GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Unpremeditated Crashes

Back in the old days, they used to say that every landing you could walk away from was a good landing. That was in the days of short runways, dirt fields, and aircraft with built-in ground-loops. As the speed of aircraft increased, so did the length of the runways. But it seems that somewhere along the line we forgot to tell a few pilots that the same care must be exercised in getting the new "heap" on the deck as with the old.

Runways have been lengthened only in proportion to the landing rollout required with a Dilbert factor thrown in for safety. The following cases show that even the Dilbert factor isn't enough.

Case #1—An F9F-2 pilot touched down 2500 feet down an 8000-foot runway. Brakes were applied without the desired results, so the pilot used the emergency braking system. Only the right brake locked, causing the aircraft to swerve off the runway, run up a slight incline, and pile up against a sand hill.

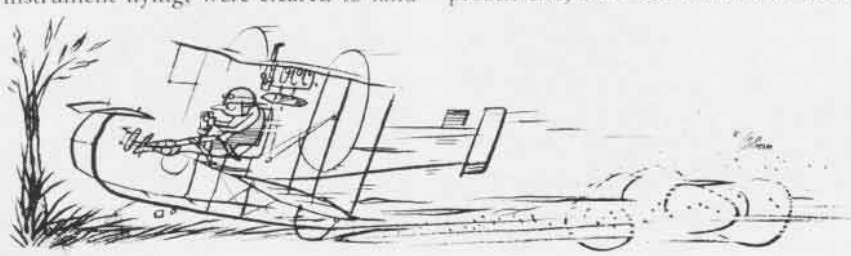
Case #2—A P2V-5 pilot touched down an estimated 800 to 1000 feet down a 7500-foot runway. After a 4000-foot runout, the pilot attempted to reverse props, but didn't succeed. A burst of positive thrust was used to maintain directional control. About 1500 feet from the end of the runway, emergency brake was applied, but there was little braking action because of ice and water on the runway. The aircraft left the runway straight ahead and climbed 225 feet up a 25 percent grade.

Case #3—Two F9F-5 pilots, practicing instrument flying, were cleared to land

on a runway 4233 feet long. The weather was 800 feet overcast, 2 miles visibility, with rain and fog. The wind was 20 knots from 70 degrees starboard. The first aircraft touched down near the approach end of the runway and the pilot commenced braking immediately.

Braking action was poor, so 1000 feet before reaching the end he used the emergency braking system. The aircraft slid off the end of the runway 250 feet into a ditch 10 feet deep. The second aircraft managed to stop a few feet short of the end of the runway. Both aircraft had 2600 pounds of fuel aboard.

Case #4—An F3D pilot lost one engine after take-off. With 700 feet of altitude, 170 knots airspeed he immediately turned back to the field and lined up on a runway 6180 feet long. There was a cross wind of six knots. With practically a full fuel load, he touched down 2500 feet past the approach end, blew both tires from excessive braking, and wound up 335 feet into the boondocks.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Fortunately, all of these lads were able to walk away from the landings. They all had one statement in common, "I was a little fast on the final, but touchdown was normal."

This reminds me of a statement a fella made once after groundlooping. "Everything was OK until the wind picked up the right wing."

In other words, the situation is normal until it becomes all fouled up. It seems to catch pilots unaware and no one is more surprised than the pilots themselves. About the time our four throttle benders above were patting themselves on the back for the fine way they greased their machines on the deck, someone pulled the runway out from under them.

Not one of them analyzed his own accident and offered the suggestion that maybe this wouldn't have happened if he had planned the landing. Length and condition of the runway, velocity and direction of the wind, and a realization that the fuel state may affect the landing rollout should all have been known upon

reaching the "break", but in these cases the knowledge was forcibly driven home after touchdown.

Obviously, they should have taken a wave-off when they realized their speed was excessive. But that's like telling a pilot his gear should have been down after he lands wheels up. It's a lead-pipe cinch that such words of wisdom are not going to lower the landing accident rate. My old hemoglobin really gets agitated every time I read about one of these accidents. When I get to the part where the Board recommends that the accident report be brought to the attention of all pilots, I reach for the Empirin bottle and a black cigar.

How many of you lads find you no longer give any serious thought to getting your aircraft safely on the deck? You used to reach the point where you were committed to a landing and the question—"What did I forget?"—flickered

in your mind. Since time did not permit an answer, off came the throttle and you set her down. If you got away with it, you didn't give it a second thought. You developed a habit of not looking for trouble.

Once in a while, you made a hairy landing, but quick thinking or spontaneous action salvaged it. You developed confidence in your ability. You began to look with contempt on the dumb yokels who couldn't set 'em down in one piece. It couldn't happen to you!

Well, let me clue you. If you've reached that stage, you are flying in a capsule. You've built around yourselves an invisible barrier that can't be penetrated by warnings of danger. Even when you're in a tight situation, you refuse to believe it and count on Lady Luck to see you through.

Whether you know it or not, you've become a candidate for membership in the Boneyard Blunderheads, an exclusive club reserved for automatic pilots and aviators with inadvertent reflexes. Maybe it won't happen tomorrow or even next month, but you can rest assured it *will* happen unless you take hold of yourselves and decide that every landing will be premeditated. My advice is to know your plan of action by the time you reach the "break" and concentrate right down to the chocks.

All for lack of concentratin'
No one gains exceptin' Satan.

When Right Was Wrong

A pilot from the Naval Parachute Unit took off in an F3D on a flight to drop test two dummies at high speed. Accompanying him for the purpose of photographing the tests was a TV-2. The two aircraft, having attained sufficient altitude, commenced the first "drop" run.

As the TV-2 crossed under in a turn following the release of the first dummy, the pilot noticed that the cowling of the port engine of the F3D had torn away and that the engine was streaming fuel. He immediately informed the pilot of the F3D of the situation, but said it was the *starboard* engine.

The starboard engine was duly secured and the pilot beat a hasty retreat back to base for an emergency landing. The landing was uneventful and the aircraft was stopped in the vicinity of the fire trucks.

The fire chief and crew inspected the starboard engine for gas leaks and gave the pilot a "thumbs up" signal. The pilot added throttle to taxi back to the line and the port engine blew up. He then decided it was about time to secure the plane, so he turned off the

battery switch and pulled all the circuit breakers, after which he made an exit.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Say now, that's really using the noggin'! There's nothing like securing an airplane when there's a chance of a fire. It's too gosh durned bad he didn't have sense enough to do it after he found himself safe on the deck. Any pilot who makes an emergency landing for *any* reason and doesn't secure his aircraft as soon as he is safely stopped is just asking for it. It oughta be squadron doctrine to do just that.

But let's get back to the seat of the trouble. I'll admit I was a little confused as to what really happened on that first run. I'm still not convinced that there wasn't a switch pulled somewhere along the line and it was actually the TV-2 pilot who was dropped. I just can't visualize any normal pilot mistaking starboard for port or vice versa.

Maybe he got so excited he got disoriented, but it seems to me that in cases of emergency, especially when it happens to the other guy, the first thing to do is remain cool, calm, and collected. You're not going to lessen the seriousness of the situation by losing your head and calling the wrong signals.

Just remember that the poor guy having the emergency puts complete faith in you. You are outside looking in and your knowledge and experience may be the balance between life and death for him. Give him a fighting chance, will you? You'll be able to live with yourself.

You Be The Judge

I've been tugging on my beard for a long time trying to figure out why we keep having the same type accidents over and over again. One would think that the words of wisdom, advanced by investigating officers and those in the know up through the chain-of-command, would adequately solve the problems of accident prevention, if implemented. The following excerpts from investigative reports and forwarding endorsements have me convinced that there is more to this business than meets the eye:

- This is the fourth accident this pilot has had in three months. The first two were spin-stall and the third a forced landing. In the future we will keep him under close surveillance to determine whether or not he is accident prone.
- The primary aim of every landing is to stop.
- Take a wave-off before touchdown when the landing cannot be safely executed.
- After the "cut" the landing is entirely in the pilot's hands and a normal landing should be made.
- The pilot made a normal carrier landing and the starboard wheel collapsed.
- The approach was normal until after the "cut".
- The pilot received a good "cut".
- LSO's must give signals slowly and distinctly in order to give the pilot time to react and take proper action.
- After the "cut" the pilot was slow in taking off his power. The aircraft was held off but a good landing was accomplished far up the deck on the centerline. The arresting gear engaged number eight cross deck pendant. The aircraft engaged number two barrier.
- It appears that the pilot was more concerned about the movement of his landing platform than he was in landing on it.
- In view of the narrow margin for error on a CVE, each landing must be the nicest possible.
- Blaming this accident on the poor old Mark 4 arresting gear is like kicking a man when he is down.
- Maintain balanced flight at marginal airspeeds.
- The snow bank came in contact with the flap.