GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Lure of the Water Witch

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Why is it so many of our young aviators can fly along the countryside for hours, seemingly intent on their work, and yet become bewitched the moment they see a stretch of open water?

The size of the body of water apparently has little bearing in the matter. Anything from a large river or lake to a pond no bigger than a tablecloth seems to have the same effect. It lures them down, and before they regain their senses they are jazzing it.

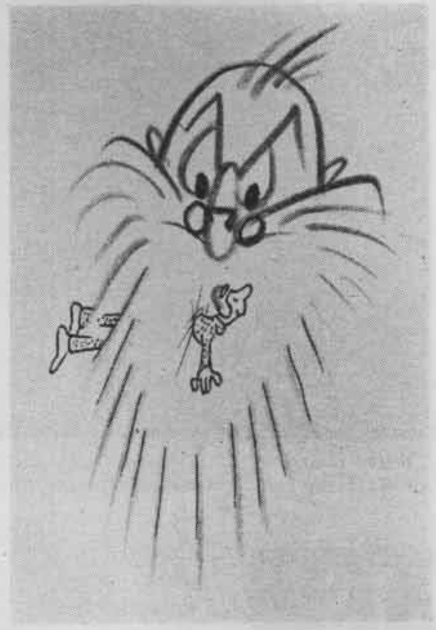
While thus enthralled, many a good pilot has come to grief; kissed the water, hooked a wing or squashed in from a dive. Also, numerous of these jazz-happy pilots have been cut down in their prime by the wires which are strung across these bodies of water, seemingly just for this purpose. These wires are so thin that they can seldom be seen in time to take avoiding action.

Not everyone who succumbs to this lure gets hurt, but any pleasure which they get out of it is dearly paid for by those of their friends who are not so lucky. This is too high a price to pay for fun. We cannot afford to lose our pilots and planes in such a senseless manner. Hence, strong measures are necessary to prevent weak-willed pilots from yielding to the enchantment of this dangerous water witch.

Quiz Kids

While coming in for a landing after a familiarization hop, a pilot's engine cut out completely at 650 feet. The aviator said that he immediately put on the electric fuel pump, switched to the "reserve" fuel tank and noted that the fuel gauge showed 45 gallons. However, the engine failed to catch again and the plane crashed in a small wooded area. The pilot received serious injuries.

Crash investigators found the fuel selector switch was on "main" despite the pilot's statement that he had switched to "reserve." The Trouble Board held that the pilot switched back to the main tank before the engine could establish suction again.



The board recommended that any pilot checking out in a new type of aircraft should be given either a written or an oral examination to ascertain that he was fully acquainted with all operating characteristics of that model. This board considered that the examination should stress especially the fuel system and engine operating data.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Any pilot who will take off in a new type plane before he is thoroughly familiar with every switch, lever, button, line and gadget, doesn't rate his wings.

Evidently there are some such, however. That's why the squadron commander holds the bag; to wit: BuAer Manual, art. 13-103(b) and par. 8(a) of Sec. Nav (Ltr. serial 61134 dated 19 July, 1944 (p. 14 of Av. Circ. Ltr. 111-44) both state: "Commanding Officers shall permit only those persons to pilot aircraft whom they consider competent to do so."

To insure such competence, efficient organizations give exams, including a cockpit blindfold test, and checkout in the air.

Haphazard Safety

An SB2C pilot had to make a forced landing at sea when his engine quit. The landing was easy, but this was only the beginning of his troubles.

The following discrepancies in certain of his survival equipment were culled from the pilot's report:

a. He couldn't inflate his raft because he was unable to remove the pin from the CO_2 bottle. Luckily, his wingman saw his predicament and dropped him another raft which was readily inflated.

b. One side of the second raft was, however, full of small holes, too numerous to be patched. It was necessary to use the hand pump every few minutes to keep the raft inflated.

c. The pump was found to have a fractured cylinder. In order to make it work at all, the pilot had to hold his hand over the crack whenever he pumped.

d. Upon checking the equipment of this raft, the pilot found that it contained *no provisions, no water and no first aid kit.*

Fortunately for this pilot, he was picked up on the second day.

▶ ***Comment*—The reason for not being able to remove the pin is not clear. The holes in the raft may have been caused by chafing; all metallic parts of the raft should be covered with cloth to prevent this, as directed in the various T.O.'s and T.N.'s covering inspection and maintenance of the several type rafts. If the pump was in contact with some other hard object, the cylinder may have been cracked when the raft was dropped. Thus, both these latter defects were probably due to improper packing.**

The complete lack of provisions, water and first aid kit is inexplicable. It is surprising how many reports of discrepancies in survival equipment are received. They show an unbelievable lack of interest in personal safety and wholesale disregard of Aviation Circular Letter 17-44.

Taxi Responsibilities

After completing his practice landings at night, a pilot was taxiing to the line when he hit another aircraft which had stopped on the taxi strip because of a flat tire.

The investigating board made the following observations on this accident:

a. Assignment of a signal man astern of the stalled plane to direct traffic would have prevented the collision.

b. The tower could have averted the accident if it had notified the incoming pilot by radio or had closed that particular taxi strip until the aircraft had been moved.

c. No matter what the extenuating circumstances, the pilot *always* has final responsibility for the taxiing of his plane.

Central Pacific thunderheads silhouette a trim *Hellcat* on patrol for Jap bogeys reported in the area. Constantly in action, the F6F is proving to be a Navy workhorse in this war

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. **After engaging in an oxygen familiarization flight, is it O. K. to come right on in and land?**
2. **Unless specific instructions to the contrary are in effect, in which direction shall aircraft circle an airport before landing, and for how long?**
3. **Aircraft in contact flight within three miles of the center of an airport or other landing area shall conform to the traffic circle rule referred to in question two, unless above what altitude?**
4. **Why is it that you can withstand only a relatively small amount of "g" during pull-outs and banks in aircraft?**
5. **What is the minimum practice in instrument flying, actual or simulated, required of the holder of a restricted instrument card in order that he may maintain his card?**

Answers on Page 48

Uncomplicated

FROM THE PILOT'S STATEMENT: "While in the taxi lane, I received a stop signal from the signalman. I hit the brakes too hard, causing the TBM-3 to nose up on its propeller."

FROM THE AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT: "In the opinion of the Board, this is an uncomplicated case of pure pilot error on the part of an experienced pilot (823 hrs.). Disciplinary action is, therefore, recomended."

FROM THE SQUADRON COMMANDER'S ENDORSEMENT: "Disciplinary action has been taken."

Life Savers

While engaged in a low-level bombing flight over water at night, a TBF flew into the water while in a shallow glide.

After interviewing the pilot, the accident board was of the opinion that the pilot misread his radio altimeter. It was actually set for low range when the pilot thought it was set for high, thus causing him to misinterpret 50 feet as 500 feet.

Neither the pilot nor aircrewmen wore life jackets. The pilot managed to stay afloat until rescued by a crash boat at daybreak. The aircrewmen were not rescued, although the pilot saw one of them clinging to part of the wreckage immediately after the crash.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

There may be some alibi for misreading a radio altimeter, but darned if I can figure out one for not wearing life jackets on such a flight.

As far as I'm concerned, such complete disregard of safety regulations is a direct reflection on squadron discipline.

Shiftless

The pilot of a TBF took off on a night familiarization flight and flew one hour and forty-five minutes, using fuel from the center main tank. While making touch-and-go landings, his engine cut out on the downwind leg of an approach, resulting in a very serious crash. Investigation disclosed that fuel exhaustion from the center main tank was the cause of engine failure. During the entire flight the pilot had not shifted to either of the wing tanks, both of which were full.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Just because we haven't been yelling about this type of accident recently doesn't mean there haven't been any. They still occur and they still kill flight personnel and destroy aircraft. Also, they still occur for the same reasons: pilots forget to shift tanks or they shift improperly. All of which still adds up to pilot negligence.

Barney Google's friend, Snuffy Smith, has a good name for such pilots: "Shiftless Skonks."

No Suction

It has been noted repeatedly in ditching reports that pilots expressed surprise that no suction was encountered when their aircraft sank. Flying personnel are advised that airplanes create no appreciable suction when they sink. Misunderstanding on this point might result in personnel clearing the vicinity of a ditched airplane prematurely, without waiting to retrieve important survival equipment and gear.

The suction when a ship sinks rapidly is caused mainly by the great volume of water rushing in behind the sinking ship. Aircraft do not have enough volume to make this serious.

There are, however, certain dangers to avoid when a plane sinks, whether you are in the water or in a raft: *1.* Don't get caught under the wing or tail surfaces, 2. stay clear of jagged or torn surfaces, and 3. be sure you are not attached to the plane by any line.

Carrier Landing Accidents

Grampaw Pettibone says:

I'm amazed every now and then to read about a certain type of plane crash. I refer to those carrier accidents in which comments such as the following appear: "The pilot took an automatic wave-off after having cut his gun, on signal, to land aboard," or "The pilot bounced on landing and attempted to take off again."

For a pilot to attempt to take off after once having cut his gun to land aboard used to be the one unpardonable sin in naval aviation. There were no possible exceptions to this rule.

What's the matter? Don't they teach it that way any more? The fact that the above quotes appear in aircraft accident reports would indicate that these violations are as dangerous today as they ever were.

Help Us Help You

AIRCRAFT Accident Reports are valuable or worthless according to the thoroughness with which they are prepared. If they are handled in a superficial manner, chances are they will be of little value to anyone.

An accident board which recognizes the importance of its findings will study each accident thoroughly. All crew members and witnesses will be questioned, wreckage will be carefully inspected, surrounding circumstances fully considered and the entire case analyzed for the main and underlying causes. The comments and recommendations of such a board will benefit not only the squadron concerned but in many cases the entire naval aeronautical organization.

In order that intelligent corrective action can be taken on material failures, it is necessary that full and complete information be submitted. For example, numerous recent accident reports have mentioned that cockpit enclosures "slammed" or "jammed" shut on impact of a hard landing or crash, but gave no details. To aid in correcting such difficulties, information of the following nature is needed:

a. Position of enclosure prior to deck contact
b. Violence of the crash, using formula for deceleration contained in Aviation Circular Letter 48-44
c. Description of difficulty in opening the enclosure
d. Identification, by part number or description, of bent, broken or sheared parts
e. If lockpin sheared, inspect track for evidence indicating at which notch pin was sheared; describe
f. Metallurgical description of failed parts (or at least retain parts, in event Bureau or contractor requires same for further investigation)
g. Steps taken or recommended to correct trouble or prevent recurrence

Don't neglect "personnel error" accidents. Investigate and report them fully. You may have only one of a type in your squadron, but added to a number of similar accidents in other squadrons, it becomes of increased importance. As a result of such cumulative reports, changes in training are often initiated, appropriate safety instructions are issued and even changes in design are made.

So, make your Aircraft Accident Reports complete.

Help Make Your Aircraft Safer.