The Navy's Own Airlines

By Assistant Director “Red” Brooks

The United States Navy has been in the air transport business for almost 70 years, and Moffett Field was involved in those operations for more than 50 years. The Navy initiated minor air transport operations in the early 1930's. The appearance of the Douglas DC-2 enabled the Navy to equip its utility squadrons with a modern transport aircraft designated as the R2D-1, which replaced a handful of Ford Tri-Motors. Eventually, the R4D-1 (DC-3) emerged in 1942. Thus, the Navy gained the capability to operate its own small airlines.

On 12 December 1941, the Naval Air Transport Service (NATS) was created to provide a global air transport network between naval establishments and areas of naval operations. The Navy signed contracts with Pan American Airways and American Export Airlines to aid in developing the Navy's fledgling system. The mainstays of the Navy's Pacific operations were Pan Am's Boeing 314 "Clippers."

The first NATS squadron, VR-1, was established at NAS Norfolk, Virginia. VR-2 became operational at NAS Alameda, California in May 1942. Atlantic, Pacific and West Coast Wings of NATS were established in 1942 and 1943. NATS continued to acquire the best equipment for its transoceanic flights. The Consolidated PB2Y Coronado and the Martin PBM Mariner flying boats were the Navy's first Pacific region transports.

The Douglas DC-4 Skymaster (Navy R5D-1) appeared in April, 1943. The Navy eventually acquired over 200 of the long range aircraft. The Navy's crown jewel during WWII was the 148,000 lb. Martin Mars, (JRM), which was first operated by VR-8 at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland in November 1943. Five additional Mars flying boats served the Navy well while flying with NATS. At the end of WWII, the Naval Air transport Service could boast about a fleet of 429 aircraft and a personnel strength of 26,000. By 1947, NATS' total transport fleet had dwindled to just 116 aircraft, mostly R5D, R4D and the five Mars flying boats.

The passage of the National Security Act of 1947 was the basis for the creation of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS), which included the combining of the Air Force Air Transport Command >>> Navy's Airline to page 5
What's New That's Old?

By Jim Sheehan

Finally we've arrived into the 21st Century. It appears that last year, 2000, was not a millennium but only a practice year for the new century. As reported in the past Sparrowhawks, last year was not kind to us as we lost a lot of valuable space that we had in mind for use for a new library and display space for our many artifacts.

But, because we are not a bunch of whiners and not to dwell on these past disappointments, everyone here who acts as volunteers and docents will still present a smile to our many guests who come from near and far to visit our small but precious museum.

I've not mentioned some of our volunteers before, but will do so now because they are of that preciousness that is the heart and soul of the museum. They breathe life into what is displayed within the museum. Some act as docents, others as volunteers working on related office-type work such as computer entry. One such person is Hal Zangari who is computer oriented and has been with us for over three years. Another guy who does a great job is Dan D'Alessandro who during WWII was a B-25 Mitchell pilot with the U.S.A.A.C. He's been with us about four years. Speaking of guys who've been former pilots, we have Lew Katz who was a naval aviator in WWII, and his wife Shirley who team up to volunteer on Wednesdays of each week. On Saturdays, normally, we have Bill Frees, who put in 20 years in the Navy beginning just prior to Pearl Harbor, and during the war flew TBF/TBM Avengers in the South Pacific, and at war's end in September 1945, was in the aerial armada of hundreds of aircraft that flew over the USS Missouri during the Japanese surrender ceremony as a show of force. Bill has been with us for over two years.

As our present Acting Treasurer, we have Gloria Perlett, who also handles memberships, along with whatever is asked of her.

Some of our newest volunteers are Herb Jewell, who is a fire chief with the San Carlos/Belmont Fire Departments; Fred Lopez who works for Northwest Airlines, and among other things asked of him, works on building and restoring many of our numerous model aircraft. As of this writing, we have Don Aasen who was a tail gunner in B-17s during WWII and will begin docenting on Fridays and Saturdays. Another more recent volunteer is Frenchie Choiniere who participates in almost all of our Tuesday work days.

Lastly (at least for this issue), we have King Wu, a delightful fellow who always has a smile for everyone (not that the others don't; they do) and has a past history of aviation working for PanAm for 31 years, and Betty Colaluca who spends hours logging in our books. During the War she was in the Navy Waves. Unfortunately the local "com" that volunteered to make our web page went belly up. So we are fortunate to have our newest docent, David Black, who is also computer knowledgeable and will create our new web page.

Carol Henderson

Now that I've mentioned many of our volunteers, I'm going to throw in the one who had the gall and fortitude to see the start of the beginning of the Moffett Field Museum, and that person is Carol Henderson.

Carol was born some years ago in Atlanta, Georgia, one of five children. Oldest brother Larry was a Captain in the Air Corps stationed in England, obtained his masters at Stanford, and started Moore Electronics. Brother Bill a Major, also in the Eighth, became a lawyer. Rosemary, an artist and a teacher, created a foundation that furnished independent living for the mentally challenged. Younger brother Charles was an editor at the Atlanta Journal and Constitution.
Upon completion of Girls High School (yes, that’s what it was called), Carol attended Alabama State Teachers College. While there, as WWII was raging, she was recruited by the Army Signal Corps as a Radio Trainee, and in time became an instructor. In that time frame she married the love of her life Lee Henderson, who subsequently entered the Navy and for the next 20 years she served with Lee wherever he was sent. In 1949 they came to California, and as luck would have it, were stationed at Moffett Field. As you can surmise, Carol has had a long association with Moffett, and aviation, for that matter. Lee was a flight engineer with MATS on the Navy version of the Constellation and for 27 years was a Golf Professional and Manger of the Moffett Golf Course. In time Carol was employed at Hiller Aviation as an inspector of sheet metal; and then Litton industries, and Stanford applied Engineering SAE. While at Hiller she helped form the recreation club and planned all dances, picnics, Christmas parties, and open houses. Carol has kept quite busy over the years. While working she was still able to be a wife and mother of a family of four children; three girls and one boy, who have given her and Lee 10 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

To bring us up to date, when it was ascertained in 1992 that the Navy was leaving Moffett Field Carol helped form the Hail and Farewell Committee and began collecting artifacts for a museum to be established after the Navy left in 1994. For this effort, all of us are quite proud of Carol as our Museum Director, a position she has held since the beginning. If you’ve ever met Carol, you’ll see she’s small in stature (five feet tall) but she’s a giant to all of us who have had the pleasure to work with her.

**JASON PROJECT:** As of the 1st two weeks in February, this year we once again worked with the people of the Jason Project, at which over several thousand students from various schools throughout Northern and Central California attend. Over this two week time frame, our volunteers man a booth to address the students needs such as cookies, candies and soft drinks, should they not have these for their lunch breaks. In addition, we have various items from our gift shop for sale. Because of the cold weather (our booth is in the open air) many of our volunteers have been wearing their Navy flight jackets (that is for those who have them). Myself, all I had was my Northface coat with a heavy scarf around my neck and a baseball cap. All you could see was my eyes. (Did I mention it was cold?) By the way, how cold was it? Well, I know this, nobody aged during the day (nothing does in an icebox). Those "frozen chosen" were Bob Wilber, Bernie McDonough, King Wu, Gloria Perlett, Hal Zangari, Bill Frees, Lew Katz, Lou Helms, "Red" Brooks, Audrus Hicks, Carol Henderson, and your’s truly, BRRRRRRRR.

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**NEWS VIEWS AND SNAFUS**

We found this poem being used as a book marker in a book donated to us...

“The landing signal officer is my shepherd; I shall not crash. He maketh me to land on green runways; He waveth me off the rough waters; He restores my confidence.

Yea, though I come stalling in-to the grove at seventy knots, I fear no evil, For thou art with me. Thy hands and thy flags, they comfort me. In the presence of mine enemies. He attacheth my hook to a wire; My deck space runeth over. Surely safety and caution shall follow me. All my days in the fleet, And I shall dwell in a fool’s paradise forever.

AIRMAN”

*By Lt. B. Randle*
Patrol Squadron Nine

By Assistant Director "Red" Brooks

U.S. Navy patrol squadrons were home-based at NAS Moffett Field for over 40 years. One of the many squadrons based here was Patrol Squadron Nine (VP-9), which arrived in December, 1963, and began operating the P-3A Orion in the anti-submarine warfare role for more than 30 years. VP-9 was commissioned at NAS Whidbey Island, Washington on 15 March 1951.

A long and illustrious history followed the squadron's maiden flight in a PB4Y-2 Privateer. Since that beginning, the Golden Eagles participated in a variety "of" missions flying a variety maritime patrol aircraft from far-reaching bases, including NAVSTA Kodiak, Alaska, NAS Atsugi, Japan, and MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. While based at NAS Moffett Field, the squadron made five deployments to Western Pacific bases during the Vietnam War and continued Pacific Area operations from its home base here until the spring of 1994 when, due to the upcoming disestablishment of NAS Moffett Field, it was transferred to NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii. Later, VP-9's home base was changed to MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, from which the Golden Eagles still perform maritime patrol operations.

Patrol Squadron Nine's many special accomplishments include being the first squadron to be deployed for six months to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean in 1982 and 1983. They broke new ground on deployment in 1984 by becoming the first patrol squadron to conduct operational detachments out of Berbera, Somalia and Al Masirah, Oman.

The Golden Eagles were selected as the winner of the CNO Safety Award for 1988, and in 1990, they were awarded their fourth Battle Efficiency "E," distinguishing Patrol Squadron Nine as the best Pacific Fleet Patrol Squadron.

Note: This is the first of a series of articles about the patrol squadrons that operated out of NAS Moffett Field.
with NATS on 1 June 1948. The new command operated 824 aircraft (766 Air Force and 58 Navy). The main airlift force consisted of 239 C-47s and 234 C-54s. "MATS" had replaced "USAF" and "NAVY" on the wings of most aircraft. VR-3, assigned to the Continental Division of MATS, operated out of Moffett Field and flew a regular air route to Kodiak, Alaska.

MATS received an airlift call-to-arms on 23 July 1948 when the command was directed to establish an airlift task force to participate in the Berlin Airlift, or "Operation Vittles," to supply foodstuffs and coal to the beleaguered city of Berlin, Germany. VR-6 and VR-8 became involved in the airlift by the fall of 1948. Those two 12-plane Navy MATS squadrons responded magnificently to the battle cry "Ten Tons to Tempelhof" by becoming the most efficient squadrons of the entire airlift. Both squadrons held the highest average load records between Rhein-Main (Frankfurt) and Berlin with 10.3 tons per flight.

VR-8 ended its tour with the airlift with the title of Most Efficient Squadron. Another Navy MATS squadron, VR-3, supported the airlift by shifting its routes from domestic to trans-Atlantic. The blockade of Berlin was lifted finally on 12 May 1949. VR-5 performed heavy maintenance and overhauls on aircraft engines for VR-6 and VR-8 during the airlift.

Even with the establishment of MATS in 1948, the Navy continued to operate several transport squadrons in Navy commands designated as Fleet Logistic Support Wings (FLOGWINGS). VR-5 was a unit of FLOGWINGSPAC based initially at NAS Seattle, Washington, and, commencing in July 1950, at NAS Moffett Field. The squadron took over the Alaskan routes formerly assigned to VR-3 and absorbed a small utility transport squadron (VRU-3) located at NAS North Island, California. VR-5 San Diego Detachment flew R4Ds and provided fleet logistic support between NAS North Island, NAS Moffett and NAS Corpus Christi, Texas. One of the aircraft operated by the detachment was an R4D-7Z, a VIP configured transport used by VADM T. L. Sprague, COMNAVAIRPAC. Passengers on that very plush aircraft included famed WWII naval officers, FADM Chester W. Nimitz and FADM William F. "Bull" Halsey. RADM E. N. Kivette (former Sparrowhawk pilot aboard USS Macon) was aboard a flight to NAS Alameda in August, 1950. The plane commander on the VIP aircraft for nine months was LTJG R. S. "Red" Brooks, now a docent at the Moffett Field Museum.

Navy squadrons VR-3 and VR-5 transitioned to the Douglas DC-6 (Navy R6D) in the fall of 1951. VR-7 and VR-8 transitioned to the Lockheed R7V-1 in 1953. The FLOGWINGS were disestablished in 1956.

During August and September 1957, VR-7 and VR-8 moved to NAS Moffett Field and, in June 1958, all aircraft operated by VR-3, VR-6, VR-7 and VR-8 were given Air Force designations. On 1 August 1958, VR-7 became the flying squadron in Naval Air Transport Wing of MATS, and VR-8 was designated as the maintenance squadron of the wing. VR-7 routes included Travis AFB to Hickam, Wake, Guam and Clark Field, extending to Dhain, Saudi Arabia and Bangkok, Thailand. VR-7 and VR-8 were decommissioned in mid-1967.

On 1 January 1966, the Military Air Transport Service was redesignated as the Military Airlift Command (MAC), and Navy MATS participation was terminated. The C-118's operated by Navy MATS squadrons were assigned to the Naval Air Reserve, which provided logistic support operations as requested by Navy commands.

The Naval Air Reserve force was reorganized into self-sufficient Force Squadrons in 1970. The Fleet Tactical Support Wing was established at NAS New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1974. C-9Bs (DC-9s) were introduced in the Naval Air Reserve in 1978, and Lockheed C-130Ts were delivered to a number of Naval Reserve VR squadrons in 1993.

The last NAVY transport squadron to operate out of Moffett Field was VR-55. The "Minutemen" of VR-55 were reassigned from NAS Alameda to Moffett Field in December, 1993. The Naval Air Reserve squadron operated from Moffett Field until late 1998 when it was transferred to NAS Point Mugu, California. The departure of that squadron closed the books on Navy transport operations out of Moffett Field once and for all.
Yee Haaa! Are Both Doors Open?

Now that I have your attention: Many stories about aircraft flying through Hangar One have never turned out to be true. But in Tillamook, Oregon, this did happen in one of our sister airfield hangars. Hangar 2 and 3 at Moffett are of the original seventeen in the U.S. and Tillamook had two.

"The hangar doors are open' what are you going to do Sweed?" The question was asked Norman "Sweed" Ralston by the air-boss near the end of the 21 August 1950 airshow at NAS Tillamook, a former U.S. Navy Blimp base on the central Oregon coast. Earlier that day the airshow manager asked Sweed if he would fly through one of the base's giant blimp hangars. A former military flight instructor, crop duster and airshow performer, answered, "If the doors are open, I'll fly through the hangar."

True to his word, Sweed climbed into his custom-painted North American AT-6 Texan, took off and circled the field and hangars. After eyeballing his approach, and with airshow smoke streaming from his aircraft, he flew into Hangar B about 50 feet above the ground at more than 200 mph. Seconds later, just before leaving the 1,072 foot-long wooden hangar, he rolled the AT-6 and emerged from the hangar inverted.

The passing years have burnished the near-legend of his flight. "I took advantage of the opportunity and the moment, Sweed said "I didn't feel there was any danger in it." Recalling the 50-year old conversation during a commemorative gathering at Jack Erickson's Tillamook museum in August, Sweed, now 84, said: I told them I'd do it and I did. Pacific Flyer, September 2000

Admiral Frederick's Gift to Moffett Field

This Old Fashion anchor located at the far end of the Moffett parade ground has an interesting history. Originally it was part of a pre-WWII four-stack destroyer. From there, it found its way to the front of the NROTC building at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA, where it resided for many years. As a university prank, the anchor was stolen and then later returned. In about 1965 the anchor was given to Rear Admiral T.R. Frederick and placed in his front yard. In 1970 the Admiral donated the anchor to Moffett Field, and it now sits at the head of the Shenandoah plaza parade grounds. Technically the name of this old fashion anchor is an Iron-Stocked Anchor or more commonly called, an Old Fashion Anchor.

Assist. Director "Red" Brooks archives.
OOPS!
Belly-Up Blimp

On January 20th a crewless 4,000 pound 143 foot advertising blimp settled onto the Oyster Reef restaurant in Oakland, California. The blimp was trying to moor in strong winds at the Oakland International Airport tore a hole in the craft. With the ship out of control, the crew of two jumped about two stories to the ground with minor injuries. It then floated on to the Oakland waterfront about three miles away where fireman removed it from the restaurant. The name or manufacture or the type of the blimp was not disclosed.  San Jose Mercury News.

Navajo ‘Code Talkers’ Honored

It only took the government 55 years to recognize the famous ‘Code Talkers’ of the Pacific theater during WWII. President Clinton signed a bill that will bestow honor to the Navajo Indians who developed a series of encrypted messages in Navajo language that were never broken by the Japanese or in fact by our code breakers. The bill that would grant Congressional Gold Medal to the original 29 ‘Code Talkers’ and silver medals to about 300 Navajo soldiers who followed them. It's about time and so well deserved. San Jose Mercury News.

Did You Know

- After its initial flight in December 1939, the B-24 Liberator went on to have the largest production run of WWII for any American aircraft. Trade-mark calendar of Vintage airplanes.
- In 1783 Jean-Baptiste Meusnier conceived an egg-shaped balloon having a ballonet to compensate for changes in gas pressure. Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- Then in 1852 history's first powered flight in a dirigible. Henri Gifford achieved a top speed of 6 miles per hour. Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- And in 1884 Gottlieb Daimler finally perfected the gasoline internal engine that drastically reduced the critical ratio-to-weight horsepower and made power flight practical. Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- And then in 1909 the Leboudy Librete added a rigid keel for strength making it the first semirigid airship. But in 1908 the Italian Army engineer Gaetano Crocco flew Italy's semirigid dirigible. Who do you believe? Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- And in 1904 France's Ville de Paris was one of the first dirigibles to attach stabilizing surfaces. Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- And last, in 1910 the Clement-Bayard II was the first airship flight to leave the Continent to London. Hindenburg by Rick Archbold.
- "You can tell when it's midnight because the darkness is directly overhead. Except during daylight saving.” Frank & Ernest, 1984

Back to the Past from the Moffett News

By Bob Wilber

- 3 March 1944, ENS. Fred M. Culbert has recently been made station helium officer.
- 26 March 1953, The All-Station badminton champ is Claude Waymire of VC3.
- 17 March 1961, LT (JG) Kermit Jackson of VF-124 was forced to parachute to safety when his jet fighter flamed out over the Chocolate Mountains in Arizona.
From the Treasury Department, Office of the Secretary

To District Inspector Bruce Watts,

As we enter a new century our service of providing the mariner with 3,270 lighted aids to navigation. Of that number, five minor aids are powered by electricity. We this new means of powering aids to navigation will increase, albeit slowly, until it becomes more reliable.

With the development of the horseless carriage, telegraph, gramophone and other modern marvels it can be expected that new machines and equipment will be invented to make our job of furnishing aids to navigation easier and more reliable. Still, even with modern equipment, it is the keeper we must always remain vigilant. And it is up to you, the officers of the service, to ensure that our keepers remain steadfast, diligent and temperate. He goes on to warn again of using candles on Christmas trees.


Oh yes, the letter was dated, December 1, 1900.

Just think, a little over one hundred years ago the only navigational aids were whale-oil fueled wick flames which gave light through the Fresnel lenses, that could send a strong light 20 miles out to sea. Now we have satellite positioning systems. Ironically the old light houses are still with us, as automated navigational night beacons and as museums which have saved the heritage of light houses, their keepers, and their perilous profession.

Note: Fresnel is pronounced as frienel, without the "s". No I don't know why, it's French.