GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Cornered in the Roundhouse

On a cross country flight recently, a P2V-5 arrived at its destination and the pilot called the tower for landing clearance. Clearance was granted and just prior to entering the traffic circle the co-pilot read the check-off list to the pilot over the intercom system. The pilot checked each item as he received it and prepared for landing. The aircraft was turned on final and landed on the first one third of the runway. Upon reaching the end of the runway, the pilot turned off and taxied to the line. The crew disembarked, and the aircraft was secured.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

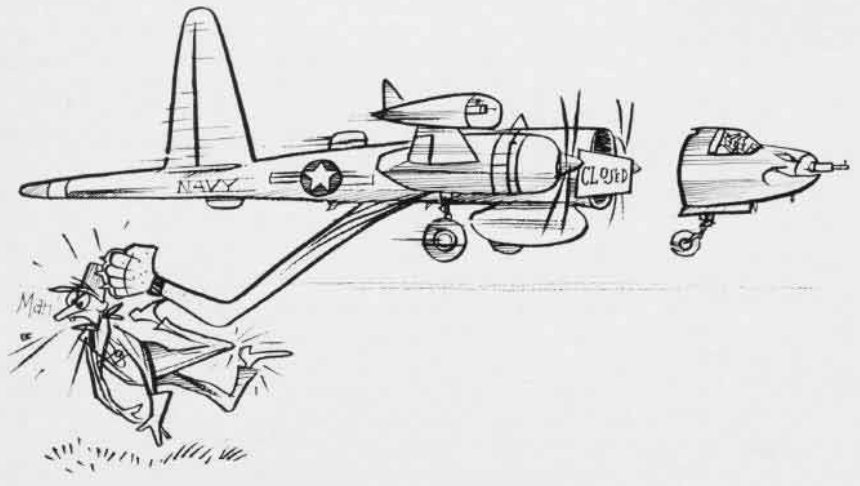
Well, that's a switch! It's just too gol-durned bad we can't print more tales like this. But like the man said, you ain't heard nothin' yet.

Something had hit the fan for sure, but it wasn't until an hour or so later that the word had reached the base. A local engineer on a Diesel engine was laid out in a hospital with a permanent phlebitis of the lower leg (scarring and injury of the muscles and blood vessels). It seems the pilot of the P2V had inadvertently cornered him in the roundhouse while landing and the engineer was smartly clipped with, of all things, the trailing wire antenna and weights.

The culprit in this case was the radio operator who allowed as how he didn't know he had to ask permission to use the trailing antenna. He just figured if you gotta use it you gotta use it. Like he said, "From the time I first reeled it out until the time we landed I was using the antenna. I had only reeled out about 100 feet of it."

I would say off hand that this lad was a little green at his job. Besides dragging a deadly missile below the airplane, he snafued the situation further by turning off the ICS in order to keep interference out. When the co-pilot came to "trailing wire antenna in" on the check-off list, the pilot called the radio operator to check it. He received a couple of clicks in the ICS system, which he took for acknowledgment, and went ahead with the landing. By George! You gotta get up mighty early to outguess some people!

While there is no excuse for a pilot not having his crew completely under control, I am sure this one has learned his lesson. Anyway, he has my sympathy.



Unbreakable Pilot

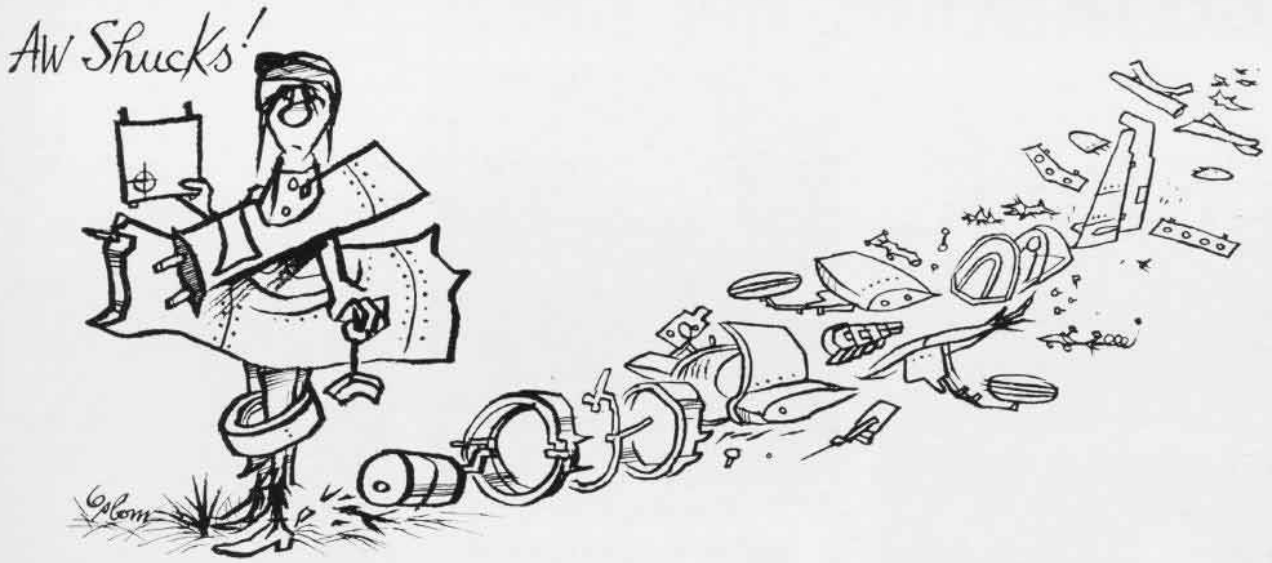
Some folks die every year just from falling out of their beds. Others seem to be practically indestructible. The T-28 pilot involved in this accident is definitely in the latter category.

His instructor had told him that the practice glide angle calibration runs were to be made with an entry speed of 140 knots, 45 degree dive, and pull-out of three "G's" or less to be completed above 1200 feet.

The flight proceeded to the target area without incident, and the instructor orbited the target to observe the runs. He had just cautioned one of the student pilots of a low pull-out and steep dive, when the Indestructible Cadet commenced his eighth run. Here is how the pilot described it:

"I had a slightly long interval on the plane ahead and tried to catch it up by using more bank in the turn into the target. I used about 40 degrees all the way around and ended up close to the target with a steep run—probably about 55 degrees dive angle. My airspeed was 170 knots when entering the run.

"When I checked the instruments in the run, I saw I was at 290 knots at 2300 feet and realized I was low and commenced a normal recovery using 4 to 4½ "G's". I trimmed the aircraft as I entered the dive and then kept my hand on the throttle to keep it at 20" MP in the dive. The dive felt normal in all respects except for being slightly steep. The plane felt like it stalled violently as my nose came through the horizon, and I then realized something was wrong. I took my left hand off the throttle to help recovery on the stick, and then found I had no control of the plane.



"I looked out and saw I was too low to bail out, but already I had put the canopy handle to the emergency position then I saw that I was losing parts of the plane. My nose was level with the horizon, and then I felt a sharp downward movement of the nose. Then I saw a shadow fly over the plane, the nose dropped through more, and I started a fast spiral to the right. I had both hands on the stick with no pressures at all. I then retarded the throttle to the closed position and tried to reach the mag switch but couldn't reach it because of the locked shoulder straps. I didn't have time to fool with any other switches.

"After the initial impact, I lost my eyesight and had to open my eye with my hand to see anything. After coming to a final halt, I unloosened my seat belt and finally got free from the parachute. I then saw something burning near me, and saw it was the engine about 25 feet away. My plan was to get away from the plane before it burned or exploded, and I managed with much effort to get about 10 feet away from the plane. I was lying in line with the fuselage and the burning engine and saw that I was clear of any fire so I tried to get back near the fuselage to shade my face from the sun. Finally I put a map over my face to escape the sun.

"Two men came up sometime after this and offered their assistance. I had them put the parachute under my head and take off my shoe. Then one man went after some water which I had requested. After a while the helicopter arrived, and the doctor took over. He gave me a shot of something, put some splints on my legs, and patched me up in general. Then they put me in the stretcher and we returned to Kingsville and then over to Corpus Christi. I have no idea of the time involved until the helicopter got there, but after they arrived I received excellent service."

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

I wish that every one who is tempted to exceed "G" limits could see the trail of parts that this plane shed before impact with the ground. They were spread along a 3800 foot area in this order: The horizontal stabilizer and elevators were the first parts to fail; then came the port and starboard outer wing panels, the port and starboard flaps, the rudder, the canopy, and the port and starboard inboard wing panels with landing gear attached to each.

After losing all of these parts, the fuselage and engine hit the ground in a slight nose down attitude. The engine and fuselage forward of station 73 broke off on impact. The pilot and what was left of the fuselage sailed another 100 feet along the ground to the spot where he crawled free.

The investigators noted that the instructor shaved off some of the safety factors in the training syllabus when he briefed the flight to dive at 45 degrees instead of 40 and specified a 1200-foot altitude for completion of pull out despite the 500 foot level of the terrain. The pilot then added an extra 30 knots to his entry speed, steepened the dive to 55° and set the stage for disintegration.

Dear Gramp:

Surely you'll have something to say about the vertical stabilizer on the F9F-2 on page 28 of the October issue!

Please, what happened?

LT USN

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

My first guess was a low bridge, but a check of the records shows that the damage occurred as a result of a mid air collision. The student pilot flying BuNo. 123651, lost sight of his instructor while performing a cross under. At this point, he made the mistake of pulling back on the stick and lost his tail feathers.