

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Gadget Trouble



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

I'm running into considerable difficulty getting certain safety devices installed in our planes, particularly such items as the "Automatic Stimulator" and the "Taxi-Accident Eradicator" which were described in recent issues.

For example, an ex-squadron commander who now occupies one of the Bureau design desks made the following comments upon being faced with a recommendation for installation of a rather complicated safety gadget:

"Installation of this special equipment is not considered desirable. Pilots who cannot be depended upon to operate such basic equipment as retractable landing gear are not qualified to fly modern aircraft. We are already carrying around a great many pounds of so-called safety equipment at the sacrifice of bomb load and performance—supposedly to prevent stupid pilots from making more stupid errors. Such installations, however, only serve to make pilots feel less responsible for their equipment and become *more and more careless.*"

You might construe these comments to mean that come peacetime, when we don't have to lug these doggone bombs around any more, we can replace them with safety equipment—the only criterion on any device then being, "Will the plane be able to take off if this is installed?"

In the meantime, might I suggest that you learn how to fly without these special aids. Ask somebody to kindly show you how to operate everything you've got aboard and use the check-off lists to tell you when. If you don't, my dear young friend, you are apt to crash—and break your damn neck!

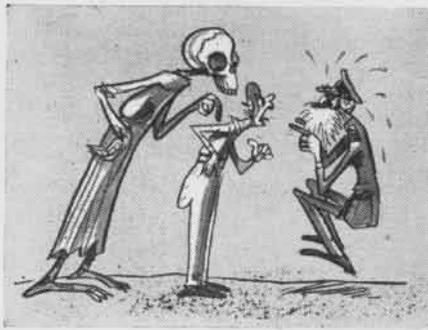
## Kerplunk in the Creek

"CREEPING CORSAIR CAUSES CARRIER CATAPULT CRASH!" These headlines might have appeared in a certain ship's



paper recently, following a catapault accident.

While the plane was being given its first engine run-up prior to night catapaulting, the hold-back tension ring broke. Both the dispatcher and the catapault crew tried in every way possible to attract the pilot's attention, so he could apply brakes. The pilot, however, apparently absorbed in checking his instruments, did not realize he was mov-



ing, nor did he see any of the emergency signals. The plane continued creeping forward until it tumbled off the deck into the water.

The accident report contained the following recommendation: "Pilots should be cautioned against withdrawing their attention from the launching officer for long periods of time."



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Just another of the countless ways in which an aviator can get into trouble—indicating why pilots always have got to be "on their toes".

Word drifts in occasionally that some pilots go into a foaming frenzy over this type of report. Here's a 100% material failure, and yet the pilot is told what he should have done! "Gawd, can't that old gink pick on somebody besides pilots once in a while!"

Lets get it straight; this is not the Pat-on-the-Back Department. This section mainly tries to show pilots how they can protect their own necks by being primed and ready for any kind of trouble—no matter what happens or who's the blame. When things start going wrong in an airplane, the pilot is in no position to argue about "whodunit." "His, then, but to do or die."

Those more interested in material and maintenance troubles can find out what is being done about them in the literature disseminated on this subject, especially the *NavAer Maintenance* pamphlet issued monthly by BuAer's Maintenance Division

Be it understood then, this section is mainly for flight personnel—to warn them of potential dangers, to suggest preventive and corrective action and to goad them into being fully prepared to protect themselves in any emergency.

## Survival Advice

*Excerpt from an action report:* "The pre-dawn ditching experience of an FM-2 pilot emphasizes the importance of frequent instruction and practice in ditching procedure and in operation and use of emergency equipment car-

ried in aircraft. This pilot had trouble in the dark locating the lock pin lanyard of the CO<sub>2</sub> bottle in the one-man raft and determining how to pull it. He had been previously instructed and checked in this procedure, both during training and after reporting to the squadron. . . . He was dangerously near exhaustion before he succeeded in inflating the raft. . . . The need for including blind-fold practice in ditching instruction and checkouts is shown by this experience."

A report from another carrier contains information of interest to future dunkers concerning the use of dye at night: "The dye was invaluable in helping searchlight operators keep trained on the man in the water."

► *Comment*—Dye will reflect light and, in the absence of more suitable night distress signal, can be particularly helpful to shipboard lookouts when a sea is running. Where an individual may be lost sight of between waves, some part of the dye will always be in sight to mark the spot.

This does not mean that dye should be used indiscriminately at night; only when there is a chance of it being seen. Due to the limited amount of dye carried, personnel are advised to conserve it until it will do the most good.

## Are Your Wheels Locked?

A review of landing accidents in which wheels collapse shows that many of them occur because pilots either neglect to look at their electrical landing gear position indicators or do not understand how they operate.



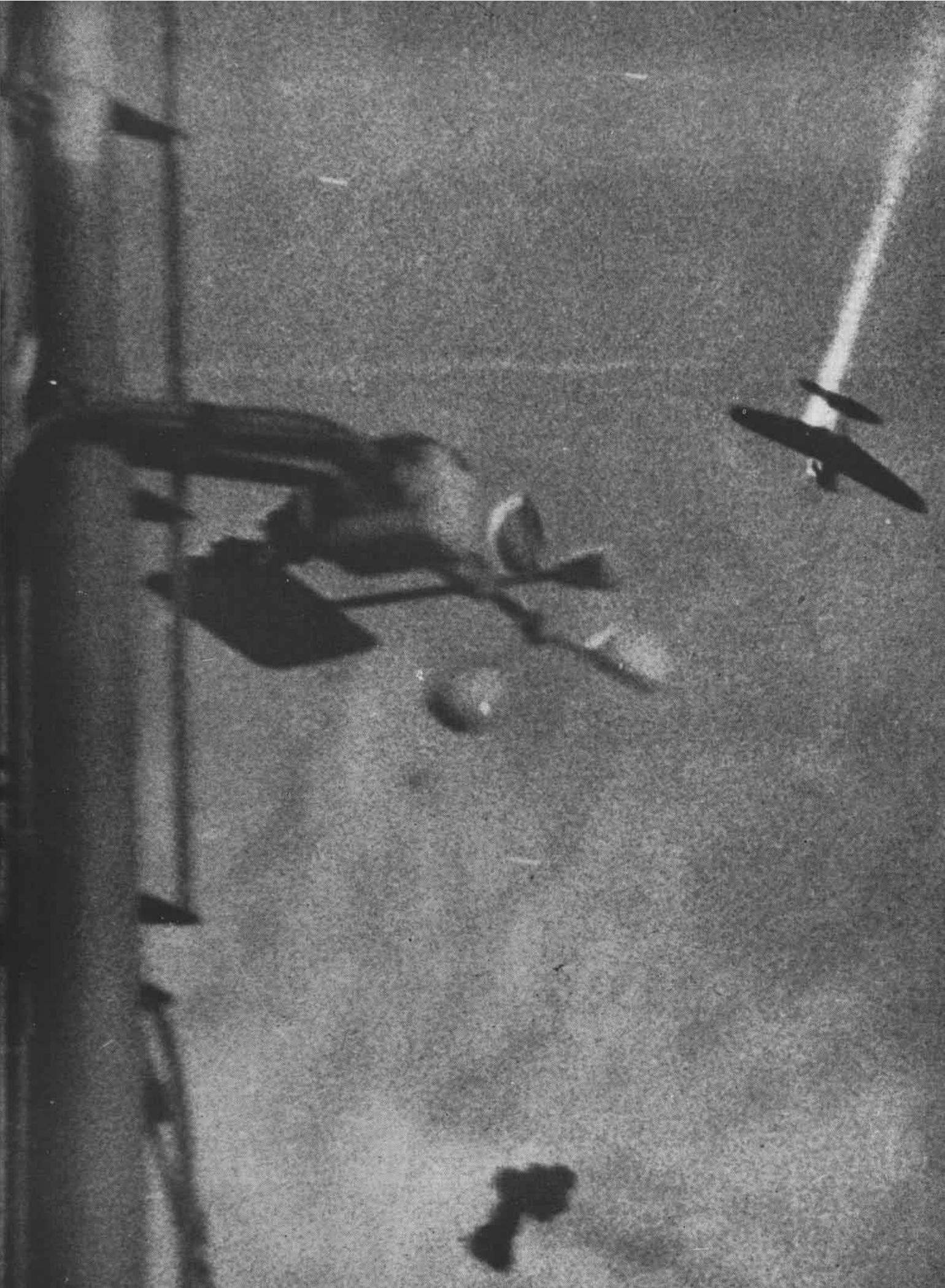
*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Merely going through the motions of lowering your wheels isn't enough. You must *check* that they are down and locked.

If you have to make a belly landing, there's no need of doing it blind. You might as well look at your indicator and know about it in advance. Then too, if it shows your wheels are unlocked, a couple more tries or a shift to the emergency equipment might even lock the things.

An illustrated Technical Note No. 35-45 recently was issued to show how these indicators work. At least look at the pictures!

**Accurate AA Fire** sent a suicide-bent Zeke 52 down in flames off Okinawa. An alert Navy photographer framed the smoking Kamikaze in the rigging of his carrier. The Jap fighter fell wide of its target. Accurate and concentrated AA fire from Naval surface units took a major slice out of Japanese air power during the action around the Ryukus.



## Bewitched, Baffled and Bewildered

Unfortunately, movie cameras were not available to record a nightmare catapult shot which occurred at a CQT unit. Here is how it looked to the pilot:

"After everything was checked, I gave the co signal and was immediately shot off the catapult.

"Shortly after becoming airborne, the plane suddenly stopped and started *backwards*. Acceleration in reverse was very fast. I repassed the catapult crew and the other R6F's which were standing by. My wing finally struck the fire truck which spun me around and started me going nose first again, but still in the wrong direction. I finally rolled off the runway and stopped.



"I unstrapped my safety belt, turned off the switch and jumped out of the plane as fast as I possibly could. I ran away from it and waited a short while before returning to look it over."

**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Don't laugh! If your plane defied Newton's laws of motion during take-off, you'd be baffled and bewildered too—particularly the first time.

This plane wasn't bewitched, however. All that happened was that the tail hook dropped down when the plane was catapulted and caught the tow cable. The tow cable was pulled out far enough to recock the catapult, which then fired the airplane in the reverse direction. Newton is still right!

It was estimated the plane gained a speed of approximately 55 knots while traveling backwards.

## All on One Flight

Two combat-experienced pilots took off in torpedo planes on a cross-country familiarization flight in mountainous country under CFR clearance. All went well until 18 miles past their first contact point, when they ran into bad weather. Instead of turning back, they changed course and flew at a lower altitude on various headings until they finally found a CAA airport where a landing could be made. This field was 112 miles beyond their destination.

Ten minutes after landing, these fiends-for-punishment again were in the air, headed back through the same stuff. Once in it, they flew through incessant rain, a good part of the way at low altitude along a railroad track. Finally, with fuel getting low, they made forced landings in a cleared area. Fortunately, none of the personnel was injured although extensive damage to engines, propellers and fuse-

lage of both of the planes occurred.

This flight is eloquent proof, if such is needed, that experience and proficiency in one type of flying don't necessarily make you an expert in any other type. Investigation by the local Aviation Safety Board showed that these aviators made the following errors on this one hectic flight:

1. Failed to check their airways transmitting frequency prior to take-off
2. No position reports with range stations were effected enroute
3. Violated CAA procedure while continuing to let down in the process of crossing airways under marginal weather conditions
4. Upon encountering instrument conditions, failed to return 18 miles to their first contact which they knew to be clear
5. Continued on into totally unfamiliar mountainous country under instrument conditions without clearance having been granted or communications established
6. Made no effort to obtain adequate weather information from teletype reports at the CAA airport
7. Also made no attempt to replenish their fuel supply at this field
8. Failed again to check their transmitters at this field
9. Failed to notify departure and destination points of any changes in flight plan
10. Used poor judgment in heading back into the same bad weather area they recently had traversed and failed to reverse course as the weather became progressively worse—this in violation of contact flight rules
11. Place they landed was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from an airstrip which was clearly marked on their regional charts.

## GRAMPAW'S SAFETY QUIZ



ALL AVIATORS should know the answers to these questions. In the air, the penalty for not knowing may prove fatal. If you miss an answer on the ground, penalize yourself by looking up the reference.

1. On which side must you pass an overtaken airplane?
2. What is the prescribed visual signal for indicating your intention of making a forced landing when in company with other aircraft or in visual signal distance of a surface vessel?
3. To prevent faulty oil scavenging during prolonged dives, what propeller setting should be used?
4. What are ceiling and visibility minimums for flight in a control zone?
5. What publications contain the maneuvering restrictions of naval aircraft?

(Answers on page 48)

## Harness Works As Advertised



This is part of an R6F. The rest of it is scattered over a broad area.

It got this way when the pilot lost flying speed and spun in during a landing approach, following engine failure.

The accident report stated "the pilot appeared slightly dazed as he left the cockpit". Undoubtedly, the shoulder harness saved his life.

**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

With apologies to Oliver Cromwell, I recommend as the modern aviator's slogan:

"Put your trust in God; but keep your shoulder harness tight."

## Dead-Stick Landing

While conducting a carburetion test in an SC-1, complete engine failure was experienced at 27,000 feet. This pilot was lucky for he was over an air field while he still had 10,000 feet altitude.

Not too lucky, however, for he had to make a 180-degree turn to enter the landing approach and, even though he had 2800 hours flight time, he was unable to judge his approach properly. He *undershot* and was forced to land in a rough field short of the runway. The airplane plowed through some small trees, crossed a ditch and then nosed over. The plane suffered strike damage, but the pilot was uninjured—because he had his shoulder harness secured.

The Accident Board attributed the pilot error in this dead-stick landing to two factors: a. lack of recent experience in forced landing procedure, and b. the necessity for making a 180-degree turn to enter the landing approach. The Board made the following pertinent comments concerning power-off landings:

"All pilots should bear in mind that a combination of rapid rate of descent and moderately strong winds, unless compensated, will invariably cause undershooting, particularly if a turn must be made which may double or triple the normal rate of descent.

"It is recommended that initial familiarization flights always include, in addition to stalls and other handling characteristics, power-off glides and turns simulating engine failure with and without wheels down—so that the pilot can note his instrument readings and know what to expect when he is faced with the real thing."