



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Pesky Beast

The crotchety old *Beechcraft* keeps provin' to pilots who have enough experience to know better that you can't take the "Bug-Smasher" for granted. In spite of its advanced age, the *Beech* is still an aircraft that has to be flown skillfully, with full knowledge of its systems and quirks of character. Here's a pretty good example:

Two Marine aviators took off in an RC-45J (SNB-5P) intent on some GCA practice at a nearby naval air station. While en route they checked all systems thoroughly, including the autopilot, which is not standard equipment on most *Beeches*. After ten minutes or so, the autopilot push-pull switch located on the panel directly behind the prop controls was disengaged, although the autopilot amplifier switch was left ON.

The initial GCA approach was normal in all respects and carried through to a touchdown. The pilot let it roll out about 500 feet on the runway, then added takeoff power. Almost immediately the *Beech* commenced to nose up in an extremely tail high attitude. The pilot heard the props hit the runway as he exerted all the back pressure he could muster on the yoke. The plane became airborne and reached an altitude of 50 or 60 feet, but with such severe engine vibration present that he relanded it immediately.

The flight controls were apparently locked and only freed after the engines

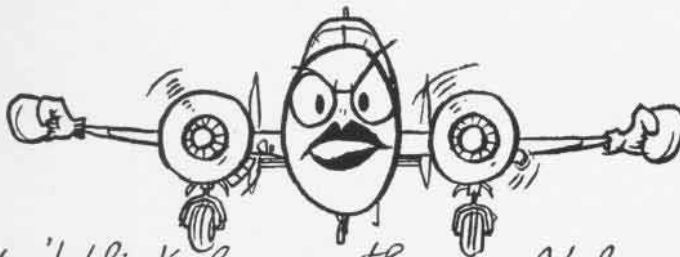


were secured. As the props stopped, eight inches of each tip could be seen, bent back 90 degrees. No wonder they vibrated!



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

When he checked the props full forward on the roll-out, this pilot engaged the autopilot by bumping the OFF-ON switch with his knuckles. If he'd shut off the power amplifier switch, this never would have happened. Another "I didn't know it was loaded" story. This was a kind of a pre-loaded booby-trap though — this item is **NOWHERE** on the pilots check-off lists!



*You'd think by now they would have mended my ways! But they havent! I'm still a B....!*

## Pre-Planned

Two helicopter pilots carefully planned for the round-robin, cross-country flight they intended to make in their SH-34G (HSS-1) helo. Lift-off was planned shortly after lunch. Their route had been decided upon, time and distance between check points calculated. Since the entire route fell within the local flying area, they filed a local VFR flight plan.

At the weather briefing, the duty forecaster advised them that the local weather was "partially obscured, 200 feet scattered, 500 feet overcast with one mile visibility in fog." Weather conditions were expected to improve to 800-1200 feet overcast and 2-4 miles in fog with occasional drizzle or rain. They were warned to "stay clear of the hills to the north of Allentown. Too much fog and haze there."

Preflight, start and rotor engagement were normal. Clearance was requested and granted at 1330 and they lifted off, heading due west on the first leg of their planned hop, cruising at 300-400 feet above the terrain.

Their home station was situated on the western edge of a coastal plain with steadily rising ground and mountain ridges to the west and northeast and some high ridges due north. To the east and south, all was fairly flat coastal area.

They hit the first checkpoint right on the button, a relatively simple thing, for it was only a short distance out, and headed north for the second checkpoint, Allentown. The ceiling picked up a little here and they climbed to 1000 feet MSL which placed them 600-700 feet above the hilly terrain.

Passing Allentown, they again altered heading, this time to 352° magnetic and continued as per their plan, still cruising at 1000 feet MSL. Four minutes out on this leg they entered a dense fog bank which they had been unable to discern through the haze. Their instant reaction was to do an immediate climbing 180° turn to get back out of this stuff.

ILLUSTRATED BY *Calom*

While still in the turn and at an altitude of 1500 feet indicated, the rotor system struck some TREES! At almost the same instant, they came out of the fog bank and could see they were in among the trees and headed right into a steep ridge whose top faded into the clouds!

The pilot immediately lowered the collective and wrapped on the throttle in an attempt to remain airborne. There was no response from the stricken helo, so he quickly flared to kill off groundspeed and settled it into the trees in a level attitude. It came to rest solidly planted on a very steep hillside with the nose pointing up-hill. They cut the switches and stepped out gingerly—not a scratch. Pretty lucky, if you can call it that.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Great balls of fire! These whirly-heads must have had plugs in their ears during the weather briefing. They headed for the worst weather area like bees to honey. Their flight planning was perfect—they hit the ridge right on course and right on time. Seems the only thing they forgot was to check minimum en route altitudes. Cruising at 1000 MSL, if they'd missed this one they'd have gotten another, for the highest terrain on their planned route was 2498 feet MSL. Kinda hard to clear VFR, even with a 1200-foot ceiling. 'Course the real frosting on this outing was—the pilot was his outfit's Aviation Safety Officer! It just about froze me up solid!

OpNavInst 3710.7A says that no naval aircraft may cruise at less than 500 feet above the terrain unless the specific mission requires a deviation. CAR 60 says you must maintain a 500-foot vertical separation below any ceiling. Looks like even the helos must observe the 1000-foot minimum for VFR flying outside of an airport control zone or be in violation of one rule or the other.

## Deadly Perch

A three-man crew from night check had towed an A4D-2N out to the designated high power turn-up area for final engine calibration checks.

The pilot-cockpit access ladder was in position along the port side of the aircraft. On the A4D this gives a flat platform at the top of the ladder which is flush with the bottom of the port side jet intake duct.

A jet mech was in the cockpit with

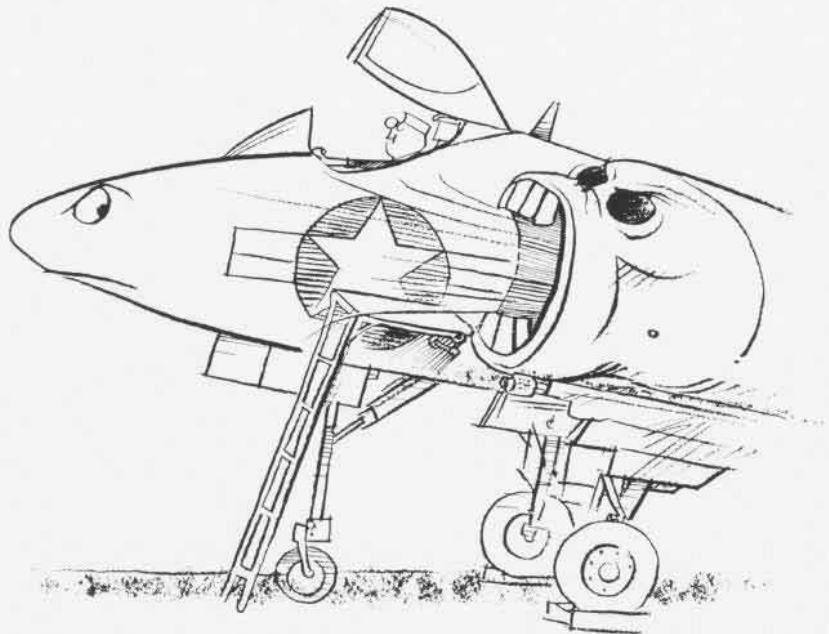
Just remember that the close ones are only good when you're playing horseshoes and pitching pennies.

the canopy open and had just turned the engine up to 100 per cent when he noted the oil pressure gauge had begun to indicate erratic readings.

He motioned to an electrician who was sitting on a starting tractor nearby, and this man immediately climbed the ladder and peered into the cockpit as the mech shouted an explanation of the problem. The engine was still at 100 per cent.

hangar to call for an ambulance and medical assistance while the other alternated between watching the injured man and the increasing amount of smoke pouring out of the tail-pipe. Obviously there was a good-sized residual fire burning in the engine.

The injured man said he could hold on, so his buddy left him on the platform, drove the starting tractor into position, and as the third man re-



The electrician moved back a little to see the malfunctioning gauge better while the mech monitored the engine instruments carefully. Suddenly the engine seemed to stall and coughed as though starved for air. The electrician was gone!

Glancing back at the intake the mech saw only the man's head, hands and left foot protruding from the duct! The mech in the cockpit quickly slammed the throttle back to cut-off and leaped out onto the platform. With the help of the third man, who had been sitting on the starting tractor, the unfortunate electrician was pulled out of the intake and propped up on the ladder platform. Both men were reluctant to move him further in the face of his obviously serious injuries.

One man now ran for the distant

turned, they gave the engine a dry run and the fire was extinguished.

The ambulance arrived within minutes and the man will survive his unforgettable experience although several months of hospital care lie ahead of him.

 **Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Great jumpin' Jehosophat! Imagine anyone nonchalantly walkin' up a ladder to face a roaring, shrieking mouth full of steel-alloy teeth, beset by tons of air rushing into that gaping hole, and then be so idiotic as to turn around and back up towards it! He musta had his brains sucked out on the way up the ladder! That engine pulled him in like a bug up a vacuum cleaner and it could have been just as fatal! Now hear this: NEVER, NEVER stand in front of a live intake!