



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Impoverished

The yellow sheets looked good in the line shack and on their way to the *Neptune*, the plane commander and copilot concluded the briefing. Preflight had been previously conducted by the crew members and everything appeared normal. Fuel quantity was 2,400 gallons by the dipstick and the samples were clean. The plane commander took one final look and manned the aircraft.

At 1125, with jets and recipis churning, the SP-2H rose from the airfield and proceeded on the scheduled instrument training flight. Several approaches were conducted at nearby facilities with all four engines utilized for the better part of the flight. Upon completing an ADF approach to an adjacent field at 1415, a fuel check was recorded as 2,900 and 3,000 lbs. in the mains and 1,400 in the center tanks.

Heading seaward, the pilot obtained from approach control a clearance for a TACAN approach and GCA to the homefield. The plane commander was under the hood and completed the landing check list.

About three minutes after commencing the final approach and at 3,000 feet, the crewman directly aft of the pilot noticed the fuel pressure on number 2 recip rapidly dropping and immediately notified the pilot of this revolting development. The PC feathered number 2, increased power on the starboard jet to 90% and completed the engine secure check-list. Right after this evolution, the starboard jet quit, leaving the nebulous *Neptune* at 2,000 feet over the water and six miles from the field. The tower was alerted to the emergency and the crew proceeded to their ditching stations. (A fuel check was conducted at this time by the PC as 3,000 lbs. in both



Osborn

mains and zero in the centers. Co-pilot read zero in the mains and 3,000 in the centers.)

The PC was attempting to hold 150 knots, intending to make a single-engine landing without jets. Approximately three minutes after losing number 2 recip, fuel pressure dropped on the port engines and, at 1,400 feet, all power failed.

With the gear up and 10 degrees flaps, the PC held 150 knots and informed the crew that ditching was imminent. He checked the fuel, mains-direct position and all boost pumps on. After getting a May Day out at 1,000 feet, he switched to the center tanks and then back to mains-direct one or more times. The engine surged, but did not restart as he headed for a nearby Coast Guard vessel.

The visibility was seven miles, sea conditions were fair with light swells and the wind was NW at 15 knots. The big bird ditched smoothly into the wind about 300 yards from the Coast Guard ship and all personnel evacuated 30 seconds after forward motion ceased.

Three minutes later the doomed *Neptune* departed for the deep six, leaving a hazardous layer and strong odor of avgas.

Within 15 minutes of splash down, the Coast Guard had picked up all hands.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Oh, my achin ulcers! Would you believe pilot error coulda sent this *Neptune* to its doom?

You can bet your last dime that if this fella was watchin' his fuel like his bank account, he'd known where every last drop of gas was and how to put it in the right place at the right time. Nuff said!

Fit to Survive

After a leisurely dinner in the wardroom, the *Skyhawk* driver proceeded to the ready room and changed into his flight gear. He donned red goggles and waited until time to man his aircraft for the final night tanker hop on the schedule. At about 2015 he arrived at his aircraft on the flight deck and had to bite his tongue as there was no cockpit ladder available. After a normal preflight he gained access to the cockpit from the hood of a start tractor and shortly thereafter noticed the plane had no lox. After this discrepancy was remedied, the start and post start check were accomplished and the tanker was launched at 2047.

The fresh tanker rendezvoused with the off-going duty tanker, checked the store and transferred the remaining fuel. He then took station and subsequently climbed to 20,000. As the final recovery phase neared completion, the tanker pilot was directed to 5,000 feet.

At 2224 he commenced his approach, a teardrop penetration from 5,000 feet at 10 miles from the ship. He descended to 2,000 feet on the outbound leg and at 20 miles made a left turn inbound. At this point he commenced dumping the store and continued the

descent to 1,000 feet. Completing the turn and inbound indicating 250 knots (supposedly at 1,000 feet), he noticed he was not right on the inbound bearing and made a slight right bank to correct. The aircraft jumped and shook violently as it impacted the water. The next thing the pilot knew, he was in the water. It was quiet. There was a strong odor of JP, and he was being tugged downward. His first reaction was to reach for the toggles of his Mk-3C but he could not locate them. His only thought now was to surface.

In hopes of freeing himself from whatever was hindering him, he quickly shed his survival vest and torso harness. (While pulling the torso harness off his left leg, he noticed the deformity of the ankle joint and realized he had sustained a fracture.) Once free of the harness, he was able to swim to the surface. For a short while he tried to tread water and float on his back, but the waves continually broke in his face. Realizing he was still wearing a "G" suit, he removed and inflated it by blowing into the hose. However, the connection fitting was torn off and he had to jam his thumb in the open end to keep it inflated.

After becoming somewhat oriented, the plagued survivor saw his flashlight floating a short distance away and found that it functioned normally. During the next hour or so he inflated the "G" suit about 50 times for whatever assistance it could afford him. Luckily he spotted an external tank floating upright and swam over and grabbed it. Assured the tank would support him, he discarded the "G" suit, laid his head against the tank, and held the flashlight alongside the white surface, periodically directing the light in all directions.

On several occasions he heard the SAR aircraft in the vicinity, but it was not until a destroyer lookout spotted his red light at 0257 that he was found and finally rescued. He had endured a harrowing four hours and 47 minutes in the sea.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great horned toadies! This pilot coulda got kilt.

Just goes to show ya that being in

good physical shape can bend the odds way around in your favor and really pays off when the chips are down. Course, he coulda saved himself a heap of inconvenience by eye-balling the altimeter a lot closer and squawking like mad for help if he wasn't completely happy with it.

Outside of scratching this bird, my hat's off to this fella for an outstanding performance in the escape and survival phase of the accident.

S.O.S.

A flight of six SH-3A's departed the auxiliary field at 0800 for an ASW training exercise. They arrived on station, seven miles seaward at 0815.

At ten o'clock during the 12th dip hovering at 40 feet with the sonar transducer lowered in the water, the flight leader and his copilot heard a loud noise and observed the port engine torque dropping to zero and the port turbine exhaust temperature gauge pegged at 1,000°C. Speed selectors of both engines were advanced, but sufficient power was not forthcoming and a controlled water landing was made into the wind. (Emergency flotation bags were activated.)

The *Sea King* was under control, floating satisfactorily. Heading into the wind, number one engine speed selector was placed in ground idle in an attempt to regain power with manual throttle. This attempt failed to produce any increase in torque and number one was secured. Approximately 15 seconds later, number one's fire warning light came on. The copilot activated the engine fire extinguisher.

At about 1010 the crew ascertained the fire to be out and notified the nearby NAS of the mishap. The NAS dispatched a rescue boat.

A slow downwind water taxi

toward the NAS was commenced at 1015. Ground swells of about five feet prevailed from the stern. Water was entering the crew compartment through the sonar tunnel and the sonar hoist enclosure. The crewmen found it difficult to seat the sonar transducer because of the sea state and motion of the aircraft but did succeed some minutes later. At 1045 the pilot turned into the wind and attempts were made to deploy the sea anchor for towing. This proved futile and it appeared likely there would be a long delay for the tow.

At 1050 they gave up the towing idea and began taxying once again. Almost immediately after turning downwind, a wave lifted the tail of the aircraft and caused the main rotor blades to strike the water. The machine rolled forward and came to rest, inverted in the water. All hands evacuated immediately and were rescued by a motor whaleboat from a nearby destroyer.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Shades of black shoes! Looks like we gotta go back to basics. Since we ain't in the VO/VS business any more, maybe we're lackin' some of the ole horse sense we always took for granted.

No doubt these fellas found themselves between a rock and a hard place when the stator vane on the port engine gave up the ghost, but from there on just plain ole damage control and seamanship coulda saved the boat.

Seems to me it woulda been a good idea to lighten ship right then and try to get it back in the air. After that, pluggin' holes with anything available makes good sense and woulda kept the draft down to a decent level and seaworthy enough for a tug to the beach or to the carrier that passed within shoutin' distance.

