



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Check and Double Check

At 0505 CST, an S2F-1 departed NAS MEMPHIS on the Memphis-Dallas leg of a Quonset Point to Dallas cross country training flight. A little over an hour after take-off, the pilots noted the fuel quantity gages moving down rapidly, and they turned back toward an airfield passed 15 minutes earlier.

Immediately following the turn, the fuel pressure on the starboard engine dropped to 12 psi and the engine quit. Fuel boost pumps were turned on, and when the re-start attempt was unsuccessful, the engine was feathered. Three minutes later the port engine quit at an altitude of 1200 feet.

The pilot made a pitch dark, dead-stick, wheels-up, flaps-down, crash landing in a pasture. The aircraft skidded to a halt among some small trees after shearing off the left wing. Fortunately, neither the pilots nor the two enlisted passengers were injured in the crash—but one passenger sprained his ankle by jumping onto the fork of a tree while evacuating the aircraft. The airplane was a strike.

The airplane had been fueled the previous evening by a refueler operator from the civilian contractor who stated that he always filled tanks and *left the gas caps off* or else set the caps

in place *without locking* in order to prevent moisture from getting into the tanks.

The accident board concluded that the pilots failed to make a positive check that the fuel caps were in place and locked with the result that syphoning occurred through the filler neck of the fuel tanks. Both engines stopped because of fuel starvation. It was further concluded that the early hour of departure on a routine cross country training flight indicated a tendency for unnecessary haste and that, since there was no plane captain aboard, normal pre-flight procedures suffered.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Looks to me like the accident board summed it up pretty well—there's jist no substitute for close attention to pre-flight details, especially when its dark as pitch or the weather's bad. And if a pilot doesn't bring along a good mech who's familiar with the aircraft type, then he's the person who'd better make *double-sure* that everything's checked.

Without excusin' these pilots for endin' up with dry tanks, we might all take a tip from their experience. Any one of us familiar with procedures at our home field might gas up at some other base where civilian refuelers utilize procedures which are normal *for them*, but non-standard and downright dangerous *to us* in the light of our own recognized methods. I know I'm gonna give those gas caps a durned sight more than an eyeball check from here on out.

Too Shook to Shake

While passing through 15,000 feet during descent from operating altitude at the completion of a routine night training flight, an F2H-3's port engine fire warning light came on. The pilot secured the engine and continued toward home.

In order to expedite the landing, the pilot elected to enter the landing pattern on the downwind leg. Upon reaching the 180-degree position, the *Banshee* had 170 to 180 knots with speed brakes out. The pilot was a little late in lowering the gear and dropping half flaps. Immediately thereafter, the airplane began to settle rapidly.

The pilot raised the gear and, in spite of carrying 100% on the starboard engine while attempting a wave-off, the *Banshee* continued to settle. The airplane slammed down in the boon-docks 1,000 feet short of the runway, caught fire and burned for strike damage. *The speed brakes had not been retracted.*

The pilot stated that he felt the accident could have been avoided if he had gone through his normal procedure—such as entering the break single



I didn't
notice
anything



engine and going through the normal landing checkoff list—instead of entering downwind and having to dive off altitude. He recommended that pilots of F2H squadrons practice simulated single engine approaches—both day and night—using either a normal or a flameout pattern.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

As near as I can figure out, the pilot—a Ltjg.—was already so shook he couldn't detect the Banshee's shakes with speed brakes out. The pilot should have got the message, since the vibrations came in loud and clear.

Obviously unhurt, the pilot showed by the following statement that he took swift action after the aircraft stopped skidding. "The airplane skidded for about 4 to 5 seconds. It came to rest and was burning intensely under the cockpit. Immediately, I opened my safety belt, shed my parachute harness and climbed from the cockpit. My oxygen hose was hooked to the bailout bottle which slowed me 2 to 3 seconds. I jumped out of the cockpit, and the oxygen hose pulled loose. I ran approximately 300 yards to the fence, jumped the fence and met the ambulance on the highway."

Seat of the Trouble

Returning home after an instrument training flight, the pilot of an FJ-4 entered the landing pattern with 2600 pounds of fuel. During the final stages of the approach, airspeed was reduced to 125 knots. With power at 65% the pilot added 5% when rudder shake indicated an impending stall.

To correct for an angling approach, a slight turn in the groove was made just as the nose was slightly rotated in

preparation for touchdown. The left wing dropped and a full stall resulted.

The *Fury* hit 100 feet short of the runway, the left wing tip dragging for 155 feet before the nose dug in violently. Explosion and rapid disintegration of the airplane followed.

The pilot's knee-pad, a piece of his flight suit, the instrument panel and some parts of the cockpit were found 400 feet beyond the point where the nose dug in. The main fuselage section, burning intensely, stopped 75 feet short of an R5D in the warmup area.

The pilot was found on a cobblestone area 21 feet beyond the burning fuselage. His APH-5 hardhat was lying three feet away. His parachute and seat raft were still intact.

Fifty feet beyond the pilot, the ejection seat came to rest almost directly under the idling R5D. The manual arming ring was in the down position, and the seat was armed but had not been fired. The automatic lap belt had been actuated.

The seat assembly and pilot were dislodged as a unit when the nose of the aircraft dug in and sheared off. The G load was estimated to be in the plus 40 range at this time. The pilot

traveled 400 feet after parting company with the aircraft. He became separated from the seat while it was in free flight and ricocheted off the ground once before landing on the cobblestones.

The pilot's injuries, although minimized as a result of automatic separation from the seat, will keep him out of the blue for at least six months.

The accident board concluded that the pilot erred when he:

1. Made entry to the break with 2600 pounds of fuel although squadron doctrine prescribed an absolute maximum of 2500 pounds except in an emergency. (His wingman had dumped his extra fuel.)

2. Reduced RPM to 65% and allowed the aircraft to become dangerously low and slow.

3. Made an insufficient power correction (5% RPM) when the rudder shaker warned of the impending stall.

4. Failed to compensate for a crosswind condition, which necessitated increasing the angle of bank in the groove to correct for the angling approach, and failed to add power while banking and raising the nose although an already marginal airspeed had been indicated by the rudder shaker.

5. Failed to utilize the accurate angle of attack indicator, relying instead solely on airspeed and "feel."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Parts of the aircraft were strewn over a wide swath. The pilot was darn lucky he wasn't likewise.

I think it's pretty generally conceded that when this lad hacked the power back to as low as 65% during the turn from the 180-degree position and shifted control to the seat of his pants, this pilot was certainly setting himself up to get slapped down—and hard.

