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100 Years of Progress and Achievement

CENTENNIAL

of Naval Aviation

SBD Dauntless recovered

First Aviation Medal of Honor

VMA-211 Celebrates combat history

CENTENNIAL of Naval Aviation

Naval Air Forces
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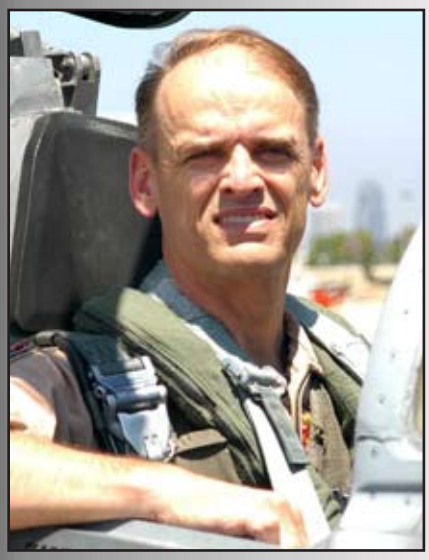

Vice Admiral Tom Kilcline
Commander, Naval Air Forces

As you read this, Centennial of Naval Aviation planning activities are ramping up across the nation. From San Diego to Virginia Beach, and many places in between, regional staffs are working to make this a celebration to remember.

Our staff has located a flying replica of the Curtiss A-1 "Triad," two Curtiss "Hudson Flyer" build projects, a Macchi M.5 replica and as you will see in this issue, a beautifully restored Curtiss JN-4H Jenny.

In addition to the air shows and historical flight demonstrations, we have several historical uniform initiatives in the works as well as an authorized Centennial logo that will be unveiled soon.

Work continues on defining special commemorative markings for aircraft, coins and other collector items that will ensure this joint milestone is remembered long after 2011.

You cannot help but be excited by this opportunity to honor our past while we look forward to our future.

From the Editor

Thank you for making Volume 1 of "A Centennial of Naval Aviation" such a great success! Within hours, the CoNA staff was recieving comments, questions and inquiries regarding the Centennial, as the electronic copy was making its way across the internet. This newsletter has expanded to 12 pages and we hope you'll find the content of this issue rather interesting.

In the meantime, we plan on releasing the next issue in early 2010 and are looking for any articles or photographs that you might want to share with a rather large and diverse segment of the Naval Aviation community. In fact, we wish to thank all of the contributors to this issue. Many of the articles came from you.

Meanwhile, sit back, take a few minutes, and enjoy!

- CAPT Richard Dann

Centennial Force Leadership

VADM Thomas Kilcline
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Commander Naval Air Forces

LtGen George Trautman
USMC
Deputy Commandant for Aviation

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

CAPT Mike Emerson
USCG
Chief of Aviation

The First Naval Aviation Medal of Honor

As the United States entered World War I, the US Navy fielded aviators to man a squadron flying Italian seaplanes from an Italian base against the Austrian enemy across the Adriatic.

On August 21, 1918, four Macchi M.5 seaplane fighters escorted a single Macchi M.8 bomber on a leaflet-dropping mission against Pola. Austrian Albatrosses intercepted the convoy, and ENS George Ludow led his division to engage while the bomber fled. In the swirling dogfight, two American fighters disengaged with jammed guns. Ludlow's M.5 was disabled, on fire and streaming oil as he spun out of the fight and recovered to ditch near the mouth of the Pola harbor.

His wingman, Landsman for Quartermaster (aviation) Charles Hammann, despite his own plane's battle-damage, decided to attempt a rescue knowing the announced policy of Austria to execute airmen captured while dropping leaflets. Hammann spiraled down, perhaps deceiving the Austrians into thinking he too was disabled, and landed his tiny plane in the choppy water kicked up by 20 knot winds, unsure if he could take off again between the chop and the damage, and knowing his possible fate should he fail.

Ludlow opened the port in the bottom of his airplane, kicked holes in the wings and made his way over to his rescuer. Given the size of Hammann's aircraft, the only possible perch for a second person was behind the cockpit, straddling the fuselage below the engine, and just ahead of the propeller. Ludlow scrambled up behind Hammann and grasped the vertical struts to keep from being swept back into the propeller.

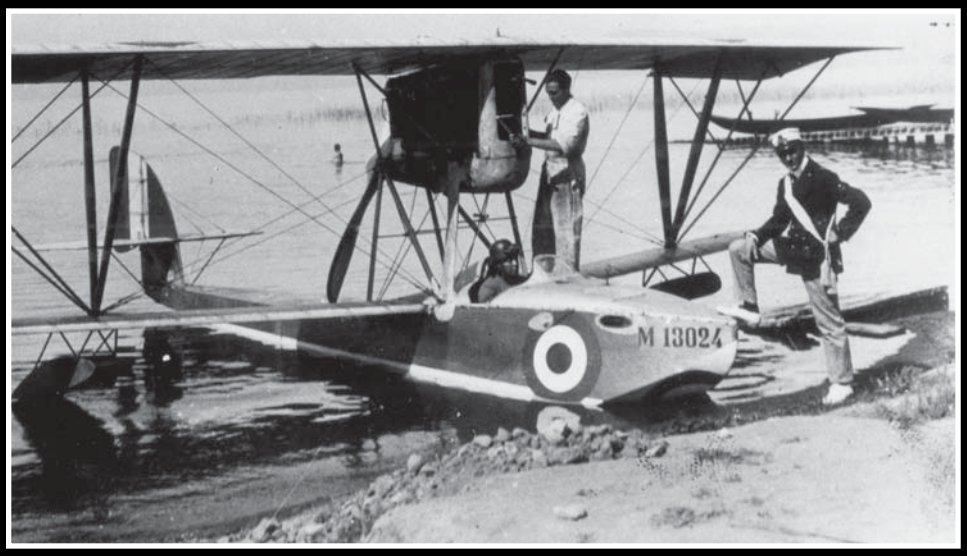
Taking water through the damaged bow of his plane, there was no time for Hammann to jettison his guns or otherwise lighten his overloaded plane. He opened the throttle full and coaxed the plane forward, slowly gathering speed.

The choppy seas stove in the weakened bow as the plane accelerated and broke free of the water, but it finally got airborne and turned for home.

The Austrians did not pursue, no doubt never expecting either Macchi to get back into the air from the rough seas with battle damage. It was 60 miles back to Porto Corsini and to a crosswind landing in the smoother waters of the "canal of worried landings."

A good approach and touchdown could not prevent the plane's smashed nose from digging in like a speed brake and flipping the plane over, completely wrecking it. Pulled from the canal by a boat, Hammann was wet and bruised, while Ludlow had suffered a gash on his forehead. But they were safely back at Goat Island, where the star shined down on the saved.

For his courageous and daring rescue, Charles Hammann was awarded the Medal of Honor, the first to a naval aviator. The legacy of Charles Hammann would continue into the next war when the ship bearing his name, USS Hammann, alongside the crippled USS Yorktown rendering lifesaving and battle damage assistance, took a torpedo meant for Yorktown and was sunk.



An Italian-built Macchi M.5. Landsman for Quartermaster (aviation) Charles Hammann was awarded the first Naval Aviation Medal of Honor. while flying an M.5.

Another SBD Dauntless Recovered from Lake Michigan

On June 19th, fittingly the 65th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the last great carrier battle of World War II in which the SBD Dauntless participated, another example of the venerable dive bomber emerged from Lake Michigan. This aircraft, destined for the Pacific Aviation Museum on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, is the second Dauntless recovered from the lake in recent months as part of the reinstitution of the National Museum of Naval Aviation's underwater aircraft recovery program. An SBD-5, which is planned for display at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, was pulled from Lake Michigan in April.

SBD-2 (BuNo 2173) is lowered on to the tarmac following its recovery from Lake Michigan in June.

This SBD-2 (BuNo 2173) boasts a most interesting history with a few twists and turns. The aircraft's history card notes its acceptance by the Navy in 1941, and assignment to Scouting Squadron (VS) 6 in USS Enterprise (CV 6). During its tour with this squadron, 2173 experienced its first mishap when its main gear collapsed during a landing, damaging the wings.

Assigned to the Aircraft, Battle Force aircraft pool at San Diego in August 1941, 2173 was in California on 7 December 1941, but the following month found it assigned to the aircraft pool at Pearl Harbor. It is here that the record-keeping goes astray.

While one page of the aircraft history card indicates assignment to Scouting Squadron (VS) 5 in March 1942, the section that details "Trouble Reports" related to the plane's service bears the entry "Strike. Crashed at sea. Plane sank immediately." The station noted for this mishap is USS Hornet (CV 8), and a look at the ship's war diary and aircraft accident reports from the era reveal that on 21 April 1942, an SBD made a hard water landing in the Pacific, the force of the crash causing the plane to sink quickly with the loss of its crew, Lieutenant Gardner D. Randall and Radioman Second Class Thomas A. Gallagher. Though the war diary indicated that the aircraft was an SBD-3, the aircraft accident report identifies the aircraft lost as SBD-2 (BuNo 2173).

Despite the fact that the aircraft was recorded lost at sea, the history card of 2173 continues as normal, listing assignment to Bombing Squadron (VB) 5 after the Battle of the Coral Sea followed by time in Carrier Aircraft Service Unit (CASU) 1 and Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 21.

On 1 July 1942, the custody change to Marine Scout Bombing Squadron (VMSB) 233, which coincided with another entry made in the Trouble Report section of the aircraft's history card - "Request plane be reinstated." In the frantic pace of wartime operations, the SBD lost while operating from Hornet had evidently been erroneously identified as BuNo 2173 when further research reveals that in fact it was likely BuNo 2179 that was lost.

Now "resurrected" from the depths of the Pacific, 2173 remained with VMSB-233 until November 1942, a month before the squadron departed for service on Guadalcanal. With the more advanced SBD-5 version of the Dauntless ready to join the fleet in early 1943, 2173's days of front-line squadron service were over. The remainder of its days were spent rotating between NAS Jacksonville, San Diego, and Glenview its service at the latter station beginning in April 1943 as part of the Carrier Qualification Training Unit (CQTU) operating on board the training carriers USS Wolverine (IX 64) and USS Sable (IX 81) in Lake Michigan.

As Lake Michigan aircraft go, BuNo 2173 led a charmed life given the fact that it spent its days in the hands of new naval aviators learning how to perform one of the most difficult tasks in all of aviation-landing an aircraft on a moving ship. The airplane operated accident free for nine months in the CQTU until 18 February 1944.

On that day, LTJG John Lendo was on approach for a carrier landing when the engine of 2173 began to lose RPMs before completely stopping, the presumed result of carburetor icing. Lendo, a Massachusetts native and graduate of Dartmouth College, had over 1,600 hours of accident free flying in his log book, the result of having served as an instructor at NAS Pensacola, following graduation from flight school in 1942.

While the plane went to the bottom, Lendo was rescued, destined for assignment to fly F6F Hellcats as a member of the newly established Fighting Squadron (VF) 45.

On 14 December 1944, while flying a mission from the deck of the USS San Jacinto (CVL 30), Lendo was declared missing in action during a combat mission over the Philippines. His status was changed to killed in action the following year. The aircraft he flew just months before his death will become a memorial to one of the lost members of the "Greatest Generation."

A Glance at the Past

December 23, 1910.

From: Acting Secretary of the Navy.
To: Lieutenant
Theodore G. Ellyson, U.S.N.,
Newport News S.B. and D.D. Co.,
Newport News, Va.
(Inspector of Machinery)

SUBJECT: Detached duty Newport News S.B. & D.D. Co., Newport News, Va., to duty instruction in aviation Los Angeles, Cal.

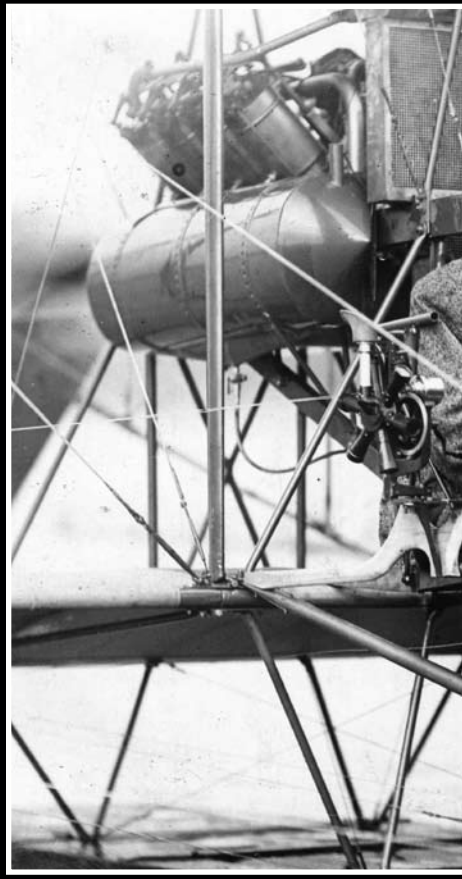
You are hereby detached from duty at the Newport News S.B. & D.D. Co., Newport News, Va., and from such other duty as may have been assigned you; will proceed to Los Angeles, Cal., and confer with Mr. Glenn H. Curtis at his aerodrome at that place for instruction in the art of aviation, and report by letter to the Commandant of the Navy Yard, Mare Island, Cal., for this duty.

You will report your progress at the end of each month, and report any circumstance which in your judgment you may deem of interest to the Navy Department in regard to aviation; you will keep a journal of practical observations such as may be of assistance in the training of the Navy personnel in aviation.)

When in your opinion and that of Mr. Curtis you have qualified in practical aviation you will so report to the Navy Department.

This employment on shore duty is required by the public interests.

LT Theodore Ellyson's orders to duty involving flying in December 1910. LT Ellyson proceeded to San Diego where he became a student in Glenn Curtiss' first aviation camp at North Coronado Island. LT Ellyson was the Navy's first designated Naval Aviator. Photo provided by San Diego Air and Space Museum.



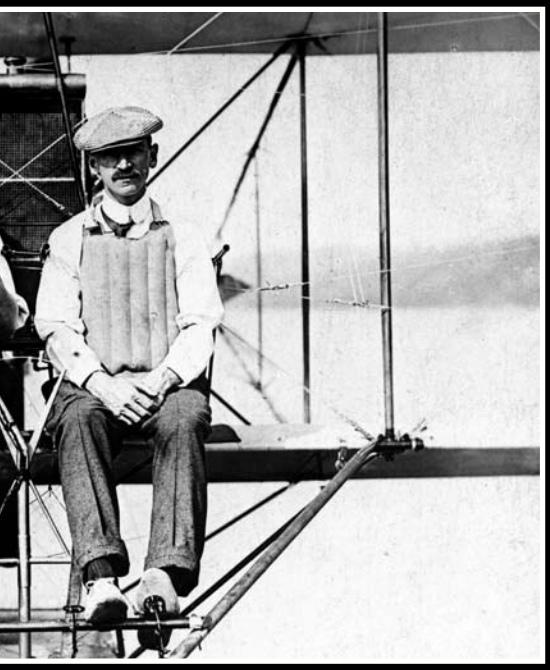
Naval Aviator number 3, LT John H. Towers go on to achieve the rank of Admiral befo

LT Ellyson is seen here at the controls of cotrol wheel, while Curtiss sits calmly ne Curtiss. The control wheel could be pivot provided by San Diego Air and Space Mu

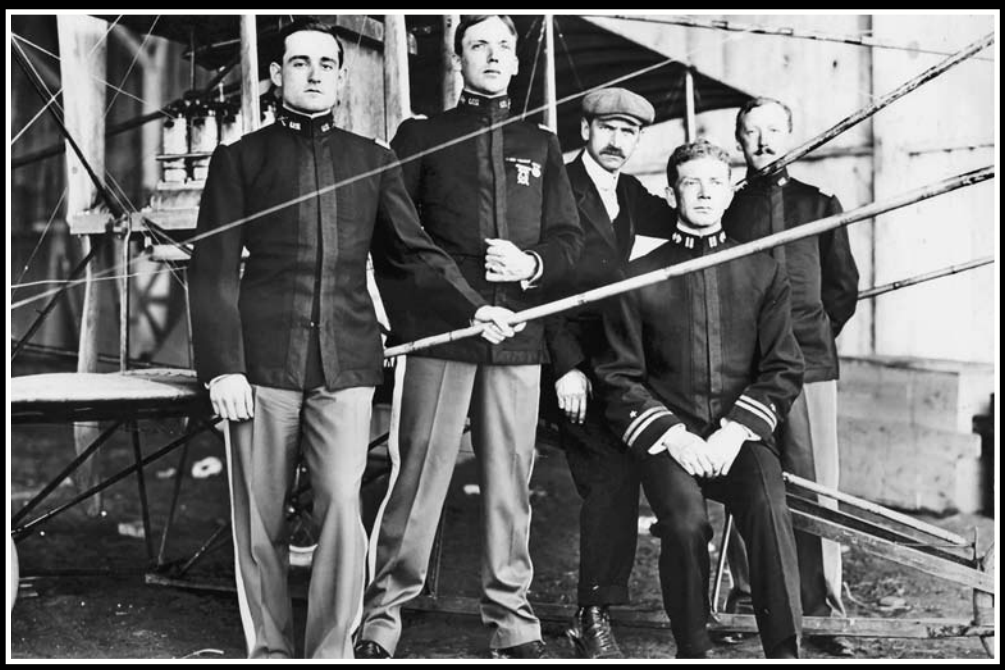
s and an unidentified individual sit at the controls of a Curtiss. Towers would
ore retiring in 1947. Photo provided by San Diego Air and Space Museum.

This aerial view shows both North Island and South Coronado Islands as they looked in the early days of Naval Aviation. At that time, the islands were separated by a water mass known as the Spanish Bight. It was on North Coronado Island where Glenn Curtiss set up his flying schools and taught students, both civilian and military how to fly. Many of Curtiss' hydroaeroplane experiments took place in the Spanish Bight, culminating with the first successful "alighting" of an aircraft from water on 26 January 1911. Photo provided by San Diego Air and Space Museum.

f a Curtiss Hydroaeroplane. LT Ellyson holds the
ext to him. Note the "kapok" type vest worn by
ed to allow either person to fly the aircraft. Photo
seum.



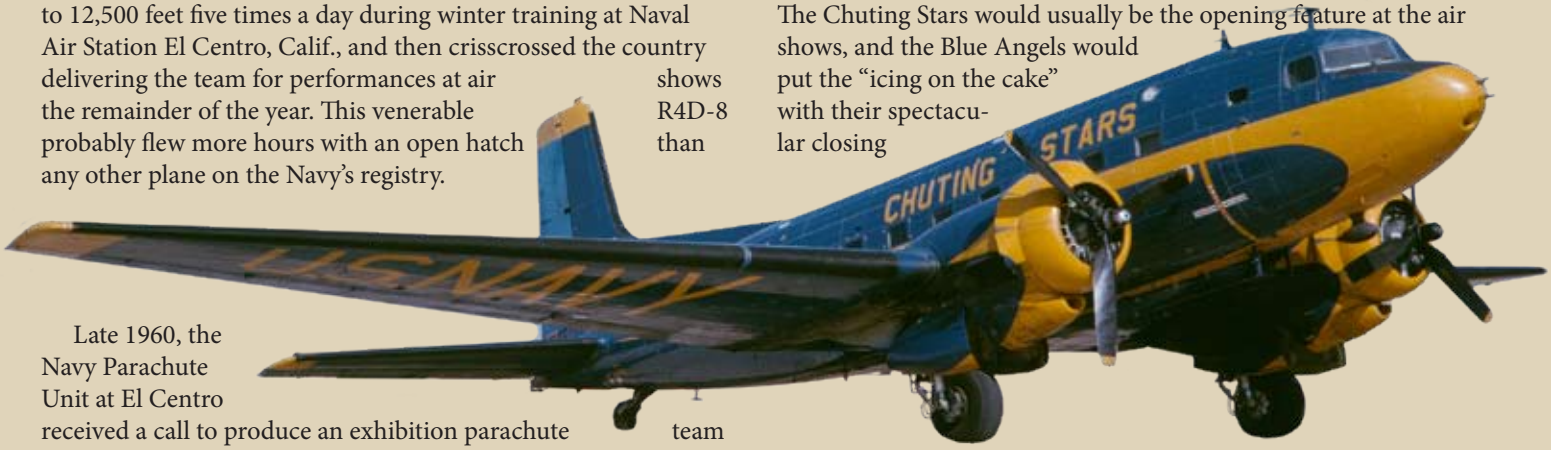
The first military students of the Glenn Curtiss flying school at North Coronado Island. From left to right are; Capt John Walker, US Army, Capt Paul Beck, US Army, Glenn H. Curtiss, LT Theodore Ellyson, US Navy, and Capt George Kelly, US Army. Photo provided by San Diego Air and Space Museum.



Around the Services

Mighty 'Blue Goose'

The "Chuting Stars' " beloved Douglas R4D-8 "Blue Goose" never let them down, but the Navy Parachute Exhibition Team did abandon her in flight nearly a thousand times. During the years 1961 through 1964, the "Goose" hauled the 98% enlisted team to 12,500 feet five times a day during winter training at Naval Air Station El Centro, Calif., and then crisscrossed the country delivering the team for performances at air shows the remainder of the year. This venerable R4D-8 probably flew more hours with an open hatch than any other plane on the Navy's registry.



Late 1960, the Navy Parachute Unit at El Centro received a call to produce an exhibition parachute team to assist in celebrating the Golden Anniversary of Naval Aviation. The mission was to appear at air shows with the Navy's "Blue Angels" Air Demonstration Team and deliver a visual message of the exciting opportunities one could have in the Navy. Deliver it they did, bringing crowds to their feet at every event they appeared.

The men selected for the first Chuting Stars Team were seasoned test parachutists, many with hundreds of jumps to their credit under the most arduous of conditions. Exhibition jumping; however, demanded an extra element of professionalism by injecting intricate free-fall maneuvers and accuracy of landing while never risking crowd safety.

Navy Chief Warrent Officer Lewis T. Vinson, two-time Navy and Marine Corps Air Medal recipient and the Navy's most experienced test parachutist was recalled to active duty to serve as the team's training officer. Under his direction, the men quickly took shape, and were prepared when the 1961 air show season opened. The Chuting Stars would usually be the opening feature at the air shows, and the Blue Angels would put the "icing on the cake" with their spectacular closing routines. The Chuting Stars popularity rose rapidly, to the point of being requested for more events than their schedule allowed. As the 1961 air show season neared its end, a search went out for additional Navy parachuting talent to expand the team, and was then moved to Naval Air Station Pensacola and placed under the command of Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA), from1962-1964.

The few Team members remaining who knew #50762 best live on in hopes their old friend, the Blue Goose, is resting comfortably in chocks somewhere in that great aircraft beyond. Well Done, good and faithful servant.

Taking a trap? Heck, no! The Pitcarin XOP-1 lands aboard USS LANGLEY (CV-1) during evaluation. Unable to hover its usefulness was limited for fleet operations. (NMNA)

Autogiros - The Pitcairin XOP-1

The autogiro was originally developed by Juan de la Cierva of Spain in 1923. It could take off and land almost vertically, but could not hover as later helicopters could.

Harold F. Pitcairin, an aviation pioneer, partnered with Cierva and continued autogiro development. He flew the first U.S. rotorcraft, C-8, cross country on 13 May1929, from Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania to Langley, Virginia, a distance of 165 miles.

In April 1931 Pitcairin won the Collier Trophy for his development of rotary-wing aircraft. The U.S. Navy bought three Pitcairin XOP-1 autogiros to test. On 23 September 1931, Navy LT Alfred Pride made the first rotorcraft landing and takeoff from a ship at sea, USS Langley, flying the XOP-1.

In 1932 the U.S. Marine Corps experimented with one of the XOP-1s in operations in Managua, Nicaragua. The fact the autogiro couldn't hover and that it had a very small payload limited its usefulness to the naval services.

Pitcairin and his company held more than 160 rotary-wing patents and his discoveries were vital to Igor Sikorsky's success in developing the helicopter. Specifically, the tilting-rotor disc cyclic control and the three-position collective pitch.

Sikorsky's VS-316/XR-4 helicopter, the first procured by the U.S. military in 1942, contained the Pitcairn patented rotor system.

‘Wildcat’ to ‘Harrier:’ VMA-211 celebrates combat history

Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 211 began as VF-4M Jan. 1, 1937, at NAS San Diego.

On July 1, 1937 the squadron was redesignated as VMF-2. Initially flying Grumman F2F-1 and F3F-1s, the squadron transitioned to F3F-2s.

In Jan. 1941, VMF-2 moved to Ewa, Hawaii and was redesigned as VMF-211 while transitioning to the Grumman F4F “Wildcat.”

Nov. 28, 1941, VMF-211 flew 12 Wildcats aboard USS Enterprise for movement to Wake Island. Dec. 8, the Japanese attacked destroying seven squadron aircraft. During the next two weeks, the remaining five planes repelled attacks and inflicted great losses on the enemy. The rear echelon was subsequently transferred to Palmyra Atoll in the South Pacific and adopted the name “Avengers” in the memory of those Squadron members who were killed or captured.

Flying the F4U “Corsair” during the rest of the war, VMF-211 participated in the Treasury-Bougainville, Bismarck, Northern Solomon, Leyte and Southern Philippine campaigns. After World War II, VMF-211 participated in the occupation of China. While operating on board USS Coral Sea in 1952, the Squadron was redesignated VMA-211.

In 1957, the Squadron received A-4 “Skyhawks” and subsequently moved to El Toro, Calif. With the escalation of the Vietnam War, VMA-211 moved to Japan in 1965 and commenced the first of four deployments to the Republic of Vietnam. August 1976, the Squadron returned to El Toro, where it replaced its A-4Es with A-4Ms.

After a unit deployment to the western Pacific, VMA-211 relocated to Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, A.Z. Dec. 10, 1987, to become a part of Marine Aircraft Group 13.

The squadron currently flies the AV-8B “Harrier” II.

VMF-211 Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat circa December 1941. Illustration by CAPT Rich Dann

An AV-8B Harrier aircraft, assigned to Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 211, lands aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2) during deck landing qualifications. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Mark R. Alvarez.

2011 Centennial Events:

January	Naval Aviation Centennial Kick off San Diego, CA
February	Super Bowl Flyover - Dallas, TX
March	NAS Meridian 50th Anniversary Air Show
April	NAS JRB Fort Worth Air show & Open House
May	Naval Aviation Week Pensacola, FL
May	New York Fleet Week/Jones Beach Airshow - New York, NY
May	Joint Services Open House Washington, D.C.
June	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	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

Centennial schedule is subject to change and may include but is not limited to any or all events printed.

Around the Services

The "Hoverfly"

Coast Guard Pilot Lt. Cmdr. Frank Erickson stands next to a Sikorsky HNS-1 "Hoverfly" at Coast Guard Air Station Floyd Bennett Field, New York. Erickson pioneered many helicopter lifesaving techniques still in use today. Photo provided by Thomas E. Doll.

February 1943, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, assigned responsibility for the sea-going development of helicopters and their operation in convoys to the Coast Guard, then part of the Navy Department.

Landing trials of the Sikorsky XR-4 piloted by Army Col. R.F. Gregory, were conducted March 7, 1943, aboard the merchant tanker Bunker Hill. On June 16, 1943, the Navy accepted its first helicopter, a Sikorsky YR-4B, HNS-1 "Hoverfly," at Bridgeport, Conn., following a 60 minute acceptance flight by Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. F.A. Erickson.

December 20, 1943, the Navy's Chief of Operations directed that effective January 1, 1944, the Coast Guard conduct a helicopter pilot training program at Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N.Y. The Coast Guard was also experimenting using the helicopter as an airborne ambulance and to carry emergency medical supplies.

January 1944, while transiting the Atlantic Ocean on the British freighter Daghestan, Coast Guard Lt. j.g. S.R. Graham made a 30 minute flight from the ships flight deck. Winter weather precluded other flights.

August 1944, an electric powered hoist was installed on an HNS-1 helicopter at CGAS Floyd Bennett Field and flights were conducted evaluating the feasibility of rescuing personnel from the water and transferring personnel and equipment to and from underway boats.

In March 1945, the Commanding Officer of CGAS Floyd Bennett Field reported that a dipping sonar suspended from an XHOS-1 helicopter had been tested successfully.

Jenny in a Barn: Restored JN-4H Airborne

Frank Schelling of Sonoma California has agreed to share some observations of his magificently restored Curtiss JN-4H "Jenny" aircraft.

The aircraft is finished to depict one of 30 Curtiss JN-4H "Jenny" aircraft purchased from the Army and delivered to the Navy in March 1918 directly from the Curtiss plant in Buffalo, New York.

The original history is unknown except that it was a "barn find" in Virginia and subsequently purchased for restoration. The restoration took 31 years and was finished in 2003. Flight time to date is approximately 90 hours. Over 225 passenger rides have been given.

The Jenny has been displayed at the following air shows and awarded "Grand Champion" at each; Watsonville, California, Merced, California and Oshkosh, Wisconsin in 2004, Rolls Royce Invitational (Reno Air Races), Reno, Nevada in 2006, and the Antique Airplane Association Fly-In in Blakesburg, Iowa in 2008.

Flying the Jenny is very different than flying a modern aircraft. Taildragger experience is an absolute requirement. She has no brakes or tailwheel and must be flown off of turf and she does not like crosswinds. The best time to fly is early morning or evening when the prevailing winds are very light. Ground handling, takeoffs, and landings are easy. Once airborne it quickly becomes evident that she is unstable and must be flown with continual corrections. One has the feeling of stirring porridge with the stick. Flying soon becomes a two hands on the stick operation. Coordinated turns are a challenge. Put the nose on the horizon or slightly below (never above) and lead with rudder and follow with aileron. With a 44 foot span, adverse yaw is a problem so there is a tendency to overbank and opposite aileron must be applied to maintain bank angle. To exit the turn, shove the nose down and accelerate out. Jenny has a very high sink rate due to drag from the round flying wires and all of the other stuff sticking out into the wind. In a no-power situation, your straight ahead landing spot is hidden

SH-60B Seahawk to Pensacola

In a rare treat for visitors to the National Naval Aviation Museum, an SH-60B Seahawk that is the museum's newest aircraft acquisition ended its flying days with a landing in the museum parking lot. Adorned in a brilliant paint scheme that included a snake coiled around the tail, a reflection of the helicopter's last assignment to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light (HSL) 48 "Vipers," "Venom 500" circled over the landing zone once and kicked up dirty and leaves at it descended for its final touchdown. When its engines shut down and rotors stopped for the final time, the Seahawk ended over 23 years of service.

Accepted by the Navy in 1986, BuNo 162137 flew with HSL-40, the SH-60B Atlantic Fleet Replacement Squadron, for six years. It was transferred to HSL-44 in January 1992, and deployed with detachments from the squadron and HSL-48 during its fleet service. Among the ships from which it flew were the cruiser USS Thomas S. Gates (CG 51), frigate USS McInerney (FFG 8), and frigate USS Boone (FFG 28). While operating from the latter vessel in 1999, it participated in the interception of the merchant vessel Caribe Star and seizure of a significant amount of illegal narcotics. During its service, Bureau Number 162137 logged 8,785 flight hours and more than 28,000 landings.

On 30 July, in a ceremony in the Blue Angels Atrium, the aircraft was formally turned over to the museum in front of HSL-48 squadron members and Rear Admiral Gary Jones, Commander, Naval Education and Training Command and a veteran of service in HSLs.

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below the radiator. Landing is initiated opposite of the threshold and a continual 180 degree turn maintained with power added as required. Flare and touchdown are normal. Landing rollout is short with the tailskid acting as the brake. Taxing and turns are made easy with the steerable tailskid.

Sharing the Jenny is fun and presents an opportunity for people to experience what flying a 1918 vintage aircraft was really like.

Frank Schelling's magnificently restored Curtiss JN-4H "Jenny", resplendent in Navy markings and a Bureau Number of 3223. This particular aircraft did not see Navy or Marine Corps service. (Frank Schelling)

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.

From Past...

Did They Really Do That?

The Convair XFY-1 "Pogo" and its competition, the Lockheed XFV-1 were fixed-wing, vertical takeoff aircraft designed to operate from small Navy ships with a minimum "footprint". The concept for both aircraft was "tailsitter" designs where the transition from horizontal flight to landing involved deceleration, and a subsequent vertical landing by "backing down".

Initial testing was done with the aircraft tethered for safety reasons until Convair test pilot LtCol James F. "Skeets" Coleman, USMCR was ready to attempt flight with a transition from vertical to horizontal. This took place on 2 November 1954 when the XFY-1 took off, transitioned to horizontal flight and flew for 20 minutes before returning to land in a 50-foot square. This was the first successful VTOL flight ever in an aircraft that was not a helicopter or autogiro. For this, Coleman was awarded the Harmon Trophy.

The XFY-1 was extremely difficult to land because of a poor view from the cockpit. Imagine this on the pitching deck of a destroyer! The T40 turboprop was mechanically complex and unreliable. The XFY-1 program was cancelled after 40 hours of flight testing.

One of the three XFY-1s actually flew. 138648 was used as an engine testbed and 138650 was used only for static tests. The sole flight article (138649) was displayed at NAS Norfolk but is now in storage at the National Air and Space Museum.

USS Macon (ZRS-5) approaches its mooring mast at Naval Air Station Sunnyvale, California. Barely visible aft of the control car is the aperture for the hangar bay capable oc carrying up to five aircraft. (NMNA)

F-35C Rollout

The Lockheed Martin Company held the official rollout ceremony for the F-35C Lightning II at Lockheed Martin's production facility in Fort Worth, Texas on 28 July 2009. The final major subvariant, the F-35C is destined for operation aboard the Navy's large deck aircraft carriers. The keynote speaker was ADM Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations.

Chief of Naval Operations ADM Gary Roughead speaks during the rollout ceremony for the F-35C Lightning II at Lockheed Martin's production facility in Fort Worth, Texas on 28 July 2009. (USN Released)

To Present.

P-8A Poseidon Rollout

Two days afer the rollout of the F-35C, the Boeing Company held the official rollout ceremony for the Boeing P-8A Poseidon at Boeing's Renton manufacturing facility. As with the F-35C rollout, the keynote speaker was ADM Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations. This aircraft will eventually replace the P-3C Orion as the Navy's Maritime Patrol aircraft.

30 July 2009 - The rollout of the P-8A Poseidon at Boeing's Renton facility marked the second rollout of a new Navy aircraft in a three-day period. This aircraft will eventually replace the P-3C Orion as the Navy's Maritime Patrol aircraft. (Released)