



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## The Spider's Web

Upon reaching 110-120 knots during his takeoff roll, the pilot of an F9F-6 applied back pressure but could not get the stick past the neutral position. Midway down the 7000-foot runway, he elected to abort the takeoff just at the instant that the control stick became movable.

With about 2500 feet of runway remaining, the port tire blew out. The *Congar* continued off the end of the runway, traversed the overrun, struck some large rocks and logs that sheared the starboard main gear and nose gear, and skidded into the edge of a bay, coming to rest with the engine running at idle and the tailpipe just clear of the water.

An inspection of the cockpit following the accident resulted in the discovery of the "spider" control lock still attached to the right rudder, although incorrectly, and to the stick. The wire loop at the stick had parted, allowing the controls to have free action.

Investigation by the accident board determined several different ways in which the spider lock can be attached to the rudder pedals. The correct method of attachment precludes the possibility of the pilot's placing his feet on the rudder pedals since the wire extends across the rudders diagonally, thereby permitting the pilot to feel it. However, with incorrect



attachment, it is possible for the pilot to place his feet on the rudders without contacting the wire. Also, in this position it is possible to kick off one or both of the hooks from over the top of the rudders. When the spider is installed improperly, with both hooks engaged, a limited amount of lateral stick control can be achieved. However, with one hook off and one hook on, complete lateral and fore-and-aft stick action can be had, providing the rudders are left free or are offset with the attached rudder aft.

Owing to the small number of qualified personnel available, plus the fact that the pilots were insisting that the aircraft be made ready in the most expeditious manner possible, the jet line chief decided not to complete new pre-flight sheets. Instead, he decided to make a visual inspection of the external portion of the aircraft while the pilot checked the cockpit, and, since the aircraft had not been flown after they were properly preflighted two days previously, to change only the date on the pre-flight sheets that had been completed at that time. Because of these circumstances, the crewman did not check to determine whether or not the spider control lock was installed.

The pilot, in an effort not to hold

up the flight (other pilots in the four-plane section had indicated that they were ready to depart the line), elected not to perform the flying tail check. Had this check been performed in accordance with squadron doctrine, the pilot would have discovered the control lock in place regardless of how it was installed.

Before leaving the runway, the pilot decided to lock the brakes by actuating the emergency air bottle. However, owing to a loose connection in the air line, this action did not set the brakes.

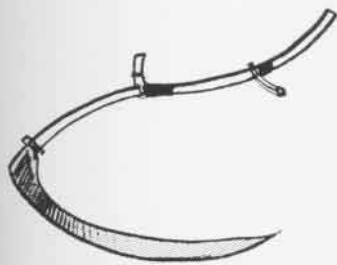
The accident board concluded that the primary cause of the accident was the pilot's failure to check the aircraft controls sufficiently to determine whether they were completely free prior to attempting flight. Contributing factors were: (1) An error on the part of both the pilot and maintenance personnel in attempting to short cut pre-flight procedures to expedite the flight, (2) line maintenance personnel error in that the spider control lock was improperly installed, and (3) either maintenance personnel error or material failure or malfunction in that a nut securing the emergency air line to the brake fitting had either been left improperly secured by maintenance personnel, or had backed off after being secured, rendering the emergency braking system inoperative.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

**Make haste slowly lest you be caught in a web of circumstance. Many a life has been cut short by shortcuts.**



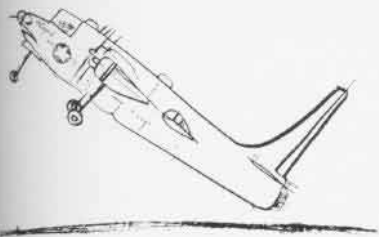


## Memo from Gramp

Sending pilots of single-place aircraft out for formation instrument practice during IFR conditions before they've thoroughly familiarized themselves with the aircraft during VFR conditions opens wide the door to vertigo alley and is like trying to teach a man to play ice hockey before he's learned how to skate.

## Flap Flap

A P4Y-2 passed over the approach end of the runway at an altitude of 30 to 40 feet at a last-observed airspeed of 100 knots. The pilot chopped the throttles, whereupon the *Privateer*



stalled and dropped in hard, striking the runway tail first and forcing the tail skeg up through the deck plates. Immediately following the initial impact, the aircraft pitched forward, causing the main gear to contact the runway with tremendous force which caused buckling in the center fuselage and at the wing roots.

Not until the flaps were about to be retracted following the landing roll-out and turn onto the taxiway did the pilots realize that *they had landed with only half flaps.*



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Forgetting to put your aircraft—any aircraft—into the intended landing configuration is a lot like forgetting whether you're out with Shirley or Amy. It can only lead to trouble and some undesirable lumps.

The aircraft accident board stated that the pilot showed poor judgment in failing to take a wave-off from a dangerously high and slow landing approach and that his landing technique was unsatisfactory in that he allowed the aircraft to contact the runway in a nose-high, power-off, full-stalled attitude.

## Understatements of the Month

The preliminary message reports of two recent aircraft accidents occurring at the same airfield and both involving *Banshees* on landing stated as follows:



*Case One:* BOTH MAIN STRUTS DRIVEN THROUGH WINGS, MAIN WING SPAR DAMAGED. Cause: EXCESSIVE SINK RATE.

*Case Two:* FUSELAGE BROKE AT COCKPIT X PORT WING TORN OFF X FIRE STARTED. Cause: HARD LANDING, STALLED ON APPROACH.

## Lost and Found

During night operations aboard an aircraft carrier, an FJ-3M *Fury* jet was spotted on the port side of the flight deck aft of the number two elevator.

The main landing gear had been chocked and placement of the nose-wheel chain was in progress when the airplane started rolling toward the catwalk.

When the airplane started rolling, someone yelled "Brakes!" and the plane captain jumped back inside the cockpit in an effort to save the *Fury*. However, the aircraft's movement couldn't be stopped in time, and it was lost over the side.

After the accident the carrier turned back toward the area and, together with the plane guard destroyer, initiated a search that lasted throughout the night. At first light an air search was started, and about an hour later the missing plane captain was sighted by a search aircraft and picked up by a destroyer 11 hours after he had fallen overboard.

The errant aircraft had struck the water right side up and tail first. The plane captain had left the cockpit immediately and jumped into a life raft that had been torn from the ship by the aircraft on its descent.



### Grampaw Pettibone Says:

This is really one for the books! The man was not strapped to the airplane, he couldn't swim, he wasn't wearing a life jacket, and the accident occurred at night.

In spite of the fact that personnel aboard the carrier were fairly certain that their man overboard was lost and couldn't be recovered, a well planned and thorough search was begun. It paid off in spite of tremendous odds.

