GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

You Were Indeed!

An F6F-5 pilot who had just made a forced landing ended his statement relative to the accident as follows:

"I believe that my decision to land was justified in that no personal injury was involved and there was only minor damage to personal property and to the aircraft."

Earlier in the day when he picked up the F6F for a ferry flight, the mechanic on the line mentioned that the fuel pump sounded funny. However, it functioned all right on the test hop, and so the odd noise was not corrected.

After departure from NAS ALAMEDA, the fuel pressure was normal for the first half hour or so. Then the pilot noticed a flicker and the needle began to vary between 9 and 16 lbs. With the emergency pump on, it steadied at 18 lbs., but as the engine ran smoothly at the lower pressures, he turned the emergency pump off.

South of Bakersfield the engine began to cut out, but smoothed out as soon as he turned on the emergency fuel pump. He decided to continue on to his destination which was about an hour away and beyond a range of mountains.

Just before reaching the mountains, the engine stopped suddenly. The emergency pump was on, and the pilot turned the gasoline selector to a tank with plenty of fuel. He then checked all circuit breakers on the right hand panel and checked the battery voltage which was indicating 28 volts. The engine had stopped at an altitude of 10,000 feet and by this time he was down 7,000.

Some open alfalfa fields lay below so the pilot decided to make a wheels-up, flaps-down emergency landing. He got an acknowledgment for his "MAYDAY" message from Burbank radio. The landing was fairly smooth and the F6F came to rest approximately 546 feet from the point of touch-down.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Yes, indeed. I agree 100%. When your engine finally quit and you couldn't get it started again and you had that nice alfalfa field right below, I think you were really justified in landing. Of course, if you'd had a sky hook handy, you might have done something else.

What I'm wondering is why you ever took off in the first place without getting that fuel pump checked. Then you had another good chance to land at Coalinga when the pressure first started to fluctuate, and still another opportunity to land as you flew past the airport at Fresno. When you didn't land at Bakersfield after the engine-driven pump gave out altogether, you put your neck right out on the chopping block.

Suppose your engine had quit just a few minutes later when you were over the mountains. Then you would have had just time enough to holler "MAYDAY" and go over the side. The plane would have been a total loss, and we might still be looking for you.

Literally hundreds of pilots have been killed because they took off without correcting a discrepancy or because they failed to land at the first sign of engine trouble.

You were plenty lucky! Next time land at the first indication of trouble. If you wait until your engine conks out entirely, you're likely to become a statistic.

Rivet Popper

On his second high side gunnery run, an aviation cadet found himself in a position where he had to make an extremely steep run in order to stay on the target.

He blacked-out during his initial recovery and when he regained consciousness, his AD-1 was in a nearly vertical dive at 400 knots. He started to ease back on the stick and says: "I thought the plane was going into the water so I pulled as hard as I could. She shuddered, but pulled out. My accelerometer read 10.2 G's after the pull-out. I believe that it was the last hard pull that damaged the wing. I estimate that my altitude on recovery was around 500 feet."

Inspection of the AD-1 after the flight showed that two rows of rivets were pulled out or loosened along the top of the main spar of the starboard wing.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I got to wondering why this fellow didn't black out a second time since he apparently pulled more G's on that last pull when he thought he was going to hit the water than he did on the initial recovery. The flight surgeon tells me that this is easy to explain. He says a blackout takes both G's and time. In other words while a pilot may be able to stand a snap load of 10 G's, he's likely to get blacker than the ace of spades if he holds half that many G's for several seconds.

P. S. By the way, son, I think you ought to write a thank-you letter to the folks that built this plane. You might even suggest that they run off a few copies and put them up on the factory bulletin boards. If that AD-1 hadn't been a good deal stronger than the "Operating Flight Strength Diagram" indicates, you just wouldn't be around these parts!

A Close Call

On a recent high altitude flight, a pilot neglected to turn on the oxygen regulator shut-off valve provided at the inlet to the model 2867-A1 automatic pressure-breathing oxygen regulator. Earlier model oxygen regulators did not have a shut-off valve, but the models now in production have such a valve to prevent leakage when the aircraft is not in use.

Had this pilot carried out the preflight procedure specified in Technical Order 16-50, which requires that the regulator operation be checked by breathing several times with the regulator in both "normal oxygen" and "100% oxygen" positions, he would have discovered his mistake before leaving the ground.

Fortunately, he noticed that the flow indicator did not blink and that the pressure gage read zero in time to descend to a lower altitude where he could safely check his equipment to see what he had forgotten to do.

Don't neglect the ground check of your oxygen equipment. Learn everything you can about the regulator installed in your plane. The few seconds you spend checking this equipment before you take off may save you from a high altitude knock-out from anoxia.

Hey, Wait For Me

The pilot of an F9F made a normal start on the line, completed his ground check, and proceeded to the end of the duty runway. He advanced the throttle and placed the fuel system selector switch in the take-off position. He then dumped the main fuel system pressure by actuating the Fuel System Emergency Check Switch—a normal part of the pre-take-off check.

Apparently the emergency system did not cut in promptly, as there was an immediate loss of RPM and tail pipe temperature indicating to the pilot that a flame-out had occurred.

Just at this instant, the pilot's wingman informed him that the aircraft was on fire and he should get out. The pilot did just that, but states that he feels certain that he put the throttle in the idle cut off position. He did not pull the emergency air brake handle or turn off the master fuel switch.

After running a few feet beyond the port wing tip, he looked back at the plane and stopped running as the flame seemed to have died out. Just then he heard the F9F wind up, and it started to weathercock into the wind and head down the runway.

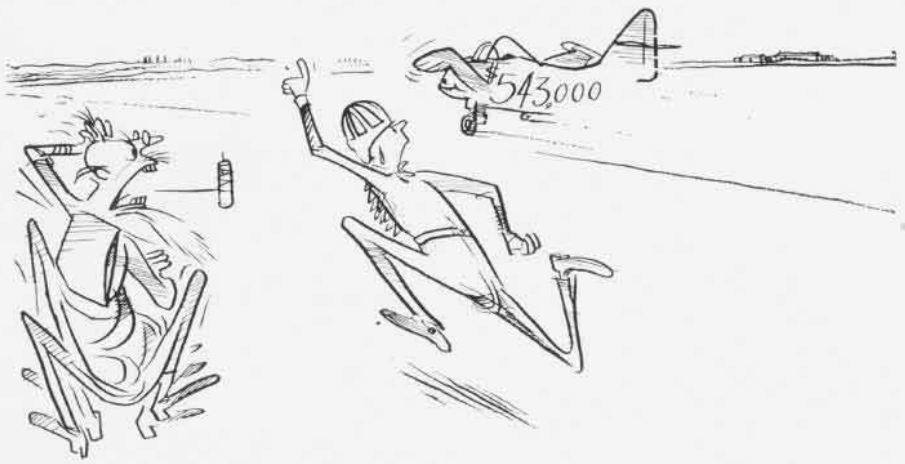
The pilot ran back to the aircraft and attempted to board it, but the access ladder was stowed and he was unable to get into the cockpit. After he had made two attempts, the plane was moving too fast. He let go and rolled under the port wing.

The pilotless F9F accelerated to a speed of approximately 150 knots. The F9F-3 will not become airborne in a three-point attitude, but after a ground run of about 6,000 feet the nose wheel struck a slight rise in the runway and the plane began a very rapid climb. At an estimated altitude of 700 feet, the F9F stalled out of a very nose high attitude and crashed into the bay off the end of the runway.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

The last runaway plane that I remember was a good deal less expensive than this $543,000.00 fighter. If my memory serves me correctly, it was an OY and the pilot hung on for awhile and broke an ankle when he let go.

In this case, the accident board concluded that the primary cause was a failure of the take-off pressure sensing switch. When the rpm reached about 40%, the emergency fuel system cut in and injected too large a quantity of fuel in the combustion chambers for the rpm of the moment. This situation had occurred on two previous occasions during lines checks by squadron maintenance personnel. The ominous fire is the result of pouring too large a quantity of raw fuel into the combustion chamber and the flames shoot out as far as fifty feet astern of the aircraft.



The wingman's transmission that the plane was on fire and the pilot should get out was somewhat misleading. Had he said that there was a large flame coming from the tail pipe, the pilot probably would not have considered the situation so critical and would have taken time to set the brakes and turn off the fuel master switch.

An RUDM has been submitted relative to the defective part, and the squadron is reaffirming the doctrine that the first action to take on indication of a flame-out on the ground is to move immediately the throttle to the idle cut off position and turn off the master fuel switch.

Button—Button Whose Got the Button?

Near the end of a routine test flight in an SNJ-5 which had just gone through overhaul, the pilot shifted the gas selector to Reserve position. For some reason, the selector didn't feel just right. He picked up his mike and asked the passenger in the rear seat to look and see if his selector was on Reserve.

The passenger replied that it wasn't centered and asked if he should place it on Reserve. The pilot answered, "Yes", but the rear seat man didn't hear this transmission as he was holding down the button on his own microphone. He decided that he had better not touch anything until instructed to by the pilot. He continued to hang on to the mike.

At this point the engine quit and a forced landing was made on level stretch of beach. Inspection showed that the fuel selector in the front cockpit had failed because of faulty installation during overhaul.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Too gosh darn many pilots assume that prospective passengers know all the answers. If this passenger had been properly briefed in the use of the interphone, he could have prevented the accident.

Whenever you give someone permission to go along for the ride, it's up to you to make sure that he knows how the interphone system works. You should also spend a minute or two checking to see that he is correctly positioned with shoulder harness and safety belt tight. Tell him to wear his earphones. Then cheer-up the passenger by asking if he knows how to bail-out. Show him where the rip cord is, and explain what items he must disconnect before going over the side.

If he hasn't changed his mind about going for a ride, get yourself all squared away in the front seat and check the operation of the interphone system of your airplane.

Remember there is no law that says you must stay with an uncontrollable plane just because the fellow in the rear seat stays put when you give the order to "bail-out". There's also no cure for the feeling that a pilot has when he jumps and learns later that the fellow in the rear seat didn't get out.

Play it safe. Make sure that the fellow in the rear seat has the word before you ever leave the line.

TAKE CARE OF THOSE PEEPERS

In the United States there are 11 companies that manufacture glass eyes. They turn out bushels of them—grey ones, brown ones, blue ones, but you can't see a thing through any of them.

With all the money in the world, you can't buy one good eye!

Right now your eyes are just about perfect or you wouldn't be flying Navy planes. Try shutting your eyes real tight for 15 seconds. How would you like to see black, to grope around in eternal darkness for life?

Protect your eyes by wearing goggles and by having your shoulder straps snug, so that you won't slam into the forward part of the cockpit in the event of an accident.

Take care of those peepers—you can't buy replacements!