


# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## "After The Horse Is Stolen"

It's an old story. The pilot forgets to switch to the tower frequency on approaching the field. He makes a good approach and then inadvertently retracts his wheels instead of lowering his flaps. The tower is unable to warn him and so a belly landing is made.

Commenting on one accident of this type, an investigating board said, "The importance of the use of the check-off list prior to landing has been impressed upon this pilot. A blindfold cockpit checkout has made him completely familiar with the position of the wheel and flap levers."

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

How much better it would have been if this pilot had been given the blindfold checkout BEFORE the accident!

And what about other similar accidents? Must a pilot crash before he is given this checkout?

## Night Emergencies

After approximately fifteen minutes of flight at 2,000 feet, while on a night cross-country hop, the engine of an *RAF* began cutting out. The pilot decided to attempt a return to base. Four miles from the field the engine failed completely. So much altitude had been lost by this time that a successful jump was not possible. In an attempted water landing on a nearby river, the plane struck some trees, crashed and burned. The pilot was killed.

The immediate superior in command issued a safety bulletin on the accident saying, "In all probability, the life of this pilot could have been saved had he resorted to his parachute. The desire to save his plane is both understandable and laudable, but in a forced landing at night the saving of the plane should be the pilot's last consideration."

► *Comment*—The pilot's initial decision to attempt a return to base while he was still at safe altitude is not criticized. His fatal mistake lay in not jumping before he had lost so much altitude that a successful jump was not possible.

Forced landings at night are extremely hazardous. When there is a choice, they should not be attempted on land unless exceptional circumstances exist, such as non-availability of parachutes in certain transports or a combination of unusual visibility and known favorable terrain conditions.

Likewise, it is considered much safer to jump than to attempt to make a forced night landing at sea in a small landplane



where all emergency equipment is carried in the pararaft. In large airplanes, however, the danger of such a landing usually will be offset by the advantages to be gained from retaining contact with the emergency equipment carried in the plane and from keeping personnel together for mutual assistance.

## Science and Skill Versus Ignorance and Superstition

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

There seems to be an attitude of false pride in some outfits which prevents any serious consideration being given to the safety of their flying personnel. As near as I can figure out, this stems from the mistaken idea that any talk or training along these lines indicates that accidents are expected to happen and is, therefore, bad for morale.

Let's get reasonable. Aircraft accidents not only can happen, but in the present stage of development, we know that many of them are bound to happen. Not to face this fact squarely and do everything we can to prevent accidents and to lessen the damage of those that do occur, just isn't intelligent. It reminds me of an ostrich with his head in the sand.

We've come a long way in aviation, but it hasn't been through hiding from the facts. Our advancement has been achieved through the untiring efforts of a bunch of

two-fisted guys who were quick to recognize deficiencies, but who would never accept them as final. They stuck with it until the defects were either whipped or counteracted by operating procedures or safety equipment. For example, not very many years ago aviators didn't even know you could bring an airplane out of a spin. Whenever a plane spun, they just "scratched" it—and usually the pilot too. Those were the days before the parachute had been developed, so you couldn't even save yourself by bailing out.

A lot has been learned about flying technique since then and much safety equipment has been developed. More of both are in the mill. Neither technique nor equipment is worth a damn, however, unless personnel are properly indoctrinated. That's what this blast is all about: trying to get aviators to know their stuff.


The know-how isn't hard. But it *does* require definite time and effort. It takes constant attention to keep equipment in condition and it takes study and drills to insure that flight personnel know all about using it. Wherever possible, actual handling of equipment beats a lecture all hollow. Don't slough those drills! It's too late to hold ditching drill when you are faced with a forced landing. Pilots are much more apt to do the right thing in an emergency if they have previously visualized such a situation—been prepared through mental drills.

## Don't Just Sit There

While making his first landing approach in a *Corsair*, a pilot became a bit apprehensive of his technique and failed to keep track of the plane landing ahead of him. He landed exceedingly long and ran into another *Corsair* which, for some unknown reason, had stopped on the runway. The pilot of this latter plane was killed.

The tower, noting the possibility of collision, had called the approaching plane, but the communication did not get through.

The overtaking pilot was clearly to blame for this crash.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

True, but don't let yourself be killed just because you have the right of way!

The pilot of the stalled plane easily could have saved his own life. He couldn't do it by sitting in his plane with his back to oncoming traffic, however. He should have gotten out of his cockpit immediately so that he could be free to maneuver. Had he done so, he even might have been able to flag the other plane and prevent any crash, saving his life and two planes.



Constant vigilance against attacks by sea or air is the price of success in battle; pilots flying with the Fleet have to time their operations with split-second precision



## Hit And Run

While taxiing at the end of a ferry flight, a pilot hit a sea wall when his sea anchor failed to engage. Although the plane was so badly damaged that it had to be surveyed, the pilot obtained transportation for his home base almost immediately after the accident. His hasty departure, before he was interviewed by the Commanding Officer of the station where the accident occurred, interfered with a prompt and thorough investigation of reasons for the crash.

► **Comment**—Paragraph 25(d) of Aviation Circular Letter 73-44 states that ferry pilots are to notify the "controlling activity"—and in this case, the station where the accident happened—when accidents occur and to stay in charge of the aircraft, maintaining adequate guard, until released by proper authority.

## Wake Up and Live

*People are still being killed by propellers!*

Four persons, including one pilot, were killed by propellers in a recent three-week period. The following are typical examples of such accidents.

**Case 1.** The starboard wheel-chock man aboard a carrier removed the chock from his plane preparatory to take-off. In attempting to get clear of the tail of his own plane, he forgot about the airplane next astern and walked directly into the propeller.

**Case 2.** A mechanic was struck by a propeller while walking diagonally across a taxiway, with his back to an oncoming plane. He was walking with his head down, studying a piece of equipment and was evidently so preoccupied that he neglected to look before crossing the taxiway. He was continuously in the pilot's blind spot and did not hear the warning shouts of other mechs.

**Case 3.** A pilot removed the right and left wheel chocks while his co-pilot warmed up the engines of their P-51. This officer apparently attempted to go between the fuselage and the propeller to reach the nose-wheel chock. He walked face forward into the propeller.

**Case 4.** A plane captain was acting as signalman to guide the pilot of his airplane from the line onto the taxiway. During this maneuver, he backed directly into the propeller of another plane which, with its wings folded, was stopped on the taxiway waiting for the signal to proceed.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Many propeller accidents occur in a manner so ridiculous as to appear impossible—but they continue to happen. As a matter of fact, some of the first airplane accidents on record were those in

## GRAMPAW'S SAFETY QUIZ



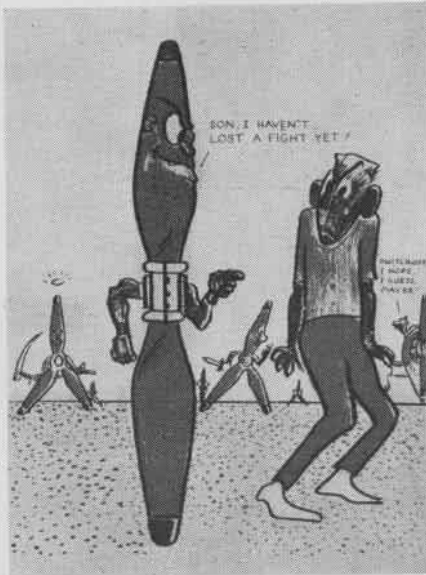
All aviators should know the answers to these questions. In the air, the penalty for not knowing may prove fatal. If you miss an answer on the ground, penalize yourself by looking up the reference.

1. On coming in to land, what signals does the pilot give to the co-pilot to lower the wheels?
2. Is it correct to depend solely on the gyro horizon when flying on instruments?
3. If, while taxiing, you receive a series of red flashes from a directed traffic control light, what should you do?
4. In a parachute jump at sea, should you leave your parachute sling just before landing in the water?
5. When is the application of brake of greatest value in preventing a groundloop or swerve?

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which people walked into propellers.

And they will continue to happen just as long as flight personnel continue to dope off. Elaborate precautions in handling aircraft on the ground plus con-



ALL PROPELLERS PACK A LETHAL WALLOP

tinued warnings, will help, but all this will not keep certain people from tangling with propellers. Total prevention will occur only when everyone concerned is constantly aware of this danger.

So kick yourself in the mind occasionally to remain alert. In other words, stay awake and live!

**A PROPELLER IS AS DANGEROUS AS A GUN!**

## Power-On Versus Power-Off

A PBM crashed during a power-off, stall landing. Two crew members were killed and three seriously injured. Gross weight of the plane was 54,000 lbs.

After an investigation of the accident the commanding officer said: "Although airplanes of this type are seldom landed in such a heavy condition, it is felt that all pilots should be cautioned on the danger involved in attempting power-off, stall landings in this type aircraft with a gross weight in excess of 48,000 pounds. All pilots of this squadron have been so informed previously and are now having this very definitely impressed upon them."

► **Comment**—The heavier the gross weight, the faster must be the landing speed due to the increased stalling speed. Also, with power off, stalling speed is greater. Specifically in this case, with a gross weight of 54,000 pounds, this plane's power-off stalling speed with flaps down was 72.9 knots and only 64.5 knots with power on. In view of this, the logic of making a power-on, stall landing as against a power-off, stall landing clearly can be seen.

## Practice What You Preach

As the flight leader of eight planes approached the field after a night familiarization, he instructed all pilots to check that their wheels were down.

Then—the flight leader landed with his own wheels up.

## Fatal Failures

A TBM pilot made a full-stall, emergency landing when his power failed during a carrier take-off. The plane remained afloat approximately one minute and the pilot and his two crewmen were seen to get clear of the plane. All three appeared to be swimming when last seen from the carrier, but when the planeguard destroyer reached the spot, only the pilot remained afloat.

The squadron commander pointed out certain failures on the part of the flight crew which proved fatal in this case:

a. Failure of the gunner to leave plane by turret and climb on port wing to help pilot remove raft from its compartment.

b. Failure of the radioman to throw at least one of his two para-rafts through the bombardier's door before abandoning the plane.

c. Failure of the pilot to take his para-raft with him when it became apparent that he could not remove four-man raft.

He further stated, "Any one of these four rafts in the water would have supported the crew until help arrived. The loss of life in this accident is the result of the personnel concerned failing to follow the abandon-plane procedure in which they were exhaustively instructed and had frequent practice."