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## **Captain Michael Gitt Papers - Mrs. Cornelia K. Gitt - Wives Safety Petition, 1952**

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general insecurity and pressure of that period.

The third period, 1946-50, is that of the introduction of postwar equipment, notably the wide use of four engine planes for both domestic and international travel. This period is marked by a decrease in both rates, particularly the fatal one, followed by a definite level-off. Preliminary figures for 1951 confirm this stabilization, showing even a slight increase in both rates, particularly the fatal one.

One point of great significance to the pilots and one not generally appreciated is this. At the 1949-51 rate of accidents and present airplane speeds, the chances are 3 out of 4 that an airline pilot will be involved in an accident during his career\*. Likewise, the chances of his being involved in a fatal accident are about 1 in 9. Looking at this, we feel that, although great strides have been made in the past, improvement is necessary and due. We feel that the past improvement was made from an extremely high rate, and that the industry should not be satisfied with the present status quo.

In any analysis of accidents, it is customary to place the blame for from 45% to 50% of the accidents on the pilot. We feel that while, of course, many errors of omission and commission are made by pilots, being only human, there are other underlying factors, and in the remainder of this paper

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an attempt is made to point out areas in which some of these factors can be eliminated.

In support of this contention, a situation that developed at the Naval Air Station, Honolulu, during the war is of interest. The main seaplane operating runways were to the northeast and east, crossing at a point approximately one thousand feet from their origins. Lighting was furnished by permanent lights on poles some six to ten feet above water level. About two months after the commencement of operations, during a night take-off, a Navy pilot tore the bottom out of a PBM on the coral reef beyond the intersection of the two runways. The verdict was "pilot error", a finding concurred in tacitly at least by the majority of pilots flying in and out of the area. About a month later a commercial airline pilot did the same thing with a PB2Y. The plane rested on the reef most of that day and was removed just before sunset. Before sunrise there was another PB2Y on the reef within 50 yards of where the first had been.

Now, each of those accidents, by itself, could be attributed to "pilot error". However, with an accident pattern established it seemed likely that there was a contributing factor. Investigation showed that the errors of runway alignment were due to the confusion of the runway lights, on their poles at a considerable height, with the lights of Honolulu,

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