



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Age vs. Safety

Some years ago an officer, newly assigned to the Aviation Safety Section, answered the telephone and was amazed when a voice on the other end of the line asked how many pilots would be killed during the coming fiscal year. His reply was something like, "I'll tell you, Mac, you'd better call back tomorrow. I don't have my crystal ball out today."

Actually he could have replied, "What sort of pilots are you asking about, young studs, old fuds, or Lieutenant Commanders?" . . . and then could have given some pretty accurate predictions.

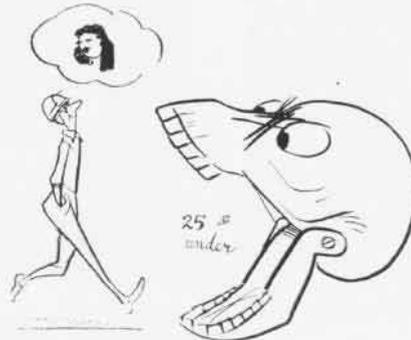
Most pilots know that Navy aircraft accident rates are usually computed to show a rate per 10,000 hours of flight. However, this is only one of many ways of measuring safety. Most airlines, for example, compute their rates to show the number of accidents per million passenger miles flown.

Once a year we calculate the Navy fatal accident rates on an entirely different basis. These calculations should be of interest to all Naval Aviators since they give a direct indication of their life expectancy.

This rate shows the number of pilots killed per 1,000 employed on active duty during the year. It is further broken down to show variations in the rates for various age groups. Because this has been done for a number of years, it is possible to know with a fair degree of accuracy just how many of us will still be around these parts at the end of the year.

Much of the information in this annual study is classified, but it is no secret that these rates show that the most hazardous years are the first two or three immediately following the completion of basic flight training. There are a number of reasons for this. In the first place, most new aviators are immediately assigned to operational squadrons, and in the second place the old law of survival of the most fit is at work. If a pilot practices sound airmanship, resists the urge to show off and to take unnecessary risks during his first tour of fleet duty, his chances of survival can be very good. When he goes out for his second tour of sea duty, these safety habits will be almost instinctive.

By the time he goes out for his third tour, possibly as C.O. of a fighter squadron this time, he has learned a lot of



answers the hard way. He has seen friends, whose techniques were just as good as his, get killed because they allowed someone to rush them on takeoff, or because they were so determined to get a hit that they pulled out too low on a practice dive, or because they were confident that the weather would be good at the other end of the line—even though the aerologists thought otherwise.

In short, the older pilot has acquired a sort of "built-in life insurance". It makes him a little less bold, but a good deal more likely to make the right decisions in an emergency. He takes risks, but they are pretty carefully calculated. They're not the needless variety that result in flattening accidents. He makes mistakes now and then as everyone does who flies but he doesn't make the fatal variety. Most important of all, he will be less likely to pile one mistake on top of another—and that's the thing that kills a good many young pilots when they get in a jam.

If you haven't arrived at this state yet, get in the habit of asking yourself, "What will I do if this happens or that happens?" When you find that the answer is, "Bub, if that happens, there's just nothing you can do," that's the time to revise your plans.

Always leave yourself a way out if you want to live to enjoy your retirement benefits.



## They Had the Word

Sometimes the stack of incoming accident reports can be pretty discouraging, particularly when a pilot gets killed doing something that we warned against the week before. But once in a while a crash occurs that is downright encouraging. Here's one that just came in:

The pilot of an R5C with a crew of 5 and 16 passengers had filed an instrument flight plan from NAS DALLAS to MCAS CHERRY POINT, N. C. The Dallas weather was 1500 overcast at time of takeoff. The pilot of the R5C had just reported passing 5,000 feet in his climb out, when a crew member informed him that the port engine was on fire.

The engine was shut down but the propeller would not feather. The CO<sub>2</sub> fire extinguisher had only a temporary effect on the fire.

The pilot started a 180° turn to return to Dallas. Midway in the turn the engine fell free of the aircraft. The fire continued to burn in the leading edge of the wing and the pilot gave the order to "bail-out".

Here's the Plane Captain's version of what happened in the passenger compartment during this emergency:

"All passengers and crew members were instructed to adjust their harnesses and to hold their positions in the aircraft preparatory to adjusting their parachutes to the harnesses. The command was then given by the pilot to abandon the aircraft. I passed the word to the radioman to prepare all passengers for the jump. He opened the cargo door and stood by. All passengers and crew members had been *thoroughly briefed by the pilot prior to the flight* as to the correct procedure to follow in the event of having to abandon the aircraft. Everyone followed the first man out in an orderly manner. The radioman assisted in getting the hesitant passengers to jump by holding the ripcord handle of their chutes and then pushing them out.

"After all passengers and crew had bailed-out, I informed the pilot and he ordered me out of the aircraft. The pilot was the only one aboard the aircraft when I jumped and he was at the controls. I jumped at approximately 1,000 feet."

The pilot then headed the burning plane for an open field and jumped at about 500 feet. He landed about 100

yards from the spot where the R5C hit and exploded.



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

All the chutes opened, but unfortunately there was a 35-40 knot wind blowing and the passengers had difficulty spilling the wind from their chutes after landing. There were two fatalities and one fairly serious injury to persons being dragged by their parachutes in the strong gusty wind.

However, under the circumstances, I think that 19 survivors out of a total of 21 was nothing short of remarkable. Only three minutes elapsed from the time the fire was discovered until the pilot was able to jump as the last man out.

I feel sure that many of the surviving passengers owe their lives to the fact that they were carefully briefed on the correct bail-out procedures prior to takeoff.

### Move Over, George

The following is quoted from the statement of an F9F-2 pilot after an accident in which one wheel collapsed during an otherwise normal carrier landing:

"The gear lever was placed in the down position approximately abeam of the ship at the end of a 360 degree turn. Speed was about 160 knots at this point. The wheel down indicators were not checked and the amber warning light was not observed. The approach was continued normally across the bow to the downwind leg. The landing gear position indicator was observed showing a 'Yoke' flag in the port window at about the 45° position shortly before entering the groove. I had already been picked up by the LSO. No attempt was made to take a wave off, assuming that a 'Roger' constituted a gear down and locked check. A landing was made after the cut and the port gear collapsed on the rollout.

"This accident could have been avoided by completing the checkoff list or taking a wave-off when the 'Yoke' indication was noticed. The assumption that a signal received from the LSO indicated that the gear was down and locked was my own and was not based on anything learned heretofore."



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

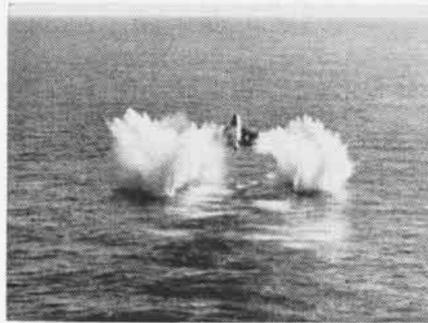
Well, that's encouraging. For a minute I wondered who had been passing out the garbled word to youthful aviators.

An LSO can do a lot of things for you, but he can't look at your wheel indicators and take a wave-off for you if they show that one wheel isn't fully down and locked.

Fortunately, the damage in this case was limited to a scraped wing tip tank. The pilot's mental blackout may have been tied in with the fact that the flight was being conducted as a demonstration for foreign observers, and he was naturally hoping to get a cut on his first pass.

P.S. Move over a little, George, we just found another man who "cannot tell a lie."

### The "Half-Shot" Banshee



THE PILOT QUICKLY JETTISONS THE TIP TANKS



THEN HE DITCHES WITH A TREMENDOUS SPLASH



OUT SAFELY, HE SIGNALS FOR RESCUE COPTER



HERE COMES THE HUP TO PICK UP THE PILOT

The pilot of the F2H-2 pictured here was the victim of a material failure of the H-8 catapult. The runaway shot preventer switch failed, resulting in premature cut off of power to the shuttle. About half way down the catapult track

the bridle fell from the catapult.

Glancing at his airspeed indicator as he went over the bow the pilot saw that he had 90 knots—not enough to remain airborne. His ditching technique in these circumstances is considered to be exactly correct.

He concentrated on keeping his wings level and maintaining a minimum rate of descent. As quickly as possible he jettisoned his full drop tanks. Wheels were not raised, because in this model such action increases the drag immediately as the wheel well doors open before the main landing gear can begin retracting. Because of the short duration of the flight (3 seconds) there was insufficient time to permit "milking" the flaps up to the recommended half-way position.

His shoulder harness, safety belt, and protective helmet were very effective in preventing injury. The life vest was used during his momentary wait for pick up by the helicopter.

### What, No Catsup?

What will they think of next? Word has just been received of a new survival manual to be printed on "wax-coated, edible paper". The wax coating, it is said, "will enable a survivor to start a fire and the paper itself will assist in overcoming the pangs of hunger."



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

You know this idea has tremendous possibilities. Perhaps future editions could be planned with different flavors for the individual pages. Then you could slip a couple of chicken-flavored pages in between bun-flavored covers of the booklet and really go to town—especially if the printer had thought to include a few green and red pages to take care of the lettuce and catsup.

I assume that the manual will have an introduction which points out the desirability of mentally digesting the survival suggestions before having lunch.

Why not go a step further and use this same type paper for inter-office memoranda? Every morning my incoming basket is piled high with communications from other offices in the Navy Department. It would be nice to be able to write something like this on the route sheets:

"Basic correspondence is being retained internally. Paragraph 2(a) did not agree with the division director, but I found page 4 delicious.

"P.S. Please ask your secretary to refrain from using the prime-ribs-of-beef route sheets on correspondence which may reach this office on Fridays. Our messenger is a margin-nibbler and we don't want to tempt him unnecessarily. Hope you like our directive of the 21st. It was designed to please the front office and hence may be a little heavy on the garlic. If so, why don't you tear out page 3 before eating?"