

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Mr. Dilbert Goes to Washington

A pilot with 520 hours' flying time recently attempted a cross-country flight in an SNJ from Cherry Point to Anacostia. Weather conditions were good. Flight plan called for a CFR flight direct to Richmond, then CFR via airways to Anacostia.

The flight to Richmond was on the nose, but about twenty minutes farther on, when it was time to change frequency, he could not pick up the Washington beam. He then took a heading which he *thought* would take him to Washington and Anacostia, but he passed so far west of Washington that he didn't even see the city.

The pilot finally decided he was lost and made an emergency landing in a small field—just 40 miles north of Anacostia.

The landing was not a success; the SNJ was practically demolished. The pilot escaped injury.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Wasn't that a beautiful exhibition for an experienced pilot!

That's just what you can expect, however, if you go barging around the country without keeping track of your position on the chart.

There is even some doubt as to whether this pilot had a map. It hardly seems possible to fly from Richmond to 40 miles north of Washington without being able to locate something to give you a fix. Evidently he didn't even recognize the Potomac River.

One other point involved is the "emergency" part of this landing. It was made just 2 hours and 20 minutes after departure. If the pilot was out of gas, it must have been because he wasn't fully fueled on take-off or because he didn't know how to operate economically. My guess is that he still had enough gas to look for a better landing area. He just gave up too easily.

## All Fouled Up

*Case I.* While making a slip to circle in an N2S-5, a student lost too much altitude. The instructor, seeing that they were not going to reach the field, took over the controls and applied throttle. The engine failed to "take" and the airplane crashed into trees.

*Case II.* After demonstrating a high altitude emergency shot into a clearing, a primary instructor "gave it the gun" to recover at 150 feet. The engine did not respond and the airplane crashed.



*Case III.* The pilot of an OS2N-1 let down from 3,000 feet in a fast glide with throttle nearly closed. At about 1,000 feet he applied throttle and leveled off, but his engine began to misfire. He immediately applied two-thirds throttle and began working the wobble pump, but the engine failed completely, necessitating a forced landing in a rough sea. A wingtip float was torn off and the plane capsized.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

All of these accidents—and many more like them—were due to insufficient throttle opening at relatively high air speeds. We have to swing our arms and exercise to keep warm in a cold wind, so why expect an engine to stay warm in flight without exercise? Remember, you don't shut off the cooling, i.e., air speed, when you close your throttle in a glide; therefore, frequent "blimping" of the engine or a reasonable opening of the throttle is necessary to keep the engine warm. An engine will "load up" with raw gas (get the sniffles) and invariably suffer an acute case of fouled spark plugs (a really bad

cold in the head) if it isn't kept warm.

Another point is the necessity for applying throttle gradually. If you slam it open after letting the engine cool in a glide, you can expect the darned thing to cut out just as the one in your old jalopy did on a cold morning when you tried to beat the other guy at the traffic light. Here is an old jingle which aptly illustrates this:

*There was a young lad from Seattle,  
Who used a strong arm on his throttle,  
He yanked it to glide,  
Then slammed it on wide,  
He's now six feet under Seattle.*

Still another major cause of plug fouling is "rich idle mixtures." Don't try to correct for this by idling at cruising rpm. Do right by our Nell and adjust the idle as outlined in General Engine Bulletin No. 2.

Lastly, plug fouling often occurs as the result of prolonged idling on the ground. Engines should be blimped occasionally during such periods. It is much better to discover fouled plugs before take-off than suddenly to encounter misfiring during take-off. Always turn up your engines before take-off—and I mean just before, not the day before. The normal procedure for checking magnetos is not sufficient to clear the engine. The highest power run-up practicable, under the operating conditions encountered, should be made, exercising care not to exceed limiting engine temperatures.

I can't see why some pilots DON'T GET THE WORD on these simple precautions. Frequent warnings have been issued and, certainly, every pilot has been told about it at some time or other, but the same type of accident keeps recurring.

## Two Obvious Errors

A PBM pilot taxied out just beyond the reef area to take off on a routine training flight. The aircraft got on the step nicely. Although the plane was making 74 knots, the pilot could not break the suction and was reluctant to pull it off. To keep water in front of him, he began a slow turn to the left. When right rudder was applied to stop the turn, the plane did not respond and subsequently went out of control in a vicious water loop. The plane was virtually a total loss. The crew, considerably shaken up, was rescued.

In his statement, the pilot analyzed this accident and pointed out that he had made two obvious errors:

1. I should have allowed myself more take-off room.
2. I should have cut my engines rather than turn on the step at 74 knots.



## Go on Instruments

A PV-1 recently crashed almost immediately after take-off. Weather conditions were as follows: ceiling, 500 feet; light drizzle; visibility, 1½ miles.

The following comments are taken from the report on this accident:

"It is the opinion of the squadron commander that the pilot tried to maintain contact with the ground during his turn after take-off, either until he settled on his departure course or with the intention of proceeding under the overcast. That after he proceeded out over the water at low altitude, he lost contact and struck the water before he could shift to instruments. It is believed that the pilot's temporary faulty judgment in attempting to maintain contact under the existing weather conditions, instead of flying on instruments immediately after take-off, was the cause of the accident."

► **COMMENT**—A review of accident records shows many fatal accidents have occurred because pilots were attempting to fly contact when they should have been on instruments.

Many pilots are apparently loathe to go on instruments as long as any possibility remains of flying contact. This a dangerous habit. It is much easier to shift from instruments to contact than to have to make a sudden shift to instruments after contact is lost, especially under adverse conditions.

Play it smart! Go on instruments while you still have time to get set, before visual references are blotted out and before the aircraft has a chance to get into some unusual position. An occasional glance will inform you when you can go back to contact flying.

Squadron commanders and operations officers should insure that their pilots are fully indoctrinated regarding this danger.

Read Flight Safety Bulletin No. 3-44.

## Life Raft Trouble

While an inflated life raft may be an aviator's best friend after a forced landing at sea, it is definitely an undesirable companion in the cockpit of a single seat airplane during flight. A pilot who had this latter experience submitted the following report:

"When recovering from an overhead gunnery run in an F6F-3 I noticed that my seat type life raft started to inflate. Upon levelling off I immediately opened the hatch and had to unbuckle the safety belt for comfort. This forced me forward against the instrument panel and I forced the now three-quarter filled raft in behind me as best I could.

"After heading for home I unbuckled my harness and raft container from the chute and attempted to toss it overboard without success after making a slow pass over the field. I then made a successful landing and surveyed the

damage to be a loose cap on the CO<sub>2</sub> bottle which leaked with the added pressure of a pullout, causing a near casualty. This accident might have been due also to improper stowage in the container."

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Wonder why he didn't puncture the damn thing with a pencil or other "weapon"!

Technical Note No. 61-43 contains a report of a similar accident and gives instructions for preventing premature inflation of life rafts equipped with Walter Kidde inflation equipment.

## Itchy Fingers

A PBJ-1 was taking off on a South Pacific bombing mission. The co-pilot saw the air speed was 100 knots and,



without any signal from the pilot, retracted the landing gear. The plane skidded 200 yards to a stop on the runway, so damaging the aircraft that it had to be shipped to another base for major overhaul.

► **COMMENT**—Don't get itchy fingers. The pilot is boss; wait for the proper signal from him before retracting landing gear.

## The High Cost of Fun

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Flight regulations prohibit stunting over congested areas and low-altitude flying over such localities.

These rules were not issued arbitrarily, just to take the fun out of flying. They grew out of experience and were designed to eliminate certain unjustifiable risks.

Some pilots seem to have the idea that these regs are merely warnings and that if they personally are willing to accept the hazard, they are at liberty to do so.

Definitely not! *Compliance is mandatory.*

These safety rules not only protect the pilot from his own poor judgment, but safeguard any passengers he may be carrying



and also protect the general public below.

Many pilots have paid with their lives for a few moments of such foolish flying, but death is not the only punishment to worry about. The following recent cases, in which no forced landings or injuries were involved, are published to show that violating these regulations is serious business—and expensive.

**Case 1.** A naval aviator was tried recently by General Court-Martial for carelessly endangering the lives of persons on the ground by low-altitude flying and for performing acrobatic maneuvers over a congested area. He was sentenced to be dismissed from the naval service. He got away lucky, however; his sentence was mitigated to loss of pay amounting to \$50 a month for 12 months.

**Case 2.** Another naval aviator was reported recently for stunting over a congested area and for flying over this area at an altitude insufficient to permit an emergency landing outside such area. He was sentenced by General Court-Martial to lose \$75 a month for seven months.

**Case 3.** Upon the recommendation of their commanding officer, two flight instructors, who jizzed a municipal airport and flew low over a small town, were summarily disenrolled from the Navy.

## Don't Take It for Granted

It was only a training hop but the pilot of an SBD-5 was in a hurry. He checked rudder and ailerons but neglected the elevators. Upon commencing the take-off, he found that it was necessary to force the stick to get it forward. However, he continued down the runway. When the pilot tried to level off after the plane became airborne, he discovered that the stick was jammed in the backward position. He cut the throttle immediately to land on the remaining runway but the plane ran off the end of the field, sustaining major damage.

During a ground check after the crash, all controls moved freely. Some .30 caliber cartridge cases were laying on the cockpit floor and were believed to have jammed the controls.

The commanding officer assigned 50 percent error to the pilot for not making a complete pre-flight check of his controls and for not cutting the throttle immediately after he noticed that it was necessary to force the stick forward. The remaining error was attributed to other personnel. The commanding officer previously had ordered radiomen to remove all empty shells and cartridge cases after each flight and to make pre-flight cockpit checks for loose gear.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

It is always better to be curious about difficulties than to assume they will work themselves out—and then be sorry.

Beside their life insurance value, regular and thorough pre-flight checks also indoctrinate your maintenance crew to be alert.