



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Gassed

A ferry crew, assigned the mission of delivering a C-1A Trader to PAR and dropping another ferry crew off at an en route air station, assembled early at the reporting custodian's hangar and commenced preparation for the flight. The plane commander instructed his copilot to proceed to Operations and file a flight plan while he and the plane captain inspected and accepted the aircraft. The PPC would then taxi over to Operations and pick up the copilot en route to the duty runway for takeoff.

The aircraft logbooks were in order. Previous yellow sheets indicated past discrepancies had been remedied. While the plane commander accepted the aircraft, the plane captain performed the preflight inspection. Part A of the yellow sheet indicated 11 gallons of oil in each engine and 500 gallons of fuel aboard.

Completing his own preflight inspection of the aircraft, the plane commander proceeded to the cockpit. With the plane captain in the right seat, the pilot went through the pre-start check list, started the engines and called for taxi clearance. He taxied to the warm-up area, conducted an engine run-up which was normal in all respects and then taxied to Operations to pick up the copilot.

The copilot had filed an IFR flight



plan to their destination with a five-minute passenger stop at the en route field to drop off the extra ferry crew. Clearance was expected in 20 minutes.

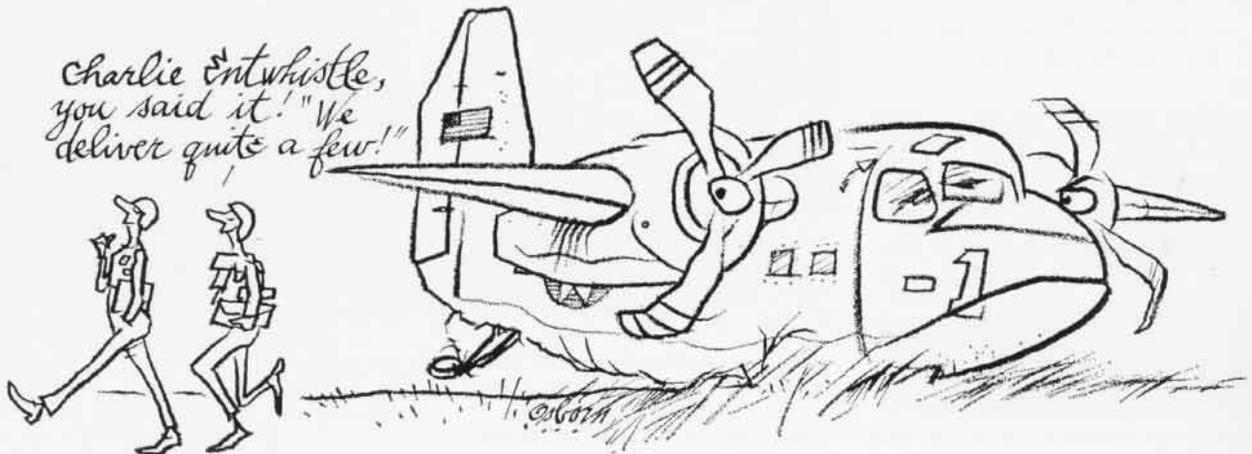
About 40 minutes later, the clearance had still not arrived. A call to the tower revealed the field to be VFR so the pilot cancelled the IFR flight plan and obtained clearance for an

immediate VFR departure. The flight to the intermediate field was uneventful and, before landing, an IFR flight plan to the destination was obtained.

After unloading the ferry crew, the C-1A departed, leveling off at 6,000 feet. A little later, the pilot received clearance to descend to 4,000 feet because of strong headwinds. This placed the C-1A below a broken cloud layer where improved visibility prevailed.

When the Trader had been en route for five hours, a momentary loss of power was sustained by the number two engine, so the pilot placed the mixture controls in the rich position and turned on the fuel boost pumps. But the engine continued to alternately lose and regain power. All engine instruments showed normal readings with fuel gauges both indicating in excess of 300 pounds. When the airspeed dropped to 130 knots, the pilot directed his copilot to secure the number two engine.

Almost immediately after number two was feathered, number one started to lose power in the same way. The pilot instructed the copilot to unfeather number two and attempt to regain power. The pilot informed the control center of his situation, cancelled his IFR flight plan, and announced he would try to reach a municipal field close by. In rapid order, number one had lost all power,



number two restarted with the cross-feed turned on and again commenced cutting out.

It became obvious to both pilots that the engines would no longer sustain the aircraft in flight and they switched the IFF to emergency. They transmitted a "Mayday" on UHF guard and selected a field to land on.

A full-flap, wheels-up landing was made on a fairly smooth dirt field. The aircraft skidded along the ground on its touchdown heading for approximately 350 feet. The number two propeller touched the ground and the aircraft swerved sharply and came to rest. The pilot secured all valves and switches and had the aircraft checked for any evidence of fire. There were no injuries and all hands left the plane through the main hatch. The plane commander then walked to a farmhouse and made the necessary calls.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Oh, my achin' back! If this fiasco don't wilt the lily, nothin' will. The first mistake these lads made was not visually checking the gas tanks. (If they had, it would'a been plain to see they were about 50 gallons shy.) Secondly, the flight planning must'a been pretty sloppy.

Just having made the trip before ain't no guarantee that fuel consumption is gonna be the same. (Not to mention excessive delays waiting for clearances and en route stops.)

Now if these fellas had been keeping an eye on the gas gauge and checking their fuel consumption, they'd have gotten the clue early that the gauge wasn't doin' right by them. Investigation showed loud and clear that both fuel quantity gauges were installed with improperly positioned connectors on the transformers. This caused each gauge to be in error by over three hundred pounds.

I can't let "quality control" off the hook on their contribution to this needless mishap, but I have to say these fellas had better learn to be a bit more nosey on their preflights and a lot more thorough in their planning.

## All but One

An SH-3A *Sea King* crew, consisting of pilot, copilot and two crewmen, was assigned a plane guard flight for the 2200 fixed-wing launch and recovery. The entire crew arrived on the flight deck at 2130 and proceeded to the assigned aircraft. Upon completion of the preflight inspection, all

hands climbed aboard and commenced preparations for the flight.

At about 2140 on signal from Pri-Fly, the number one engine was started, blades were spread and systems checked. After number two engine was started and upon signal from Pri-Fly, the helo's rotor was engaged and all final preparations for flight were meticulously performed in the cockpit. Flat pitch power was checked satisfactorily and the takeoff check list was double-checked.

The plane director gave the pre-launch signal to hold brakes, remove chocks and tie-downs and stand clear of the helo at 2156. As the copilot watched from the left seat, the plane captain released the port tie-down, pulled his chock clear of the wheel and ran in front of the aircraft to a position aft of the island structure. At this time, the pilot watched the chock and tie-down on the starboard landing gear being removed by a Blue Shirt. Each pilot then verified to the other that his tie-down and chock had been removed. But one tie-down on the port mount, tending inboard, was overlooked.

As they received the launch signal from the plane director, the pilot commenced adding power to accomplish a vertical takeoff. The *Sea King* no more than became airborne when the nose pitched down uncontrollably and simultaneously developed a rapid roll to the left. The helo skidded to the left in a left bank, the port wheel

struck the deck and continued over the deck edge.

Water entry was surprisingly gentle and barely discernible to the pilots and crewmen. The two crewmen egressed through the starboard emergency exit window without incident. The pilot elected to leave by way of his already fully open sliding window on the starboard side. The copilot, however, experienced extreme difficulty getting out of the aircraft. He actuated the emergency release handle and, with considerable difficulty, finally succeeded in opening the jettisonable window assembly and escaped.

Fortunately, all required survival equipment was worn by the crew and it functioned flawlessly. The plane guard destroyer's whale boat recovered all hands at 2217.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Sufferin' succotash! Ole Gramps was mighty happy to see these lads come through this fiasco with no more than minor injuries, but I darn sure wouldn't want to write their insurance if they can't count their tie-downs any better than this.

You can count Gramp's rotary wing time on one finger, but you can bet I'd have a much better working agreement with the plane captain and directors.

A good surgeon always counts his tools before he sews up his victim. For longevity's sake and better morale for the next of kin, all helo drivers would do better to count and double-check, then check again, the chains.

