



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Is This Trip Necessary?

A flight of three F2H-2-type aircraft took off from Cecil Field on an instrument navigation flight to Glenview. The flight was cleared to cruise at 30,000 feet. Estimated time en route was two hours and five minutes, fuel remaining at destination estimated as forty minutes. The weather forecast for destination plus two hours was 2,000 feet broken, two miles with smoke and snow.

The flight was uneventful until Approach Control at O'Hare was contacted for a jet penetration to Glenview. All three aircraft had experienced intermittent radio difficulty during the flight, so the flight leader decided to make the penetration in formation.

Dropping speed brakes and wheels, they commenced a letdown. O'Hare Approach Control called and asked if they could make the approach to O'Hare. The flight leader, who had the only jet penetration handbook, replied in the affirmative, immediately leveled out, and put speed brakes in. One of the wingmen couldn't retract his speed brakes so became separated from the flight.

The flight leader cranked in the O'Hare range station and in so doing knocked his jet penetration handbook off his knee pad, where it became lodged out of reach beneath the seat. Then, things started to happen, which somehow no one had anticipated.

The lone wingman, in an attempt to catch up, experienced an explosion in his port engine and had to shut it down. After tooling around for an hour on one engine trying to contact Glenview GCA, he finally made a low ADF approach to the field and landed, with an assist from GCA on the final, with 100 pounds of fuel. It seems he had spent fifteen minutes reporting his altitude as 2,100 feet, when he was actually at 21,000 feet.

In the meantime, the other two pilots were jolted with the realization that



they couldn't get O'Hare GCA on any frequency. They were passed over to Glenview GCA where they were picked up, but held above 2,500 feet by the tower, because of the lone emergency. The flight leader saw the handwriting on the wall, so attempted his own approach by letting down in the clear over Lake Michigan and trying to get back to the field beneath the overcast.

The weather had deteriorated to 400 feet, ¼-mile visibility. He called the tower for permission to come in below 2,500 feet, but was refused. He climbed back to 2,500 feet and, at this time, he noticed he was shy another wingman. He then proceeded to O'Hare on ADF, dropping down to 300 feet. He passed over the edge of the runway and was able to effect a safe landing. His fuel state was 400 pounds.



The GCA at O'Hare tracked another jet over the field behind the flight leader. It circled the field three times then took up a heading of 170° and disappeared. The next day, a forward internal fuel cell identified as standard F2H-2 equipment washed ashore near Gary, Indiana. The ill-fated wingman has never been found.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Well, if that doesn't take the rag off the bush! Just about 99% of the accidents that happen on cross-country flights, during lousy weather, run the same pattern as this. From all outward appearances, a combination of unfortunate circumstances is responsible for the resultant fatality or bad crash.

When are you lads going to learn to anticipate trouble, especially when flying instruments? When are you going to realize that time is of the essence, when flying jet aircraft in inclement weather? Let me give you a rundown of the circumstances uncovered in a separate investigation of this accident and you can decide how much of the bad luck was asked for.

- Weather briefing was given by a third-class petty officer.
- Alternate airport requested was Truax AFB, which had below minimum weather. The flight leader was unaware of this.
- Alternate weather placed on the flight plan was for Moline, Illinois. The flight leader was unaware of this.
- There is no evidence that the two wingmen had received any weather briefing.
- Only the flight leader had a jet penetration handbook, although the squadron was on the distribution list for 20 copies.
- The flight leader was unaware that Truax AFB had no published jet let-down.
- The flight was approved by squadron authorization to be flown airways. It was not so planned, nor did there appear to be any indication of intent to follow the approved flight plan.
- No attempt was made during the flight to obtain destination weather.

It's a lead-pipe cinch that the penetration was started with only one thought in mind—that all they had to do was get below 2,000 feet within two miles of the field and they had it made. They didn't expect deteriorating weather, they didn't anticipate any emergency situation de-

veloping, and they just weren't ready when it happened.

There is nothing that gets a pilot tightened up quicker than finding himself in the soup, low on fuel, with no chance of landing immediately. The old force of self-preservation comes to the fore and it's every man for himself. Crank in an extra complication, like loss of two-way communications, and anything can happen.

It seems the old warning, "Keep your head, when the going gets rough", just doesn't fit the bill anymore. My advice is to use your head *before* the going gets rough and you won't run into such difficulties.

While you're at it, you might make a quick mental calculation of everything that could happen, if weather should sock in at your destination, and maybe you'll decide that the trip isn't necessary. I'm sure Mabel will see eye-to-eye with you on the subject, if you take the trouble to call her up instead.

Don't Look Now!

An AJ-2 pilot made his eighth approach during carrier qualification landings. As the aircraft approached the ramp, the pilot was given a high dip, which was not answered, followed by another high dip, which was answered, and a cut. The aircraft contacted the deck, nose wheel first. The main gear hit slightly starboard gear first, rocked over and caused the port gear oleo to depress more than the starboard oleo.

The aircraft caught No. 6 cross-deck pendant and bounced back into the air. After pulling out about all the wire that could be pulled out, the plane was slammed back to the deck on the nose gear and the port main gear where it came to a stop. Here we take up the pilot's statement:

"The aircraft was inspected by the deck crew and no visual discrepancies were noted. I completed my check-off list and prepared for take-off.

"The launch and climb-out were normal except that I required more right rudder than usual. While climbing out, the ship called me and said they suspected that I might have hit my port propeller on the deck on my eighth landing. I made a visual in-flight check of my port propeller and observed from the propeller arc that the tips had apparently been damaged.

"Further inspection revealed a six-inch skin crack on the upper inboard side of the port nacelle. There were also popped rivets and a small tear on the fairing between the nacelle and wing



structure. As there was no abnormal vibration and all engine instruments were indicating properly, I elected to continue to the beach. A safe landing was executed upon arrival there.

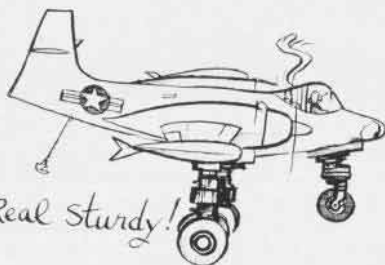
"It is noted here that on my landing roll-out my port main landing gear oleo strut was flat. In my opinion, the subject carrier landing was not abnormally hard. However, it was definitely a nose-wheel-first landing. I believe that my port main landing gear oleo strut had lost enough pressure to 'bottom' on impact, allowing the propeller to strike the deck. I do not believe this landing would have caused any structural or propeller damage, if the port landing gear oleo strut were maintaining pressure properly."



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Now, let's just slow down a minute, bub? It seems to me that you're getting the cart before the horse in this case. Just how much harder would you have to dive into the deck, before you'd call it damage as a *result* of a landing? They build 'em pretty strong these days, but not that strong.

What gets me is how an airplane can get



half-way into the wardroom on a carrier landing in front of a few dozen observers and get launched after a cursory inspection. After striking the deck twice with loud unusual noises, causing debris to fly all over the place, the aircraft looked just as sound as it did after the first landing. At least everyone hoped it did.

The port main gear inspector claimed the oleo looked normal to him after the landing, yet the board concluded that the primary cause of the accident was a low port oleo resulting from a leak in the "O" ring seal. They admitted that there might have been a little pilot error in the landing.

To me a "little pilot error" is like a little smell of garlic. There ain't no such thing. It oughta be standard practice to shut down and inspect an airplane, after an abnormally hard landing. Wishing away structural damage, won't make it so, especially when you know deep down that the possibility exists. The old axiom, "What you don't know won't hurt you," doesn't apply in aviation. A little more "know" and a little less "hope" will save us a lot of airplanes and pilots, not to mention a higher state of morale for the next-of-kin.

Gajpoline?

After twelve hours of work without relief, a driver of a fuel tanker stopped at the fuel farm to top off his truck. A combination of fatigue, poor lighting, and inadequate fuel markers caused him to inadvertently fill the tank with jet fuel instead of 115/145 gasoline.

The next day a line of AD's were refueled from the truck. A short time later four of the AD's were manned for a flight. Three of the AD's aborted their take-offs due to detonation on full-power turnup. The fourth became airborne, but, fortunately, made it back to a safe landing on the field before rigor mortis had a chance to set in.



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Great balls of fire! What kind of a fueling system will allow such goings on? It's not enough that pilots have to depend on their own ability to get their flying machines out and back. To crank in the hazard of inevitable engine failure is just going too far.

It's a sad operation if pilots are forced to look into their fuel tanks before each flight in order to assure themselves that they won't wind up in the boondocks off the end of the runway.

The next thing you know an outfit like that will have a sign on the line shack door which reads: "Please return flashlights and/or match boxes after checking fuel." That would be an earth-shaking development to say the least.