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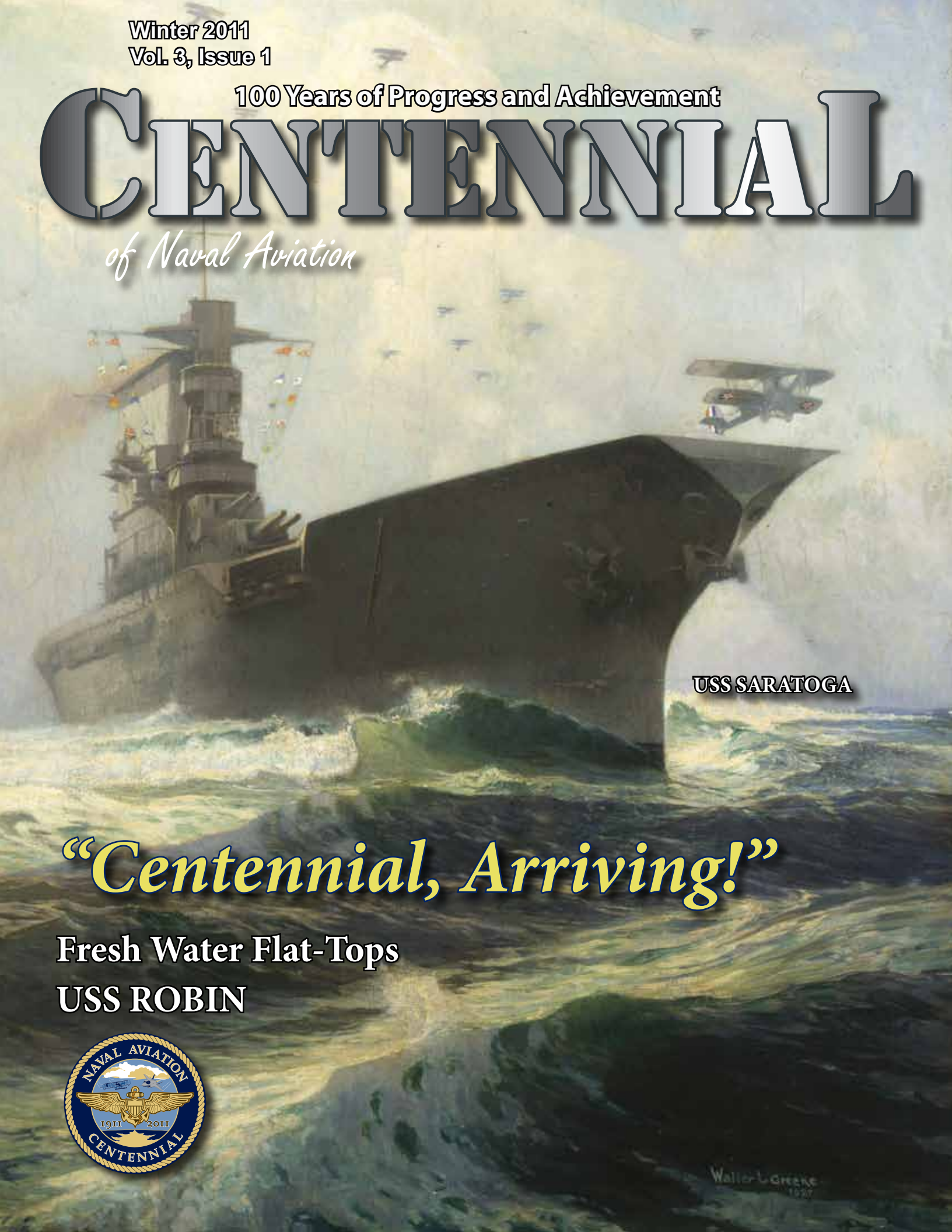
100 Years of Progress and Achievement

CENTENNIAL

of Naval Aviation



USS SARATOGA

"Centennial, Arriving!"

Fresh Water Flat-Tops

USS ROBIN

Naval Air Forces
Official Publication
Winter 2011

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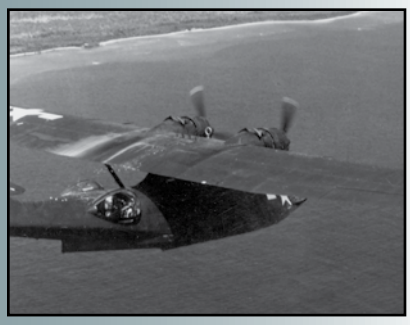

Black Cats 14

COVER: "USS SARATOGA (CV 3)", Oil on canvas; 1928 (Navy Art Collection 28-001-A). The original artwork was painted by artist Walter Greene and illustrates the SARATOGA in her first year of operation. (Courtesy of the NHHC)

Word From the 'Air Boss'

Vice Adm. Al Myers Commander, Naval Air Forces

The headquarters building for Naval Air Forces is located on Naval Air Station North Island - the site where young men came together 100 years ago to learn the craft of powered flight. Under the tutelage of aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss, Navy Lieutenant Theodore Ellyson became the Navy's first Naval Aviator, learning to fly on a 4-cylinder machine that the flight students called Lizzie. From austere beginnings, Naval Aviation has evolved into a centerpiece of American military might, capable of influencing events around the globe with little advance notice.

In 1911 Ellyson wrote that he did not think there was a place in the country that could compare to North Island for flying. So it is only fitting that we start the commemoration here at North Island, where it all began. A full year of events across the nation will begin with the Centennial of Naval Aviation Parade of Flight and North Island Open House February 12, 2011. We look forward to celebrating our history and observing this important milestone with the reflection and dignity that our century of service to our Navy and our Nation deserves.

Fight to fly, fly to fight, fight to win! Mad Al

From the Editor

What a long strange journey it has been! We have now entered the year of the Centennial of Naval Aviation and are set to execute our first major event, the North Island Open House and Parade of Flight. What started out as ideas two and one-half years ago has blossomed into a nationwide effort to commemorate this momentous anniversary. Now it is time to turn all that planning into execution. In the meantime, we will continue to publish this magazine through the end of 2011 and will add a special comemmorative edition featuring the Heritage Paint Project aircraft, likely to be published in May to coincide with the actual birthday of Naval Aviation. My regards to all of you who have contributed to this magazine - the stories are fabulous. I also thank the readers who have taken the time to read some really fascinating Naval Aviation history.

- Capt. Richard Dann

Centennial Force Leadership

VADM Allen G. Myers
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Commander, Naval Air Forces

LtGen Terry Robling
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Deputy Commandant for Aviation

RADM Pat McGrath
USN
Deputy Commander, Naval Air Forces

CAPT Mike Emerson
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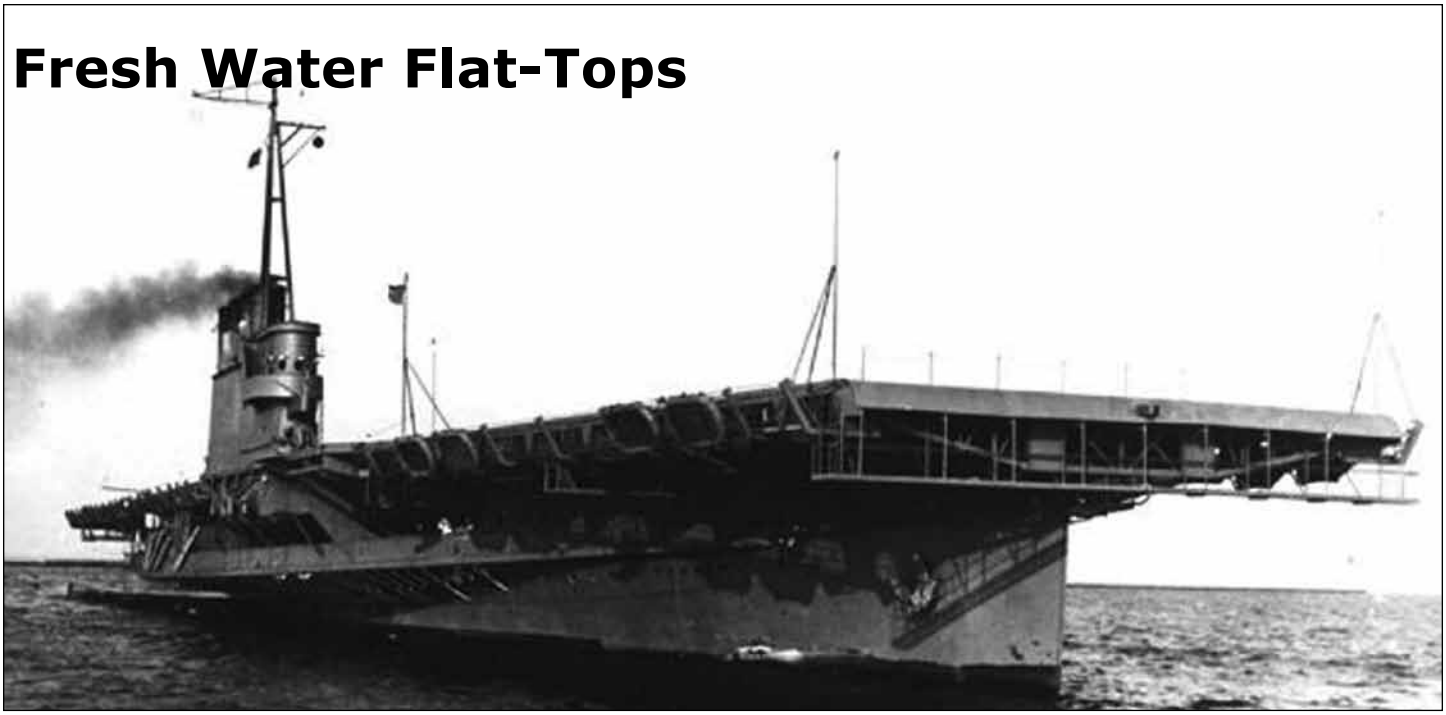
Chief of Aviation

Fresh Water Flat-Tops



USS WOLVERINE (IX 64) is seen here underway in Lake Michigan. Many Naval Aviators would qualify in carrier landings on her deck and on the deck of USS SABLE (IX 81), the Navy's freshwater carriers during World War II. (NNAM)

By Mr. Nathan J. Nickel

Two U.S. Navy aircraft carriers were vital in achieving victory during World War II (WWII). However, neither one ever saw combat service. These ships never sailed on the ocean. In fact, they never left the shores of the Great Lakes. However, they provided invaluable training to thousands of Navy and Marine Corps aviators who would go on to participate in some of the most pivotal battles of WWII.

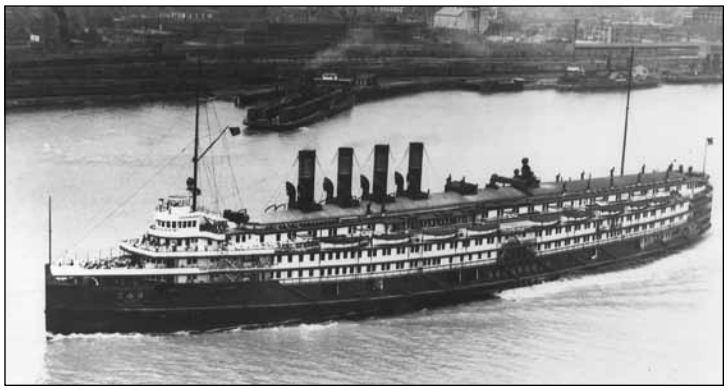
Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, there was an urgent need for thousands of new naval aviators. Training them for the required carrier operations, however, posed a significant challenge. All available aircraft carriers were needed for combat operations and thus could not be spared for training purposes. Additionally, German and Japanese submarines lurked off the American coasts, which would place any aircraft carrier used for dedicated training operations in significant danger.

To address this situation, Cmdr. Richard Whitehead of the Ninth Naval District conceived the idea for what he called "pseudocarriers." These would be civilian passenger ships, converted into aircraft carriers used for training qualifications, and operated entirely within the safety of Lake Michigan. Two vessels, the Seeandbee and Greater Buffalo, were acquired by the Navy in 1942 for this role. Both were formerly operated as Great Lakes passenger ships and were steam powered, paddle-wheel propelled, ships. The cabins and superstructures were removed in order to install a 550-foot flight deck. The ships were then commissioned as the USS WOLVERINE (IX 64) in 1942 and USS SABLE (IX 81) in 1943, respectively.

On August 1, 1942, the Carrier Qualification Training Unit formally stood up at Naval Air Station (NAS) Glenview, Illinois. Advanced flight training occurred at NAS Glenview and 15 nearby auxiliary fields. Once this phase was completed, student aviators would then undergo their carrier qualifications. This was accomplished by successfully making eight landings and take-offs on the carriers, steaming underway in Lake Michigan, and then returning to NAS Glenview. Training flights occurred during daylight hours, seven days a week, year-round, and were only halted if the lake's ice became too thick to break.

Between 1942 and 1945, an estimated 120,000 successful landings and take-offs occurred on the SABLE and WOLVERINE, with roughly 17,000 Navy and Marine Corps aviators receiving their carrier qualifications. One of these pilots was Navy Lt. j.g. George H.W. Bush, who would go on to become president of the United States. In addition, scores of landing signal officers and flight deck crew also received their training aboard these ships.

After VJ Day, both ships had accomplished their missions. They were decommissioned in November 1945 and transferred to the U.S. Maritime Commission, which sold them for scrap in 1948. Their contribution in training Navy and Marine Corps aviators was invaluable and led the way to victory in WWII. The USS SABLE and USS WOLVERINE are a very unique chapter in the history of naval aviation, and remain the only paddle-wheel propelled, fresh-water operated, aircraft carriers ever operated by the U.S. Navy.



The Great Lakes paddlewheel steamer "Seeandbee" before conversion to USS WOLVERINE. (NNAM)

Valor in the Dark

By Capt. Vincent C. Secades, USN (Ret)

Editor's note: Lt. j. g. Clyde Lassen was the first Naval Aviator to be awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam.

In the middle of a dark night June 19, 1968, the Search and Rescue (SAR) alarm blared aboard USS PREBLE (DLG-15). Lt. j.g. Clyde Lassen stumbled out of his bunk and rushed to man his UH-2A Seasprite. An F-4J had been hit by a Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM), and two aviators, Lt. Cmdr. John Holtzclaw and Lt. Cmdr. John A. Burns, had ejected 20 miles inside North Vietnam. This event triggered one of the most daring helicopter rescues in naval aviation history.

Clyde Everett Lassen was born in Fort Myers, Fla. on March 14, 1942. He entered the Navy as an Airman Recruit on September 14, 1961. After completing Aviation Electronics Technician School, he served with VT-2, NAS Whiting Field, Fla. In 1964 he was accepted into the Naval Aviation Cadet Program, and pinned with his wings of gold October 12, 1965. During his first operational tour with HC-1 he served as Officer in Charge (OIC) of Detachment Cubi Point, RP, and OIC of H-2 CSAR detachments in the Gulf of Tonkin. In 1967 these detachments became part of HC-7.

On that night Lt.j.g Lassen, with copilot Lt.j.g Leroy Cook and gunners/rescue air crewmen ADJ3 Donald West and AE2 Bruce Dallas, launched from PREBLE into the darkness and was vectored by the Rescue Combat Air Patrol (RESCAP) aircraft to the survivors' location, a heavy forested area. After establishing radio contact with the survivors, Lassen set the helo on a rice paddy nearby. The UH-2A began to take small arms fire. With "Come get us" calls coming through his earphones, he decided to try to get above the survivors and hoist them aboard. Using the illumination from RESCAP parachute flares, Lassen positioned the helicopter above the survivors, between two towering trees. Before the air crewmen could begin the hoisting operation, the flares went out. Lassen recounted, "I added power and was just starting to climb when I hit the tree. I felt a large jolt, and the helo pitched down and went into a tight starboard turn. I regained control and waved off." The helicopter was still in flying shape. Lassen had to postpone another rescue attempt until a new RESCAP aircraft with more flares could arrive. He determined that the survivors would have to make their way to the clearing if they had any hope of being rescued. Informed of the situation, Burns and Holtzclaw made their way down the slope. As Lassen approached the clearing for a second landing, small arms fire erupted along the perimeter. The survivors were too far away and Lassen aborted the approach. During the third approach the last of the illumination flares went off. Lassen decided to turn the landing light on and expose the aircraft to enemy gunners rather than abandon the survivors. For two minutes he hovered, with the landing gear just touching the mud, while Dallas and West blasted away at the tree line nearly. Finally, Burns and Holtzclaw emerged from the dark and dashed toward the helicopter. Dallas reached out and yanked them inside the UH-2A, which departed immediately. With the aircraft vibrating abnormally, a malfunctioning compass, and a low fuel state, Lassen headed for the coast while dodging antiaircraft fire. He landed the crippled helicopter aboard the closest ship available, USS JOUETT (DLG 29), with 135 pounds of fuel, enough for five minutes of flight time, left in the tanks. For his heroic actions Lt. j.g. Clyde E. Lassen was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Cmdr. Clyde Lassen upon assuming command of Helicopter Training Squadron EIGHT (HT-8). (Vincent Secades)

Lt. Lassen's HC-7 Detachment 104 pose for a photo aboard USS PREBLE (DLG-15). (NNAM)

Lassen continued a successful naval career, serving tours with VT-1, USS AUSTIN (LPD-4), NAS Norfolk, HS-11, HS Wing One, and command of HT-8. Upon completion of his command tour, he retired from active duty in December 1982. What the North Vietnamese gunners could not do, cancer did. After a short but brave battle with this terrible disease, this modest and unassuming, but decisive and courageous man passed away April 1, 1994. He is buried in Barrancas National Cemetery, NAS Pensacola, Fla.

Lt. Lassen became the first naval aviator and fifth Navy man to be awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery in Vietnam. On April 21, 2001, the United States Navy commissioned USS LASSEN (DDG-82) in his honor.

The Mysterious Aircraft Carrier USS ROBIN

Edited by CAPT Richard Dann

From February to September 1943, there was an aircraft carrier operating with the U.S. Pacific Fleet that is never seen mentioned in an American roster of ships, or mentioned in any American orders of battle, but was equipped with American-built aircraft painted in American markings. USS ROBIN in reality was HMS VICTORIOUS an ILLUSTRIOUS-class Royal Navy aircraft carrier. She was assigned to operate with the U.S. Pacific Fleet following the loss of USS WASP (CV 7) and USS HORNET (CV 8) in September and October 1942 respectively. With the damaging of USS ENTERPRISE (CV 6), the only American carrier available to conduct operations in the Southwest Pacific was USS SARATOGA (CV 3). Details of this arrangement were kept very secret, and even today, there is very little public knowledge that it actually occurred.

During November 1942, VICTORIOUS participated in Operation TORCH, the invasion of North Africa. VICTORIOUS provided air cover during the landings and made air attacks at Algiers and Fort Duree. Four of her Martlet (Wildcat) fighters landed at Blida airfield to accept surrender.

In late December 1942, VICTORIOUS was loaned to the U.S. Navy after an American request for carrier reinforcement. During this time, for signal purposes, she was code named (not renamed) USS ROBIN, derived from the character "Robin Hood." After a refit in the United States at the Norfolk Navy Yard in January 1943, VICTORIOUS passed through the Panama Canal to operate with U. S. forces in the Pacific.

Arriving at Pearl Harbor in March 1943, she recieved modifications to support operation of U.S. Navy Wildcat and Avenger aircraft and the addition of more close range weaponry. This also included painting the ship's Royal Navy aircraft complete with American national insignias and paint schemes. She was ready for service by May and sailed with SARATOGA for the southwest Pacific. Her role with Task Group 36.3 was to support U.S. landing operations and provide defense against attacks by Japanese warships. The two aircraft carriers had Anglo-American aircrews, with air-cover provided by VICTORIOUS and strike aircraft by SARATOGA. In August 1943, VICTORIOUS and SARATOGA provided air support for Allied forces during the invasion of New Georgia (Operation CARTWHEEL). Detaching from Task Group 36.3 July 31, VICTORIOUS traced her route back to Scapa Flow, and arrived there in mid-October 1943.

VICTORIOUS would undergo refit until March 1944, when she formed the nucleus of a battle group that participated in Operation TUNGSTEN, the concentrated attacks on the German battleship TIRPITZ. It was during these actions that she became the first carrier of any nation to sucessfully deploy the Chance Vought F4U Corsair.

VICTORIOUS would return to the Pacific in 1944 following operations in the Indian Ocean, as part of the British Pacific Fleet (BPF). In early February 1945, she joined Task Force 113 at Sydney to prepare for service with the US 5th Fleet; this took place March 25 as U.S. Navy Task Force 57 supporting the American assault on Okinawa.

During her time in the Pacific in 1945, VICTORIOUS supported numerous opearations through the end of the war. She was struck by kamikaze aircraft May 4 and 9, 1945. Her armoured flight deck minimized the damage. She remained on station and was back in operation within hours on each occasion.

VICTORIOUS remained in service through 1968 before being decommissioned. Her assignments in the Pacific are a true testament to the spirit of coalition operations that endures to this day.

HMS VICTORIOUS during operations in the Mediterannean Sea during 1941. In 1943, she would operate with the U.S. Pacific Fleet under the code name USS ROBIN. (Tailhook)

What appears to be a U.S. Navy F4F Wildcat is actually a Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm "Martlet" Mk IV assigned to No. 896 Squadron. This mishap took place near NAS Norfolk in early 1943. (U.S. Navy)

Floyd Bennett Field

A Coast Guard HNS-1 Hoverfly pictured during tests on a rocking platform simulating a rolling ship deck that was constructed at Coast Guard Air Station (CGAS) Brooklyn (Floyd Bennett Field), New York, 19 May 1944. (NNAM)

Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N.Y., figured prominently in the early development of aircraft and helicopters. The field was named after Floyd Bennett, born in Warrensburg, N. Y. Bennett enlisted in the Navy for flight training in 1917 and later served as a test pilot and as Chief Machinists Mate aboard USS RICHMOND in charge of aircraft.

While aboard RICHMOND, Bennett met Rear Adm. Richard E. Byrd. In 1925 he accompanied Byrd on the MacMillan Expedition to the Arctic. On May 9, 1926, Byrd and Bennett made history by being the first to fly over the North Pole. For this feat both men were awarded the Medal of Honor.

In February 1928, a decision was made to construct a municipal airport in New York city. The site chosen was Barren Island located in Jamaica Bay on the southern tip of Brooklyn. Sand was pumped from Jamaica Bay to raise the site to 16 feet above the high tide mark. The dedication ceremony for the formal opening of the field was held May 23, 1931, and was named Floyd Bennett Field. From 1931 until World War II many pioneer flights originated from the field flown by famous aviators such as Wiley Post, Howard Hughes, and Amelia Earhart. On January 1936 the City of New York executed a 50-year lease to the Coast Guard for facilities on the field. In 1941 the Navy leased Floyd Bennett Field from the City of New York and Naval Air Station, New York was commissioned June 2nd, and all commercial flying from the field was discontinued. On September 28, 1943, the city of New York ceded exclusive jurisdiction over Naval Air Station, New York to the Navy. At that time the Coast Guard was part of the Navy Department. The field was very active during World War II and was expanded from 387 acres to 1,288 acres. During this time the Navy assigned the Coast Guard responsibility for development and testing of helicopters at NAS New York, Floyd Bennett Field. NAS New York remained busy during the Korean War and Vietnam War. In 1971, the Naval Air Station was decommissioned. Today, only Coast Guard and the New York City Police Aviation Unit continue flying at the field.

2011 Blue Angels Schedule:

March
12 NAF El Centro, CA
19-20 Keesler AFB, MS
26-27 NAS Meridian, MS

April
2-3 Sun-N-Fun, Lakeland, FL
9-10 NAS Corpus Christi, TX
16-17 Fort Worth JRB, TX
30 MCAS Beaufort, SC

May
1 MCAS Beaufort, SC
3-4 NAS Pensacola, FL
7-8 NAS New Orleans, LA
8 Flight Academy Fly-over, Pensacola, FL
14-15 Indianapolis, IN
21-22 Lynchburg, VA
25 & 27 USNA show and graduation fly-over
28-29 Millville, NJ

June
4-5 Rockford, IL
11-12 Evansville, IN
18-19 Davenport, IA
25-26 North Kingstown, RI

July
2-3 TBD
9 Pensacola Beach, FL
16-17 Rochester, NY
23-24 Ypsilanti, MI
30-31 Great Falls, MT

August
6-7 Seattle, WA
13-14 Fargo, ND
27-28 Brunswick, ME

September
3-5 NAS Patuxent River, MD
10-11 Lincoln, NE
17-18 Millington, TN
24-25 NAS Oceana, VA

October
1-2 MCAS Miramar, CA
8-9 San Francisco, CA
15-16 NAS Lemoore, CA
22-23 El Paso, TX
29-30 San Antonio, TX

November
5-6 NAS Jacksonville, FL
11-12 NAS Pensacola, FL

A GLANCE AT THE PAST –
IN THE PRESENT

(Above) MH-60S (BuNo 166294) on the ramp at NAS Norfolk. This aircraft is painted to represent the Sikorsky HO3S flown by Lt. j.g. John Thornton, who recieved the Navy Cross while attached to HU-1 in Korea. (CDR Shelby Mounts)

(Top Left) T-45C (BuNo 165598) conducts carrier qualification training aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) in November 2010. The aircraft is assigned to Training Wing ONE at NAS Meridian Miss. (U.S. Navy Photo)

(Left) T-45C (BuNo 163656) assigned to Training Wing TWO at NAS Kingsville. It wears the colors of WASP Air Group circa 1940. (LCDR Gabe Pincelli)

TC-12B (BuNo 161197) In markings applied to Navy aircraft in early 1942. (Hawker Beechcraft)

HH-60H (BuNo 163787) from HSC-84 banks sharply. This aircraft is painted in the colors of Helicopter Light Attack Squadron THREE during the Vietnam War. (AMCS Mark Brush)

MH-60S (BuNo 166323) is assigned to HSC-3 at NAS North Island. It is painted in the markings of fleet helicopters from 1947 to 1956. (Capt. Rich Dann)

(Left) T-34C (BuNo 161841) in the markings of USS RANGER (CV 4) circa 1936. It was painted by Sabreliner Corporation in Perryville, Mo. (Mark Nankivil)

(Right) T-6B Texan II (BuNo 166064) was painted new at the Hawker Beechcraft factory while the aircraft was manufatured. It was delivered to the Navy December 7, 2010. (1st Lt. Eric Galloway, USMC)

(Bottom) F/A-18A+ (BuNo 162866) departs NAS North Island on her first squadron flight following rework at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest. Aircraft is assigned to VFA-204 at NAS New Orleans. (Ray Rivard)

(Bottom Right) S-3B (BuNo 160581) on final approach to NAS Point Mugu. It is painted in markings of aircraft that participated in the Battle of Midway in June 1942. (VX-30)

Norfolk Celebrates Eugene Ely

National Naval Aviation Museum

Naval Station Norfolk hosted a ceremony Nov. 12, 2010 to celebrate the Centennial of Naval Aviation and the Navy's shipboard takeoff, which took place Nov. 14, 1910.

That's when "an act of daring by Eugene Ely set the stage for a revolution in naval warfare, and changed the face of the United States Navy forever," said Rear Adm. Richard J. O'Hanlon, commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic.

Ely flew a rudimentary one-seater Curtiss Pusher biplane, the "Hudson Flyer" off the deck of the light cruiser USS BIRMINGHAM, thus ushering in the beginnings of naval aviation. His flight was the first launch of an airplane from a ship, and the Navy hasn't looked back since, O'Hanlon said.

"Flash forward 100 years and we can see - through the lens of history - just what an incredible change this daring flight set in motion," O'Hanlon said. "The spirit of innovation, daring and foresight that were displayed in 1910 have become part of the fabric of naval aviation."

The ceremony is the first of a series of events the Navy will sponsor to commemorate the importance of naval aviation during its 100th anniversary year.

Virginia Senator Mark Warner spoke at the event, and Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell issued a proclamation commending the Navy for its historic achievements in flight.

"Naval aviation… has evolved into a force that supports the national strategy across the full spectrum of operations, ranging from preventing conflict to direct combat," McDonnell said.

Keynote speaker Adm. Robert F. Willard, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, said naval aviation has helped to transform the U.S. military into the world's pre-eminent military force.

"Naval aviation gives our military a decisive asymmetric advantage in counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency warfare," Willard said. "Without question, the quality of our Sailors is our greatest asymmetric advantage."

Bob Coolbaugh and his Curtiss Model D on board the USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) during Centennial festivities at NAS Norfolk in November. (Navy - Released)

A replica of a Curtiss Model D was flown during the ceremony, outside the hangar and alongside the flight line. Strong winds had threatened to ground the aircraft; however, Bob Coolbaugh, a pilot and retired Naval Aviator, was determined to brave the wind and make the flight, just as Ely had braved more difficult weather conditions a century ago.

Attendees also had the opportunity to see current and recent vintage Navy aircraft - the MH-53E, MH-60S, E-2C Hawkeye, and F/A-18 Hornet - fly overhead and in formation.

The pilots and aircrews flying these aircraft are "the next generation [of naval aviators], who are carrying on naval aviation's legacy every day," O'Hanlon said. "Our forces are doing amazing work every day around the world, and I assure you we are making a difference."

Naval aviation plays an integral role in supporting America's maritime strategy and is branching out into new mission areas including irregular and special warfare, humanitarian missions, and disaster relief, O'Hanlon said.

Bob Coolbaugh and his Curtiss Model D on an early test flight over the Virginia countryside. This aircraft is scheduled to attend several Centennial events in 2011. (Bob Coolbaugh)

News and Notes

- The Bay Area Tailhook Ready Room will be hosting a luncheon to commerate the 100th Anniversary of Eugene Ely's historic first landing aboard a ship. Rear Adm. John Sadler, Commander Naval Air Force Reserve will be the guest speaker.
- NAS Pensacola will be hosting a 97th avvinversary celebration January 20, 2011.
- The Coronado Public Library in Coronado, Calif. will have a year-long display of Naval Aviation as part of its outreach, that will also include guest speakers throughout the year.
- The Coronado Historical Society in Coronado, Calif. will also have Naval Aviation displays and speakers during 2011.

Centennial 2011 "Tier 1" Events Schedule

This year, the Sea Services will partner with and execute 32 "Tier 1" Centennial of Naval Aviation events across the country, plus two gala events. These events include extensive Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard involvement, in conjunction with existing Fleet Weeks, Navy Weeks, Marine Corps Weeks, Blue Angels' Air Shows, and other significant aviation events during the Centennial year.

Join us across the country this year as we celebrate 100 years of progress and achievement during the Centennial of Naval Aviation.

100th Anniversary Parade of Flight & North Island Open House, San Diego CA.	09-Feb	-	12-Feb
Mississippi Navy Week, Keesler AFB & Golden Wings over Meridian Air Shows. MS	19-Mar	-	27-Mar
NAS Corpus Christi Salute to 100 Years of Naval Aviation, TX.	09-Apr	-	10-Apr
Dallas Navy Week & NAS Fort Worth JRB Air Power Expo, TX.	10-Apr	-	17-Apr
MCAS Beaufort Air Show, SC.	30-Apr	-	01-May
Centennial of Naval Aviation Week Pensacola, FL.	02-May	-	08-May
New Orleans Navy Week & N'awlins Air Show.	05-May	-	11-May
MCAS New River Air Show, NC.	14-May	-	15-May
DoD Joint Services Open House, Andrews AFB, MD.	20-May	-	22-May
New York Fleet Week & Jones Beach Air Show, NY.	22-May	-	02-Jun
Philadelphia Navy Week & Millville Wheels and Wings Air Show, PA.	23-May	-	29-May
Rockford AirFest 2011, IL.	04-Jun	-	05-Jun
Evansville Freedom Festival, IN..	11-Jun	-	12-Jun
Davenport Navy Week & Quad City Air Show, IA.	16-Jun	-	22-Jun
Marine Week St. Louis, MO.	20-Jun	-	26 -Jun
Rhode Island National Guard Open House Air Show, RI.	25-Jun	-	26-Jun
Rochester Navy Week & ESL International Airshow, NY.	11-Jul	-	17-Jul
Detroit Navy Week & Thunder Over Michigan Airshow, MI.	18-Jul	-	24-Jul
EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, WI.	25-Jul	-	01-Aug
Seattle Fleet Week & SeaFair, WA.	31-Jul	-	08-Aug
Fargo Navy Week & Fargo AirSho, ND.	08-Aug	-	14-Aug
The Great State of Maine Air Show, ME.	26-Aug	-	27-Aug
NAS Pax River Air Expo '11, MD.	03-Sep	-	04-Sep
Omaha Navy Week & Guardians of Freedom Air Show, NE.	06-Sep	-	11-Sep
National Championship Air Races, Reno, NV.	14-Sep	-	18-Sep
Memphis Air Show, TN.	17-Sep	-	18-Sep
NAS Oceana Air Show & AIAA Centennial Convention,VA.	20-Sep	-	25-Sep
San Diego Fleet Week & MCAS Miramar Air Show, CA.	19-Sep	-	02-Oct
San Francisco Fleet Week, CA.	08-Oct	-	09-Oct
NAS Lemoore Air Show, CA.	15-Oct	-	16-Oct
El Paso Navy Week & Amigo AirSho, TX.	17-Oct	-	23-Oct
NAS Jax Air Show, FL.	05-Nov	-	06-Nov
NAS Pensacola Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show, FL.	11-Nov	-	12-Nov
Centennial Commemorative Gala, Washington, DC.	03-Dec		

San Diego Set to Kick Off Centennial Year

This 1961 photo shows the transient flightline at Naval Air Station North Island in preparation for the 50th Anniversary of Naval Aviation Examples of many Naval aircraft attended. Numerous vintage aircraft will take part in the 100th Anniversary celebration. (NNAM)

February 17, 1911, inventor and aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss taxied his "hydroaeroplane" to the cruiser USS PENNSYLVANIA anchored in San Diego Bay. It was hoisted aboard the ship and then lowered back into the water and Curtiss returned to North Island. This historic event, more than any other, prompted the Secretary of the Navy's decision to purchase the Navy's first aircraft.

In tribute to this and the 100 years of progress and achievement in Naval Aviation, hundreds of historic and current Navy aircraft will take to the skies February 12, 2011 over Naval Air Station North Island - the official "Birthplace of Naval Aviation."

On that day, NAS North Island will host a spectacular open house event welcoming military and civilians aboard. Guests will be able to stroll the runways to view historic static aircraft displays, witness a "Parade of Flight," and tour an aircraft carrier, amphibious assault ship and guided missile destroyer. The "Metal Mulisha," a motorcycle stunt show, antique cars, sponsor and vendor booths, live entertainment, food and beverage, children's activities will also take place throughout the day.

Gates at North Island Naval Air Station will open at 8 a.m. Saturday Feb. 12, 2011. This Celebration of Naval Aviation kickoff event is open to the public - admission and parking are free.

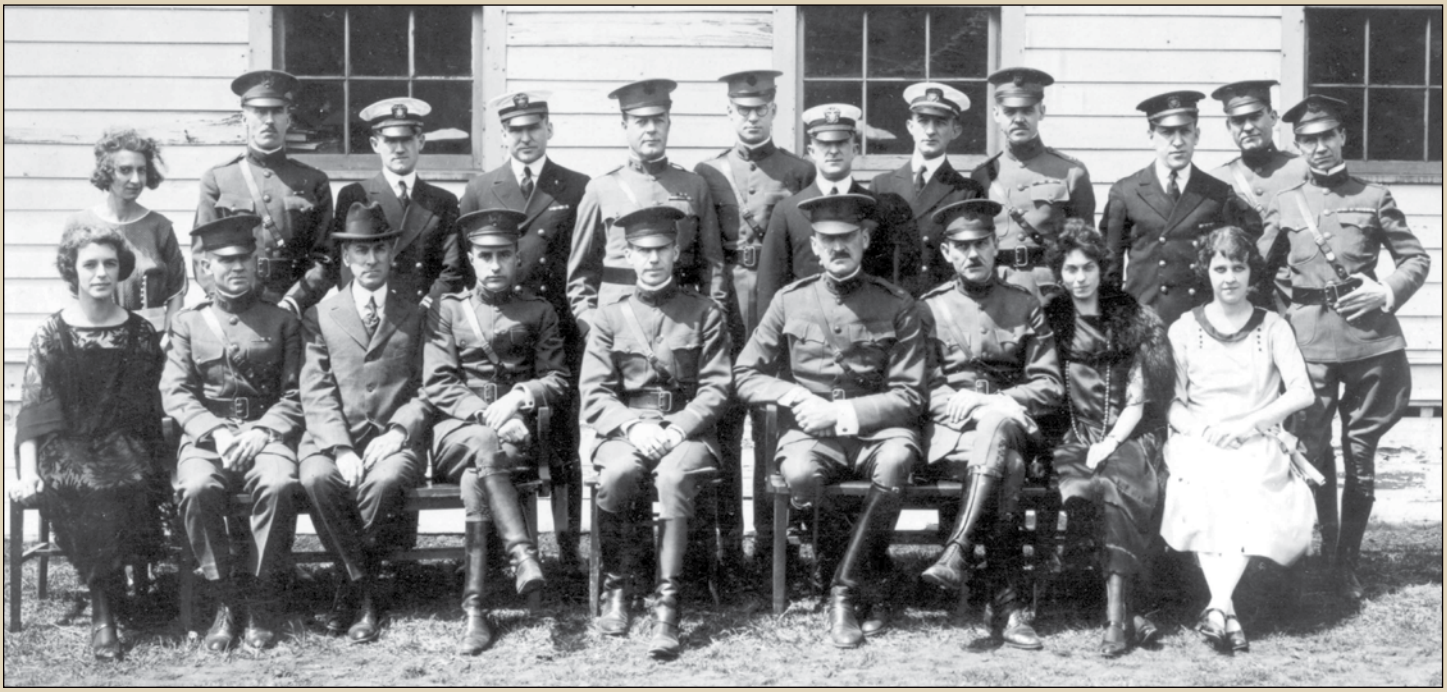
The day will commence with a large number of static display aircraft positioned near Hangar 303, the historic "double domes." This display will include Naval Aviation aircraft from all eras and all three sea services. In addition, "Heritage Garden" will host a large number of the "retro" aircraft painted in "historic" Naval Aviation paint schemes. Finally, examples of modern Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard aircraft will be on display. During the morning, a replica of the Navy's first aircraft, the A-1 Triad, will be taxiing in San Diego Bay, courtesy of the San Diego Air and Space Museum.

In the early afternoon, more than 200 naval aviation aircraft of many types will take to the sky and participate in an aerial "Parade of Flight" over San Diego Bay, the likes of which has not been seen since July 1932 when 420 aircraft flew over San Diego in honor of visiting members of the National Editorial Association and other news reporters on the West Coast attending the opening of the 10th Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Navy, Marine and Coast Guard aircraft, from pre-WWI to the present, will parade over San Diego Bay from south to north.

Located directly across the bay from NAS North Island is the USS Midway Museum. It will be open to the public and will also provide a great viewing location for the Parade of Flight. The Midway will also host a gala event in the hangar deck Saturday evening hosted by the 100th Anniversary of Naval Aviation Foundation.

This event promises to be something that the entire San Diego region will not soon forget, and it will also mark the beginning of numerous other Centennial events and activities taking place across the country and at several overseas bases.

For more information, visit the following website: www.mwrtoday.com/cona.



The first class of naval flight surgeon graduates, April 29, 1922. Back row, from left to right: Lt. Louis Iverson (3rd), Lt. Carl J. Robertson (4th), Lt. Victor S. Armstrong (7th), Lt. Page O. Northington (8th), and Lt. Julius F. Newberger (10th). Photograph was discovered in 2005 by Lt. Justin Campbell while cleaning out dusty recesses at the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory in Pensacola, Fla. (via Cmdr. Walter Dalitsch)

The First Naval Flight Surgeons

By Cmdr. Walter "Lunar" Dalitsch, MC, USN

"*The 'Flight Surgeon Idea' had come to us at the front. In other words, as we saw it, this new specialist was a military necessity. It is probable, in the ordinary course of events and if there had been no war at all, that there would have been a 'medical examiner.' In fact all the Air Services already had medical examiners. But, as all those in the aviation family know, a flight surgeon is not merely a medical man who knows about the eye, the ear and the heart. He is a doctor who knows flying.*"

– Dr. Isaac H. Jones, 1937

Involvement of the medical profession in aviation, encompassing all its art and science, was inevitable. When the Army first involved itself in the modern age of aviation, Dr. Theodore Lyster, now known as the "Father of Aviation Medicine," is known as the first flight surgeon, and ultimately retired as an Army Colonel. The outbreak of World War I paved the way for direct involvement of aviation to support the military mission, and the immediate need from a medical standpoint was assurance that those who took to the air were actually fit to do so.

"During the [First World War] it was estimated that the average flying life of the pilot over the lines was 150 to 300 hours. By that time he either had been killed or had to be relieved permanently from flying duty.[1]" It became obvious that the physician would play a key role in ensuring fitness and survivability. Ultimately, the Army aviation medical examination became the model not only for the Navy and Marine Corps, but for the Department of Commerce as well.

Dr. Louis H. Bauer, who wrote the first textbook of aviation medicine in 1926, founded the first aviation medicine professional organization in 1929, and served as the first medical director of the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce."He was named director of the Air Service Medical Research Laboratory in Mineola, NY, in 1919 and proceeded to establish, in connection with it, the world's first School for Flight Surgeons.[2]"

During the immediate post-war period, the Navy also "recognized the importance of aviation medicine for the protection of its flyers and detailed several classes of officers from its medical corps to the [Army's School of Aviation Medicine] for training.[3]"

It was in Mineola that the first five officially designated Naval Flight Surgeons graduated from their training April 29, 1922. Although they were military physicians fully trained in aviation medicine, there were not yet designated flight surgeon wings. One of the graduates, Lt. Victor S. Armstrong, was given orders in 1923 to serve the Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery as the first Chief of the Aviation Medicine Division.

[1] Flying time for the pilot. The Journal of Aviation Medicine, 1932 (Mar); 3(1):1.
[2] Hoffman, Mary A., Rothert, Mary E., and Stegmann, Barbara J. 100th anniversary of Dr. Louis H. Bauer's birth. Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine, 1988 (Oct); 59(10):986.
[3] Strong, Robert A. Editorial foreword. The Journal of Aviation Medicine, 1930 (Mar); 1(1):3

This Chance Vought F4U-1 Corsair was recovered from Lake Michigan November 8, 2010. It is a very early production aircraft and is characterized by its "birdcage" canopy. The aircraft crashed in the lake November 23, 1943. (Mark Wegge)

"Birdcage" Corsair Recovered

National Naval Aviation Museum

On November 8, 2010, the culmination of what has been a banner year for the National Naval Aviation Museum's underwater aircraft recovery program took place in the waters of Lake Michigan, with the recovery of a rare F4U-1 "Birdcage" Corsair. The last time it had seen the light of day was just a little before 5:30 p.m. on the afternoon of June 12, 1943. On that day, the Chicago Cubs were in last place in the National League, newspaper headlines trumpeted the bombing of targets in the Ruhr, and in theaters, Fred MacMurray and Rosalind Russell were starring on the silver screen in the motion picture "Flight for Freedom." Ens. Carl H. Johnson of Massachusetts climbed into the cockpit of F4U-1 Corsair (Bureau Number 02465) at Naval Air Station (NAS) Glenview, Ill. Taking off, he set course for the training aircraft carrier USS WOLVERINE (IX 64) sailing in Lake Michigan. Johnson, winged as a Naval Aviator earlier in the year, had 57 hours in type and a total of 388.5 flight hours under his belt as he prepared to qualify as a carrier pilot.

Settling into his approach, Johnson experienced one of the obstacles confronted by many a Corsair pilot making a carrier landing. The lack of visibility from the cockpit over the nose of the aircraft, a characteristic that inspired one of the airplane's nicknames,, "Hose Nose." In Johnson's case, a momentary lack of visibility caused him to miss seeing the Landing Signal Officer (LSO) positioned on a platform along the port edge of the flight deck. Though the LSO had given the "cut" signal, which indicated that the pilot was on the proper glide path for landing and should cut his engine, Johnson never saw it and instead decided to take a wave-off and go around for another try. It was too late, and when Johnson pushed the throttle forward, he felt a tug as his arresting hook grabbed the number six wire. When this wire snapped, the hook snagged the number seven wire, pulling the tailhook from the plane. The Corsair plunged over the port side of the ship and remained afloat long enough for Johnson to egress. Rescued by a boat, Johnson suffered minor lacerations, he soon returned to the cockpit, and completed his required eight landings aboard WOLVERINE in an SNJ-4C Texan.

The plane from which Johnson escaped that day is a far cry from what it looked like sixty-seven years ago when it last flew. The force of snagging the arresting wires at high speed contributed to the tail section separating from the aircraft, and the two pieces of the plane were recovered separately. Having been accepted by the Navy just months before its loss, the factory fresh paint scheme of yesteryear is now covered by mussels. The element that makes this particular Corsair special is relatively intact, still in the position it was in when Johnson slid it back to exit the aircraft. The cockpit canopy with its unique framed structure is what gave the very earliest F4U-1s the nickname "Birdcage" Corsairs.

It is appropriate that the recovery of the F4U-1 Corsair, destined for restoration and eventual display by the museum, occurred during the week of Veterans Day. Johnson, the last man to fly it, eventually received assignment to the Pacific Theater, joining Fighting Squadron (VF) 10 in Hawaii. While flying an F6F-3 Hellcat November 25, 1943, Thanksgiving Day in America, he was killed in a midair collision with another aircraft. His remains are interred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii alongside thousands of other veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Black Cats

By Ens. John Leeds, Maritime Reconnaissance and Patrol Force Public Affairs

One of the most versatile, storied branches of Naval Aviation is the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Force (MPRF). Today's patrol force consists of land-based, long range aircraft, the P-3C Orion and EP-3E Aires II. Patrol aviation traces its roots directly back to the very beginning of Naval Aviation.

One of the remarkable chapters in patrol aviation history took place in the Southwest Pacific during the bleakest days of World War II. The warriors who flew "Black Cats" rewrote naval war-fighting doctrine and helped turn back the Japanese advance, and indelibley shaped the future of maritime patrol aviation.

When America entered the war in December 1941, the Consolidated PBY Catalina was the Navy's workhorse long-range patrol aircraft. It was big and slow, but had excellent range and endurance. It was well suited for long-range patrols, convoy escorts, transport, and anything else that called for flights of long-duration over water. Countless rescues, so-called "Dumbo" missions, were also performed. Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in some of the most remote island locales in the world survived via the Catalina's re-supply missions.

After the attack on Oahu in December 1941 and the subsequent Japanese advance during the early months in the South Pacific, the U.S. and Allied forces faced dire circumstances. What forces had not been killed or captured beat a hasty retreat all the way to Australia. By March of 1942, only three of the original 45 PBYs of Patrol Wing Ten in the Philippines had survived. As Allied forces needed every resource available in the fight for jungle islands and atolls between Australia and the advancing Japanese, PBYs were thrust into combat roles.

Out of necessity, the Catalina crews learned to adapt to nighttime flying, where they were less vulnerable to Japanese fighters and less likely to be spotted by the ships that they were attacking. Crews painted their PBYs black to make them harder to spot. Equipped with radar and radar altimeters, the Cats could navigate in the dark and fly just a few feet above the water. It was practically impossible for Japanese fighters to attack the low-flying Cats at night without flying into the water.

PBYs operated from seaplane tenders and primitive airfields on remote islands like Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal. They attacked enemy shipping during nighttime raids by dropping ordnance and strafing. One of the most daring missions was the raid on Tonelei Harbor, northwest of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Island chain. October 26, 1942, at the start of the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. It was a 900-mile flight, one way, to attack Japanese ships at anchorage, at night. The following is the recollection of Lt. George F. "Blackie" Poulos, excerpted from "Black Cat Raiders of WWII," by Richard C. Knott:

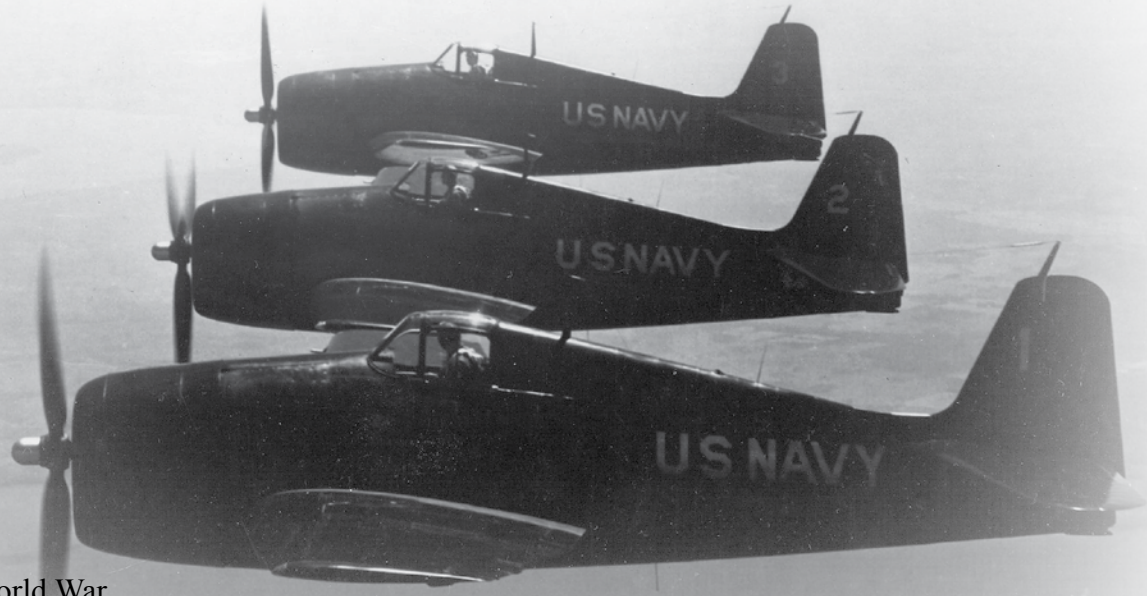
"It was a bright moonlit night with exceptionally good visibility. In order to avoid detection, we flew the last 150 miles at 20 feet above the water in a tight formation. (Lt.) Jack Coley was the lead plane and his navigation was perfect. We found ourselves going right into the harbor inlet undetected until we had to pull up to avoid hitting the destroyer that was doing sentinel duty at the entrance. Once inside the harbor the formation split up with each of us seeking his own target. Ships were visible everywhere, mostly destroyers and harbor craft then a larger ship, a heavy cruiser in an uncluttered area - a very good target. I swung to the right to allow enough room to make a good torpedo run, a quick turn to the left with just enough time to stabilize the run, and I pulled the release handle at about 300 yards. During the pull-up to get over the top of the cruiser, I pulled the handle to release two 500-pound bombs. The PBY shuddered as the weapons exploded. The crew members at the waist hatches reported direct hits but it was not possible to determine the extent of the damage. Nevertheless, we knew that we had scored, that we had hurt them, and that they now knew that their sanctuary was not safe from the workhorse PBYs."

This VP-52 PBY-5 "Black Cat" heads out for another night's work, somewhere near New Guinea in December 1943. (Mark Aldrich)

Night operations proved very successful. Between November 1943 and June 1944, VP-52 destroyed or damaged 16 enemy ships. Entire squadrons became dedicated Black Cat operators. PBYs equipped with radar-detecting equipment became the Navy's first dedicated electronic surveillance aircraft during the same campaign. These squadrons continued to perform their more traditional missions as well. A PBY piloted by Lt. Cmdr. Adrian Marks rescued 56 Sailors from the stricken USS INDIANAPOLIS by landing in the open ocean and filling every available space with survivors.

Today's Patrol and Fleet Air Reconnaissance squadrons are descendants of the Black Cats. Just like their forefathers, the modern-day MPRF is skilled, dedicated and resourceful. They provide a persistent presence, whether hunting submarines, pirates and narco-terrorists over water, or supporting troops on the ground. In honor of the Centennial of Naval Aviation, patrol aviation's contribution to Naval Aviation's illustrious history, and will be recognized at the 2011 MPRF Reunion and Symposium, as well as at a number of events dedicated to special Heritage celebrations. Please join us the first week in April onboard NAS Jacksonville for these history dedications.

Blue Angels - From Past ...



At the end of World War II, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Chester W. Nimitz ordered the formation of a flight demonstration team to keep the public interested in Naval Aviation. The Blue Angels performed their first flight demonstration less than a year later in June 1946 at their home base, NAS Jacksonville. Lt. Cmdr. Roy "Butch" Voris led the team, flying the Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat. (NNAM)

2011 will mark the 25th year of the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron's "Blue Angels" association with the F/A-18 Hornet as well as the team's 65th Anniversary. Started in 1946, the team has thrilled millions of people in venues across the world.

... To Present