grampaw pettibone

Bent Bird

An instrument instructor (senior type) with his lieutenant student departed an East Coast air station in a T-33 for what was scheduled as a local instrument training flight.

The initial portion of the flight was, in the words of the pilot, routine in all respects for approximately one hour and 20 minutes. At about this time, while still some 20 minutes north of home station, the pilot asked his dual pilot if he would like to do some aerobatics but he declined, stating that he was not familiar with the airspeeds and aircraft limitations.

The instructor then asked the dual pilot if he objected to his doing a couple of rolls. As there was no objection from the junior pilot in the rear seat, the pilot turned east to clear the airways and picked up about 350 knots at an altitude of 12,000 feet. The pilot pulled the nose above the horizon and entered a roll to the left, but about halfway through the roll he became completely disoriented and the nose fell through.

After checking instruments, he became rudely aware that the aircraft was in an extreme nose-down attitude with airspeed building fast. He immediately chopped the power and attempted to pull the nose through, but when excessive G force was applied naturally, the aircraft began to shudder. Stick pressure was relaxed and a gentle recovery accomplished at an altitude between 2,000 and 3,000 feet.

The dual pilot was unable to recall if the attempted roll was to the right or left as he became disoriented when this episode began and blacked out completely during the recovery. After regaining consciousness, he had a good case of vertigo. It took several seconds before he was aware the aircraft was in a climbing turn and several minutes before he was fully aware of what had happened.

The pilot was disoriented during the

entire maneuver and although he didn't black out himself during recovery, he did find it difficult to hold his head up. After taking a quick inventory, the pilot climbed the tired little aircraft to 6,000 feet and headed toward home.

While the dual pilot was looking around trying to get his bearings, he discovered the port aileron to be badly wrinkled and immediately notified the pilot. He also informed him that he had a severe pain in his neck and back and asked how many Gs they pulled during recovery. The pilot reported that his accelerometer showed 5.5 positive Gs and, after checking, the dual pilot reported the rear cockpit accelerometer showed 10 Gs.

Aware that the aircraft had been structurally damaged during the flight, the pilot requested a straight-in approach to the runway and the landing was accomplished without further incident. After landing the aircraft was inspected; the airframe was damaged to such an extent that it was classified as a strike.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosaphat! This wasn't a close shave, it was a narrow escape. With a G or two more, the little bird would most likely have shed a wing and these guys would have been helpless in their semi-conscious state. Even if these T-33s are tired old dogs, that's no reason to whip 'em this way.

There's certainly no mystery as to why the dual pilot blacked out. His G-suit hadn't been refitted since wearin' it over heavy winter gear. It's plain to see that a loose fitting G-suit is of little or no value to anyone.

Now there's nothin' wrong with aerobatics, provided the hop is briefed so everyone knows what's going on. This flight was scheduled as instrument training for the lad in the rear cockpit. What he learned about instruments on this hop could be put in that well known thimble. Although he was exposed to a rather unusual maneuver, he really didn't learn a lot about aerobatics either. (July 1964)

Retracted Rollers

Two pilots departed an East Coast air station for a syllabus familiarization and demonstration flight in an E-1B (WF-2). It was the first E-1B flight for the pilot in the right seat and also his first flight of any type in approximately 30 days.

After takeoff the instructor pilot climbed to altitude and pointed out distinguishing landmarks in the local area. He then demonstrated the different characteristics of the aircraft in both the clean and dirty configurations. The pilot in the right seat practiced stalls, recovery and slow flight for several minutes, then proceeded toward a military field in the local area for practice touch-and-go landings.

The instructor pilot contacted the tower and received permission for practice landings. The tower directed the pilot to plan his approach for right

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traffic to the duty runway and a full flap touch-and-go landing was made. The instructor demonstrated 2/3 flap landings, then informed the tower that they would depart the pattern and switch pilots.

After the pilots changed positions, they returned to the field, so the pilot who was under instruction could practice a few landings. The tower cleared the pilot into a left pattern for touch-and-go landing. He shot three full flap landings and one 2/3 flap when the tower advised him to plan his next approach for right traffic to the runway due to GCA traffic.

Both pilots were concerned with the GCA traffic during the approach. At the 180-degree position they advised the tower that gear was down. They were cleared to land. The approach was normal with good speed and line-up, but at touchdown both pilots realized the landing gear was not down. After the aircraft came to a stop, all switches were secured and the pilots evacuated.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Now doesn't a thing like this really frost you? Here are two well-qualified and supposedly professional pilots who let an interruption in their routine get them into this embarrassing mess. The pilot in the left seat had over 3,000 hours total time and over 500 hours in a similar bird. It's pretty clear that he allowed a right-hand pattern and concern for other traffic to get him so thoroughly confused that he just plain forgot to put his rollers down.

It's obvious that they both failed to use the check-off list. There is no directive that requires a wheels watch for multi-piloted aircraft, but there could very well be with any more tricks like this. It's mighty hard to figure why a guy will continue an approach when he has interrupted his routine or is overly concerned about conflicting traffic.

There's really nothin' old fashioned about taking it around—A Real Pro will. It's the guy who cons himself into complacency that sets himself up for trouble and creates work for the AZs. (April 1964)

Memo From Gramps

Every once in awhile I run into a great story involvin' one of our older birds. I'm sure that this story will bring back many memories of the old days of prop flying across the North Atlantic. Would you believe that it occurred in 1976?

A C-117D *Skytrain* was being ferried from Goose Bay, Newfoundland, to Keflavik, Iceland. After a weather check and briefing, the crew preflighted the aircraft and climbed aboard. The forecast called for "no significant weather" en route with winds light and variable. Time en route was estimated as seven hours at 9,000 feet with a true airspeed of 185 knots. The *Skytrain* had ten hours of fuel on board.

The first part of the flight was without incident.

Approximately 100 nautical miles west of Prins Christians Sund, Greenland, the C-117 encountered broken clouds and light rime icing. Two hours later the icing became heavy and severe turbulence occurred. The pilot requested and was cleared to 11,000 feet. But this proved ineffective in alleviating the ice formation. The heavy ice accumulation now forced the pilot to descend to 600 feet where he was able to maintain flying speed. The *Skytrain* continued to encounter severe turbulence. The outside air temperature indicated two degrees C. and the ice began breaking loose. The navigator observed the ground speed decreasing from 190 knots to 125, due to strong headwinds, and reduced true airspeed. The aircrew's calculations confirmed that there was insufficient fuel to reach Keflavik. The pilot transmitted an emergency distress call and reversed course. He continued to maintain communications with Iceland. Following the distress call, a C-130 was launched from Keflavik.

Despite the increase in ground speed, due to the course reversal, and considering the fuel remaining, the crew determined that Narssarssuaq, Greenland, was the only available airfield within range. It was a daylight-only field with no instrument approach.

Fifteen minutes prior to ETA, the aircraft climbed to 11,000, the minimum altitude from Prins Christians Sund to Narssarssuaq. Since both ADF radios were inoperative, Loran provided the only navigational information. The navigator "steered" the aircraft to Narssarssuaq and the pilots spotted the portable airfield lighting through a break in the undercast. The ensuing landing was without further incident. All communications with Narssarssuaq had to be relayed through Keflavik.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great gallopin' gremlins!! Here is a case of a crew following the procedures and, through no fault of their own, windin' up in trouble!

It really does my old ticker good to see one of our drivers make a quick response to a serious emergency and carry his decision to a successful conclusion. Good job, LCdr. G. W. Woy, pilot, LCdr. D. F. Sherrod, copilot, Lt. Jim Lifgren, navigator, and crew!! The turbulence on this flight was so bad at times that almost all aboard suffered from airsickness. I'm sure that the flight crew is as grateful as I am to the 100 townspeople of Narssarssuaq who responded to the emergency siren to ensure that the airfield was ready and lighted for our aircraft.