



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## A Missing Wrench!

A student pilot in an F8F-1 completed three slow rolls in each direction during an authorized period of acrobatic practice. He then executed another slow roll to the left. The F8F ended this roll in a slightly nose high attitude with the left wing down and *with the ailerons locked.*

Unable to move the stick sideways, the pilot found that he could keep the left wing up fairly well by using right rudder. He informed his instructor of his difficulty and was told to test the plane's handling characteristics at 8000 feet.

With wheels and flaps down, he found that he could control the plane by using an excessive amount of right rudder, and that he could take a wave-off only if he advanced the throttle very slowly. He decided to attempt a straight-in approach to runway eight at Cabanis Field.

During the return to the field, the tower was notified of the emergency, and the pilot was instructed to try moving the stick fore and aft with rapid movements in an attempt to break the ailerons loose. (This advice was based on the assumption that some foreign article had become lodged against the aileron controls and might be shaken out.) The pilot tried this but reported that he was still unable to get any side motion.

About two miles from the field while at 3000 feet, the pilot slowed the plane to 140 knots and lowered his landing gear. Additional right rudder was required to hold the plane level. A slow let down with about 20-22 inches of manifold pressure was started.

At an altitude of 400 feet and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the field, the pilot was instructed by the tower to hold altitude. He added a little more throttle. The added torque caused the left wing to drop to such a degree that it could not be held up by rudder pressure. The plane was also skidding to the right of the runway heading. The pilot realized that he would have to reduce power and land short of the field.

He heard the tower tell him to raise his wheels but was too busy at that moment to reach for the gear handle. The F8F slipped into the ground on the left wing while turning slightly to the right. The wing tip hit first followed by the left landing gear which broke on con-



tact with the plowed surface. After sliding for about 120 yards on the right gear and left wing, the plane nosed up. The pilot was wearing a protective helmet and his shoulder straps and safety belt were tight. He was not injured.

Subsequent investigation revealed that an open-end wrench, 12½ inches long, had been left in the starboard wing center section when a landing gear rework had been performed by O&R personnel a week earlier.

Indentations and scratches on the aileron push rod assembly showed that this wrench was the cause of the jam.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

So the surgeon carefully closed the incision, leaving just one large pair of forceps inside the patient!

Jeeppers, you'd think that a mechanic would miss something as big as a 12" wrench. This particular tool had been especially fabricated by the O&R to accomplish the removal and installation of the F8F-1 landing gear trunion assembly at the attaching bolt in the wing center section. Had the mechanic counted his tools, this would have given him a mighty good clue as to where to start looking for the missing wrench.

Maybe he thought that it would be easier just to order a replacement! When you make any repairs to an airplane, someone's life depends on the quality of your work. You've got to be a perfectionist. When you're satisfied that you've done the job exactly right, count your tools before you sew up the patient.

## Pump Brakes Before Landing

Recently the pilot of an AF-2W returned from an instrument flight and made a normal landing and roll-out. He applied port brake to turn off at a taxi strip, and a second later applied starboard brake to slow his rate of turn. He discovered that he could obtain no braking action on the right wheel either by pumping the brake or by a steady pressure. By this time he was on a collision

course with some parked aircraft, and therefore intentionally groundlooped his plane to the left. At the completion of a 270° arc, the starboard elevator of the AF-2W engaged the folded right wing of one of the parked planes.

When the pilot climbed out of this plane to see what damage had occurred, he noticed a pool of hydraulic fluid had formed at the right wheel and found fluid dripping from the wing aft of the wheel well. Immediately prior to this flight a new starboard brake assembly had been installed. The universal attachment fitting which attaches the brake line to the brake had evidently come loose in flight. This fitting has given some previous trouble and an RUDM has been submitted.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This fellow used his head when he discovered that he had no right brake. By groundlooping to the left he avoided a head on collision with a group of parked planes.

However, there's a lesson for all pilots in this accident. Had the pilot tested his brakes while in the landing circle, he would have noticed that he had no pressure on the starboard brake. He could then have planned his landing and roll out so as to avoid a congested area.

Get in the habit of pumping your brakes a bit just before landing. It doesn't cost anything, takes only a second, and it may prevent a serious collision.

## Congratulations to VF-194

Fighter Squadron 194 is the proud possessor of the ComAirPac VF Safety Award for the third quarter of fiscal 1950. From 1 January to 31 March of this year 5115 accident-free hours were flown in F4U-4 and AD-type aircraft. The squadron has since had another quarter without mishap.

A total of 8987.6 hours including 443 carrier landings on the USS *Sicily* (CVE 118) were flown between 1 January and 1 July. The record was established in a period when the type aircraft was changed from *Corsairs* to *Sky-raidors*, with no change of maintenance personnel.



Rest in Peace  
Young Ensign Sneed  
Dive brakes would  
Have cut your speed.  
You really were  
A darn good flier  
Too bad you didn't  
Pull out higher.

## Cranial Concussions

The crew of a P4M-1 got a rough jolting in a recent near accident. The plane was being used for instrument instruction and the instructor looked up from the instruments to see a TBM approaching on a head-on collision course. Closing speed was estimated at better than 300 knots, so the instructor in the P4M-1 grabbed the yoke and pushed forward, diving beneath the TBM with only a few feet of separation.

The sudden pushover threw everyone in the plane against the overhead except the pilots who had their safety belts and shoulder harness fastened. Two of the nine crewmembers were hospitalized with the diagnosis "cranial concussion".

Evidently the TBM pilot did not see the P4M-1 as he made no alteration of course to avoid the collision. The incident happened so suddenly that no one was able to get the number of the TBM. The engineering department made a very thorough check of the P4M-1 upon return but reported that there was no damage to the plane.



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

The visibility was so good on the day that this happened that the instructor decided that a bow turret lookout was unnecessary. I'll bet that he uses a forward lookout from now on.

Incidentally, the squadron lookout-doctrine was revised as a result of this near mid-air collision. It was determined that the best position for a forward lookout was a position standing between the two pilots. This affords slightly better visibility than is available in the bow turret.

## The Powerful Panther

During recent qualification exercises aboard the USS Essex an F9F-2 defied all the accepted basic principles of flight and performed a feat that would win a bet from any aircraft designer.

The pilot made a normal approach, took the cut, and pulled his nose up slightly before easing over towards this deck. The resulting rapid rate of descent caused a slightly hard landing, and the

plane failed to catch a wire. Instead of holding the nose of the F9F down so that it would go into the barriers, the pilot lifted the plane to a flying attitude and it became airborne.

As soon as he realized that he was flying, the pilot applied full power. By this time, however, he was low enough for his hook to engage the nylon tape of the Davis barrier and carry it away. Part of the tape wrapped itself around the hook.

Forward of the barrier one F9F was being taken below on the #1 elevator and another was waiting for taxi instructions to the port catapult.

The pilot who had taken the wave-off saw that he was about to hit the parked plane and pulled back on the stick. His attitude was so nose high that he settled and crashed into the other plane. His starboard wing tore off the vertical stabilizer, while his starboard gear dragged through the after part of the fuselage. His port wheel hit the canopy and was sheared off by the armor plate.

Miraculously the pilot of the parked plane was uninjured. He was sitting with his seat all the way down. The canopy was smashed all around him and the armor plate had absorbed a gash nine inches long and half an inch deep.

The other F9F continued on over the bow and leveled off inches above the wave tops. With the barrier tape dragging in the water and the jet blast leaving a noticeable wake, the pilot was able to effect a recovery.

The ship was 90 miles from the beach and there was some question as to whether the pilot had sufficient fuel to get there, especially since he was unable to retract what was left of his landing gear and flaps. Consequently he was ordered to make another pass and land on board. This time the deck was cleared of all planes and a line of mules and tractors was set across the flight deck just forward of the barriers.

**YOU AIN'T HEARD NOTHING YET!**

On this pass the pilot was slightly fast

because part of his flaps and his port wheel had been carried away on the first landing attempt. He took a cut and eased the nose over. The plane made a reasonably satisfactory landing on the starboard wheel, nose wheel and port tip tank.

The hook did not pick up a wire nor did it drop the fouled tape. Once more the pilot pulled back on the stick and became airborne. This time what was left of the gear and the hook missed the barriers, and the pilot applied full power. The F9F then settled into the line of mules, loosing his nose wheel and starboard landing gear on this impact. This slowed the plane enough to make it settle to the deck on its belly.

The plane skidded up the deck for about 300 feet and then off the bow. This contact with the deck tore off the remaining flap and damaged the tip tanks and the underside of the fuselage. It did not kill the airspeed, however, and the pilot made a recovery before hitting the water.

While the ship was trying to decide what to do next, the pilot called this masterpiece of understatement over the radio: "THIS IS BECOMING A RATHER RUGGED FLIGHT!"

The pilot was ordered to try to make it to the beach and an escort was launched to fly his wing. About 20 miles from the beach he ran out of gas and had to ditch. The pilot was picked up uninjured by a nearby destroyer which took him to port.



*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

Don't say it can't happen. They sent pictures to prove it.

The cost of this unusual "performance test" was slightly over a million dollars, and I hear by the grapevine that the pilot has decided that he is in the wrong racket and doesn't give a hoot about ever trying another carrier landing.

The lad who was sitting in the parked plane is said to be a full two inches shorter than he used to be . . . seems that he shrivels-up a little bit more each time he thinks of what a close call he had.

