



grampaw pettibone

'Cable'-gram

An instructor pilot (IP) and a student Naval Aviator (SNA) were preparing to proceed on a scheduled cross-country flight in a TH-57 *Jet Ranger*. The instructor had considerable experience with over 1,700 hours, more than 500 in the TH-57. The IP and SNA proceeded to the flight line where the crew downed the first two helos. They accepted the third one.

The IP briefed the student on the planned flight and gave a general briefing on egress and start procedures. He then occupied the left seat, the position he occupied for the duration of the flight. (The right seat is the pilot's seat and must be occupied by instructor pilots on all student syllabus night training flights.) The IP later said that the reason he strapped into the left seat was that he felt much more comfortable and relaxed in the seat from which he flies 90 percent of his student instructional flights.

They departed home field and proceeded to an AFB to refuel. They flew at 700-800 feet msl and 100 kias. They arrived at the AFB and refueled. The pilot received a weather briefing which stated there would be isolated thundershowers en route to his next stop. They made an uneventful departure but the IP could see thunderstorms to the east, in line with his intended flight path. He chose to alter his flight path to the west in order to circumnavigate the storm.

After awhile he decided not to proceed to his filed destination but to alter his flight plan and proceed to a new destination. He proceeded at an altitude of approximately 1,000 feet msl. He landed at the new destination and refueled. At base operations he refiled and received a verbal weather



brief. The weather was forecast to be ten miles and clear.

They departed and climbed out to the northeast below 500 feet until clear of the airport traffic area. They remained below 500 feet to stay below

commercial air traffic. There was somewhat of a horizon but it was a dark, no-moon night. When clear of the control zone, the IP climbed to approximately 1,000 feet msl, checked his altimeter, leveled off, and proceeded on course.

Approximately 30 minutes after takeoff, the crew felt the aircraft jolt and yaw to the right. At this same time, a witness on the ground reported seeing the aircraft strike a cable. The aircraft was flying approximately straight and level at 100 kias when it struck a 300-foot-long static cable which was suspended between two power poles on opposite ends of an overpass. The helicopter pitched up and down, then yawed right; the pilot had very little control as it hit a fence around a parking lot and came to rest on its right side. The crew was, miraculously, uninjured.





Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy smokes! I don't believe it! This gent violated so many rules, I don't know where to start. The worst part is that he also violated plain common sense.

This gent claims that he feels "more comfortable" at low altitude!?! Would you believe that a pilot can lose 700 feet of altitude in 15 minutes and not recognize it — especially when you start at 1,000 feet! I believe we should comply with this pilot's desires and keep him at a "low altitude" — zero feet on the ground.

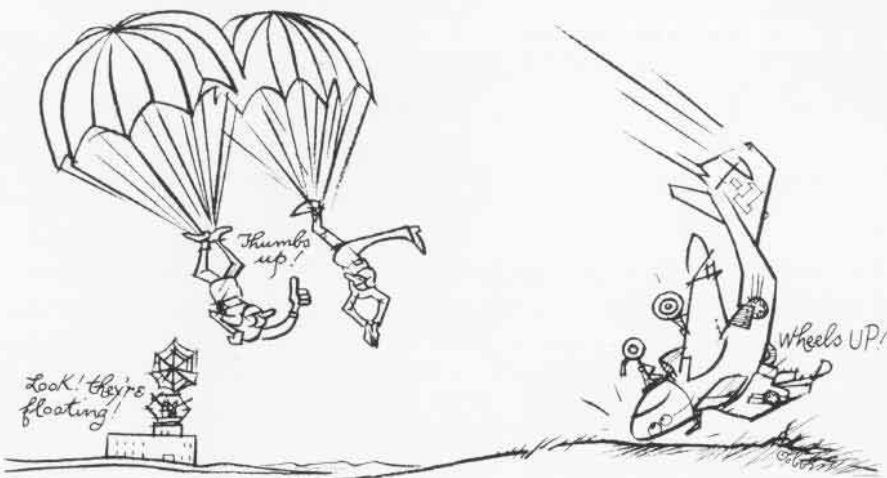
Non-Emergency Fuel Exhaustion

A young Naval Aviator replacement pilot and his replacement bombardier navigator were scheduled for night field carrier landing practice (FCLP) at a nearby outlying field. Following a routine brief in the ready room, the RP and BN proceeded to an A-6 *Intruder* and completed the preflight, start and taxi without incident. The pilot was in his last week of FCLP training. This was the BN's first FCLP period, however.

Following an uneventful departure, the A-6 proceeded to the outlying field and entered the pattern. At the completion of the FCLP period, the A-6 received clearance to depart and contact home-field tower for landing. The crew, which had reported a fuel state of 3,400 pounds on its final pass, acknowledged the clearance and departed for the short flight back to home field.

When departing the field, the crew raised the landing gear and noticed an unsafe nose-gear indication. The pilot reduced power in order to not exceed 200 kias. He requested the BN to consult the Natops pocket checklist and read the recommended procedure over the ICS. The crew read the procedure which calls for a visual check if possible and then a recycling of the landing gear in an attempt to get all gear up and locked.

Tower was contacted and told that the *Intruder* had an unsafe nose-gear indication. The crew requested permission to enter the break with the flaps down and to have someone give them a visual check. Tower informed the *Intruder* that no aircraft were available for an airborne check. The pilot then



switched frequencies and contacted the squadron operations duty officer (ODO), stating that he had an unsafe nose-gear indication.

The ODO referred to the Natops pocket checklist and asked if the crew had its pocket checklist out, which it had. The ODO advised that a visual inspection was necessary to determine if the gear was down and locked. The ODO further recommended that they have the tower or the squadron LSOs at the outlying field do the visual check, indicating that the LSO was the best alternative.

The aircrew switched frequencies back to the tower and requested permission to depart the pattern and return to the outlying field. Meanwhile, the squadron ODO called the LSO to inform him that the A-6 was returning for a visual check of nose-gear problems. The tower offered to provide a gear check on a low fly-by and the A-6 accepted that course of action. A low fly-by past the tower confirmed that all gear appeared to be up.

The tower utilized a white Aldis lamp for checking the landing gear and asked if the aircrew was going to blow its gear down. The pilot lowered the gear handle and all gear indicated down and locked with no other unsafe indications. This was reported to the tower.

The tower requested a fuel state, which was given as 2,000 pounds. The pilot was informed of an A-5 inbound that could check his gear. A gear-down fly-by past the tower was performed

and the tower confirmed that all gear appeared to be down and locked. The pilot requested that the A-5 check the gear also. The A-6 now had a fuel state of 1,500 pounds. As the A-5 was closing, the A-6 pilot reported a fuel state of 1,000 pounds and that this was his final turn around the pattern. The A-5 effected a rendezvous and shortly thereafter the A-6 reported a dual engine flameout and intention to eject.

The pilot steered the aircraft toward an uninhabited area prior to ejection. The flight terminated with a successful ejection and the aircraft crashed into a field near home base.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy Hannah! I don't believe it! Lost a flyin' machine because of lack of communication! I must'a read this report about a dozen times. I can't believe that a Naval Aviator assisted by a Naval Flight Officer can run a plane out of gas while they're checking to see why the landing gear would not lock in the *up* position. Someone please help and save me from this type of amateurism. Who in the h--- cares if the gear won't lock up *when you are running out of gas?*

I figure most pilots know that a real gear problem is one that will not lock *down*; I say again, one that will not lock *down*! I guess that the tower people and the duty officer just assumed that if he had a gear problem it must be a "down" problem. Certainly no one would be making all of this fuss over a gear-up problem!

Talk about confusion and lack of communication, this is a classic! I can't recall the last time I was so teed-off about an accident. I say that we don't need this driver or his helper!