



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Big Show — Rerun

Two Naval Aviators flew an uneventful first portion of a cross-country flight. The T-28 *Trojan* performed well in all respects and, upon landing at NAS Midcoast, the two pilots informed operations personnel that they would be remaining for the weekend (two nights). They spent the two days at a nearby resort area.

The two returned to the base about mid-afternoon for a late afternoon departure to home plate. They planned on filing VFR; however, upon checking with the weather office, they filed for a VFR departure to pick up an IFR clearance approximately 30 miles away. The pilots filed their flight plan, preflighted the *Trojan* and, following an uneventful start, taxied to the duty runway.

Departure was without incident and a few minutes later, according to witnesses, a T-28 was observed in the nearby resort area. The aircraft appeared to be in a slight descent and had started a slow-roll maneuver. It continued in another roll. These rolls were apparently a mix between aileron rolls and barrel rolls. After one of the rolls, the left wing continued to go down. The aircraft went inverted, extremely nose down, and then disappeared behind the trees.

Another witness reported that he was at the roadside trailer park when he noticed an aircraft overhead. To

him, the aircraft appeared low and doing a barrel roll. The aircraft passed out of sight behind the trees. The last time anyone saw it, it was in a steep dive. The witness heard the engine go to high power and, a moment later, heard a boom and felt the ground shake.

Investigation revealed the aircraft impacted the ground in a near vertical dive. The crash was fatal to both pilots.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' sailfish! Will we ever see the last of this foolishness? Again two young aviators bit the dust 'cause they wanted someone to see how "hot" they were.

What is even more amazin' is the number of misinformed personnel that attempt to shield a driver that has been caught (and survived) flatthattin' with comments like "Yes, but he is my best pilot," or "He is very aggressive," etc. Bull hockey! Since it's obvious that a certain small percentage can't be trusted . . . when caught, there is only one way to be sure of preventing this type of future performance — the long green table!



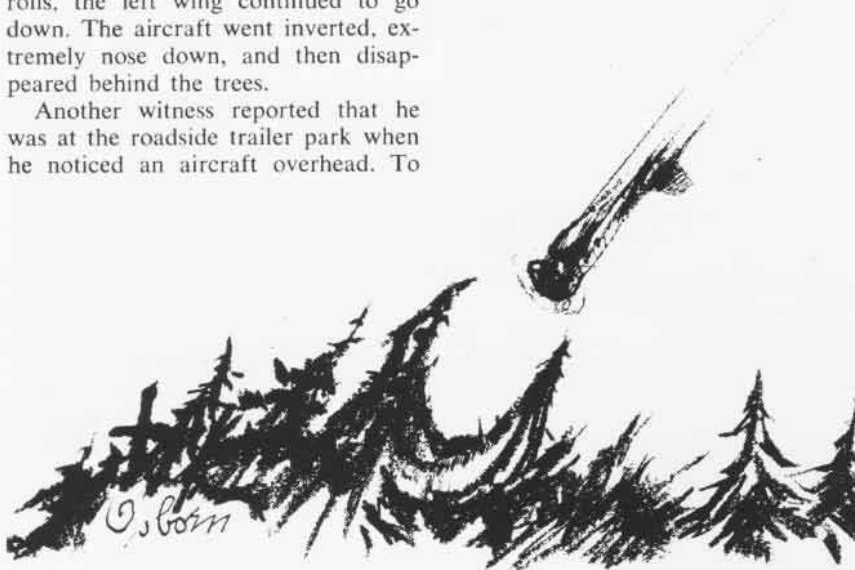
Fuel Starvation???

A Naval Aviator was scheduled to ferry an A-7B *Corsair* from one field to a naval air station approximately 20 miles away. The *Corsair* had been defueled aboard an aircraft carrier two days before in preparation for offloading at the adjacent airfield.

The preflight of the A-7 was normal and, on entering the cockpit, the pilot noted that the aircraft had 1,000 pounds in the main tanks and 3,800 pounds in the wing tank. During the start cycle, the pilot observed the fuel low level light was on which confirmed the fuel in the main tank. The fuel low level caution light remained on throughout the start, taxi, takeoff and airborne portion of the flight.

After takeoff, the *Corsair* climbed, made a turn over the field and proceeded outbound. At this point the fuel was fluctuating between 800 and 1,000 pounds in the main tank. At level-off, with the aircraft at 4,000 feet, the fuel boost caution light came on and the pilot felt several distinct engine surges.

He immediately requested clearance



back to his takeoff field and commenced a turn to that heading. He noted a fuel flow of 2,000 pph, but his rpm indication of 40-50 percent was low and the Corsair did not seem to respond to throttle movement. Selecting manual fuel control and extending the EPP, the pilot attempted an air restart by retarding the throttle to the igniter position. He then noted zero fuel flow and approximately 20 percent rpm.

The aircraft was passing approximately 1,500 feet at that point, so the pilot pulled up to optimum angle of attack and ejected. The ejection sequence was normal in all respects. The pilot was rescued by helo shortly after water entry. From takeoff roll to ejection was approximately five minutes.

The investigation revealed that the engine failure was due to fuel starvation; no malfunction of the fuel system was detected.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jupiter! I just can't imagine anyone departin' a field with the low level fuel light on! This gent was no nugget — although I believe a nugget would have done a better job. A low fuel warning light means exactly that, WARNING — dern it!

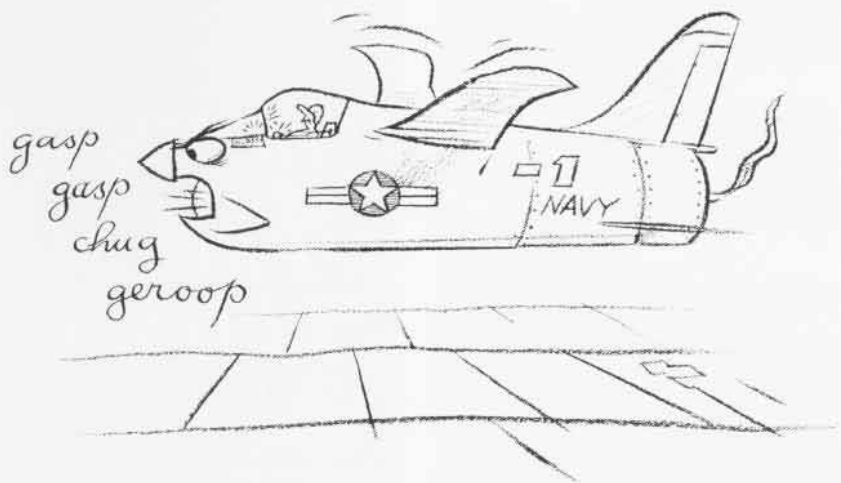
In addition to the pilot screwing this whole thing up, he had lotsa help — the personnel doing the refueling did not ensure proper fuel distribution. In other words, there was plenty of fuel, it just wasn't where the pilot thought it was!

Amazing how, in most cases, a chain of events is set up for a crash. Yet, along the way, there are opportunities to stop this "chain of events" — but nobody does!?!

Nostalgia

Shortly after takeoff on a group ferry flight in the Western Pacific, an SB2C-4 pilot attempted to switch to his droppable wing tanks. No matter how hard he concentrated, however, he couldn't remember where that particular valve was, nor could he locate it.

Not one to be easily discouraged, this young pilot did a bit of rapid calculation and figured out he had sufficient fuel to reach his destination. It might be a close shave and, unfortunately, there weren't any alternate atolls en route, but it was a good chance to practice operating at maximum fuel economy. And think of the



ribbing he would get if he turned back! Besides, he would have plenty of time on the way to find that drop tank gas valve. So-o-o-o, he continued with the formation.

Two hours later, they approached a weather front and climbed to 11,000 feet to clear it. They all climbed, that is, except this pilot who was nursing his gas. He lagged behind and below, attempting to circle the front. A short while later, he notified the flight he had lost contact. Upon receipt of this message, the leader directed the next senior pilot to take charge while he turned back to find our hero.

Radio communications were excellent, but visibility conditions prevented the two planes from rendezvousing, even by radar. The lost pilot finally found a light spot in the front and flew through at 200 feet altitude.

Soon thereafter he made radio contact with the island for which he was heading. When he explained that he was lost, he was instructed to turn on his emergency IFF. In his excitement, however, he *detonated* it instead. He then was told to transmit on a medium high frequency. The tower took a bearing on his transmission and gave him his heading to the island. The dark clouds all disappeared and everything seemed rosy again when he sighted the island about 20 miles away.

Five miles later, his engine sputtered and stopped. He still didn't know how to shift to his drop tanks. (The report never cleared up why he hadn't requested radio advice on this point.) He evidently didn't know how to pre-

pare for ditching either. Even though he was at 7,500 feet when his engine quit, his shoulder straps still were loose when he landed. The fractured jaw he received, plus other contusions and abrasions, left him too dazed to assist his radioman get the life raft out of the plane before it sank.

They still had their life jackets, however, and were floating pretty, 15 minutes later, when a PBY, sent out by the island air-sea rescue service, dropped a life raft close aboard. They didn't even have to paddle ashore; a minesweeper picked them up.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Not a few casualties have resulted because pilots were unfamiliar with some seldom used switch, lever or piece of special equipment not essential to a checkout flight. The accident board made a potent recommendation regarding this: "each activity prepare a standard checkout procedure, peculiar to its own needs, placing special emphasis on these seldom used accessories."

Whether you follow the recommendations of this board or not depends on your attitude. If you want to string this war out as long as possible and lose a lot of your friends, you'll be satisfied merely to show your pilots which way to bend the throttle for take-off (Some of them are bound to get through!). But if you want to get this damn thing over with as soon as possible, you won't be satisfied to turn 'em loose until you're sure they know how to operate every switch, knob, lever, button and gadget in the cockpit. (July 1945)