



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Nobody's Fuel

After briefing his three students on the track they would be required to navigate visually, the instructor preflighted the C-45J and all hands climbed aboard. The flight became airborne at 1327 with 4½ hours fuel on board. Weather en route was such that they had to climb to 9,000 feet and descend as low as 500 on the first three legs of the flight to maintain VFR.

After the flight had been seven minutes on the fourth leg, the weather indicated a course reversal. It was decided to fly the track counter-clockwise. Weather again plagued the flight and finally the instructor resigned himself to an instrument clearance. He tried to contact a flight service station without success. No side tone was audible on the radio, so he had a student check for blown fuses.

A climb to 9,000 feet was effected to remain VFR and the Center was finally contacted on a manually set frequency. An instrument clearance was obtained as requested at 1625 and the flight turned on course for home. Estimated time en route was 1 + 00 hours with 1:45 + hours fuel



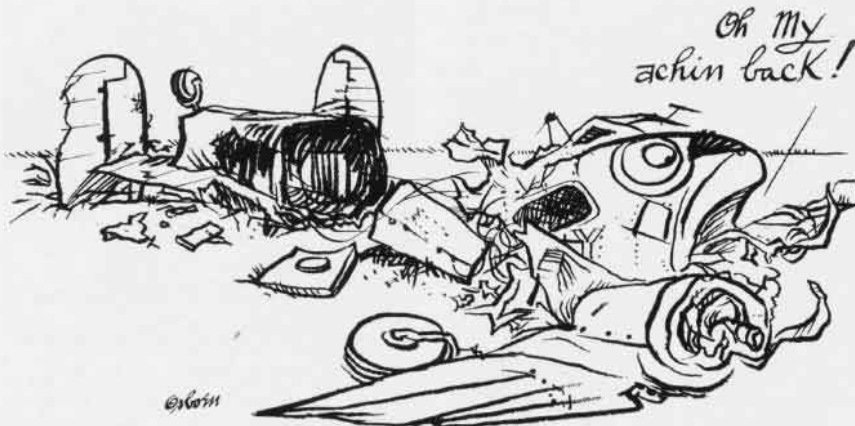
remaining on board.

The flight passed over its first navigation fix in ten minutes and continued toward the next checkpoint in instrument conditions. About 45 miles from homeplate, the C-45 broke into VFR conditions. The instructor immediately cancelled his IFR clearance (time 1715), intending to land at the AFB close by if his destination was IFR. He descended rapidly in a clearing with the runway lights of

the AFB in sight. Radio contact with home base was established and the weather was reported as 1,200 scattered, 2,000 broken, 4,000 broken, 10,000 broken, 5 miles in haze. Acting on this favorable report, 40 miles out and with 0.3 fuel remaining in the right main tank, he turned the *Beech* for home.

Weather encountered en route made it necessary for him to descend to 700 feet. Attempts to tune in home base's ADF were futile. Finally, the VOR of a satellite field was tuned in and a bearing from home plate was determined. There were no visible signs to firmly establish their position so the instructor attempted to contact home base on normal and guard frequencies to obtain assistance. This, too, met with failure.

With 0.2 fuel remaining on board, the night dark and himself not too well oriented, the *Beech* driver climbed to 3,500 feet, and ordered the occupants to bail out. He then aimed for an unlighted area, broadcast his intention to leave the aircraft and bailed out. All hands parachuted safely to earth and the wayward *Beech* crashed in an uninhabited area.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Oh, my achin' back! Some folks would be better off in bed—all the time. This fella convinces me that some people schedule accidents in advance. A pilot with over 3,000 hours of multi-engine experience just couldn't do a thing like this—but he did.

OPNAV Instruction 3710.7C was promulgated to save all of us embarrassment from mishaps such as this, but it looks like there is no sure way to legislate against poor headwork. Pushin' the weather to complete that instructional flight just didn't pay off. What's more, it never will. The decision to execute a 180 has saved many a pilot and plane if it was made before reaching the point of no return.

Done In

After a preflight briefing for a scheduled practice buddy-bombing mission, the *Skyhawk* driver proceeded to the flight deck to man his A-4. The start and post-start check revealed no discrepancies and at the proper time he was directed to the port catapult. The hook-up and tensioning were accomplished without difficulty and appeared normal in every respect. With the engine at 100% and all instruments reading normal, he positioned himself for launch and saluted the catapult officer.

The catapult fired and the shot initially appeared normal. About one-half the way down the track, the A-4 started to decelerate. As it cleared the bow, the aircraft rotated to a normal attitude, but a sink rate was established immediately and continued. Just prior to impact with the water, the pilot ejected. (The A-4 at this time was in a slightly nose-high, right-wing-down attitude.) The canopy blew off to the right and the seat traveled almost straight up. The pilot and seat reached a trajectory of about 200 feet above the water. Seat separation was delayed and occurred just prior to impact with the water. The parachute did not deploy but was just beginning to stream at impact. The pilot struck the water on his back in a reclined sitting position.

Once in the water, the *Hawk* driver attempted to inflate his Mk 3-C but noted he could not use his left arm. Nevertheless, he located one toggle with his right hand and pulled it.

A helicopter (not the assigned plane guard) hovering close aboard the mishap conducted the pickup, bringing the injured pilot to the flight deck hanging below the helo with his left arm through the sling, his right hand grasping it, and the streamed parachute dangling.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! I think this poor lad had just about enough for one day. The cause of the premature loss in steam pressure has been fixed, but a hairy retrieval like this could, but shouldn't, happen again.

When you go fishin' for a fella

that's been through what he had, it seems to me it'd be a fine idea to send help down, get rid of his chute and get him inside th helo for the ride back to the ship.

Blindman's Bluff

Following a number of frustrating delays, the student pilot finally became airborne for his second flight in the AF-9J. He proceeded out to the familiarization area, completing his 2,500-foot checklist and checking in with the FDO. After leveling off at 18,000 feet, he practiced wing-overs until time to secure transfer and dump. After dumping, he completed two barrel rolls, one loop, and two-and-a-half Cuban eights.

At 19,000 feet he entered a split "S." Upon recovering, just as he passed 18,000 feet, dense, white smoke came pouring out from the area under the instrument panel. With vision instantly obliterated and his eyes irritated by the smoke, the pilot's first reaction was to reach for the oxygen regulator to insure it was set at 100%. He next attempted, but failed, to switch to ram air and open the cabin air dump valve.

Three more courses of action occurred to the youngster: switching to emergency IFF, jettisoning the canopy, and transmitting a "May Day." All three were discarded in deference to his growing concern for the plane's altitude and atti-

tude, his fear that the canopy might not jettison properly, and his belief that the IFF was sour. Fearful that the *Cougar* was on fire, he decided to eject without further ado.

He positioned himself in the seat and pulled the face curtain with both hands. Nothing happened. Holding the primary handle with his left hand, the anxious driver pushed aside the guard and pulled on the secondary handle with his right hand. Still nothing happened. Finally, by exerting a harder pull on both handles simultaneously, he was ejected from the aircraft.

Seat separation and chute deployment were normal. Upon nearing the ground, he attempted to maneuver his chute to avoid landing on a large cactus plant. Being preoccupied, he touched down before he expected and fractured a bone in his left foot. Local citizens arrived at the scene in short order and aided the distressed aviator.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' catfish! This young man must've been wired off when his instructor was passing out the smarts about inflight emergencies and things. There ain't no doubt that he had his thoughts organized but he failed to include a few basics like how to get to the ram air and cabin dump in zero visibility, like he did on the blindfold checkout.

Simple ignorance is not knowing; compound ignorance is not knowing that you don't know.

