



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

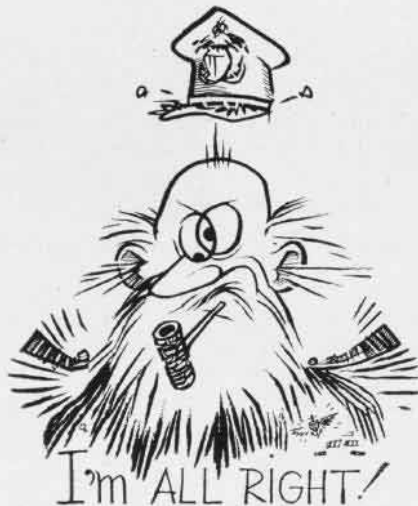
This Is It

Thousands of accidents each year are caused by pilots who make a simple error in judgment or technique. Hundreds more are the result of a combination of two or three errors or actual negligence in carrying out orders. Volumes of literature have been written, covering every possible flight violation and the do's and don'ts of naval aviation, in an attempt to lower the accident rate.

Just how effective the written word is can be attested to by the pilots who know how to read and who have a sincere desire to carry out the responsibilities incumbent with the wearing of the wings of gold. One of the prime responsibilities is maintaining a whole skin, not to mention the equally important duty of preserving expensive equipment. It's a tough grind, and pilots will dope off now and then.

Few of them can truthfully say that every flight is routine and that they never had a "close" one. Some even allow themselves the extravagance of making half a dozen errors during one flight, but, somewhere in the back of their minds, a warning horn blows and they quickly take hold of themselves and avert disaster.

The ones we read about are the ones who allow error after error to pile up, disregard the warning horn if it does blow, and wind up behind the eight-ball. It is inconceivable for an experienced pilot to allow himself to make six gross errors without doing some-



thing about it. It is impossible for an experienced pilot to make an even dozen gross errors and live to tell about it.

In this day of push-button warfare, hydrogen bombs, and vertical take-offs, even the impossible is relegated into nothingness and the laws of Nature take the course of the "Old Soldier." The following tale, unbelievable as it is, will show that nothing is impossible.

A pilot, three co-pilots, and an enlisted passenger departed Anacostia on a training day and night navigation flight to Binghamton, New York, in an SNB-5. The clearance was to destination and return after dark with no intermediate stops. For some undisclosed reason, the pilot elected to continue on to Flint, Mich., probably to use up the remaining daylight.

The aircraft had been refueled at Binghamton, but was not refueled at Flint. This meant a flight of 772 miles with two take-offs.

They departed Flint at sunset with a VFR clearance to Anacostia. The flight was uneventful past Grosse Isle, past Cleveland, past Akron, past Pittsburgh, and past Martinsburg with one exception—they flew in and out of clouds. This is the pilot's statement:

"When we passed what I thought was Martinsburg, I still had 0.4 of the left tank remaining, but about 15 minutes later, not sure of our exact position, I decided there was not enough gas to reach Washington. I had not stopped at any of the numerous fields along the way to refuel the plane.

"I did not do the navigating and neither did I check adequately on the navigation to know accurately the ETA for Anacostia. We did not make up or keep flight logs on gas consumption, ground speed, true air speed, ETE, or magnetic headings.

"I turned to go back to Martinsburg and asked Martinsburg Radio to have the field lighted. However, I sighted a city which I thought was Martinsburg as I came out of my turn to reverse course and I headed for it. I had Martinsburg on the radio compass and it showed the station to be 60° to the right of my heading, but I thought that was correct for the way I was approaching the lights of the city which turned out to be Winchester, Va. The airport there and also the one at Front Royal were dark, and I was unable to find them.

"As I came over Front Royal, I saw a long parking lot near a factory with cars only at one end. I decided to try landing there while I still had power. We were indicating 1200 feet by radio altimeter, so I asked the passengers if they'd like to bail out.

"No one made a move so I proceeded with the landing. When I got to the downwind leg, I saw the lot



was so short I would pile into a bunch of cars. However, there was a houseless area parallel to the lot that was long enough, so I came around with enough altitude to get into this space. I turned on my landing lights and put the gear down.

"When I was sure I could make it, I cut the throttles and slipped off excess altitude. The landing was effected with a minimum of damage to civilian property. However, I first hit and cut some telephone wires, next we mushed through a tree which sheared the right wing at the engine nacelle. The plane then settled to a stop about halfway down this clearing about 100 feet in back of a house. All passengers and the co-pilot got out as soon as it came to rest, and I got out after securing all switches." The following are excerpts from the passengers' statements:

"At 1910 we arrived at what we thought was NAS ANACOSTIA and determined that it was not, so we made a 180° and then tried to contact Martinsburg for a beacon signal in order to orientate ourselves. At this point, fuel exhaustion was apparent so we had no alternative but to make a forced landing."

"It was believed by all that we could safely land at Pittsburgh and refuel. This, unfortunately, was not done."

"The search for an airfield was in vain. The pilot said that we had had it and to bail out if we desired."

"I believe that the personnel injury was minimized because of the skillful handling of the aircraft and choice of landing area by the pilot."

"I knew we were low on gas . . . I had asked the pilot to stop at Pittsburgh and fuel up but he stated that he had plenty of fuel to go into Washington, D. C. Shortly after this, everything was in confusion . . . the pilot seemed lost . . . he turned back."

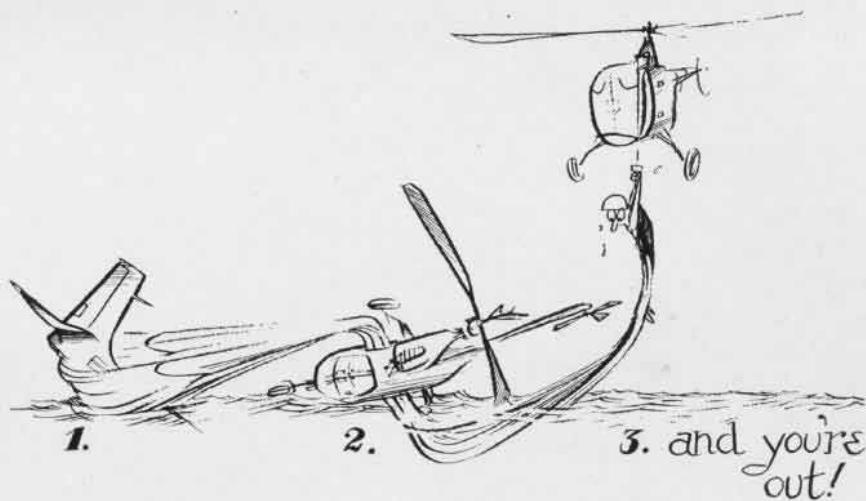
"The pilot told us to bail out if we wanted to. I prepared to do so, but the pilot lost altitude and he said we were going in."

"I was a flight order man and was just a crew member. I escaped with minor bruises, just a little shook up, but thankful to God to be alive."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Amen! Amen! Amen!



Double Jeopardy

An F2H-2 pilot was spotted on the starboard catapult in preparation for a launch. The pilot started his engine, performed his cockpit check and was given full power turn-up signal. Immediately after the catapult shot commenced, the port tip tank dropped off. The plane swerved to port and starboard.

It continued over the starboard side of the ship, striking the water in a nose-down vertical attitude and disappeared from sight. It resurfaced a few seconds later, and the pilot escaped from the cockpit before the plane sank.

The rescue helicopter reached the spot almost immediately and lowered the sling. The pilot was recovered, parachute and all. He says:

"I was very tired from swimming and had barely gotten inside the helicopter and was lying on the floor when I realized we were in the water again. I still had the sling around my waist. The rescue pilot yelled for me to get out of the sling, which I did.

"He went out the starboard side forward as the fuselage was lying on its port side. My left foot was caught in the trap door on the bottom of the helicopter. I shouted that my left foot was caught and, at the same time, I kicked the door out with my other foot. My foot free, I made my way up through the forward door. The fuselage was then sinking.

"I was about half way out of the door when the chute I had on got caught on something. I held my breath and managed to get out of the chute and swim clear of the rotor blades. My

Mae West wouldn't inflate, so I hung on to the crewman until a second helicopter pulled us out of the water. I think if I had taken more time to remove my chute and inflate my Mae West orally when I first went in, it might have saved us all trouble."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I'll buy that, bub. You might mention too that getting clear of the F2H cockpit was no doubt aided and abetted by the fact that your oxygen mask was on and you were breathing 100 percent oxygen.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

I appeal to you as a last resort in preventing our species from becoming extinct. Time and time again our cousins are flying around minding their own business when out of nowhere one of your infernal flying machines appears and wipes out some unsuspecting members of our species.

Can't you do *anything* about it?

Chief Turkey Buzzard
Miami Detachment



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

My sympathy to you and yours,
You've posed a ticklish question.
On this I've talked until I'm blue
And I'm open to suggestion.

The written word seems not enough,
At this you well may wonder,
Some pilots fly with eye-balls caged
Around the wild blue blunder.

So my advice to you, my friend,
In this dangerous game of tag,
Is to have the BIRDS uncage their heads
And zig instead of zag.