



grampaw pettibone

Slow Roll Blues

A West Coast test facility's T-28B was scheduled for a 1300 local area familiarization flight to provide a visiting USAF helicopter project pilot with an airborne, firsthand look at the operating range and test drop areas. Following a thorough brief, the VFR flight departed on schedule. Since there was a range event of interest, the pilot requested clearance into the operating area. Clearance was granted upon departure of all other participating aircraft.

The previous range event had involved several parachute drops into a large shallow salt lake on the southern end of the range, requiring three boats to recover the test equipment.

After entering the range, the pilot flew over the area, pointing out various items of interest to his passenger in the rear cockpit.

The pilot made a series of low passes over the recovery boats at altitudes of 50 to 100 feet above lake level at about 180 knots with power set at 2,200 rpm, 30 inches, and mixture rich. After passing the recov-



ery boats, the pilot pulled up approximately 20-25 degrees and commenced a climbing steep turn to the right. After reaching 100 degrees of starboard roll, he decided to execute a full 360-degree roll to the right. The maneuver was flown to a wings-level position 130 knots of airspeed (altitude unknown) with the aircraft in a slight nose-down attitude.

At this point the pilot saw two large birds directly in front of him and pulled up sharply to avoid collision, causing the aircraft to stall. He relaxed stick pressure and attempted a recov-

ery. Insufficient altitude remained, however, and the aircraft contacted the water, tail first, and sank into the 12-foot-deep lake. Pilot and guest exited the aircraft and swam to the tail section. Recovery boats were immediately on the scene and rescued the wet, but uninjured, men.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great sufferin' catfish! This is one of the saddest songs I've heard in all my days! Here is an extremely experienced pilot with over 4,000 flight hours to his credit who, with his "tough-act-to-follow" routine, dang near put himself and his not-so-impressed passenger asleep-in-the-deep! Fortunately, they escaped with only a short sail-on-the-tail, giving rudder orders to their once trusty but now rusty flying machine. The only admirable act observed in this whole fandango was that of the prompt and professional rescue by the recovery boat crew.

As Old Gramps has always said, "When you assume that your thousands of hours in the air or tiger attitude makes you immune to accidents, then you are a candidate for the deep six, shallow twelve in this case, or some mighty fast tap dancin' to your swan song at the end of the long green table. A little travelin' music, please. And that's the name of that tune!"



Sucker Hole

One Sunday afternoon, six T-28s, in two flights of three planes each, were scheduled to depart a south-eastern Air Force base for a *day* VFR navigation mission on the return to home base. Each group was made up of one instructor and two student pilots.

Bad local weather all afternoon made them decide by 1600 not to leave that day. As the pilots walked to their planes to get their gear, blue patches of sky appeared and the field went VFR. Since the earlier forecast for their destination was VFR, a quick GO decision was made, and the flight members scurried to get off.

Airborne at 1629, they completed their rendezvous and proceeded on course at 2,500 feet. Twenty minutes later, encountering some cumulus clouds up to 3,000 feet, the flyers climbed to 4,500 feet. When they were about an hour out and it started to get dark, power settings were increased to 33 inches manifold pressure (mp) and 2,200 rpm (about 185 knots). As it became darker, power was again increased to 36 inches mp and 2,400 rpm to pick up speed. The two instructors discussed the possibility of landing for an RON, but decided to continue. A short cut was taken to bring them home faster.

The lead trio arrived in the vicinity of home base to find the weather had gone IFR with scud and haze. As the flight tried to descend below the clouds and come in VFR, the #2 man became separated and climbed back on top (about 2,000 feet). The #1 student, though told by the instructor to climb also, saw the runway and proceeded to land. The instructor climbed back on top, joined the #2 man and brought him in on his wing with a VOR approach. The wingman broke off when the runway was sighted while the instructor S-turned and landed behind him.

The second flight, some 10 minutes behind, had descended to 1,500 feet and, upon encountering scud, started a gentle descent to get clear of the clouds. Encountering more scud, they descended further. The instructor

pilot, flying the #3 position, ordered a right 360-degree turn to pick up the original heading.

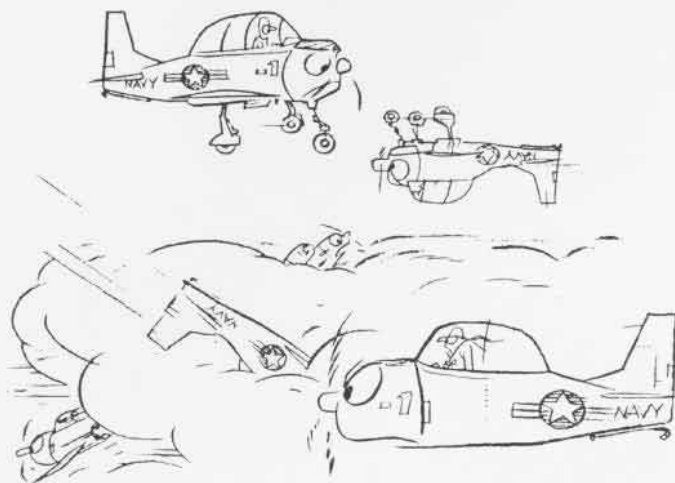
As the flight descended toward the field, still in parade formation, it became darker. At 300 feet and in the clouds, the #2 man found himself in a 20-degree right bank, still descending. He leveled his wings and started a climb. At this point, the leader was visible only by his lights and the instructor was nowhere to be seen.

Breaking out on top at 2,000 feet, the #2 man made contact with #1 who had also climbed on top. Course was reversed to take them back along their previous flight path. A fuel check revealed #1 had only 200 pounds of fuel remaining and #2 had only 45 to 50 pounds.

Attempts to make radio contact with their instructor were fruitless, for his aircraft had struck the ground in a descending turn within three miles of home base.

The #1 man flew back along his previous route and could soon see the ground. Remembering an airfield he had seen earlier, he continued north until the lights of the field came into view where he landed at the municipal airport.

The #2 man, who was really short of fuel, climbed to 6,500 feet as he continued north looking for a place to land. He reduced power to 19 inches mp and 1,900 rpm. As he broke out



from over the clouds, he saw a small town. With only 25 to 30 pounds of fuel remaining, a bailout appeared to be in order.

He then spotted a very large field in the dim light, decided to land there, switched to guard frequency, and broadcast a Mayday. Setting himself up at the high key, he could easily see ground references, but as he flew lower, he could hardly see the field in the dark.

On final, with the gear up, the battery mags and gas were turned off, the canopy was blown open, and the radio cords were disconnected. He flew over some trees that suddenly appeared ahead, then floated on across the field. On touchdown, the plane skidded, started burning and came to a stop about 150 feet from a farmer's house. The relieved student got out fast and ran to the house. The farmer's wife came out and proceeded to put out the fire with her garden hose.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sufferin' succotash! These guys should'a stayed in bed! There were so many errors in judgment on this flight, I didn't take time to count 'em, but they all add up to the same thing, Trouble. You really can't blame these poor students. After following their leaders almost over the cliff, they did a good job of salvagin' the situation. (September 1968.