



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Butt-Buster

Seems like we've been warning pilots for years to watch those sink rates and hard landings or they'd "bust their backsides" or words to that effect. This tale illustrates the point.

A young pilot, during his sixth FAM flight in the A-4C and with a grand total of 3.7 hours in this model of aircraft, was making a practice precautionary landing approach (PPLA) to the duty runway at his home field. He had been cleared for a circling precautionary approach to a low wave-off. All seemed well until he reach the 45° position turning on final.

At this point he was high, just a little too much altitude too close in, so he reduced power below the 85% normally carried in a PPLA. An extremely high rate of descent was immediately apparent and he shoved the throttle to 100% power and LOWERED the nose slightly to pick up airspeed. By now he was over the approach end of the runway and at about 100 feet of altitude and at 170 knots.

The additional power didn't seem to stop the sink rate even a little bit, and the A-4C slammed down HARD on the runway, knocking the wind clean out of the pilot and became airborne again!

Gasping for breath and ignoring a tremendous ache in his back, the young pilot kept his wits about him and climbed out straight ahead. His instructor, who had been following at a distance, joined up and inspected the A-4C for damage. Finding none evident, the pilot was again cleared to land and made a fine, power-cushioned landing.

Medical examination later showed a fractured vertebra, way low down. It will take about 90 days to heal.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Loose shoulder straps, a habit of hunched-over posture in the seat, and about a 20 G touchdown (estimated) did the trick for his backside. Easing power and then improper wave-



off technique set him up like a duck in a shootin' gallery. This same mistake could buy him a piece of the ramp on a shipboard approach. The most important part of a flight is that last bit of the landing approach. Mistakes here leave little or no margin for corrections. You've got to *know* what to do and do it *right* from the very first ride on. Modern aircraft seldom give second chances to the unwary pilot.

## Who's Got It?

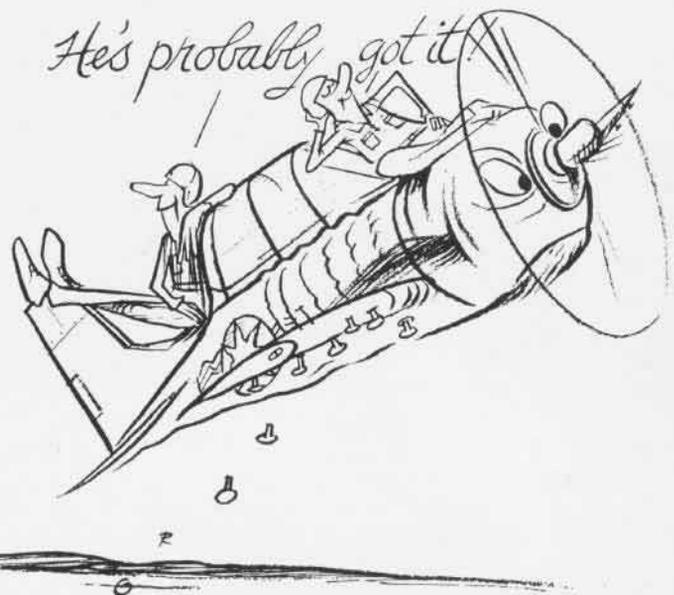
Two young Marine pilots with little or no pre-flight briefing manned their T-28 for a routine flight on a bright Carolina morning—just perfect for

flying. The pilot in the front cockpit needed flight time and was to be the safety pilot for the lad in the rear cockpit who needed instrument time.

Pre-flight inspection, engine run-up and takeoff were normal with the rear cockpit pilot going under the hood immediately after takeoff. The safety pilot trimmed the aircraft in a climbing attitude and passing through 2000 feet called to his friend. "You have it." This transmission was not acknowledged, so he told him a second time and relinquished positive control.

Not realizing that he was supposed to be flying the bird, the gent under the tent watched his instruments as the little aircraft struggled through several assorted maneuvers in getting itself to approximately 4500 feet. Unaided, the T-28 did a fair wingover to port, but got a little too steep and slow. The only thing to do in this situation was to roll and split "S" out.

The two young aviators suddenly realized that this aircraft really needed help, so they both grabbed the controls and pulled out at 700 feet MSL. Neither pilot had thought to reduce power up to this point.



Both pilots noted that they pulled eight G's in getting the aircraft out of the dive. They visually inspected the wings for wrinkles and popped rivets (from the cockpit, yet) and, as none could be seen, decided to continue the flight. They proceeded to a nearby air station and practiced instrument approaches prior to returning to home base.

After landing, the pilots looked the plane over and noticed no damage, but they did down it because of the high accelerometer readings. Two days later maintenance personnel found the wrinkles and popped rivets.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

This one not only brought tears to these tired ole eyes but made me want to sit down and bawl. It's gosh darn hard to see how these lads could get themselves into such a confused mess. OpNav Instruction 3710.7A is mighty clear on the proper way to transfer control of an aircraft. There certainly is no law against the use of common sense.

These intrepid gents really tried to corner the "poor judgment" market when they continued the flight after exceeding the max allowable limits of this little bird by over 50%. There are a few thousand more well chosen words to be said on this one, but I'll bet the reporting custodian has already said most of them.

## Flat Hatter

On a beautiful July morning, a young ferry pilot departed El Paso International in an AF-1E he had accepted at NAS ALAMEDA the previous day. A VFR flight plan was filed direct to NAS DALLAS at 21,000 feet. The pilot reported his position to Wink radio then proceeded to the Dyess AFB area.

At this point, however, he deviated from his planned route and a short time later crashed the *Fury* in a plowed field. Witnesses report the aircraft made several extremely low passes in the vicinity prior to the crash landing. It may be hard to believe but these passes were near or over his father-in-law's home.

Luckily several residents of the area saw the aircraft crash-land and rushed to the pilot's aid. They were unable to remove the canopy, but cut a hole in it and pulled the flat hatter out. He received a cut above the left eye and a cerebral concussion. The aircraft sustained strike damage.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Oh, my achin' back! Any description of the cause factors involved in this needless accident other than plain ole FLAT HATTING would be wasting words. Witnesses' statements verified that the pilot was making unauthorized maneuvers at an unauthorized altitude. How many times have I read these overworked words!

There isn't a pilot flying today who hasn't been warned about "flat hating" at least 100 times, yet this guy thought he could beat the odds. I'll admit he's rather lucky in one way—most FLAT HATTERS end up a very unhealthy kind of *statistic*.

## Cool

Three F-8C *Crusaders* took off from MCAS YUMA, Ariz., for an air-to-air gunnery exercise. The flight was briefed to make individual afterburner departures with a 1000' interval between aircraft. During climb-out, the flight leader reduced power to 90% after reaching 300 knots and began a climbing right turn to start a running rendezvous.

The leader's fire warning light came on at about the same time the wingmen were checking in and he asked his number two man to check his aircraft for smoke. The wingman could not see smoke or fire but informed the lead aircraft that his tail hook was down. Just then the lead pilot saw his utility hydraulic pressure drop to zero and the low pressure warning light come on. As the wingman closed in, he saw flames around the tail pipe shroud and tail hook assembly area.

Yuma tower was contacted and the pilot advised them of his intention to return to the field. He requested the number two man to escort him back. The third aircraft was instructed to proceed to the gunnery range and wait for the second aircraft. The pilot calmly advised the tower of his condi-

tion. At the same time he told them he would attempt a straight-in-approach to a landing and after touchdown would shut down. Crash equipment was requested.

The wingman informed the pilot that the fire was out, but shortly thereafter a mild explosion was heard. The wingman saw the fire starting again. This fire went out but a second explosion, more severe than the first, was heard; again the fire started. Yawing the aircraft had little effect, but again the fire went out. Shortly thereafter, the pilot landed the aircraft, secured the engine upon touchdown and rolled into the arresting gear.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Singe my old grey whiskers, but this lad was mighty cool in a tight situation that had every indication it could get tighter fast. A good amount of this coolness was a result of his absolute faith in the "spring seat" he was riding and the confidence that it would operate as advertised. You have to know your machine and its emergency procedures thoroughly, then professionally evaluate all factors before deciding to bring a wounded bird home versus getting it to an area considered safe for ejection. This gent handled things like a "Real Pro."

## Memo from Gramps

Aviation safety doesn't depend on new and smart ideas—safety is the result of the mature pro sluggin' along day in and day out. It's doin' what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it the way you're supposed to do it. If you do, flying is basically safe; if you don't, it ain't. It's just that simple.

People who go in for safety as an end objective, leave me cold. The best accident preventer I know of is the best airplane driver, period. He is the pilot who, with the help of a professional ground crew, has reduced the hazards to an absolute minimum. A safe flight is not accomplished by accident.