GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Jet Blast Victim

Ever wonder what it might feel like to get caught in the blast of a jet? Here's a first-person account by a plane captain who was caught in the jet blast of an F2H-4 while working on a carrier deck:

"At approximately 0800 on 3 August 1955, I had completed the preflight inspection of AD-6, #506, and was standing by the leading edge of the right wing waiting for the pilot to start the engine. My airplane was spotted in the front row of prop-driven airplanes adjacent to the port side of the flight deck in the vicinity of the #5 arresting wire.

"The airplane was secured to the flight deck by three tie-down reels which were attached at the right wing stub, the tail wheel, and the left wing stub. An F2H-4 jet airplane was spotted about 15 feet forward of my airplane. The F2H-4 was facing forward and canted 45° to the right of the fore and aft axis of the ship. After I gave the pilot the all clear signal for turn-up, he started the engine.

"Normally the tie-down reels remain on the airplane until after the pilot conducts his power check. Then only, are the reels removed after receiving a signal from the pilot. However, in this case, the line petty officer, signaled me to remove the reels and clear the area. I believe he gave me this signal because he realized it might get dangerously hot in the area when the jet airplanes, which were parked in front of our AD aircraft, were pulled out and taxied forward. I had removed the tie-down reels from the right wing stub and the tail wheel and was in the vicinity of the left main gear when I noticed a taxi director standing in front of the F2H-4 jet airplane.

"As I had completed removing the tie-down reel from the left wing stub, I felt an excessive amount of heat and jet blast hit me. I immediately jumped behind the left wheel of my airplane.

I glanced up and realized the F2H-4 was taxiing out, and the jet blast was directed right at me. Prior to this time I did not see any signal from the taxi director nor did I see or hear the F2H-4 begin to taxi out until I felt the jet blast on my body.

"I was unable to hold onto the wheel of my airplane. I could feel my face being burned so I tried to cover my face with my hands. Immediately the blast began to blow me to the rear. As there is no catwalk or ladder in this area, I reached for the steel gutter edge of the flight deck thinking I might drop down into the gun sponson which is fifteen feet below. However, the steel edge was too hot to touch, therefore I scrambled under the tail of my airplane as I was being blown to the rear.

"Another AD-6, #505, was spotted about two feet aft directly behind my airplane. I remember rolling over an arresting wire and pushing under the right arc of the rotating propeller of #505. Then the plane captain of #505, grabbed me as I was sliding under the wing of 505. I was in extreme pain from the burns on my body. Shortly there-after I was carried to sick bay and treated.

"At the time of the accident I was wearing the following articles of clothing:

1. Goggles, over my eyes.
2. Helmet, buckled under my chin.
3. Pull-over jersey, which was too small in waist and sleeve length.
4. Dungarees.
5. Black socks.
6. Flight deck shoes.

"I believe this accident could have been avoided if I had been given a signal from the taxi director to clear the area prior to taxiing the jet aircraft out of its spot. Further, if I had seen the jet begin to taxi, I might possibly have cleared the area safely."

Dear Grampaw:

The other day I was making a simulated instrument approach in a Beechcraft in a high density area. It was a good steady instrument type approach with power and everything was just the way I liked it.

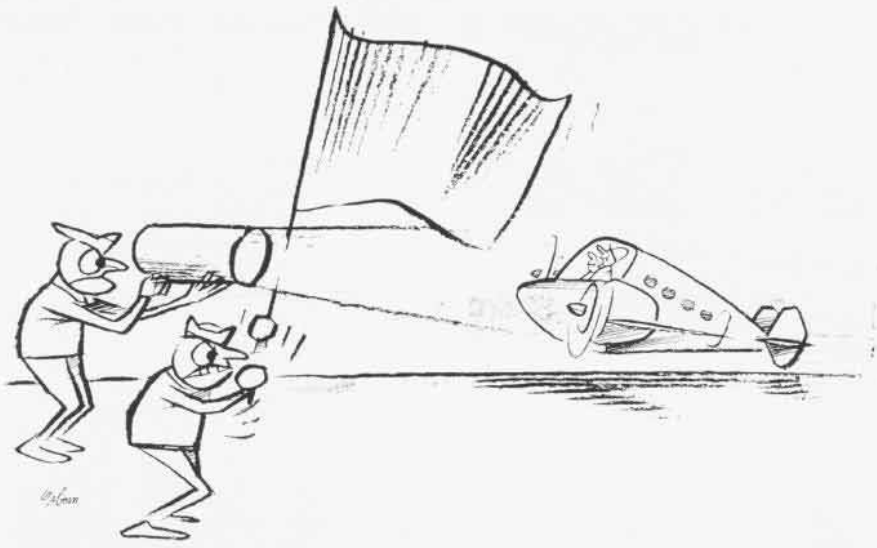
As I was about to touch down on the runway, I took off power and a landing gear warning horn was heard. Instinctively I took a wave-off! After securing from General Quarters in the cockpit, I found that my landing gear was down as I had thought, but there was still no explanation of the warning horn. To complicate matters further, the co-pilot had heard no such warning and couldn't figure why I was taking the wave-off.

After completion of the landing and securing of the aircraft, the flight was again discussed in the locker room with the co-pilot. It was here that interested listeners were able to shed some light on the mystery. The pilot of the

plane behind me said he was very happy to see me take the wave-off, because he felt himself too close and that he had heard a horn, too. The pilot of the second plane behind me said that he was reporting over the range station to the tower and lowering his landing gear while he was transmitting. *I had heard his horn and thought it was my own!*

I thought you would like to hear of this one as it might prove embarrassing to somebody in a tight situation. Maybe you could warn other pilots that it's not good procedure to have the landing gear warning horn operating while you are transmitting on a tower frequency.

Sincerely yours,
Commander, USN



Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Amen to your suggestion. Now I'll stand by for some "wheels-up artist" to say, "I heard the horn, but figured it was probably from some other plane in the pattern."

Self-Made Booby Trap

Some days you can't make a dime, and certainly this was such a day for two student aviators on a cross country syllabus training flight in an SNB-5.

All went well for the first hour or so until they began to smell smething burning. Further investigation revealed that the odor was coming from the starboard voltage regulator box which was smoking slightly. The ammeters showed an unbalanced load with the starboard generator carrying most of the load. Both generators and battery switches were secured and a decision was made to head for NAS OLATHE about 90 miles to the northeast.

The co-pilot got the portable fire extinguisher and opened the starboard voltage regulator box to ascertain the origin of the smoke. Both pilots state that the smoke increased when the cover plate was removed, but subsided shortly thereafter.

Enroute to NAS OLATHE, all radio circuit breakers were pulled except the VHF and ARN-7 inverter. Battery power was restored momentarily from time to time in order to get ADF bearings on the NAS OLATHE low frequency range and to check fuel quantity readings.

At 4000 feet over the air station, the pilot relinguished control of the aircraft to the co-pilot and lowered the landing gear by the emergency hand crank. Both pilot and co-pilot visually checked that the gear was down.

The pilot then turned the battery switch on and called the tower for landing instructions. Upon receiving these, the pilot acknowledged, stated that he was securing his electrical system and asked for a green light on the base leg if cleared to land.

At about the 30 degree position, the co-pilot reported landing check list completed and manually lowered the flaps. Turning on the final, the co-pilot saw a light which he believes was green.

The aircraft continued in the final approach with the tower broadcasting six distinct transmissions that the landing gear was not down. (These, of course, were not heard, nor did the warning horn blow, since everything was off except the ignition switches.)

Throughout the final approach, the tower flashed red lights. The "wheel watch" positioned at the approach end of the runway performed his duties to the extent that he went out on the landing portion of the runway waving a red flag four feet square. The aircraft continued in the approach with only a slight rise in the flare-out and made a very smooth wheels up landing.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

These lads worked like beavers to booby trap themselves. If they had pulled just one more circuit breaker for the landing gear and/or put the gear handle in the *down* position before lowering the landing gear, the accident would not have occurred.

Since they had secured all electrical power prior to manually lowering the gear, they had no trouble getting it down and locked despite these omissions. However, when the pilot turned on the battery switches to ask for landing instructions, the gear promptly came up again. A few seconds later they shut off the battery switches and effectively cut off all communication with the tower and eliminated the warning horn.

The sad part of it all is that the correct sequence for emergency lowering of the landing gear was clearly printed on the back side of the check-off list. It was also in the handbook, and the pilot states that he looked over the emergency procedure on his way to NAS Olathe.

Both pilots had been given a number of simulated landing gear emergencies in "A" stage training. Oddly enough the manner in which these were given may have had something to do with this accident. The instructor would pull out the landing gear circuit breaker somewhere in the landing pattern. When the student put the gear handle down, the warning light and horn would tell him that all was not going according to Hoyle. The student would then go ahead with the procedure.

It is quite possible that the student never really learned the first two steps in the emergency lowering of the gear (circuit breaker out, gear handle down) because these steps had always been accomplished before the simulated emergency.