

GRAMP AW PETTIBONE

We Were Lost

Here's Grampaw's near accident of the month as told by the co-pilot of a PBM on a routine ferry flight from NAS ALAMEDA to NAS WHIDBY ISLAND.

"Shortly after take-off the Fluxgate compass began to fluctuate violently—all attempts to remedy the situation proved futile. Our initial mistake was now at hand. The weather was clear and visibility good so we elected to proceed to Whidby Island. We knew that conditions were not good farther along the route, but assumed we could make it through all right.

"For about three hours all was serene. Clouds were beginning to appear and the air was becoming a little turbulent, but we felt confident. After all, the gyro-compass wasn't precessing too rapidly, the radio compass was working fairly well and the magnetic compass appeared to be functioning properly. You may readily see that these were all assumptions and we made no effort to check our instruments. *Mistake number two.*

"By the time another half-hour had passed, visibility was zero; however, no one was very worried as we were riding a good clear radio beam. The radio compass was pointing out the way to our destination, the radar was showing coastlines, mountains, etc., and all seemed to be doing nicely. Of course we were bucking ever increasing headwinds that would delay our arrival until just before dark, providing that the winds didn't get any stronger. We thought they wouldn't. *Mistake number three.*

"Things really started to pop when the radar went out. This was followed by one of our biggest mistakes. We were near our alternate base, but decided to grope on to Whidby Island. After all, it only necessitated following the indicator of the radio compass home.

"The radio compass, however, had other ideas and became extremely uncooperative. It whirled madly about, evidently a victim of the same electrical short that had surveyed the radar.

"Rather than leave the beam we stayed with it by bracketing. Had we at this time attempted to wander about hunting our alternate base, I fear the results would have been disastrous.

"We at last reached Whidby, only to discover a wind of 50 knots was whipping the water into a frenzy. To add to the confusion, darkness was slowly engulfing us. Three landings were attempted but the thrashing water hurled us skyward at all sorts of precarious angles. *Mistake number four.* We circled for over an hour, hoping that the wind would abate. This was to no avail as it increased in intensity



and the circling only resulted in the loss of precious gasoline.

"Abandoning the circling idea, we started for NAS SAND POINT. Everett radio was coming in clearly, but in spite of this we drifted away from the beam. We hunted in vain through the rain-swept skies for our lost guide. As we turned this way and that, listening intently for some

sound other than the clear dit dah, we detected the reason for losing the beam. The terrific impact of our attempted landings had rendered the gyro-compass inoperative. The air was by far the roughest I have ever been unfortunate enough to experience. It goes without saying that under these conditions the magnetic compass was completely useless.

"The unpleasant knowledge that we were lost now confronted us. I feel that we made a wise move by immediately notifying CAA of our plight. They in turn took the necessary steps in alerting the air/sea rescue network.

"The lights of a town were faintly visible and we set our course in their direction. We had absolutely no inkling as to our position. We were sure of just one thing; as long as we circled the city, we wouldn't rub noses with any mountains. Nothing milder than a tornado could have torn us from those lights.

"Radio bearings were taken on us by several stations and we were confronted with startling news. The city we were circling was Victoria, British Columbia.

"Ships of the Royal Canadian Navy, based at Victoria, were quick to grasp our desperate situation. They stationed themselves at strategic points around the harbor, playing their searchlights on the landing area, rocks, high obstructions, and other hazards to a safe landing. Due to their excellent preparations a landing was effected and all hands aboard breathed easily for the first time in five hours. Those of us aboard the plane that night owe the Canadian Navy a debt of gratitude for the speedy and efficient manner in which they handled the entire situation."



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Thanks for this hair-raising story and for the honest account of the mistakes made on this flight. I hope that your nerve-racking experience will serve as a warning to other pilots who are tempted to push on in the face of bad weather. Almost every week I receive reports of fatal accidents which occur because pilots don't turn back or land at alternate fields when they encounter instrument weather on CFR flights or bad terminal weather on instruments flights. Unfortunately these accounts are mostly guess-work as there are no survivors to tell us what really happened—just a heap of tangled wreckage against the side of a mountain.

No doubt some of you other pilots have "True Experiences" which need to be told so that somebody else won't make the same mistake. If you've had a close call lately and lived to tell about it, I'd like to hear from you. Maybe you can save a life by writing the details to Grampaw Pettibone, Room 1801, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

GRAMP AW'S SAFETY QUIZ



1. What does a flashing amber light on the control tower indicate?
2. If the phenomenon known as "compressibility" is encountered in a high speed dive, should the power setting be reduced to assist in the pull-out?
3. When planning a long distance flight in the Northern Hemisphere an area of extremely low pressure is predicted to lie directly across your intended track. Should you alter your flight plan to the right or to the left to avoid it?
4. When weather conditions below basic contact flight minimums are encountered on a CFR flight plan what action should the pilot take?
5. In reference to airport traffic patterns, what is the correct definition of "base leg"?

Answers on Page 40


Dilbert Shows Off For The Home Town Folks!

The owner of a small civilian airport was surprised one afternoon to see a number of cars pull up beside his field, despite the fact that light plane flying had been secured because of high surface winds.

He was informed by one of the spectators that a Navy pilot was going to land an F6F at his airport in a few minutes. The spectators consisted of the pilot's wife, other members of his family, and several friends.

Shortly afterwards the *Hellcat* appeared over the airport and made an approach to a downwind landing. The pilot overshot the 2200-foot grass strip and decided to go around again. On his second approach he made contact with the ground, but took another wave-off because of excessive speed. On his third downwind attempt he landed half-way down the field at an estimated speed of 120 m.p.h. Unable to stop the aircraft within the boundaries of the field, he crossed the highway, tore down an electric pole, and came to a stop in a plowed field. The aircraft was a complete wreck, but the pilot was uninjured because he had his shoulder straps locked.

Investigation disclosed that this daring young airman was an inactive reserve aviator on a local familiarization flight from a Navy field some 40 miles away. *He was not authorized to leave the local area or to land at any other airport except in an emergency.*

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

There is no cure for congenital idiocy! Downwind landings are hazardous in light airs, but with high surface winds any downwind landing spells "CRACK-UP." Wind socks, flags, smoke, wind streaks on the water, and even washing on the line have always served aviators by indicating the direction and force of the wind. Even though you are living in the "Atomic Age" you need to know where the wind is before you land. In this case Dilbert was probably worrying so much about his unauthorized landing, that he forgot to observe which way the sock was blowing.

The board of investigation held that this accident was the result of the pilot's own misconduct and recommended that he be disenrolled from the Naval Reserve.

Last Minute Tug Pays Off

After catching the number two wire in a carrier landing, the entire tail hook assembly of an F6F-5 pulled out after approximately 35 feet of wire ran out. As a result the plane went over the port side of the ship and crashed into the sea. The pilot says:

"On the way over the side I gave my

shoulder straps an extra good pull, then I pulled back on the stick to avoid hitting the water at an extreme nose-down angle. This is the last I remember until I came to under water. The cockpit was full of water and I was going down very fast. This was no place for me! I loosened my safety belt, grabbed the windscreen and gave myself a jerk, really getting out fast. I had my parachute on and one side of my life jacket inflated and I came to the surface with great speed."

This pilot was picked up by a destroyer a few minutes later, in good shape except for a few bruises. He concludes his statement: "IT IS THANKS AGAIN TO THOSE SHOULDER STRAPS for saving a life or a marred face."


It Can't Happen To Me

The pilot had 2200 hours and was flight officer of a training squadron. Word comes to *Grampaw* that his students and junior instructors sometimes thought him a mighty "hard-hearted" man. Here's what happened to him one day when he didn't heed his own advice.

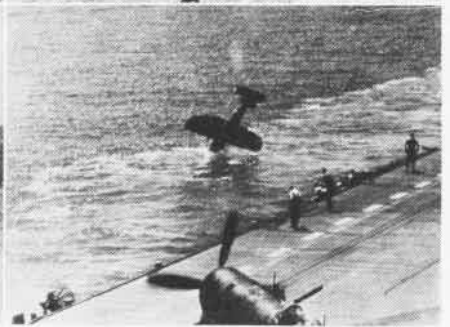
On a 400-mile cross-country flight in an SNJ with headwinds prevailing over most of the route, the pilot requested clearance by radio for the last 165 miles of his trip. He did not land and refuel. The weather was good so

the pilot didn't bother to do much navigating. When he thought that he was near and slightly East of his destination, he started flying West looking for the field. Somehow it wasn't there. With 15 minutes of gasoline left he turned on his radio and determined that he was in an "A" quadrant. Still believing himself to be East of the field, he continued to fly in a westerly direction. Unfortunately he was in the western "A" quadrant, and the beam soon began to fade out. He realized his mistake, but by now his fuel was exhausted, and he was forced to land in a corn field. Checking his navigation with a farmer, he found that he was *seventy* miles due west of destination.

The plane was undamaged, but the farmer filed a claim for \$100 for damage to his property, and the Navy had to send a truck and working party nearly 250 miles to disassemble the plane and return it to base.

 *Grampaw Pettibone says:*

It can happen to you! This pilot showed very poor judgment in not planning his flight to allow for a safe margin of fuel upon arrival at his destination. Had he paid closer attention to his navigation during the last leg of his flight, moreover, and kept a log of easily discernible check points, he would have realized his off-course position long before he became lost and was up against it.



F4U Take-Off Accident

The plane pictured above stalled immediately after leaving the catapult—probably due to a short, quick pull on the stick. Improper tab setting is another possible cause.

COMMENT:

Before any take off—CHECK YOUR TAB SETTINGS. Immediately after take off follow these precautions:

DON'T MAKE A STEEP CLIMB

DON'T MAKE A STEEP TURN

Remember that spins and stalls are the leading cause of fatal accidents in the F4U. In the last nine months there were twenty-six such accidents. Pay particular attention to avoiding stalls when close to the water or ground. Once you stall at low altitude there isn't much that you can do about the situa-