

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Really "Fouled" Up Flight

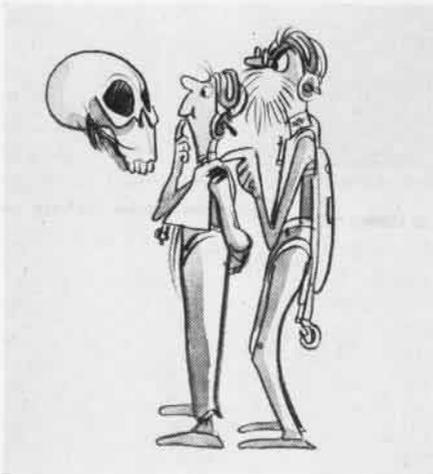
The pilot of an F6F requested and was granted a VFR clearance from NAS DALLAS to NAS ATLANTA on a routine ferry flight. He gave his estimated time enroute as 3 hours, T.A.S. 180 knots, and estimated time of take off as 1330. The distance from Dallas to Atlanta is approximately 610 nautical miles, but the pilot was counting on a good tail wind at his proposed altitude of 10,000 feet.

Shortly after leaving Dallas the pilot descended to stay under heavy precipitation. Flying alternately on instruments and by visual reference to the terrain, he passed Shreveport and Jackson without being able to see either city. Near Meridian, Mississippi he climbed to his proposed altitude after receiving a somewhat garbled weather sequence, which he believed indicated that contact conditions prevailed on the airways ahead.

After 1600 the pilot was unable to get an accurate check point because he was flying above a layer of low broken clouds. He did not know how much time to add to his ETA as a result of the low flying which he had done during the first two hours of his flight.

When he intercepted the South-West leg of the Atlanta range he started a let-down in an effort to establish his position along the beam. By this time it was getting dark and he was unable to get a positive fix. Turning to a heading which he believed would take him across the NW leg of the beam near the range station, he commenced calling Atlanta Radio on 3105 kcs. and also on VHF. When he could not establish communications with Atlanta Radio, he shifted to Channel 9 on VHF and tried to contact Atlanta Navy. He could hear other planes talking on VHF, but received no answer.

Finally he spotted the neon lights of a liquor store on U. S. Highway 41 about 20 miles from Atlanta. His gasoline was almost gone and after a futile search for the Cartersville airfield, he decided to land on an open stretch of highway. He was able to distinguish the pavement, but did not see a bridge ahead. With his wheels and flaps down he stalled the plane about 20 feet over the road. The right wing dropped, and the plane hit the bridge and cartwheeled through the railing into the creek 75 feet below. It was all over quickly.



The plane came to rest, right side up in about three feet of water and the pilot waded ashore unhurt. As shown in the picture below, the cockpit was just about the only part of the plane which was not demolished.



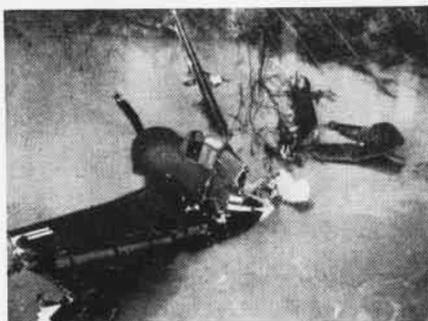
*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Maybe there were a few more mistakes that you could have made on this flight, son, but it's hard to think of them.

In the first place your request for a clearance from Dallas to Atlanta that late in the day was in direct violation of existing ferry flight regulations. You couldn't have completed your flight one-half hour before sunset, even if you had been able to stay at 10,000 feet all the way. And both you and the weatherman could tell from the sequences that you wouldn't be able to remain VFR and fly at that altitude. You should never have asked for that clearance and **IT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN GRANTED.**

Apparently, at no point in your flight, did you bother to figure out your gasoline consumption or check your ground speed and determine that you were not going to arrive in the Atlanta area until after dark. By your own admission you violated CAA regulations, and Navy instructions for ferrying aircraft by continuing on instruments with a VFR clearance.

But the mistakes that came close to



killing you occurred during your forced landing. With twenty gallons of fuel remaining you should have thoroughly investigated the area of intended landing. Perhaps you *could* have landed safely on one side or the other of the bridge, but if any doubt existed you should have made a wheels-up landing. My files contain a great many reports on aviators who decided to put their wheels down for forced landings at night and suffered "injuries multiple and extreme."

I'm mighty glad that you at least remembered to lock the canopy open and to tighten your shoulder straps and safety belt before you hit. As far as I can see those were the only things that you did right during the entire flight.

## Some Check

Not long ago a pilot who had not flown for over 11 months reported to a Naval Air Reserve Training Unit and volunteered to do some flying. He was assigned to a check pilot who was cognizant of his long lay-off and of the fact that he had never soloed in an SNJ.

The volunteer was given a 20-minute cockpit check out and observed two landings from the rear seat. He then made one landing from the front seat and his check-pilot informed him that he was safe for solo.

On his first solo landing he misjudged his altitude above the runway and failed to break his glide at the proper height. The SNJ hit wheels first at rather slow speed and bounced back into the air. The pilot applied power but evidently it was "too little and too late." The aircraft went out of control and struck the runway with the starboard wing.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

I concur 100% with the comments of the Commanding Officer which follow:

"This is an outstanding example of the failure of this Command to properly supervise flight checks of Reserve Pilots. . . . (a) Only thoroughly qualified check pilots will be employed in the future, (b) Check pilots themselves will undergo periodic checks, (c) All pilots who are checked out for solo will be required to build up sufficient dual instruction time to insure that they are safe for solo, (d) Before assigning pilots for solo flight, their records will be more carefully examined to insure that they are qualified in type and have been flying regularly enough not to require a check flight."

## Test That Pistol, Son!

*Case No. 1.* An SB2C pilot was coming in for a landing in night FCLIP. The runway duty officer, who was stationed about 200 yards down wind from the LSO, noticed that the approach was being made with the wheels up. He had a Very pistol in his left hand and the Aldis lamp in his right hand. He immediately attempted to fire a red star, but had to pull the trigger three times before the Very pistol would fire. The pilot hit the deck with his wheels up just as the flare fired. Inspection disclosed that the pistol had a faulty trigger.

*Case No. 2.* An F6F pilot making field carrier landings at night forgot to lower his wheels as he came around for his sixth pass. The runway duty officer observed that the wheels were not down and attempted to fire his Very pistol. The pistol was not properly breeched and he could not pull the trigger.

He dropped the microphone which he held in his other hand, and tried to pull the trigger with both hands. At the same time an ordnanceman who was assisting the duty officer tried to fire another Very pistol, but due to defective shell the pistol did not fire until the third time the trigger was pulled. The pilot by this time had received a "cut" and landed wheels up.

*Case No. 3.* An F4U-4 pilot was making night touch and go landings. On his fourth approach he called the tower and reported wheels down and locked. He was cleared for a landing and made a normal approach, passing over the end of the runway at an altitude of about 75 feet. The assistant runway duty officer who was handling the Aldis lamp noticed that the wheels were up, and the runway duty officer fired his Very pistol.

The stars, however, did not blossom with normal brilliance. Then the runway signalman, 1200 feet further down the strip, tried his pistol, but again the stars appeared only as thin pink streaks. By the time a satisfactory warning was fired the plane was about three or four feet off the runway. The tower operator, who had noticed the defective flares, also gave the pilot a wave-off at this time but it was too late. Just as the pilot added throttle, the F4U hit the deck. The plane slid 1200 feet farther down the runway. The unsatisfactory cartridges turned out to be five years old.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

You could fire a Very pistol from now until Christmas for less than it costs to repair one of these planes. Never take it for granted that the pistol is in good shape, or that you know how to use it, or that your cartridges will fire properly.



## Guardian Angel At Work

The Corsair pictured above has just completed an outside loop after crashing on take-off. If you look closely you can see the pilot's seat in the right foreground.

The engine failure occurred when the plane reached an altitude of about 75 feet and the pilot continued straight ahead and made contact with the ground in a three point attitude. The plane crashed through the field boundary fence, hit an embankment, and made a complete outside loop. It came to rest with the engine and part of the fuselage on the original course.

The seat containing the pilot was on the ground under the largest portion of the fuselage. Upon arrival of rescue squads the pilot was found in the seat, well strapped in, but in a dazed condition. The shoulder harness and safety belt were released and the pilot was rushed to the dispensary. An examination by the Medical Officer revealed a few small lacerations and bruises and a small flesh wound on his head. The next day the pilot found that his shoulders were pretty sore. Aside from these minor nicks he was uninjured.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

Even with his harness and safety belt snug, this pilot certainly had a mighty close call. I agree with the opinion of the accident board that he would very probably have been killed except for the fact that he was using these safety devices properly. Even so I guess it wouldn't be a bad idea for him to go right on saying his prayers regularly.

## Navy Relief Call



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

The Navy Relief Society has announced its annual call for contributions will begin on May 4 and run through June 6. The dates were chosen to commemorate the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Grampaw Pettibone has seen this organization assist the dependents of many pilots and crewmen who were killed or injured in aviation accidents. This year the goal is to get the maximum number of contributors. Approximately \$300,000 must be raised by individual donations. Everyone in the hazardous business of flying should be glad to contribute to the organization that takes care of our own people.

## Starvation Diet

A Marine Corps pilot flying an F4U from a carrier to a West Coast air base encountered engine trouble at an altitude of 1800 feet. Being only a few miles offshore, he immediately climbed to 4500 feet hoping, in case of complete engine failure, to be able to make a wheels-up landing on good old terra-firma. As he came over land his engine continued to lose power. He checked his instruments and found that all engine gauges were within operating limits and put his fuel pump on emergency position, but shortly thereafter his engine gave its last cough and died completely.

Unable to make the nearest airfield, he picked out the best available spot—a fairly level plowed field almost directly below him. Maintaining 110 knots on the approach, he landed wheels-up, flaps all the way down, shoulder harness locked, with all switches off. The F4U slid to a stop right side up about 250 feet from the point of first contact. It received sufficient damage to necessitate a major overhaul, but the pilot got out without a scratch.

The investigating board found that the engine failure was caused by improper installation of carburetor adapter part #78796 which had been installed in an inverted position, thereby closing off the bleed line from the top of the fuel feed valve. As the engine warmed up, the pressure evidently increased to such an extent that the fuel feed valve would not open to allow fuel supply for the engine.



*Grampaw Pettibone says:*

This is an example of excellent pilot reaction in an emergency that was caused by careless maintenance. Gaining a little altitude while he had partial power enabled the pilot to reach a relatively safe emergency landing area. The plowed field turned out to be quite soft and a wheels-down landing would have been dangerous to the pilot and would probably have resulted in strike damage to the aircraft. Proper use of the shoulder harness allowed him to walk away from his crash unhurt.

This squadron inspected all carburetor adapter spacer assemblies for proper installation, and the skipper notes that all aircraft maintenance personnel, particularly carburetor mechanics, should be cautioned concerning the ease with which this part can be improperly installed.

Let's not have a repetition of this particular accident.



We grieve to state that Ensign Proud Liked flying contact through a cloud. The hill he found was hard and stable; Our Ensign now is much less able.