



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

All Ahead Blind

The pilot of an AD-5, having previously test-hopped and accepted his Skyraider following its overhaul at a West Coast air station, filed an instrument flight plan for the first leg of his flight to deliver the aircraft to his home base back east. Weather conditions at the time of filing were ceiling zero, visibility one-eighth mile in fog, wind calm, but pilot and passenger were unimpressed.

At 0838 PST the pilot received taxi instructions to runway 31 and proceeded from the ferry line. En route to the duty runway the pilot made a wrong turn and the tower operator issued supplementary taxi instructions before the AD-5 faded into the fog.

Because of reduced visibility, the actual takeoff could not be observed from the tower, but the sound of the plane was heard and a normal takeoff was assumed accomplished at 0847.

Some 43 minutes later the coxwain of a crash boat, which had been sent out to search for another boat that was overdue and presumably lost in the fog, reported to the tower that he had come upon two pilots clinging to the tail of an aircraft submerged about 100 yards off shore.

The pilot had become disoriented owing to the low visibility and attempted to take off from an access taxiway at right angles to the duty runway. According to the aircraft accident report, approximately 800 feet of takeoff run was made and a speed of 65 knots attained before the



plane ran out of Naval Air Station. The pilot stated that takeoff was normal until the aircraft struck the dirt and rock dike at the edge of the field, shed its engine, and hit the water.

The fact that the pilot attempted to take off from a taxiway on a heading 90 degrees from that of the runway indicated that he either failed to recognize the discrepancy in the heading or neglected to check his gyro with the magnetic compass prior to takeoff. In either event, the accident board considered that he took inadequate precautions to insure a safe takeoff in view of the conditions of visibility existing at the time. A contributing factor in the accident was the pilot's failure to comply with the general rules and procedures for the conduct of a ferry movement with regard to weather restrictions as contained in OpNav Instruction 3710.6A.

The pilot stated that he did not consider the aircraft to be in a ferry status since he had accepted it for the new reporting custodian. However, the OpNav Instruction makes no such distinction in its definition of a ferry movement. The accident board determined that the aircraft was in a ferry status and should have been operating

under the rules for ferry flights with regard to weather restrictions.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Jumpin' Jehosaphat! This gent couldn't tell where he was goin' but he was bendin' the throttle all ahead blind. And this performance was turned in by an experienced green-card pilot with over 6000 flight hours!

His commanding officer felt that "the requisite judgment for a pilot with a Special Instrument Rating was not demonstrated" and his green ticket was terminated.

Amen! Taking off under near zero-zero conditions hardly shows optimum use of the ol' headbone. In my book, when the birds are walkin' it's time for a coffee break, and it *should* take some mighty urgent business to make a pilot miss the muster.

Right here's a good place to recommend a periodic review of "Green Cards and 'Green' Pilots" in the 13-19 January 1958 Weekly Summary of Major Aircraft Accidents. It's chockful of mighty pertinent poop for all pilots who have card and will travel.

Head Down and Locked

While taxiing toward the warm-up area prior to a local VFR flight in an AD-6, a young pilot of 320 hours flight experience and only 4.2 hours in model heard a noise which sounded like an electric motor starting. A previous yellow sheet had listed a discrepancy concerning the elevator trim control, so the pilot thought perhaps the control was operating because of a faulty switch. He became so engrossed in



*The Wearing (thin)
of the Green!*

determining the source of the cockpit noise that he was oblivious to the aircraft's movement and heading change.

The pilot's interest remained in the cockpit while the Skyraider traveled 450 feet at a normal taxi rate. Suddenly he realized the aircraft had crossed a concrete ramp and was about to collide with a small building some 225 feet from the edge of the taxiway. He hit the brakes and pulled the throttle to idle, but the aircraft's right wing struck the building and the prop chopped the concrete as the application of brakes caused the tail of the Skyraider to leave the ground. The airplane settled back into a three-point position, and the pilot secured flying for the day.

The accident board attributed the accident to the pilot's failure to give proper attention to the directional control of his aircraft while taxiing and recommended that pilots not allow their interest to be diverted. Performance of functional checks on equipment within the cockpit and use of checkoff lists should be accomplished prior to leaving the chocks or while holding in the warm-up area. If a pilot's attention is required in the adjustment or check of a cockpit control, he should stop the aircraft, radio his intentions to the tower, and keep aware of other taxiing aircraft.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Unless he concentrated a little harder on the business at hand, I'll bet when this pilot was just a little tad he had a hard time keeping his kiddie car on the sidewalk. Staying alert during any phase of aircraft operations is such a basic requirement that it's hard to believe such accidents could happen. But so help me, they do. This is no isolated case.

It's purty certain that if a pilot buries his head in the cockpit, sooner or later someone else will have to dispose of the rest of him.

Straight In

Returning to the home field, the pilot of an F9F-6 got tower clearance for a straight-in approach to the runway because of a low fuel state of approximately 750 pounds.

At 2000 feet with an airspeed of 275 knots, the pilot lowered the landing gear, speed brakes and flaps; and contacted the 8000-foot runway at the



2000-foot point at a speed of 175 knots. The *Cougar* started porpoising and was not brought back under control until well down the runway. In response to a radioed instruction from a squadron mate, the pilot tried to lower the tail hook in an attempt to engage the arresting gear. However, he yanked the control handle only once, raising the barrier guard, and assumed the hook was down. It wasn't.

Unable to catch the arresting cable, the pilot made an unsuccessful attempt to ground loop the airplane. The *Cougar* skidded sideways for the remainder of the runway, blew a tire, and proceeded off the end of the runway and into the water. The pilot climbed out onto the wing and stepped into a rescue boat.

In the pilot's own words, "I feel that if I had first reduced my speed before losing altitude I could have made a normal break over the field and proceeded to a normal landing.

"On the basis of my first touchdown which was far too fast, I should have, at this time, added throttle and gone around. After the aircraft started to porpoise, I should have added throttle for a normal go-around. Instead, I cut the engine to reduce all possible thrust. In endeavoring to lower the tail hook, I pulled the handle only once. I should have pulled it repeatedly."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This lad had to learn his "shoudda didds" the hard way. For a long time I've been trying to drive home the idea that there's not much point in hurrying yourself into a heap.

I don't think we can outlaw straight-in approaches altogether, but let's not forget there's a lot to be said for well-planned, unhurried approaches in any line of endeavor. They generally produce the most satisfying results with the minimum of bashed noggins.

Given my druthers, I'd make a circling approach—or at least crank in a base leg, circumstances permitting. Seems to me there'd be less chance of an overshoot or undershoot, wheels-up or goof-off. A normal 180-degree approach allows time for the usual cockpit procedures in the pattern, provides a view of the airfield, simplifies lineup with the *duty runway*, and facilitates touchdown at the proper point on the runway.

The demands on a pilot are already great enough during an emergency situation without adding the complications of a straight-in approach requiring near-perfect judgment on airspeed, altitude, distance and closure rate. It's purty hard for a shook pilot to "stay loose" in a situation that's been robbed of its safety-producing flexibility. Why go straight-in to the salvage bin?

