



A Centennial of Naval Aviation



100 Years of Progress and Achievement

United States Navy

United States Marine Corps

United States Coast Guard



A Curtiss "Hydroaeroplane" is pushed into the water in preparation for flight at North Island in January 1911. On the 26th of the same month this aircraft achieved a notable aviation "first" by being the first aircraft to operate from water. Note that the engine has a pusher propeller and the ailerons are independent of the wings.

On 8 May 1911, Captain Washington Irving Chambers, United States Navy, officer in charge of aviation, prepared the requisition for the Navy's first aircraft to be purchased from aviator and inventor Glenn H. Curtiss. After 98 years, Naval Aviation has grown from a tactical afterthought and support capability to a primary instrument of our national security. From the Curtiss A-1 Triad, to the F/A-18 Super Hornet, from the *USS Langley* (CV 1) to the *USS George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77), Naval Aviation has scored an impressive list of achievements in peace and war. The first crossing of the Atlantic by air, victory at the Battle of Midway, and the first American in space, to name a few, have put Naval Aviation at the forefront of our national destiny.



Highlights of this issue:

This is the first of a number of periodic newsletters that will be issued by Commander, Naval Air Forces as the Centennial year of 2011 approaches. Here's what is inside Volume 1, Issue 1!

- 2011 National Event Schedule
- Squadrons in Profile
- Profiles in Courage
- Centennial Force Leadership
- Then and Now



Commander, Naval Air Forces Headquarters building, constructed in 1918-1920 at Naval Air Station North Island.



The Centennial of Naval Aviation kicks off January of 2011 and continues as a year-long celebration with a variety of events and commemorations throughout the year. Airshows, art exhibits, flyovers and tactical demonstrations are but a few of the events being planned.

The Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard along with many other organizations, are working together to ensure that proper recognition is given for this most important anniversary year.

For the latest information, visit the Commander, Naval Air Force's website at <http://www.cnaf.navy.mil/centennial/>.





USMC Squadron Focus - VMFA-251

Marine Observation Squadron 251 (VMO-251) was activated 1 December 1941 at Naval Air Station North Island, California. While flying the Grumman F4F *Wildcat* during World War II, the squadron participated in numerous Pacific campaigns including Guadalcanal, Southern Solomons, Santa Cruz, Luzon, and the Southern Philippines.

While no longer known as VMO-251, the squadron is still operational and is currently flying the F/A-18C *Hornet*.



Grumman F4F-3P Wildcat assigned to VMO-251 in the Solomons

1911



2011

Enterprise to Turn 50

USS Enterprise (CVN 65) will mark a half-century of service on 25 November 2011. Commissioned on that date in 1961, the Big “E” is the oldest nuclear powered vessel afloat, and the oldest U.S. Navy warship (excluding *USS Constitution*). The latest in the long line of U.S. Navy vessels to bear the same name, including CV-6, the most decorated American ship ever with 22 battle stars. *Enterprise* continues to provide stalwart service in both peace and wartime. At 1,123 feet she is the longest military vessel in the world and weighs in at 93,500 tons. She is the only ship of her class.

Enterprise is seen here steaming prior to the removal of the SCAN-FAR radar “cone” atop the ship’s island during her three-year refit, 1976 to 1979. She is the oldest ship in the fleet.



2011 Centennial Events:

- [January - Naval Aviation Centennial Kickoff - San Diego, CA](#)
- [February - Super Bowl Flyover - Dallas, TX](#)
- [March - NAS JRB Fort Worth Air Show & Open House - Dallas, TX](#)
- [May - New York Fleet Week/Jones Beach Airshow - New York, NY](#)
- [May - Indy 500 Flyover - Indianapolis Motor Speedway, IN](#)
- [June - 69th Battle of Midway Commemoration - San Diego, CA](#)
- [July - EAA AirVenture Oshkosh - Oshkosh, WI](#)
- [August - MCB Kaneohe Bay - Kaneohe, HI](#)
- [August - City of Chicago Air & Water Show - Chicago, IL](#)
- [August - Seattle Sea Fair - Seattle, WA](#)
- [September - Reno Air Races - Reno NV](#)
- [September - National Air Show - Washington, DC](#)
- [September - NAS Oceana Air Show - Virginia Beach, VA](#)
- [October - MCAS Miramar Airshow - San Diego, CA](#)
- [October - San Francisco Fleet Week - San Francisco, CA](#)
- [November - Blue Angel Homecoming - Pensacola, FL](#)
- [November - Centennial Gala Closing - Washington, DC](#)

Notional schedule - subject to change

Profiles of Courage

Captain Thomas J. Hudner (Ret.) graduated the United States Naval Academy in 1946 and was designated a Naval Aviator in 1949. On December 4, 1950, while serving with Fighter Squadron 32 onboard *USS Leyte* (CV-32), LTJG Hudner deliberately crash-landed his *Corsair* near the Chosin Reservoir in an effort to rescue ENS Jesse L. Brown, another VF-32 pilot whose own F4U-4 *Corsair* had been shot down. Fully aware of the extreme danger in landing on the rough mountainous terrain and with the scant hope of escape or survival in subzero temperature, he put his plane down skillfully in a deliberate wheels-up landing in the presence of enemy troops. With his bare hands, he packed the fuselage of Brown’s *Corsair* with snow to keep the flames away from the trapped pilot and struggled to pull him free. Unsuccessful in this, he returned to his crashed aircraft and radioed other airborne planes, requesting that a helicopter be dispatched with an ax and fire extinguisher. He then remained on the spot despite the continuing danger from enemy action. For his heroism on that occasion, Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor. Hudner was presented with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman on April 13, 1951. His was the first Navy Medal of Honor awarded for actions in the Korean War.





Then and Now



On 19 June 1944, LTJG Alex Vraciu (center) shot down six enemy aircraft to become an "ace in a day". The top photo was snapped shortly after landing. The lower photo was taken at the Naval Aviation Symposium in Pensacola in May 2002.

Centennial PoCs

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USN Squadron Focus - VFA-11

The current VFA-11 traces its roots back to 1950 with the establishment of VF-43 *Rebel's Raiders*, flying F4U-5N and F4U-5 *Corsairs*. In 1959, the squadron was redesignated as VF-11 and adopted the name *Red Rippers* following the disestablishment of a squadron bearing that designation and name. Since 1959, the *Red Rippers* have flown the F-8 *Crusader*, F-4 *Phantom II*, F-14 *Tomcat* and recently transitioned to the F/A-18 *Super Hornet*. With this transition, the squadron changed its designation to VFA-11. The "Boar's Head" logo worn by the *Red Rippers* can be traced through various squadrons back to 1927.



VF-4 Grumman F3F-3. Note the Neutrality Patrol star on the fuselage.

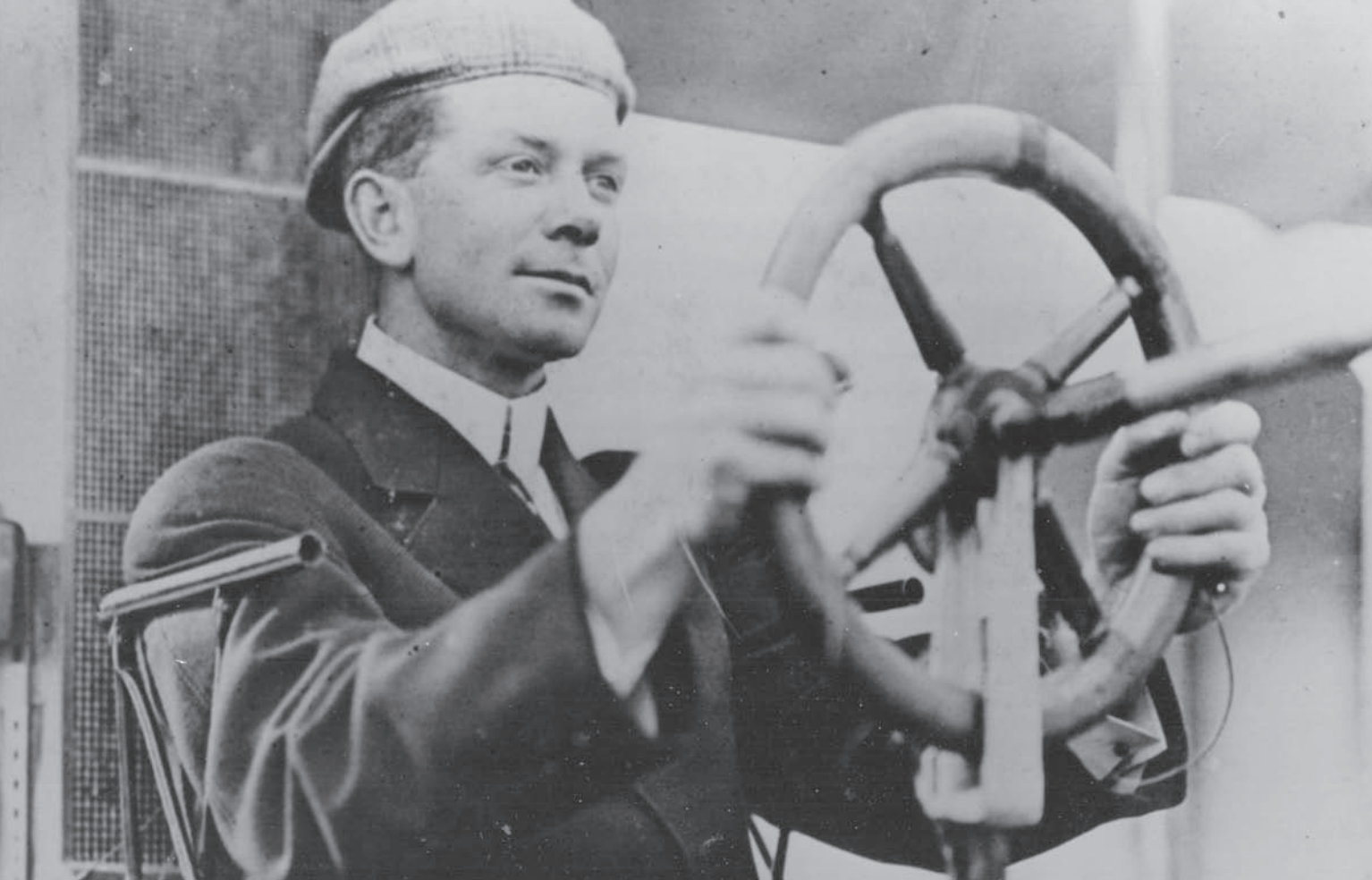


Did They Really Do That?

Have you ever heard of the F4F-3S "Wildcatfish"? Didn't think so. But yes, it was real and it did fly. Based on the Grumman F4F-3 airframe, the Navy put forward a requirement for just such a fighter aircraft. At a time when the U.S. was on the defensive in the Pacific, the lack of forward bases was a real concern, hence the *Wildcatfish*. At one point, the Navy had 100 of these aircraft on order, but later modified the contract when the island "crisis" had passed and the Seabees came to the rescue, constructing airstrips in amazingly short time. The 100 aircraft were eventually built as normal F4F-3s, with conventional landing gear. These were also the last Grumman-built *Wildcats*, as by then, production had shifted to General Motors Eastern Aircraft Division in Linden, New Jersey.

F4F-3S "Wildcatfish" (BuNo 4038) takes off Near NAS Norfolk in February 1943.





1911 - LT Theodore "Spuds" Ellyson at the controls of a Curtiss Hydroaeroplane. Ellyson was designated as the U.S. Navy's first aviator.

2009 - Navy Lieutenant in F/A-18C Hornet assigned to the "Rough Riders" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 125 salutes the catapult officer, or "shooter," before launching from the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76).





VADM Thomas Kilcline, USN, Commander, Naval Air Forces, Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.



LTGEN George Trautman, USMC, Deputy Commandant for Aviation.



RDML McGrath, USN, Vice Commander, Naval Air Forces, Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve.



CAPT Mike Emerson, USCG, Chief of Aviation Forces.

Centennial Force Leadership



Significant Dates in Naval Aviation History

January 18, 1911 - Civilian pilot Eugene Ely becomes the first person to ever land an aircraft on board a ship, flying a Curtiss pusher onto a makeshift wooden platform constructed on the armored cruiser Pennsylvania in San Francisco Bay.

January 26, 1911 - With LT Theodore G. Ellyson, destined to become Naval Aviator Number 1, observing, Glenn H. Curtiss makes the first successful hydroaeroplane flight in San Diego, demonstrating the application of airplanes for naval purposes.

May 8, 1911 - CAPT Washington Irving Chambers prepares contract specifications for the Navy's first aircraft. This date is later designated the birthday of U.S. Naval Aviation.

July 1, 1911 - The Navy's first aircraft, the A-1 Triad, makes its maiden flight from Keuka Lake at Hammondsport, New York.

May 22, 1912 - 1LT Alfred Cunningham, USMC, reports to Greenbury Point, Maryland, for flight training, marking the birth of Marine Corps aviation.

April 24, 1914 - An AB-3 flying boat flown by LT Patrick N.L. Bellinger completes the first combat flight by a U.S. military aircraft, flying a reconnaissance mission in support of operations at Veracruz, Mexico.

Mar 30, 1916 - Second LT Charles Sugden and Third LT Elmer F Stone become the first two Coast Guard aviators assigned to flight instruction.

September 24, 1918 - LTJG David S. Ingalls shoots down his fifth enemy aircraft over the Western Front, becoming U.S. Naval Aviation's first fighter ace.

May 27, 1919 - The NC-4 flying boat lands in Lisbon Harbor, Portugal, completing the first transatlantic crossing by air.

July 12, 1921- The Bureau of Aeronautics (later the Bureau of Naval Weapons) is established by an Act of Congress.

March 20, 1922- The U.S. Navy commissions its first aircraft carrier, Langley.

October 26, 1922 - LCDR Godfrey DeC. Chevalier records the first landing on board a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier aboard USS Langley

July 16, 1927 - In the first combined arms action in the Marine Corps, DH-4 aircraft provide close air support for leathernecks on the ground in a battle against Sandinistas in Ocotol, Nicaragua.

May 7-8, 1942 - U.S. Navy and Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers square off in the Battle of the Coral Sea, the first naval engagement in which ships of the opposing forces are not within sight of one another.

June 3-6, 1942 - U.S. Navy carrier aircraft sink four Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers and a Japanese heavy cruiser, offensive blows that lead to victory in the decisive Battle of Midway.

September 29, 1946 - A P2V-1 Neptune patrol aircraft nicknamed the Truculent Turtle completes a non-stop flight of 11,235.6 miles from Perth, Australia, to Columbus, Ohio, in 55 hours and 17 minutes.

February 20, 1962 - LTCOL John H. Glenn, Jr., USMC, becomes the first American to orbit the earth.

July 21, 1969 - Astronaut Neil Armstrong, a former naval aviator, becomes the first human to set foot on the surface of the moon.

February 22, 1974 - LTJG Barbara Ann Allen becomes the first woman to be designated a naval aviator.





Naval Aviation In the News

P-8A Flies For First Time



25 April 2009 - The Navy's newest aircraft, the Boeing P-8A Poseidon, flew for the first time. The 3 hour 31 minute "Limited Systems Check Flight" took off from Renton Field and landed at Boeing Field where the aircraft will prepare for flight tests starting in the Fall (Boeing Released)

The Navy's newest aircraft, the P-8A Poseidon, flew for the first time on 25 April 2009. The P-8A "T-1" (BuNo 167951) took off from Boeing's Renton Field facility, landing three hours and 31 minutes later at Boeing Field. The T-1 aircraft will undergo systems installation, and will fly again later this summer.

Articles and Photos Needed

The Centennial staff is looking for articles, photos and other submissions for this newsletter. Why not join in and send us some of your work? Articles should be no more than 500 words and photos should be no less than 300 dpi in order to print properly. We are interested in any facet of Naval Aviation history. Submissions should be made to CAPT Richard Dann at richard.dann@navy.mil.

Next publication is set for December 2009, followed by more frequent intervals in 2010 and 2011.

Beetle Bomb?



Would you believe that this was a Blue Angel Aircraft? We know the story behind this aircraft, do you? (NHHC)

SBD Dauntless Recovered



A Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless (BuNo 36291) was recovered from Lake Michigan on 24 April 2009. The aircraft has been shipped to the National Museum of Naval Aviation for assessment and restoration, and will eventually be put on display at the World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. (Buddy Macon, NMNA)

On Friday, 24 April 2009, a Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless (BuNo 36291) was recovered from the waters of Lake Michigan. This particular Dauntless crashed during carrier qualification training with USS Wolverine (IX 64), one of two training carriers in Lake Michigan on November 24, 1944. 36291 is the latest of more than 30 airplanes recovered from Lake Michigan since 1990. Recovery and restoration are sponsored by the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. This Dauntless represents the reactivation of the Navy's underwater aircraft recovery program in the Great Lakes, which has yielded a number of rare or one-of-a-kind aircraft.

USS Wolverine was one of two civilian paddle-wheel steamers converted to an aircraft carrier specifically for the training of Navy and Marine Corps carrier pilots to meet the demands of the fleet. Ensign Joseph Lokites, in his initial carrier landing training, was the second pilot to climb into 36291, the aircraft having taken off from Naval Air Station Glenview, Illinois, in the hands of another aviator, who flew it for 50 minutes earlier in the day. Lokites circled Wolverine, making approaches to the carrier's deck. He made two landings and three passes before successfully making a third landing on the deck of the ship, requesting that the fuel be checked. The Fly One Officer, tasked with launching aircraft from the carrier, reported switching the selector valve on the aircraft to a tank registering 60 gallons of fuel. Lokites was soon airborne again for his remaining qualifying landings, unaware of what was to come.

Lokites made two more landing passes and had just turned into the groove behind the ship on final approach when the engine abruptly quit, which resulted in the Dauntless splashing into the water. "She just conked out," Lokites told the Daily Herald, a Chicago-area newspaper, from his home in Des Moines, Iowa. Now 86 years old, he recalled things happening very quickly after that, the wing striking the water first followed by his hasty exit from the cockpit. He was rescued within minutes, and in the air two days later to complete his carrier qualification.

The aircraft is damaged, but restorable, and is encrusted with mussels, all of which are being removed from the airframe with high pressure water. The museum will continue to preserve the aircraft until its turn in the restoration queue.

