GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Lost Warrior

A ferry pilot made a hurried preflight check of the AD-6 he planned to fly from NAS DALLAS to NAS NORFOLK. He was anxious to get on the road, for he had been delayed excessively during delivery of another plane to Litchfield.

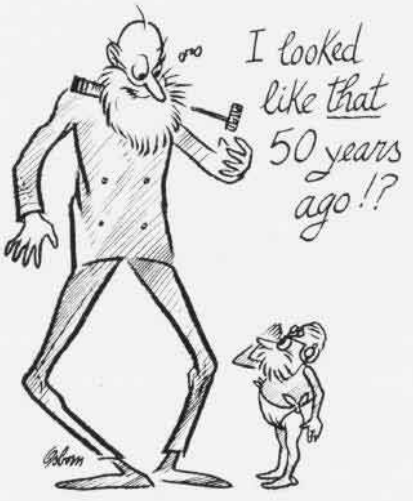
Soon after take-off on the first leg to Birmingham, Ala., he realized the ARN-6 DF was completely out of calibration and unusable, and the gyro compass was inoperative. He would have to rely on the wet compass plus dead reckoning, using WAC charts to reach his destination. He kept on and arrived with no difficulty at Birmingham, Alabama.

His next hop would be to Norfolk, two hours and 45 minutes en route, basically a night VFR hop. Again he would have to rely on wet compass and chart reading alone.

He got off at 1600 CST, hit Atlanta right on schedule, then Athens, Georgia, and had his last visual fix over the town of Anderson, S.C. It was beginning to get dark.

Stricken, he realized he was in bad shape! The regular instrument and running lights were O.K., but the wet compass light was out! There went his only navigational aid! He remembered his flashlight — safely stowed in the baggage compartment. Furthermore, to compound it a bit more, there was no portable or detachable light in the cockpit!

Visibility dropped to five miles in



haze, making map reading and orientation difficult. He was lost! The pilot now switched on his IFF and called GCI for a fix. Two stations answered up, but even after identification turns had been made, they were unable to pick up contact on him.

With an hour and 45 minutes of fuel remaining, he suddenly passed over a fairly large town with a lighted runway south of town. After a couple of 360° turns and a low pass down the runway convinced him it was short but suitable, he notified GCI he would land there.

He flew a good landing pattern, estimating his height above the unknown terrain and rolled into final at 95 knots. He touched down right on the numbers but hit hard and bounced high. He poured throttle on for a waveoff, but the AD-6 started a violent torque roll to the left. Immediately retarding throttle, he relanded but in a violant swerve to the left. This he was unable to control with right rudder and brake, the aircraft left the runway, smacked into some trees, and stopped, a strike. The pilot escaped with bad bruises.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great jumpin' Jehosophat! This lad was lucky, even though he acted like he'd had his brains stomped out.

He gets more flight time per month than the average pilot and practically ALL of it cross-country! A flashlight is a MUST on a night hop, and you've gotta be mighty light-headed to head out with no radio navaids AT ALL!

His acceptance test of this machine must have been confined to "Does she run?" The outfit that turned a miserable machine like this over to a ferry pilot better do some soul-searchin' too.

Dead Heat

A TV-2 departed its home station at 0715 one morning on a scheduled instrument instruction hop. It was one of those GO-NO-GO mornings with 4000-5000 feet broken, a high overcast, lightning and rain showers off in the distance, and towering cumulus in all directions. A line of small thunderstorms predicted to cross the air station by 0700 had not materialized, so the hop was launched as scheduled.

Departure was filed and the entire hop was conducted VFR at 20,000 feet on top of broken clouds in the local area.

Returning at the planned ETA, the instructor pilot took the TV down to 4500 feet in a clear area and called the tower for field weather and clearance in. The tower cleared him but reported a heavy rain storm was moving toward the station. The ceiling now was 500 scattered, 2500 broken, visibility two miles in rain, and a 10-knot crosswind from the right.

ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

En route from initial to the break, the tower called to ask if he had the field in sight. The pilot replied he had "the end of the runway in sight."

It was a dead heat. As the TV-2 hit the break, the rain storm rolled over the field! The pilot continued his break, but because of reduced visibility (rain on the windshield), he overshot turning final and had to S turn back. Touchdown was right on speed but 3000 feet down the soaking wet runway!

Raising the flaps and cutting the throttle to idle, he commenced slow steady braking action. Below 80 knots the canopy was cracked open. Suddenly the pilot realized he was running out of runway and began hard braking, but with no apparent effect.

Alerting the dual pilot, he shut down the engine, cut all switches, and tried to hit the overrun as straight as possible. As they braced themselves, the TV-2 slammed into the field boundary fence and slid to a stop on the highway bordering the airfield.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Son-of-a-Gun! When you pull a stunt like this, you've only yourself to blame! A good solid 180-degree turn back to that clear area would sure have saved a lot of anguish later. Most storms lose their fury in 20 minutes at the outside, and he could have made a better approach without the first wild gusts to contend with.

NASA at Langley Field did a fine project on braking action on wet runways. With one inch of water on the runway at over 80 knots, you've got NOTHING! Under 80 knots its marginal, maybe only half effective.

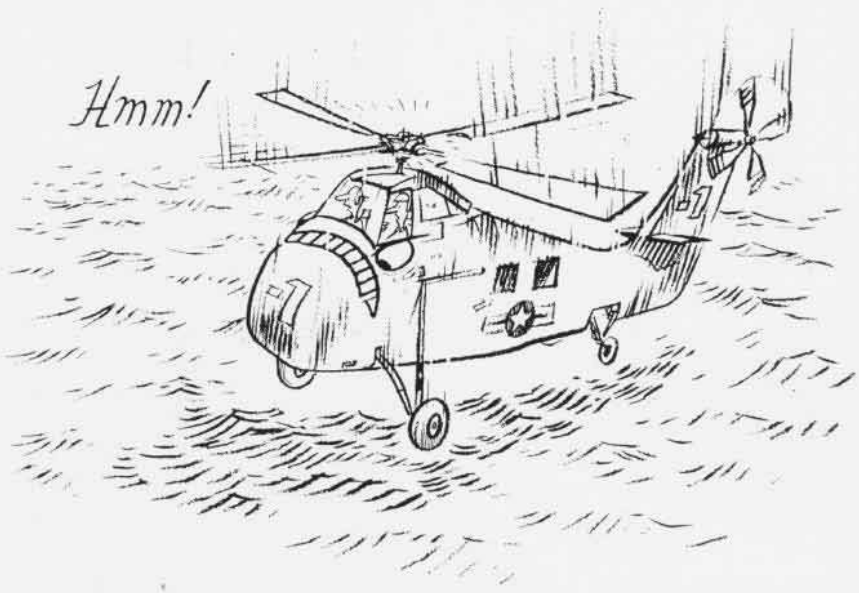
Unless you've got a hook to drop and a wire to catch, you need ALL the runway and a Pax River size strip at that to take care of our present aircrafts' touchdown speeds!

Fuel Fools

Gramps has been writing so many yarns these past years of the exploits of real "can do" helo pilots, thought you might like a tale from the other side of the ledger. Gather 'round, here's a dinger.

A couple of helo lads, each with over 400 hours in the HUS-1, departed their home field on a VFR cross country flight to the East Coast.

The first leg of the hop, to Patuxent River, was uneventful, taking 2.2 hours with 2.5 hours rotor time. Just prior to landing the fuel warning light came on. The aircraft was refueled and required 242 gallons. This represented a fuel consumption of 561 pounds per hour for the first leg and meant he had only 119 pounds remaining after landing.



They filed their flight plans and departed on the second leg, reaching their final destination, New York, uneventfully. Again the HUS-1 was refueled, this time taking 190 gallons for a fuel consumption of 525 lbs. per hour. As at the previous stop, the plane captain reported the gallons of fuel used to the pilots. The relatively high fuel consumption either did not impress the pilots or was ignored by them. No fuel checks had been made in flight.

The next afternoon, after a pleasant RON, and figuring to return by the same route, they filed for NAS PATUXENT RIVER, listed 3+30 fuel aboard and headed out. Thirty-seven minutes later they returned to New York to pick up some forgotten baggage, spent six minutes on the deck, and took off again, finally on their way.

They flew blithely along, making one very rough fuel consumption check exactly one hour after initial rotor engagement. They figured they were burning only 430 pounds per hour, and had no apparent problems until suddenly, only 25 miles out of Patuxent, the fuel low-level warning light came one! Still no real concern, for right beside the light a placard read—"Light ON—30 MIN FUEL."

As they reached the shore of the Chesapeake Bay, there was the field, only 10 miles away! One mile out from the runway's end the pilot evidently realized it was getting tight, for he called the tower and requested permission to land on the end of the runway owing to critical fuel state. Almost immediately thereafter, he had a complete power loss and made an autorotative ditching in the drink just 6000 feet short of the runway. All three of the crew got out safely.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! At the time of power failure the elapsed rotor time was two hours and 54 minutes. Use of the smaller of the two fuel consumption figures of the previous day (525 lbs/hr) indicates that two hours and 54 minutes was the maximum time the engine could be expected to run. That's all the go-juice there is! Normally, the "fuel on board" figure of 3 plus 30 is based on an average fuel consumption by the HUS of 445 lbs per hour. So is the 30 minute low fuel warning light.

First thing we oughta do after the hangin'—is pull off that low fuel light placard and put in one that simply says "LIGHT ON—LOW FUEL."

Next, this outfit and every other helo outfit better make sure their pilots are keeping real accurate fuel consumption and flight logs on all cross-country hops.

Last, in a helo it's a h--- of a lot easier on the nerves and saves a lot of explainin', to set it down in some farmer's field and holler for fuel, than to think up some plausible excuse for the AAR Board. Those sessions are ALWAYS grim!