



grampaw pettibone

Gear Down and Locked, Solo

A student pilot was scheduled for a night local familiarization hop in a TA-4 *Skyhawk*. The student had approximately 190 total hours, 50 in the TA-4. This was his second hop of the day, having flown a formation flight during the afternoon.

The operations duty officer asked the pilot if he had received his night solo briefing and the pilot replied that he had. The pilot manned his aircraft following an uneventful preflight. He took off and conducted his area familiarization without any significant occurrence. He then decided to conduct a GCA to be followed by entry into the touch-and-go pattern.

The GCA was to be a missed approach and a turn downwind for the landing practice. The pilot, while making his approach, reported "Gear down and locked, solo." However, the *Skyhawk* just didn't feel right.

He noted his indexer lights were inoperative and his angle of attack (AOA) did not correspond to his airspeed for the configuration he thought the aircraft was in. He made a go-around and contacted the runway duty officer (RDO) and discussed his problem with him. The RDO transmitted that he would check the external approach lights on the second approach and waveoff.

The pilot was told that his approach lights were inoperative and to fly airspeed. The pilot did not check his landing configuration and, since the aircraft did not "feel right," he flew a compromise between the AOA and airspeed.

The *Skyhawk* touched down in a shower of sparks, *wheels up, flaps up*. Observing this and believing the aircraft was on fire, the RDO broadcast: "Eject, eject, eject!" The pilot ejected with the system working as advertised.



The aircraft, surprisingly, had only minor damage. The pilot was not injured.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thunderin' thunderings! I can't believe all the cues this gent had — no indexer lights, aircraft didn't feel right, external approach lights not working, and still it *never sunk in* that his wheels were not down. You could'a told him that his wheels were not down and he still wouldn't have believed it.

And what a lot of help he got from the RDO. Seems to me an RDO ought to be a suspicious cuss when a young fella is havin' all the problems this lad had! No one escaped having their "hand in the till" on this one. The

squadron "helped" in that the RDO was not fully qualified before standing this watch.

On and on and on. Where will the next wheels-up occur — in your unit? Never!!!

"Thorough" Preflight

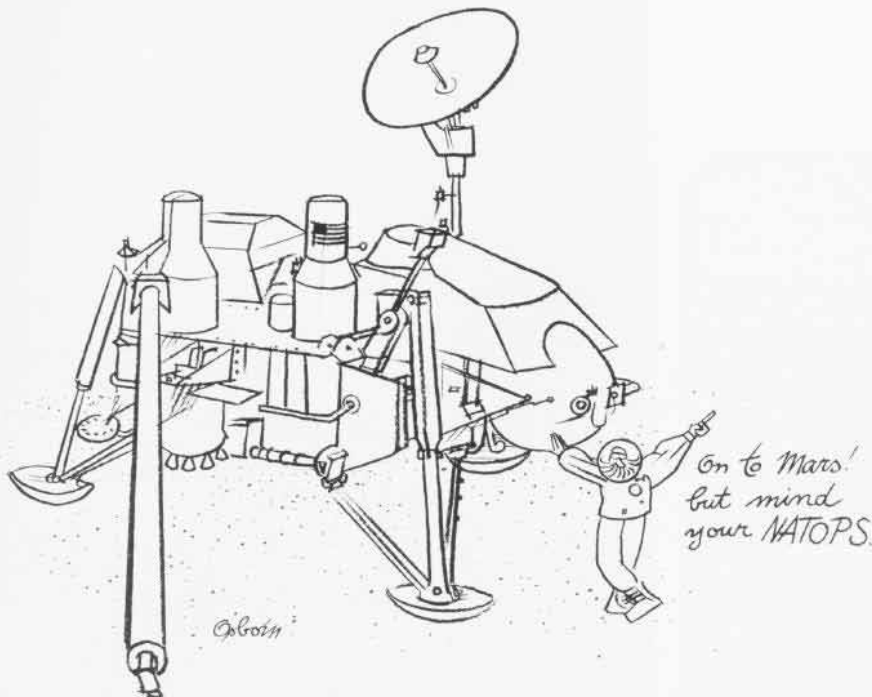
Two "senior type" pilots were scheduled for a proficiency day instrument flight in a T-28 *Trojan*. The first aircraft assigned was downed for electrical problems. The pilots placed their IFR clearance on hold and returned to the line where they were assigned a replacement aircraft.

The pilot-in-command preflighted the lower half of the aircraft while the copilot inspected the top half. During the preflight, the port engine cowling release handle was noted to be unfastened and the plane captain was directed to secure it.

The plane captain climbed on the wing and secured the port engine cowling release handle by securing the DZUS fastener. One of the pilots checked the slot of the cowling release lever DZUS fastener to see that it was vertical and aligned with paint marks on the cowling. No other discrepancies were noted during the preflight.

The pilots completed normal start, taxi and pre-takeoff checks. After receiving IFR clearance, they were cleared for takeoff. The initial portion of the takeoff was normal. However, immediately after liftoff, with the aircraft accelerating through 90-105 knots, the left engine cowl opened and was struck by the prop. The cowl tore from the aircraft and damaged the front canopy, vertical stabilizer and rudder in its rearward passage. (Later, upon examination, the cowl was found to be distorted and damaged beyond repair.)

Now somewhat over the surprise of



the cowl departing the aircraft, the pilot decided that there was insufficient runway remaining to land straight ahead. Since the T-28 was controllable, a turn downwind was elected and the *Trojan* landed without further incident.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! These gents were plain lucky — that cowl could've just as easily cracked the canopy, hit the pilot on the noggin — then hung up on the tail and sent the aircraft out of control. Can't happen? Baloney! The books are full of accidents that people said "can't happen."

When the pilot noticed the cowl was not properly secured, he directed the plane captain to secure the latch. However, neither the pilot nor plane captain checked to see if the shear pins were properly secured as required by Natops. Old story? You bet it is!

Takeoff Fiasco

A flight of six SB2Cs taxied out to the takeoff runway. Before the leader was ready for takeoff, the tower called and changed the runway in use. The leader acknowledged and started for

the new runway. Also at this time, five F6Fs which were waiting to take off began taxiing across the old runway toward the one newly designated.

In the meantime, the #2 pilot in the SB2C group had aligned his plane on the old runway ready for takeoff. He didn't receive the tower's signal on change of runway. When he saw his flight leader begin taxiing (to the new runway), he thought the leader was

taking off. Approximately 25 seconds later, he started his takeoff with full-gun. He didn't see the planes taxiing in front of him until he got his tail up.

He sheared the starboard wing off his flight leader's plane, cut the vertical stabilizer off one of the F6Fs and ended up in a sand dune with strike damage to his own plane. Miraculously, no one was injured!

This fiasco is an example of what can happen when standard operating procedures and safety precautions are ignored. The main errors made by this pilot were:

1. Assumed that his flight leader was taking off.
2. Failed to check the tower for a visual signal before taxiing into takeoff position, as required by local flight rules.
3. Neglected to cock his plane around to make sure the runway was clear before he started his takeoff.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Under the circumstances, and not having gotten a clear signal from the tower or a takeoff signalman, I feel that the last mistake was the worst because it showed the pilot lacked both common sense and a sense of responsibility.

An airplane is a lethal weapon; a weapon too dangerous to be entrusted to an irresponsible pilot. And dangerous not only to the pilot himself but, as in this case, to everyone else within range. (August 1945)

