grampaw pettibone

Preoccupied

A Naval Aviator was scheduled for a familiarization flight in an F-8 *Crusader*. He had about 2,400 total hours —with over 100 in the F-8 in the last three months. Start and taxi were uneventful and takeoff was routine. He proceeded to the training area, an ATC assigned airspace, which was 30nm southwest of home field. There he completed the high work associated with his FAM training.

After approximately 45 minutes, he returned to home field for multiple GCAs to burn down to landing weight. Then he intended to perform touch and go's in the VFR traffic pattern. On base leg of his first GCA, approach control informed him that he would have to terminate his approach with a full stop due to impending field closure for parachute drops in the airport traffic area. The pilot informed approach control that his fuel state prohibited a landing on this approach. He was issued clearance to climb to 4,000 feet and vectored overhead. As the *Crusader* passed overhead at 4,000, approach control switched him to tower frequency where the pilot obtained clearance to orbit the field at 4,000.

After two orbits, the pilot requested vectors into a fuel dump range. Clearance was issued and after dumping fuel to landing weight, he proceeded to the VFR initial for the duty runway.

The tower requested the F-8's position. The pilot responded that he was approaching the initial for the duty runway. The pilot broke at midfield and stated later that in the break he was primarily concerned with raising the wing. At the abeam position, he found himself high and fast and reported, "106 at the 180 with gear, full stop." Because he was so preoccupied with altitude and airspeed, he failed to perform the landing checklist. On this particular day no wheels watch was posted.

As the *Crusader* passed through the 90-degree position, the tower operator picked up binoculars to check the wheels. The controller was unable to get a good wheels check because the *Crusader* was in a tight 90-degree turn onto final. The controller removed his sunglasses and continued observing the F-8. As the aircraft rolled wings level on final, the controller noticed that something was different. He reached for his transmitter key when another aircraft transmitted, "Wheels up, wheels up."

An F-4 holding short made the wheels-up transmission as the F-8 hit the runway. The *Crusader* touched down 750 feet from the approach end of the runway and came to a stop after skidding 3,800 feet. The pilot secured the engine and kept the aircraft on center line through the skid. As the aircraft came to a stop, he opened the canopy and exited. The pilot was not injured. The aircraft sustained substantial damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thunderin' thunderin's! Where in the heck was this gent's brain — preoccupied with other tasks! How do we get the attention of a pilot who has tunnel vision? It's an amazin' thing. Once a pilot has decided that his wheels are down almost *nothing* will convince him otherwise — save hittin' him over the head with a 2 by 4!

Regardless of all that is said and done, the ultimate responsibility for lowerin' the rollers is the driver's! Yes, others can help — like wheels watch (when available), tower, other aircraft. The solution is so simple, but I'll still repeat it: use your checklist!

Excessive Tab Causes Failure

Recovering from a rocket firing run with the aid of elevator tab, an F4U pilot noticed a slight buffeting, but apparently paid little attention to it. He then executed another run. Buffeting increased and, during the recovery, the elevator completely failed. According to the pilot, the engine pulled the plane out of the dive. With full military power, he managed to maintain flight at a critically low altitude. By making flat rudder turns and by using flaps for increased lift, he managed to avoid hills in his flight path until he came to a valley which gave him 500 feet above the terrain, at which time he made a safe jump.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

This pilot coolly handled a tough emergency. Had he become the least bit panicky at such low altitude, death probably would have resulted.

However, the pilot created his own emergency! Excessive or jerky use of the tab undoubtedly caused the elevator failure. Par. 4 of Technical Note No. 72-44 says: "The use of elevator

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tabs as a means of primary control in pull-outs from high speed dives is not recommended except in emergencies such as may arise under compressibility conditions. When tab is used to lighten stick forces in pullouts, caution should be exercised to ensure continuous and smooth control of the resulting accelerations." (June 1945)

Hooded Crash

A lieutenant instructor pilot (IP) was scheduled for an instrument training hop in the T-2C *Buckeye*. He briefed his student and informed him that they would depart home field, proceed to a nearby airport and make a simulated instrument approach followed by GCAs to touch-and-go landings and then return to home field.

The takeoff, en route portion and initial penetration to a touch and go were routine. A simulated no-gyro GCA followed during which the student (hooded) in the rear cockpit flew to minimums. The IP then demonstrated a simulated minimum fuel approach with the student riding the controls.

On both these approaches, the IP stated that he assumed control of the aircraft at minimums and performed a touch and go landing, returning control of the aircraft to the student when safely airborne.

The third approach was a GCA in the half-flap configuration. It was flown normally without radical heading, altitude or rate descent corrections. However, the IP permitted the student (still hooded) to continue below the published minimum altitude, which, for this airfield, was 113 feet.

At 50 feet indicated altitude (approximately 30 feet AGL), the IP assumed control of the aircraft to perform a touch and go. The aircraft "flattened out." The IP detected an excessively high sink rate. He attempted to cushion the landing with full power on both throttles and retracted speedbrakes shortly before touchdown. The aircraft impacted with excessive Gs in an unbalanced attitude. The left main gear hit first. The right main gear and nose gear struck the runway simultaneously. The nose wheel failed and separated from the aircraft and the nose wheel strut hit the runway. Both engines were "fodded" by nose wheel fragments. The instructor rotated the nose, succeeded in becoming airborne and retracted the landing gear.

At approximately 100 feet altitude, with the throttle still at full power, violent vibrations were experienced. The instructor, maintaining 15 units AOA and visual reference, noted that the *Buckeye* was beginning to settle. He initiated successful ejection sequence for both cockpits. Upon landing the student became entangled in a riser and was blown down the runway. The instructor chased him down the runway, caught up with him and cut him free. The student sustained minor injuries; the aircraft was a total loss.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! I have trouble with pilots who intentionally break or bend the rules. I can be a little sympathetic with a flyer who makes an error while abidin' by the regs, but not with those who intentionally deviate!

This gent was fully aware that students were not permitted to fly the machine below minimums while hooded —simple enough! As with any game, when you break the rules you get penalized. In aviation, the penalty could be your life or someone else's and the loss of your machine. Is it worth the risk?