel aboard as four hours and 30 minutes.

Well before reaching their destination, the pilots requested a let-down in order to descend below the cloud layer and switch to visual flight rules. However, ATC advised them to pick up the requested change at the next reporting point. This continued at each succeeding reporting point until the aircraft arrived over its destination, whereupon the pilots—now a little concerned about the amount of fuel remaining—effected an off-airways let-down.

Breaking into the clear at 1600 feet and recognizing their position, the pilots headed toward MCAAS BEAUFORT nine miles away. Unfortunately, the fuel gave out. The *Beech* bellied into the mudflats just six miles from their home base.

Both pilots stated that no fuel checks were made enroute although when over Charleston they noted that on'y .3 of a tank of fuel remained. However, they still believed they could make it to Beaufort.

The flight was planned for a total of four hours and 20 minutes (to destination and alternate), leaving only a 10-minute fuel reserve. The high fuel consumption which caused the aircraft to exhaust its complete fuel load of four hours and 30 minutes in three hours and 30 minutes at the normal cruise settings reported by the pilots remained unexplained since an extensive check of fuel lines and fuel tanks failed to reveal any leakage. However, the engines are under O&R test.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Looks to me like these boys just couldn't believe what was happening. They were lulled into a feeling of over-confidence because they had made a number of prior flights between these two points, including the previous day's uneventful VFR hop. They assumed they'd have enough fuel as usual and didn't bother to keep a fuel log or make any attempt to compute the fuel consumption rate.

Durned poor judgment went hand in hand with over-confidence when these lads finally discovered over Charleston that they had only three-tenths of a tank of fuel showing on the indicator and then still continued their IFR flight instead of declaring an emergency and getting on the deck at Charleston.

The pilots failed to comply with the provisions of OpNav Instruction 3710.7A when they allowed only a 10-minute fuel reserve beyond the alternate field and also erred in filing IFR to a destination that lacked approved navigational aids for an instrument let-down. While these items were primarily the pilots' responsibility, the clearing authority—NAS Operations at the point of departure—also slipped up.

For the latest word on fuel reserve required for VFR or IFR flights, a careful reading of Section VII of OPNAV Instruction 3710.7A is highly recommended. I'm advised that similar up-to-the-minute dope will be contained in the applicable section of OPNAV Instruction 3720.2A when it reaches the field in the near future.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Two recent helicopter rescue attempts at sea were unsuccessful. Two pilots and one helicopter crewman were drowned.

The failure of the rescue missions can be attributed to the most severe complicating factor which can be introduced into any helicopter rescue attempt—an open parachute attached to the downed pilot.

A parachute is a lifesaving device. A

helicopter is a lifesaving device. But a mixture of the two during a helicopter rescue is a deadly mixture.

Everyone who flies should be thoroughly indoctrinated and rebriefed at frequent intervals to GET THAT PARACHUTE OFF!

CDR, USN HU-2

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

A hearty Amen to all your comments!

Thorough indoctrination and frequent rebriefing are absolute necessities in licking this rescue problem. The Dilbert Dunker—a very useful gadget—can't provide the complete answer. Pilots and crewmen need to make an occasional wet dry-run. Wearing normal gear for a dip in the drink is durned nigh as informational as a real emergency and provides experience with problems not otherwise foreseen. For example, one try at unfastening a parachute harness with water-soaked flight gloves presents a strong argument for baring those meathooks prior to water entry.

Short Minutes

The following minutes of a monthly Aviation Safety Council meeting recently crossed Gramp's desk:

"The meeting was called to order at 1025 by Capt. ———, USN, Senior Member.

1. The minutes of the preceding Aviation Safety Council meeting were read and approved by all members.

2. Old business: None.

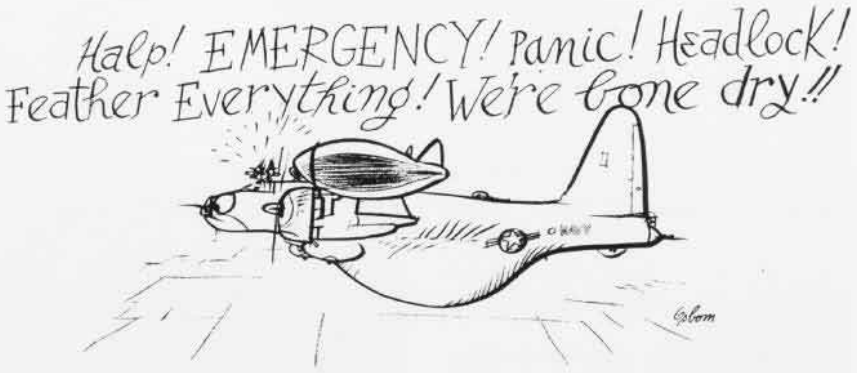
3. New business: None.

4. The meeting adjourned at 1055."

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Judging by the length of the meeting and the little business that was transacted, I figger that (a) the previous meeting must have been a whopper, (b) the recorder was a slow reader, (c) somebody had a heck of a lot of new stories, or (d) one of the members just happened to have a deck of cards.

I hope I never see seconds on this kind of minutes—my blood pressure couldn't take it! If the accident rate *isn't* zero, there should be plenty of business; and if the rate *is* zero, there should be plenty of business to make durned sure it stays that way.



Fooled Though Fueled

During the first hour of a training flight, the pilot of a P2V-5F made four GCA runs using both reciprocating and jet engines for climbouts. After reaching an altitude of about 1000 feet following the fourth GCA run, the starboard fuel flow fluctuated rapidly. The engine began to surge and was subsequently feathered. At this time the jets were not developing power.

An emergency was declared and the pilot initiated a slow left turn back toward the airfield. Three minutes later, when two miles from the air station, the port engine failed. The crew was ordered to ditching stations and a Mayday was broadcast.

The airplane bellied its way through a chain link boundary fence and slid to a stop in a plowed field with overhaul damage and NO injuries!

Post-accident investigation revealed that the aircraft was started, warmed up and flown with the fuel selector valves set on the left and right center section tanks instead of on the main tanks. When the fuel was exhausted in the center section tanks, three engines went out in fairly rapid succession.

In the three-minute interval before the last engine quit, the pilots did not observe that they were attempting to operate the aircraft on dry gas tanks. The main tanks held *1400 gallons* of readily available fuel had either the pilot, copilot, or plane captain determined the cause of the trouble and turned the valves.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Great Balls of Fire! Son, you gotta give it that go-juice or it jist won't stay up there in the blue!

The position of the fuel selector valves was not altered at any time prior to or during the flight.

It seems that when the emergency occurred the pilot took no effective action to restart the engines, because he had a fixed notion that the selectors were on the main tanks which could not have been run dry in the short length of time the plane was airborne.

Well, bub, I'll grant that you were probably all hands and feets and busy as the well-known cat when the engines started going out, but gosh, man, your mind must have been shut mighty tight. The nature of the engine failures should have busted your mental block and clued you to make a positive check on your pushwater.

For the lack of help you got from your copilot and plane captain, you have my sympathy. But with a crew set-up such as yours, all the more responsibility necessarily rested on your own broad shoulders which you should have squared away.

Good Scout

The pilot of a TV-2 initiated a precautionary flame-out approach when the engine instruments began giving erratic readings and the engine started vibrating.

At the 90-degree position during the approach, the engine flamed out, and the pilot made an uneventful forced landing on his home field.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Routine? Not at all! This lad was saved by a "Don't Wait—Anticipate" philosophy and his past Boy Scout-type training that taught him to be prepared. A professional pilot, he knew his onions and plane—and came out smelling like a rose.