

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Engines and Prayers!

Not very many pilots are alive to explain what it feels like to lose elevator control right after take-off, so the following statement is of particular interest. The aircraft was a PV-2 piloted by a lieutenant and an ensign in the Organized Reserve.

"After preflighting the aircraft I started the engines. While awaiting increased cylinder temperature and tower clearance, I checked my yoke and rudder controls.

"We taxied to the run-up position, checked our engines, and went down the check-off list. After completing the check-off, my copilot checked the controls on his side.

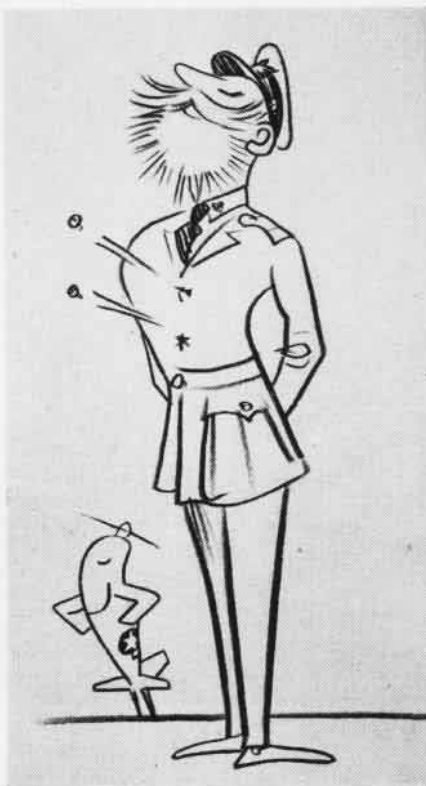
"We made a normal take-off. I leveled the plane off with slight forward pressure on the yoke at approximately 10 to 20 feet above the runway. Suddenly the yoke was free of pressure. The aircraft immediately went into a violent climb. Full forward yoke did not decrease the severity of the climb and the yoke seemed free from the pressure of the airflow over the elevators. While in this dangerous, full-power climb, my copilot and I cut the throttles simultaneously. The nose dropped immediately and evenly with no stalling effects being noticed.

"With the nose of the aircraft again in normal flight, I increased power steadily, applying full forward yoke. With this increase in power the aircraft again started a steep climb. We were over the lake at this time. With this second attempt at normal flight and still no elevator control, I decided to ditch the aircraft in the lake.

"I decreased throttles steadily to no power, the nose dropping in proportion to the reduction of power. Again no stalling effect was noticed. At approximately 50 feet I opened the pilots' escape hatch. By now we were close to the water. I leveled my wings and instinctively hauled back on the yoke as we hit. The back pressure on the yoke had no effect on raising the nose of the aircraft. We hit the water paralleling the west shore of the lake in a slightly nose down attitude. The impact didn't seem severe to me, but the nose and windshield were completely enveloped in water.

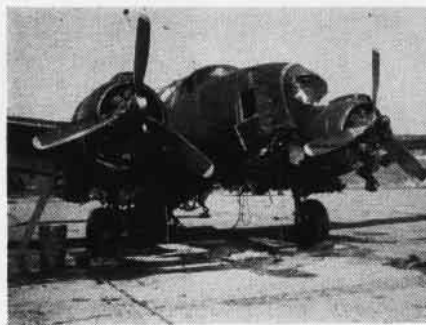
"Upon full impact I noticed my copilot against the windshield with his hands before his face."

After getting out of the plane, the pilots and the two radiomen who were aboard inflated their life jackets. The copilot swam to the raft which was floating after the PV sank. While the others were swimming towards the raft a civilian boat approached and picked up all four. The copilot had suffered a minor concussion due to releasing his



shoulder straps before the final impact, and a radarscope had broken loose causing minor facial injuries to one radioman. Otherwise the crew was uninjured.

After three days of intensive diving and salvage operations the PV was recovered from the bottom of the lake in the condition shown below. Investigation soon revealed the cause of this freak accident. A broken cotter pin had allowed a small nut to back off. This in turn allowed a 1/4 inch bolt to back out of the elevator control rear push-pull rod. The bolt, washer and two pieces of the cotter pin were found in the bilge when the plane was recovered from the bottom of the lake.



Gram paw Pettibone says:

That was some "see-saw" ride that you had. My hat is off to you for the cool and deliberate manner in which you handled this emergency. In a spot like that—one wrong move might have meant a watery grave for you and your crew.

As for the broken cotter pin and missing nut—it's the same old story. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Aviation maintenance is one field where careful workmanship and rigid inspections pay big dividends in lives and planes.

Dead End Street

Here is a story of a naval aviator who paid the piper.

He took off from NAS DENVER on a local familiarization flight and immediately left the local area and proceeded in a NW direction to the vicinity of Estes Park, Colo., where he was seen to make several low passes. He was observed flying up Fall River Canyon, around Sun Dance Mt., down Forest Canyon, then back up Fall River Canyon toward Trail Ridge. At this point witnesses say the FG-1D was in a climbing attitude at about 140 kts. The pilot apparently realized he could not gain sufficient altitude to clear the approaching ridge, so he began a left climbing turn to go back down Fall River Canyon.

Apparently due to a downdraft from the Ridge, the aircraft settled in the turn and struck the face of the steep slope approximately 400 ft. below the top of the 12,000 ft. ridge. The pilot was killed instantly and the aircraft was completely demolished as a result of the impact and the fire that followed the crash. In the opinion of the Accident Board the pilot was flying in an unauthorized area just before the crash; he was conducting unauthorized low flying in mountainous terrain; and he failed to observe ordinary precautions for flying in mountainous terrain.

Gram paw Pettibone says:

This is another one of those tragedies that occur all too frequently. This pilot was evidently enjoying a 13,000 foot roller coaster ride over mountain peaks and ridges until he flew up a one-way canyon that had too little air space.

Give yourself a little margin of safety when flying in this sort of country. Stay away from mountain peaks and ridges, for they have treacherous wind currents and down drafts that are of such strength that they will make any plane as helpless as a piece of paper in a windstorm. If you want to go sightseeing in the mountains, take a bus instead of a Navy airplane.



Slow Response

The series of pictures at the top of the page show a fatal accident in an AD-2 which occurred during the pilot's first day of carrier landing qualification. Prior to the accident he had made five passes and received two cuts and three wave-offs. Two of the wave-offs were given for making the same error which resulted in his death.

In each instance he answered a "high dip" signal by taking off throttle without lowering the nose. On the sixth pass, which is shown above, the landing signal officer picked him up at the 90 degree position with a high signal which the pilot answered by easing throttle and maintaining his attitude. The LSO then gave him a "come-on" followed by a "high dip" as the plane was getting in a dangerously nose high attitude.

When the pilot did not seem to answer these signals, he was given two more "come on's" followed by a "wave-off." At this time the AD-2 was about 150 feet astern of the ship.

The pilot appeared to be a little slow in answering the wave-off. After applying throttle he either started a steep left turn or the torque effect rolled the plane into a steep bank. In any event, as he came over the stern of the ship his port wing scraped the deck in an arc from a spot just forward of the LSO's platform up to the catwalk.

The AD-2 cleared the port side of the ship, rolled over on its back, and crashed about 100 feet off the port quarter. The pilot appeared to have full throttle on at the moment of impact. The plane sank in about 15 seconds without a trace of pilot or wreckage to help potential rescuers.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

I notice from the record that this midshipman had only 28 hours in type at the time this accident occurred. This scant experience coupled with the natural anxiety of a newcomer to the squadron probably had a great deal to do with his failure to answer signals promptly and correctly. Following his two successful landings he was noticed to be slow in answering taxi and flight deck handling signals. Apparently the rush of carrier operations was confusing him and he became more nervous and tense during the wave-offs prior to the accident.

Seems to me somebody should have called this chap on voice radio and explained to him what it was that he was doing wrong. A few words of encouragement and advice might have enabled him to get back aboard safely, after which he could have been grounded pending additional carrier landing practice.

In my opinion pilots, especially those just out of flight training, should have a minimum of 50 hours in type before starting their carrier qualification landings.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

I know that your job is to write about the errors and boners that cause accidents, but did you notice that the Naval Air Reserve Training Program logged a 76 day stretch near the end of the year without a single fatal accident? With close to 10,000 Organized, Associated, and Volunteer pilots participating in this program, I think that's a record worthy of mention. How about it?

Grampaw Pettibone says:

You're darn right it's worthy of mention. The surprising thing is that during the very same period (September 5 to November 19) there were no fatal accidents in the Advanced Training, Basic Training, or Technical Training Com-

mands either. To round out the picture the Marine Corps Reserve training program was also free of fatal accidents.

The folks who keep the flight time records tell me that these various outfits logged close to a quarter of a million hours during that two and a half month period.

Congratulations! Keep up the good work!

Look! It's Free

For a long time I've been wanting to give something away (besides advice) and now I can do it.

One of the bright young lads who work across the hall has compiled all the stories that I've written about the *Corsair* in the last five years into a 35-page illustrated booklet called *Grampaw Pettibone Looks at the Corsair*. It's been published, and they even gave it a nice, long, fancy number: NAVAER 00-80R-21.

By this time every squadron or station that uses F4U's should have received several copies, but just in case anyone got left out, you can get a copy by sending me the coupon below.

Grampaw Pettibone
Naval Aviation News
Navy Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Grampaw:

I want to live to be as old as you are. Please send me a copy of *Grampaw Pettibone Looks at the Corsair*.

Rank _____ Name _____ Corps _____

Address _____

P.S. I promise not to do any flathatting all next year, and I'll keep my shoulder straps tight too.