GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

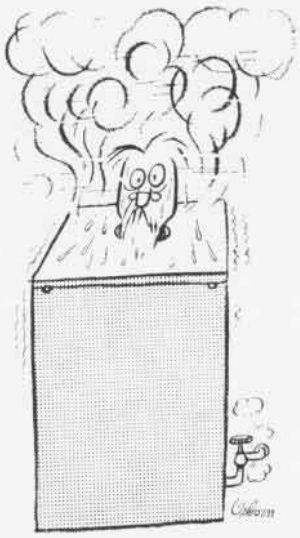
Who's Got It?

It was a fine clear morning, high scattered clouds and visibility 15 plus, but gusty surface winds running 16 knots, gusts to 21, made it just a little bumpy and uncomfortable down at landing pattern levels.

After about a half hour of airwork for a first pilot check, an SNB-5 entered the pattern, right hand turns, for a landing. There was a strong gusty crosswind about 45° from the left. An experienced (over 100 hrs. in model) instructor was in the right seat; the student, an experienced jet pilot but with only 60 hours in the SNB, in the left seat and flying the Beech. Two passengers rode in back.

The pilot made a good approach and using full flaps, touched down on the centerline in the first third. The SNB had a tendency to drift left on the rollout and full right rudder didn't help much, so the instructor yelled, "I have it," but the pilot yelled back "No, I have it! I have it!"

They continued angling left as the tail wheel was lowered to the deck and the instructor again yelled "I have it." The pilot being checked again yelled back, "No, I have it!" and applied a little port throttle and took it off again. The instructor got on the controls with him and attempted to correct the situation, but the pilot was still on the controls and applying right brake. As



they went off the edge of the runway, the student pilot locked the brakes and the SNB nosed up and stayed there.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

The little old SNB sure causes a lot of trouble for our jet men, them being used to machines with a nose wheel attached. Just 'cause its top speed is lower than the landing pattern speed of a fighter with everything down and dirty is no reason to get complacent about this tricky little beast. Old Beech hands say, NEVER use full flap with 45° of strong crosswind on the usual length of runway, or she'll nail you sure. You MUST use differential throttle for directional control on a crosswind takeoff or landing. Rudder and brake just don't do the job.

When an instructor says "I've got it,"—that's it,—or the C.O. should have a big old carpet session prepared for the stubborn one. There should be a clear understanding of this before a check-out or instruction hop even leaves the chocks.

There were two passengers in this jobbie. OPNAV Instruction 3710.7A specifically forbids passengers on fam or check-out hops. The reason is obvious.

Cat Shot

Early one fine clear California morning, an A4D-2 buddy tanker was lined up on the starboard catapult of a CVA in position for the shot. During the interval between the time 100% power was added and the cat was to fire, the holdback pulled out of the deck. This allowed the plane to roll forward full bore as the bridle fell off. Cutting his engine and hitting full brakes, the pilot managed to stop the A4D ten feet short of the round down at the bow! While he was rolling forward the catapult had fired, the shuttle striking the nose wheel.

The A4D was struck below and squadron maintenance personnel checked it over for visible damage. None could be found, so some two and a half hours later it was again spotted on the catapult for launch. Turn up was O.K., the pilot gave the salute and waited for the shot. The initial stroke and acceleration felt good and gave him a brief instant of relief (he admitted he had more than the usual ration of concern about this shot being a good one). His moments of relief were brief! The nose dropped suddenly and he was looking straight down at the deck. His nose wheel and fork had both sheared off. He was 'riding' down the cat on the bare strut!!

He knew the plane was going too fast to stop *this* time and recalled thinking three more distinct thoughts.

First, "I hope the bridle stays on." Second, "I better get this nose up as soon as I can." The third thought was relative to the ancestry of the starboard catapult.

The A4D continued down the deck nose low and became successfully airborne with an endspeed of 124 knots. The pilot smoothly rotated, cleaned it up, got a few hundred feet of altitude, and checked all the gages. Everything O.K.

His wingman joined up, checked him for damage, reported it didn't look too bad, so they decided to proceed as planned to China Lake and put it in there.

The airfield tower had been alerted by the ship and was busy foaming down the runway in the vicinity of the arresting gear. Things were looking good and advice from the tower was excellent, reassuring, and most welcome.

He orbited for an hour, both drop tanks being burned dry and the buddy store dumped. His internal fuel was burned down to 2000 pounds, the recommended landing weight.

As he circled he thought over the possibilities open to him. Gear down and on the stub? No. The strut might ram up through the cockpit deck and pin him to the seat. Gear up, hook down, on the empty buddy store and 300-gallon drop tanks, coming around the horn on touchdown, seemed best and he advised the field tower of his intentions.

He turned on final approach for the landing at 125 knots, slowed to 110 over the end of the runway and held this speed, dragging the hook up the runway until he was over the foam, then chopped the power to off and set it on. The hook grabbed the wire and the A4D skidded to a stop with no further damage at all.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehosophat! Any comments I might make on this real pro's performance are strictly superfluous! He had a couple of purty narrow squeaks for one day's operations and sure don't hafta back up to the pay window to draw his dough after the way he handled 'em both!

I wrote this one up not only because it was hairy, but to point out that the shuttle striking a nose gear assembly on a cold shot or misfire CAN damage the gear, and it takes a little more than a good visual inspection to determine the extent of damage. Zyglo penetrex or dye penetrant inspection is just about the only answer.

Hot Stuff

A student pilot was busily engaged in a preflight inspection of his F9F-8B *Cougar* prior to scheduled departure on a DR navigation hop. As he crouched in the port wheel well to inspect the landing gear, the lineman in order to facilitate the pilot's preflight inspection, climbed on top of the port wing to open the access doors and gas gaps.

As he opened the main fuselage fuel cap, fuel overflowed from the cell due to expansion of the JP-4 in the heat of the day. The overflow drain is located in the port wheel well and fuel poured on the pilot's back. As it trickled on him, the pilot immediately crawled out of the way and asked the lineman how much was on his flight suit. Assured it was only a "small spot" he departed on a two-hour hop. It was hot and he perspired profusely and felt completely uncomfortable.

After landing the pilot reported to the dispensary. He was found to have first and second degree chemical burns on most of his back and was hospitalized.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

My old hide's pretty tough and thick, but JP-4 spilled on me gets a durned sight more than a quickie eyeball check. You gotta get out of those clothes and scrub with soap and water RIGHT NOW and then check in with the Doc. This stuff burns and burns and burns. A fella's back or hands can feel as hot as the inside of those burner cans after the stuff is ignited. For lack of a half-hour cleanup, this lad was grounded for eight days. This was just plain fuelishness.

Gramps' Advice to the Airborne

Ever watch a bunch of pilots preflight their aircraft? Some of 'em never look up the tail pipe or check for leaks around the hook, a real fire hazard, but almost ALL of 'em kick the tires! Must be a holdover from the old days when on a preflight we usta just kick the tires and twang the wires, or maybe it's just a savage urge to show the beast who's boss!

Sleepy

An F8U-1P was spotted on the hangar deck of a large CVA and the plane captain, sitting in the cockpit, had fallen asleep. A buddy, who had a little work to do in the cockpit, pounded on the fuselage and shouted "Open the canopy." The plane captain was immediately awakened. Thoroughly startled but still pretty groggy, he pulled the canopy emergency jettison handle! The canopy blew, shearing the hinge bolts and causing about 75 man-hours of damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

The canopy safety pin was not in place or this wouldn't a happened. NO ONE should sleep in a parked aircraft! A sleeping man in an uncomfortable position could kick the gear handle to the up position or trip any number of switches with possible major damage. If you've gotta grab 40 winks, grab 'em someplace else!