



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Booby Trap Dept.

With 41,000 accident records in the files, it is easy to think that you "heard everything". Two accidents last month, however, prove that there's no end to the ways in which folks can smash up high priced planes.

Both fall into the "booby trap" category and in each case the fault lay not with the pilot but with the carrier flight deck personnel:

Case #1

Pilot of an AD-3Q was engaged in night carrier qualification landings. As he came around for his third landing, another plane was being taken to the hangar deck via the forward elevator. The AD-3Q made a nice landing and was taxied up to the take-off spot just forward of the barrier. At this point, it was turned over to FLY ONE where the turn up and launch signal was given. When the plane was about 50 feet from the forward elevator, the pilot noticed the light from the hangar deck and realized that the forward elevator was not fully up. He attempted to pull the plane off the deck in order to clear the stanchions.

The AD became airborne but hit the guard rail around the elevator. This slowed the plane to a point where it started a nose high roll to the left. The ensign at the control had sufficient presence of mind to retard throttle and get the nose down to pick up some airspeed. He hit the water in a flat wing-level attitude just forward of the carrier.

The pilot made good use of his life jacket, signal flares, and the red light on his life jacket. He was picked up by a whale boat from the plane guard destroyer a few minutes later.

Investigation revealed that the FLY ONE officer had been at flight deck quarters since 0600 and was undoubtedly fatigued beyond the point of proper reaction. The forward traffic signal light, moreover, was left on "GREEN" when the forward elevator was lowered.

Case #2

Believe it or not this one occurred in broad daylight!

The pilot of an F4U-4 had completed two carrier qualification landings and expected to be taken down the number two elevator in accordance with previous briefing. At this time the two planes which had landed immediately before



were being spotted on the port and starboard catapults.

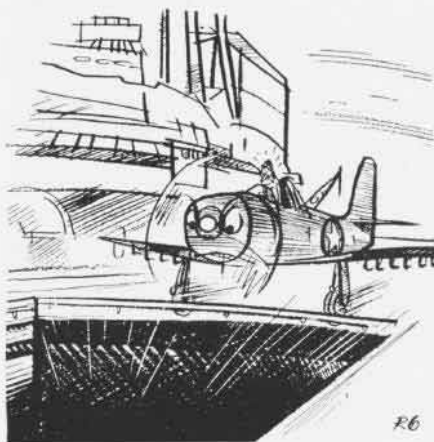
As the F4U-4 taxied forward out of the arresting gear, the pilot raised flaps and began to fold his wings. However as he crossed the barriers, FLY TWO gave the signal to unfold wings. After glancing at a PRIMARY FLY, FLY TWO then gave the flaps down signal, followed by the turn-up signal. The pilot indicated that he was ready, after which he was given the launching signal.

The F4U started down the deck, and the pilot's first indication of danger came when he saw numerous members of the flight deck crew scampering for the catwalks. As the tail came up he saw the two planes on the port and starboard catapults, and hit the brakes.

The F4U skidded from the 275-foot position to the 160 foot position where it crashed between and into the two planes on the catapults.

All three F4U's were severely damaged and will require major overhauls. Fortunately no one was injured.

This accident occurred on the first day



of flight operations following the recommissioning of the carrier. It was caused by haste and inexperience on the part of the flight deck personnel. FLY TWO apparently launched the aircraft without visually checking the forward deck. Neither bull horn, yodel, or radio was employed by PRIMARY FLY to warn pilot and deck crew of impending danger.

Mighty Sharp

A couple of months ago I wrote about two cases where pilots had engine failures at high altitudes right over their home fields and were unsuccessful in gliding to a dead stick landing within the airfield boundaries.

Here's a recent instance which did not result in an accident and is interesting because almost everyone involved did the right thing and did it so expeditiously.

The engine failure occurred in an F6F-5 during a high altitude test flight. Here's the pilots description of what happened:

"The take off and climbout were normal and all instruments indicated normal readings except that the cylinder head temperature was a little high although no difficulty was experienced keeping the temperature within limits. Shortly after passing 20,000 feet, without any warning, the engine began to vibrate severely.

I immediately reduced throttle setting and shifted to neutral blower. This had no effect on the vibration, so I put the propeller control in full decrease RPM. About this time large quantities of white smoke began coming out of the engine cowling. Fearing fire, I put the mixture control in idle cut off, turned off the ignition, and turned off the gas. I then broadcast *Mayday*, and told NAS PENSACOLA tower of my trouble.

I had slowed the plane to 100 knots, trying to slow the windmilling of the propeller to reduce vibration, but the vibration increased to the point that I feared the engine mounts or aircraft structure might fail. I called the tower and told them I might have to abandon the plane.

After a time, the vibration did not seem to increase so I decided to ride the plane down. This was at about 12,000 feet. I then called the tower of my intentions and asked them to relay to Barin Field runway portable a message asking them to clear the field of FCLP. At 4000 feet east of the field, the tower told me that Barin had been notified.

I was staying fairly close to the field so that I could make a choice of runways. At 4000 feet, I put the gear down and continued

my glide close aboard. At 1200 feet, I was north of the field, about 90 degrees from runway 18, west field, and as I could see planes in the FCLP pattern, decided to use this runway to be able to keep these planes in sight. I started my turn in toward the runway and lowered by flaps.

At this point, I figured I was 2000 feet from the runway and in a good position to hit the runway. I maintained a 90-knot glide and as I neared the field boundary, started flaring out. I touched down about 100 yards down the runway and was completely stopped about halfway down. I then checked the cockpit again to see that everything was secured and got out of the plane. The search and rescue PBY-5A and helicopter landed within 30 seconds after I crawled from the cockpit."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

An observer who listened to the radio transmissions during this emergency tells me that the thing that impressed him most about this show was the calm way in which the pilot described his troubles and his descent. He says, "The pilot sounded as if he were a disinterested observer sitting off to one side and passing on the word."

Alert tower operators at the fields where the SAR planes are based caught the *Mayday* and started the ball rolling immediately. The helicopter was on its way in less than three minutes and the lumbering PBY was right behind. The PBY was at the scene by the time the F6F-5 was down to 7000 feet, and the helicopter got there at about the same time.

The only hitch in the whole performance was the fact that the SNJ's in the FCLP pattern didn't get the word to clear the landing pattern. However, the F6F came in crosswind right after one SNJ had taken off and another SNJ in the final got the word from the runway duty officer in time to take a wave-off.

Use Guard Frequency

Not long ago an F8F pilot had an engine failure on the plane's first flight after coming out of overhaul. The pilot was at an altitude of 3000 feet close to the field, and he should have had little trouble in making a dead stick landing.

He did not shift to guard frequency to notify the tower of his troubles. The pilot's emergency call was blocked by the tower's own transmissions to other aircraft, and therefore the field was not cleared for the emergency.

When the pilot saw that the service runway was not being cleared for him to land, he continued around hoping to land on the next runway. As he approached this runway an SNJ taxied onto it. The pilot finally had to land in soft ground parallel to the runway.

The landing gear was sheared off, the left wing panel severely damaged and the skin on the bottom of the fuselage and left stub wing was ripped in several places. The engine mount, cowling, and propeller were also damaged.

In short, the F8F was ready to go right back in for another major overhaul.

In all probability a successful dead stick landing could have been made on the service runway if the pilot had declared himself on proper channel.

When you're in serious trouble, use the guard channel to be sure of getting your message through.



Who Stacked the Deck?

If you look closely you can see that this *Corsair* has snagged a wire although the pilot is trying to take a wave-off. The plane went on over the side and hit with full power. The pilot crawled out with a bruised knee and was picked up seconds later by the plane guard.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

There's more to this accident than meets the eye. Of course, the pilot erred when he anticipated a cut and took off some power only to realize that he was getting a wave-off.

However, the accident board notes that due to a combination of circumstances this pilot had not been given any FCLP during the week prior to his initial qualification aboard the carrier. He lost a couple of these days in transit, and a couple more when he was confined with the flu.

The carrier was heading into the early morning sun at the time the qualification exercises began. The plane just ahead of this F4U blew a tire on a hard landing and the other planes in the pattern circled until the deck was clear.

As he approached the ramp, the pilot had difficulty seeing the Landing Signal Officer. In an attempt to get a better view he extended his head outside the cockpit. This probably caused him to lower his left wing and add more right rudder, which set up a skid to the left. At the same time the pilot eased off throttle which resulted in the airplane settling at the ramp. The pilot was given agitated come-on signals, a low close to the ramp, immediately followed by a wave-off. He appeared to take off some power and then add full throttle. The hook caught number 3 wire.

I think the cards were stacked in favor of this accident before it happened.

"Here lie the bones of old friend Joe
Started his pull-out a shade too low.
He used to get a lot of hits,
But now he's in such little bits."

Hey, Ma, Get Me Out

If your folks happened to live right next door to a 2600-foot landing strip, and you just happened to make a little 100-mile detour that put you right over it, you too would be tempted. In fact, you might even convince yourself that your engine sounded a little rough and that you ought to land and tighten a spark plug or two.

This combination of circumstances appears to have been the undoing of a youthful reserve pilot the other day. Having yielded to temptation, he inadvertently landed down-wind on the last half of the strip. When he ran out of runway, the F8F flipped over on its back.

The hero of this episode must have looked rather unhappy while his friends dug him out. Thanks to shoulder harness and a protective helmet, he was uninjured.

He is currently scheduled to appear before a Naval Aviator's Disposition Board.



A Costly Short Cut

At 0900 one morning an F4U-4 was de-gassed preparatory to installing a new emergency fuel pump. At 0930 the plane was towed into the hangar and the old emergency pump was removed. The hole in the fuel cell was left open.

Twenty minutes later two mechanics assigned to the job soldered the leads of a new pump to the detachable end of the cannon plug and proceeded to test the new pump before completing the installation.

The battery switch and fuel selector valves were turned on and the fuel pump switch placed in the "emergency" position. The mechanic observing the pump then called to the man in the cockpit to place the fuel pump switch in the "boost" position.

When this was done, an immediate explosion and flash fire took place. The clothing of the mechanic under the plane was ignited and he suffered very painful burns.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Had either of two recommended safety procedures been followed, this accident would not have occurred. No doubt these men were anxious to complete the job and get the plane back in the air with a minimum delay, but the new pump should have been bench checked prior to installation. Had this been done the short circuit that set off the fire would have been discovered.

Also, if the gas tank in which the new pump was being installed had been purged properly with CO₂, the explosion and fire would not have occurred.