



American Military Heritage Foundation
Dedicated to preserving, in flying
condition, a Vintage PV-2 Harpoon in memory of all who fought on
behalf of the United States of America

June 2017 Newsletter

Well June is now here and we are still trying to make it to the starting gate. May was somewhat better to us than April. I really can't say the weather was much better. However, we did luck out and have a couple of days that really allowed us to accomplish a considerable amount, and, we did have one of those marathon days which allowed some of us arrive back home just before the next day arrived.

Accomplishments for the month were good in the realm of Harpoon land. We were able to get one of the wheels changed out with new tire, tube and a clean brake pack and a new seal. We ran the left engine to confirm that it was the vacuum pump that was bad and not anything else. Changed out vacuum pump and did test run to confirm it worked OK. The tire and tube from the wheel was removed and it is now painted and ready to be reassembled and installed back on the plane. Completed the rigging on the rudders and worked on some sheet metal repairs. So all and all it was a pretty good month. If Mother Nature gives us a break and we have people

to help with the work we should be ready for a test run, sign off and first flight this month. It has been a very long process but it looks like we are getting very close to finishing this project.

We also had some new people come out on a Saturday and spent the day working with us on some of the projects. It worked out that we ran an engine that day and they were quite impressed even with all of the oil she belched out all over the nacelle and flap. We have also had another person visit and talk with us and think they will be able to put together a plan that could get us on track to become a better organization and perhaps develop a revenue stream.

In other news we were contacted by two different people that were interested in our organization due to the fact they had a relative that was involved with either the PV-1 or the PV-2. In one case it is the gentleman's father and he is currently 100. I believe the other individual had a grandfather involved with the Harpoon. I will be working with both of these individuals trying to write their story. So there could be some very interesting things come up. My resident historian, Paula, did a little research for me and the one unit got a German Sub. So I am waiting to see if he was involved in that operation.

For those of you who have never had the chance to work on the Harpoon at MQJ you never know who might walk up and talk to you. This month there was two individuals just walked up and started looking at the plane. So David looked at me and said, "you need to go out and talk with them." I went out and introduced myself and asked if they had any question. Naturally first one out of the box is what it is. Come to find out it was a father-in-law with his son-in-law and they were just killing some time. The son-in-law turned out to be a Lt. Col. Stationed in South Korea near the DMZ. He was Vietnamese and came here with the boat people. I told him I was over there during the war and where I was stationed and his family lived just a little farther south in the delta. It is strange how you can sometimes run into people that you never dreamed your path would cross.

That about sums up the activity for May and it looks like June will be very busy trying to finish up and get the plane back in the air. There will be a BOD meeting coming up soon and all members are invited to attend. I will send out a notice with date just as soon as I get it. I have attached a page from a book that was sent to me and I believe the two articles are well worth reading. One involves a simple cotter pin and the other unauthorized flight.

Have a great month,

Gaylon

"Restlessness is discontent -- and discontent is the first necessity of progress. "

*Thomas Edison,
Inventor*

GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Engines and Prayers!

Not very many pilots are alive to explain what it feels like to lose elevator control right after take-off, so the following statement is of particular interest. The aircraft was a PV-2 piloted by a lieutenant and an ensign in the Organized Reserve.

"After preflighting the aircraft I started the engines. While awaiting increased cylinder temperature and tower clearance, I checked my yoke and rudder controls.

"We taxied to the run-up position, checked our engines, and went down the check-off list. After completing the check-off, my copilot checked the controls on his side.

"We made a normal take-off. I leveled the plane off with slight forward pressure on the yoke at approximately 10 to 20 feet above the runway. Suddenly the yoke was free of pressure. The aircraft immediately went into a violent climb. Full forward yoke did not decrease the severity of the climb and the yoke seemed free from the pressure of the airflow over the elevators. While in this dangerous, full-power climb, my copilot and I cut the throttles simultaneously. The nose dropped immediately and evenly with no stalling effects being noticed.

"With the nose of the aircraft again in normal flight, I increased power steadily, applying full forward yoke. With this increase in power the aircraft again started a steep climb. We were over the lake at this time. With this second attempt at normal flight and still no elevator control, I decided to ditch the aircraft in the lake.

"I decreased throttles steadily to no power, the nose dropping in proportion to the reduction of power. Again no stalling effect was noticed. At approximately 50 feet I opened the pilots' escape hatch. By now we were close to the water. I leveled my wings and instinctively hauled back on the yoke as we hit. The back pressure on the yoke had no effect on raising the nose of the aircraft. We hit the water paralleling the west shore of the lake in a slightly nose down attitude. The impact didn't seem severe to me, but the nose and windshield were completely enveloped in water.

"Upon full impact I noticed my copilot against the windshield with his hands before his face."

After getting out of the plane, the pilots and the two radiomen who were aboard inflated their life jackets. The copilot swam to the raft which was floating after the PV sank. While the others were swimming towards the raft a civilian boat approached and picked up all four. The copilot had suffered a minor concussion due to releasing his



shoulder straps before the final impact, and a radarscope had broken loose causing minor facial injuries to one radioman. Otherwise the crew was uninjured.

After three days of intensive diving and salvage operations the PV was recovered from the bottom of the lake in the condition shown below. Investigation soon revealed the cause of this freak accident. A broken cotter pin had allowed a small nut to back off. This in turn allowed a 1/4 inch bolt to back out of the elevator control rear push-pull rod. The bolt, washer and two pieces of the cotter pin were found in the bilge when the plane was recovered from the bottom of the lake.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

That was some "see-saw" ride that you had. My hat is off to you for the cool and deliberate manner in which you handled this emergency. In a spot like that—one wrong move might have meant a watery grave for you and your crew.

As for the broken cotter pin and missing nut—it's the same old story. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Aviation maintenance is one field where careful workmanship and rigid inspections pay big dividends in lives and planes.

Dead End Street

Here is a story of a naval aviator who paid the piper.

He took off from NAS DENVER on a local familiarization flight and immediately left the local area and proceeded in a NW direction to the vicinity of Estes Park, Colo., where he was seen to make several low passes. He was observed flying up Fall River Canyon, around Sun Dance Mt., down Forest Canyon, then back up Fall River Canyon toward Trail Ridge. At this point witnesses say the FG-1D was in a climbing attitude at about 140 kts. The pilot apparently realized he could not gain sufficient altitude to clear the approaching ridge, so he began a left climbing turn to go back down Fall River Canyon.

Apparently due to a downdraft from the Ridge, the aircraft settled in the turn and struck the face of the steep slope approximately 400 ft. below the top of the 12,000 ft. ridge. The pilot was killed instantly and the aircraft was completely demolished as a result of the impact and the fire that followed the crash. In the opinion of the Accident Board the pilot was flying in an unauthorized area just before the crash; he was conducting unauthorized low flying in mountainous terrain; and he failed to observe ordinary precautions for flying in mountainous terrain.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

This is another one of those tragedies that occur all too frequently. This pilot was evidently enjoying a 13,000 foot roller coaster ride over mountain peaks and ridges until he flew up a one-way canyon that had too little air space.

Give yourself a little margin of safety when flying in this sort of country. Stay away from mountain peaks and ridges, for they have treacherous wind currents and down drafts that are of such strength that they will make any plane as helpless as a piece of paper in a windstorm. If you want to go sightseeing in the mountains, take a bus instead of a Navy airplane.

