



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Up and Locked

The Marine second lieutenant departed the training command air station on his P-6 solo flight in a T-28 *Trojan*. After completing acrobatics and slow flight, he entered the landing pattern at an outlying field for touch-and-go practice. The first touchdown was long, and the student applied throttle for takeoff. Just after liftoff, the engine lost power. He quickly applied full throttle, but the airplane continued to settle back to the runway. Maximum braking did not stop the *Trojan* and, as it left the runway, the pilot retracted the landing gear. The craft slid 250 feet to a stop, and the second lieutenant tried unsuccessfully to blow the canopy back; then beat a hole in it with his fists and climbed out through the hole onto the left wing and to the ground.

Another student pilot, an ensign on a solo flight in the same type aircraft, noted the sump plug warning light on while doing wingovers. All other instruments were normal, and the engine continued to run smoothly. Quite professionally, he set 2,000 rpm and 20-inch manifold pressure and prepared for a precautionary emergency landing at an outlying field.

At high key, he set the propeller to low pitch and closed the throttle. The gear warning horn came on, but he silenced it so he wouldn't miss any radio transmissions. He trimmed up for the glide and began the landing checklist. It seemed a bit premature when he reached for the landing gear handle, so he noted to himself, "gear to go." Arriving at the "low key" position somewhat high, he lowered the landing lights. Approaching the 90° position, he lowered one-half flaps, followed soon by full flaps. Since he was still high, he even opened the canopy to increase his rate of descent.

As the *Trojan* arrived on final approach, the crash crew fired a red flare



which the ensign assumed was a warning to other aircraft that an emergency landing was in progress. On touchdown, when the propeller stopped turning, he thought that the engine had seized. As the plane started to skid off the right side of the runway, it finally dawned on him that he had landed wheels up. The craft skidded to a stop and the switches were secured before the pilot climbed out to survey the damage.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

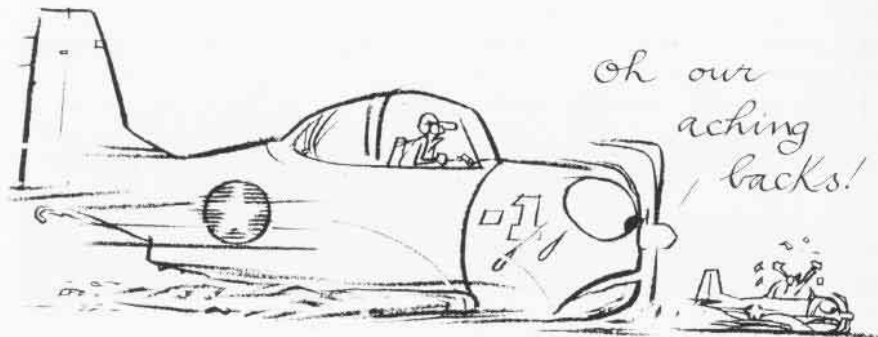
Embarrassin', what! Some days ya can't make a nickel. Seems they couldn't find anything wrong with the engine on the

first T-28 or with the canopy. However, the prop was found set at 2,200 rpm and the mixture on normal lean. Even though both these mishaps occurred with student pilots who admittedly had very limited experience, it could happen tomorrow – to anyone. Not one of us, includin' ol' Gramps, is exempt from the broken habit pattern or the diverted attention which can cause a lapse. There is only one prevention, CHECKLISTS. Nuff sed!

Fish or Cut Bait

The A-4E *Skyhawk*, piloted by a combat veteran lieutenant, was launched on a bombing mission from the starboard catapult of the small CVA at dusk one summer evening. The cat was set for the correct gross weight of 23,000 pounds to give the A-4 an end speed of 141 knots.

Witnesses noted a definite decrease in engine rpm as the aircraft proceeded down the catapult. Off the end, with 14 knots excess end speed, they also noted a possible over-rotation, although the lieutenant stated that he rotated normally to ten degrees. The *Skyhawk* encountered immediate buffet and began to settle. Seven to ten seconds later, as the stricken bird reached 20 feet above the water, the pilot initiated ejection on the air boss' radio call. He was forthwith deposited uninjured in the water alongside the remaining debris of his aircraft. He was



immediately drenched with fuel but there was no fire. He was picked up by the plane guard helo and deposited on deck within seven minutes.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

What was wrong there? Mighty lucky guy (quite true). What else can a guy do if his engine fails him off the end of the cat. But did he really have engine problems? I'm a mighty suspicious cuss, you say.

Three nights earlier, he had witnessed, from the LSO platform, the catastrophic demise of a friend when his aircraft hit the ramp. By his own statement, he took this cat shot with his left hand on the alternate ejection handle instead of holding the throttle full on. There was sufficient time for several remedial actions by the pilot, such as jettisoning ordnance, cleaning up the aircraft, or above all, advancing the throttle which was probably pulled aft by the G load of the catapult shot.

Why didn't he react? Most probably because he was momentarily over-saturated and unable to respond to the maximal stress situation.

Think ahead — plan and practice your reaction to emergency situations.



Shudda Stood in Bed

During initial carqual landings in the A-7B, the lieutenant was sent out for his first night period. After six passes, resulting in one waveoff, two bolters and three arrestments, the seventh also left something to be desired. A lineup call fairly close in, to which he responded, and an attitude call just prior to touchdown left him in a nose-high, left wing-down attitude. The tailpipe skagged from a point 18 feet forward of the round-down. The nose came through hard, and the *Corsair* hook skipped the first three wires. Engaging the fourth, it continued to roll out in a marked left drift. As the left main mount slipped into the catwalk, the lieutenant reached down and pulled the alternate firing handle with his right hand. Due to the aircraft's approximately 85 degrees of bank, he ejected in a low trajectory and hit the water without chute opening.

The A-7 was still at full power and attached to the number four arresting cable. The flight deck crew flamed out the engine by spraying water down the intake; however, the *Corsair* continued to slip over the side and came to rest,

suspended by the wire, with its nose in the water. (Later, the \$1.5 million A-7 was intentionally released and fell into the sea.)

The pilot found himself in the water, unable to use his injured left arm. He managed to inflate the right side of his MK-3C, then discovered that his legs were entangled with parachute shroud lines. He turned on his strobe light and was soon approached by the plane guard helicopter. The swimmer was not equipped with fins or knife and, although the pilot had a knife and shroud cutter attached to his vest, quite a bit of time was spent in un-tangling the shroud lines. Finally, in the horse collar, he was hoisted prematurely and, because of his broken arm, fell approximately 20 feet, back into the water. The swimmer attached his D ring to the hoist, put the pilot back into the horse collar, wrapped his arms and legs about the pilot and signaled the helo to hoist away. Because the lieutenant was hanging too low, it was impossible to get him aboard the helicopter. As he began to slip, a crewman grabbed his broken left arm and, with the swimmer hang-

ing on, too, they proceeded back to the ship.

Although the helo was given a "clear deck," it was unable to land because of the arresting cable still across the deck — holding the suspended *Corsair*. In addition, the helo pilot couldn't lower his landing gear for fear of hitting the rescued pilot. As the lieutenant became aware of the problems he released his grip and fell five to ten feet to the flight deck, receiving minor additional bruises. He was x-rayed in sick bay and evacuated to a naval hospital the following day.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! Kind'a shows a weakness in our methods, don't it? Can't second guess the captain, but it sure would'a been nice to save that *Corsair*. I know one ship which went back into port with one hanging over the side so a dockside crane could hoist it back aboard. A million and a half bucks is not small change.

And as fer the uncoordinated rescue crew — man, they need some training, fast. What a contrast between a crew that knows what it's doin' and a fiasco like this. No swimmer should ever be used unless he really knows what he is doing. Who, in the chain of command, allowed this to happen?