



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Falling Star

While cruising at 41,000 feet on his return from a cross-country jaunt the pilot of a TV-2 observed that visibility through the canopy was diminishing due to internal icing. Assuming that cabin pressurization was being lost, he commenced a descent which took him into a turbulent area.

The aircraft started to shudder. Finding it difficult to read the instruments, the pilot trained his flashlight on the horizon indicator which registered a 30-degree bank. He leveled the wings, hit more rough air, reduced power to idle, and extended the dive brakes.

The lights appeared to get dim and the pilot couldn't read the instruments. G forces increased to an estimated 3 to 4 G's and the pilot had a sensation of turning or spinning. He was thrown to the left side of the cockpit. He pushed the stick forward, to neutral, and then to the right with no apparent effect. Feeling that he was losing altitude rapidly and getting close to the ground, he decided to abandon his airplane. He hauled back on the stick in hopes of slowing the rate of descent and providing an opportunity to eject.

The recalcitrant jet continued to shudder and shake. He made three attempts before succeeding in reaching the canopy jettison handle. He then had similar difficulty raising the right arm rest of the ejection seat prior to squeezing the trigger and being blasted out into space.

He landed on a housetop and his parachute collapsed over the roof. The neighbors helped him down and he used their phone to call his base.

A reliable witness saw the aircraft come out of the overcast in a 45-degree dive. He estimated that the *Shooting Star* had fallen to 300 feet before abruptly zooming back up.

The accident board determined that the only reason for the pilot's assumption of pressurization loss was canopy frosting and a lowering of cockpit



temperature. Defrost switches were off and were *never turned on*. His extreme difficulty in seeing his instruments resulted from the combination of the acceleration forces encountered in turbulent air and the fact that *he had not adjusted the instrument light intensity* after he reached his cruising altitude.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Great Balls of Fire! It's just plain miraculous that this lad is still among the walking, talking group after this hairy hop. And I'm mad as a hornet that another jet bit the dust for no good reason. It was a mighty shoddy performance for a jet pilot with almost 500 hours in model. He musta been busy as a one-armed paperhanger when he tried shining a light on the panel to see which way was up. By the time he could attempt a recovery his jet job was descending at high speed in an unusual attitude.

This gent goofed off and caused himself a lot of trouble that he could have avoided by just being on the ball.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Thought you might like to hear about an incident that recently had me a bit shook. I was in the bombing pattern with my FJ-4B and because my kneboard strap gave me trouble and wouldn't stay fastened, I let it lay loose on my leg.

You guessed it. During my landing flare-out the stick froze and I couldn't get enough back stick to flare. My *Fury* touched down about three-point and I could get no aerodynamic braking. I first thought I had a control failure but on rollout I found the kneboard wedged between stick and seat. My wheel brakes were good enough to allow me to get the airplane stopped on the runway but



rollout was increased due to lack of aerodynamic braking.

I had been forced to land on one of the shorter runways because the longest runway was fouled with an F3H that had used the arresting gear. If the runway had been wet I'd have barreled right off the end and clobbered myself. I recommend that the kneboard be stowed if the strap breaks.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Right as rain, bub! A place for everything and everything in its place. And that goes for stopping flying machines short of the rough terrain as well as making darned sure you have no UFO's (unstowed flying objects) aboard. They're booby traps!

Taxi-Turvy

Two helicopter pilots were practicing water landings on a scheduled training flight. After one pilot had made several landings, the other pilot took the controls and prepared to depart the lake for another approach. Due to the proximity of the shore and trees, the pilot turned the HTL-5 helicopter to the right about 90 degrees out of the wind. At an altitude of 2 to 3 feet and an airspeed of 3 to 5 knots, he began to air-taxi downwind in sideward flight in order to



Heaven help the pilot who flies me!

In the pilot's words, "I told the tower I had a critical fuel state, giving my position as 15 miles north, and said I was making a straight-in opposite my direction of takeoff. They cleared me and said the crash barrier would be rigged. The aircraft responded very well throughout the approach and I used speed brakes to slow down and dropped the gear at 250 knots. This procedure gave me about 130-140 over the fence and I touched down at 120 knots about 1000 feet down the runway. I shut down the engine, opened speed brakes, dropped the tail hook and began braking. The aircraft seemed to slow easily and I was able to stop about 50 feet short of the barrier on the 6000-foot runway with wheel assemblies intact."

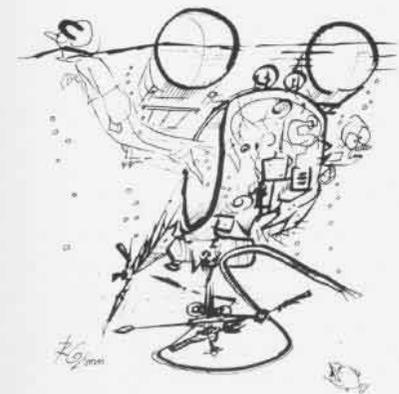
Fuel flowing from the port main fuel cell, which had ruptured during takeoff, was ignited by the hot brake disks but the uninjured pilot jumped from the cockpit and the crash crew promptly brought the fire under control. Of the original 4000 pounds of fuel aboard at takeoff, an estimated 200 pounds remained at time of landing five minutes later.

Rupture of the fuel cell and associated structural damage to the

Skyray resulted from excess pressure building up within the fuel cells, causing an expansion and stress of the tanks to a point beyond their stress limitations. The excess pressure was caused by blocking of the vent line by preservation tape. The tape had not been removed from the vertical fin fuel cell vent line during depreservation two days prior to the flight.

This was the last plane to be depreserved and it was subject to a rush job late in the day under poor lighting conditions in order that it could go on the steam cleaning rack which would not be available for use the next day. The job of stripping and removing tape from the aircraft became an all-hands affair, not one man's job.

The accident board attributed the accident to supervisory error since specific duties were not assigned to crews involved in removing tape from the aircraft and personnel error by maintenance men who did not comply with instructions to remove all tape.



gain sufficient space for takeoff.

While air-taxiing in the above condition, the pilot commenced a turn to the left. The forward edge of the starboard float struck the water and the HTL began an immediate rapid roll to the right which terminated with the helicopter inverted in the water. With minor difficulty and superficial abrasions the pilots evacuated the up-ended whirlybird.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

It's purty obvious that the pilot erred in air-taxiing sideways at such a low altitude that he was left no margin of safety for controlling his machine or attempting recovery from settling, sudden gusts of wind, or loss of power. Appears as though these boys woulda been ahead of the game if they'd just busted out some oars and rowed away from the shore.

Too Many Cooks

After climbing to 5000 feet shortly after takeoff, the pilot of an F4D-1 *Skyray* noted that the fuel indicator registered only 1600 pounds and was dropping steadily, to his great dismay.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This lad, a 450-hour man with 42 hours in model, had a mighty narrow squeak in getting back on the runway. But he made his decision and expertly carried it out. And that's a durned sight more than can be said for the maintenance people who almost stewed him in his own go-juice.

It all goes to show that too many cooks can cook up quite a mess. The maintenance gang should have made haste a little more slowly, including the inspector who checked the completed work without noting the tape.