GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

The Rover Boys In China

The flight of eight Marine *Corsairs* started back to base after having maintained a simulated combat air patrol over a task force for a period of three hours. The planes had sufficient fuel for 75 minutes of flight and the return to base was not expected to take more than half an hour.

Just off the China Coast the flight encountered a well-developed frontal storm which extended to the right and left of the course as far as the pilots could see. The bottom of the front was right down to the water, obscuring the coast line and the coastal mountains. The flight leader made a 180-degree turn and started a climb in an attempt to go over the top.

At 5500 feet he could see that the top of the storm reached up to approximately 25,000 feet, and decided that it would be impracticable to go over or around the storm with the limited supply of gasoline. At this time the base was reporting a ceiling of 8000 feet and good visibility, so the leader made another 180-degree turn and entered the front on an approximate heading of 255 degrees.

Three of the eight planes became separated from their divisions in the turbulence and low visibility. One pilot turned around and flew back out of the front and eventually ditched his F4U near the task force. Another took up a heading of North and held it for thirty minutes, because he heard one of the pilots say that he was on that heading at 8000 feet and in the clear. Unfortunately this heading took both of them some 90 to 100 miles Northeast of the base and kept them in the front for a long time as they were flying nearly parallel to the squall line.

These two lost birdmen finally broke out in the clear at a much greater distance from the base than they had been when they first entered the storm. Worse than that—the storm was still between them and home. After sighting each other they established voice radio contact, but were confused as to their probable position and for the next fifteen minutes they continued to fly away from the base. Finally they reversed course and one of the pilots oriented himself sufficiently to take up a heading for home.

At about this time the other pilot called and said that he was out of gas and was landing on the beach. Shortly afterwards he called again, stating that he had made a successful landing, but that the Chinese were firing at him. He was taken into custody by the Chinese Communists. Subsequent reports say that he was eventually released, and returned to his base.

The second pilot had enough gasoline to continue to within twenty miles of the airfield where he again encountered the frontal weather. With just a few minutes of gas left, he ditched his plane in a lagoon and drifted ashore in his life raft a couple of hours later. He shouted "Hello" in Chinese several times and on receiving no answer decided to look for a place to spend the night. He finally crawled into a small Chinese temple and fell asleep. The next morning he met some friendly Chinese who provided him with a mule and after a five-hour ride he reached Tsingtao.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Esprit de corps **is a mighty fine thing to have in any outfit, but I don't think it should be stretched to the point of sending in accident reports like these with the words "NONE" written in the space provided for noting "Errors of Pilot or Other Personnel."**

I'm inclined to believe that a goodly portion of the error should have been assigned to the Flight Leader as there is no indication that he took even a minute or two to brief the flight before taking them into the instrument weather. I think this makes a tremendous amount of difference. The flight leader should think about the reaction of his most inexperienced pilots.

By taking a few minutes to explain to the flight that the weather at the base is good, and that they will in all probability be through the front in a matter of ten minutes, he prepares the less experienced pilots for what lies ahead. Then, given a course and altitude to fly, the chances are much greater that they will come through without any serious trouble.

In my opinion these pilots, who became lost, went on instruments without having the benefit of this psychological preparation. I think that if their morale had been given a boost in the form of a two minute briefing, they would probably not have become so confused as to turn 90 degrees off course and end up with the storm still between them and the base.

Of course, it is a little difficult to understand how they came to the conclusion that they were southwest of the field after altering course from 255° to 000°, but you can get a lot of screwy notions when you've just had the living daylights scared out of you, especially when you see that gasoline gauge getting uncomfortably low.

The worst fear is *fear of the unknown*. Get the word around, and the roughest flying will be a little easier, and a good deal safer.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Most Navy pilots won't run into this, we hope, but this incident illustrates why untrained pilots should stay away from these Western Pacific typhoons. The excerpts quoted are from a letter written by one of our more capable PPC's operating from a detachment.

"Did you hear about the one I flew with a VIP aboard? Well, to begin with, it was just a weather recco, supposedly, and he came along for a nice flight. 'CAVU and all that,' he said. We were out less than 200 miles when we ran smack dab into it. It was a dilly (*Mildred* to be exact, with winds of 100 knots or better). About one-third of the way around he asked, 'When do we return to base?' I was busy and didn't let it bother me.

"Somehow I got into the thing too far. The co-pilot was flying manually at 500 feet as the plane had a badly-checked windshield on my side, and I practically had to stick my head out the window to see anything.

"As I said, we got in too far. The

winds got too high. The air got too rough. I said 'Let's turn down wind.' Suddenly I felt the plane shaking and noticed my air speed reading 105 knots. The radio altimeter was reading around 150 feet and moving downward. The co-pilot's pressure altimeter read 1000 feet and mine read 900 feet. I shouted to pick up airspeed as I increased the power and RPM and looked out to confirm the reading of the radio altimeter.

"I confirmed it all right by staring at a tremendously large white wall of water coming right at us. I think we missed the crest of that one by a good foot. We staggered back up to about 700 feet and discovered that the airspeed indicator on the co-pilot's side had stuck at 130 knots. That made Christians out of all of us, including the VIP, and we stayed well out in the 50-knot circle the rest of the way around. As the saying goes—'I learned about flying typhoons from that ——.'

"Late last month some of the boys in our squadron who had flown winds in excess of 100 knots formed *The Century Club. The Century Club* lasted two days as *Olive* and *Rosalind* became more difficult. It was supplanted by *The Christian Club* and the members began to refer to themselves as "the 60-knot pilots" and "the 50-knot boys." Despite this voluntary reclassification, they were consistently reporting winds of 100, 110, and 130 knots and were returning to base with elaborate explanations of how it happened to them.

"I thought that you might like to know, Grampaw, that the Pacific typhoons were just as wily as ever and that even pilots trained to fly typhoons were still being surprised by them.

Respectfully,

COMMANDING OFFICER."

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Many thanks for this interesting letter. Just looking at the pictures that you enclosed was enough to scare me. Wish I could print some of them but I'm afraid they wouldn't show up very well in one-column cuts.

Winter Safety Hints

Grampaw Pettibone says:

A hasty review of the accidents which occurred most frequently last winter, shows that the great majority were preventable. Follow the winter safety rules below and stay out of Grampaw's accident file.

1. Demand all the available weather information before every flight. Plan your flight to *avoid altitudes where icing is prevalent.*

2. If you should encounter instrument weather while on a Visual Flight Plan, DON'T PUSH THROUGH. This caused nearly one-third of all the fatalities last winter. *Land* at the nearest airport where *contact conditions prevail.*

3. If you are flying over water, know your emergency rescue procedure, and wear an exposure suit. You won't last long without an exposure suit in water of or near freezing temperature.

4. Just before any take-off, be sure to check all controls for free movement, and clear your engine thoroughly. Never take off with snow or frost on the wings. A very small amount can destroy your lift.

5. Check the runway conditions with the tower before landing. Icy spots on runways caused many groundloops and nose-overs last winter.

6. By all means learn the correct way to operate every piece of de-icing equipment on your airplane *before* you get in the air.

7. Don't let ice in the pitot tube foul you up. Use the pitot cover when securing the aircraft. Use pitot heat in freezing or near freezing weather.

8. Brakes are of little help when taxiing on icy areas. Taxi SLOWLY and allow yourself a large stopping distance.

Dear Grampaw:

Your excoriation of a JRB pilot who corrected for a strong cross wind by "bending" upwind throttle was not completely justified. Since the JRB is little more than a light double-breasted SNJ with sensitive and immediately effective aileron controls, the proper and recommended corrective cross wind action, requiring the least throttle jockeying, on the approach would be the same as the method employed in the single engine equipment, i.e., by dropping a wing and slipping into the drift and/or crabbing into the wind or a combination of both. In that sense your upbraiding can be concurred with.

However in heavier, multi-engine equipment, R4D's, R5D's, etc., upwind engine, used judiciously, is just as right as adding ice to anteprandial liquids. You can take it or you can leave it alone. The point I want to make is that IT DOES WORK.

Control pressures are relatively heavy in R4D's and R5C's and at the slower speeds of a final approach the reaction to aileron movements tends to be sluggish. It is sorta like sitting on the front porch and flying a house. Even so, you don't HAVE to use up-wind engine at any time in a cross wind condition but it is a nice little trick to further demonstrate one's aplomb as a skygoing wayfarer.

Don't just take my word for it. Borrow a two-engine aircraft some day and adjourn to an authorized low flying area where you won't be violating Article 6-206 of the *BuAer Manual*. Get low enough to the terrain so that you can definitely notice drift and carry out this recipe:

1. Pick a road, fence, or any demarcation on the ground representing a straight line which is about 90° to the wind direction. Hypothetically let that line represent your approach line to the runway.
2. In normal flight your aircraft will drift from the line. You correct and stay over the line, in single engine equipment, as follows:
   a. By lowering a wing and slipping into the wind.
   b. By crabbing into the wind.
   c. A combination of *a* and *b*.
3. With a two-engine plane, however, there is the additional advantage provided for correcting for the drift by slipping to the wind with the wings perfectly level. This is done by an application of power on the upwind engine. Assuming now that the wings are kept level, with upwind power added, the nose of the aircraft will tend to turn down-wind. BUT keep the nose headed straight down that hypothetical approach line with rudder and you will be slipping or skidding (either word is correct in straight flight) into the wind. The wings are level, the nose is straight.

The trick is to use just enough of this power slip (which is, in effect, what it is) to counteract the drift. It requires technique and much practice to learn just how much power is required to correct for a given cross wind condition BUT IT DOES WORK and after the imperceptible transfer from air to ground there is that desirably requisite assistance, you mentioned, that prevents the plane from weathercocking into the wind.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sounds to me like you've got something there, young feller. I went right out to the Air Station and tried to borrow an R4D, but they wouldn't let me have one—said my beard would get all tangled up in the yoke.

By the way, if you're ever in Washington stop in and see me and I'll mix you an "anteprandial" concoction that will curl your hair. As for the rest of you, get out your dictionaries.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

"You just put the weather on it, brother, I'll fly it."

A Thousand Pardons, Suh!

From Atlanta comes word that the SNJ pilot whose flight was written up in the November issue under the title, "SOME RIDE, EH?", was not a member of the Naval Air Reserve Training Unit, but a regular naval aviator getting his time in there. This was a mighty sorry ride and Grampaw apologizes for pinning it on the wrong outfit.