

IN JANUARY 1917 SCENE AT PENSACOLA ARE THREE STURTEVANTS, A GALLAUDET AND N-9'S IN BACKGROUND

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

THE DECLARATION of war against Germany on April 6, 1917, found United States Naval Aviation unprepared for the task ahead. The strength—almost too optimistic a term—of Naval Aviation stood at 48 officers and 239 enlisted men with some aviation experience, 54 aircraft of training types, one free balloon, one kite balloon, one unsatisfactory dirigible and one air station. This was the nucleus around which an effective fighting force would be built.

Though it had been six years since the first aircraft had been acquired by the Navy and its first pilots trained, the Navy had nothing resembling a formally organized aviation force. Only the first faltering steps toward developing operational units had been taken.

Very naturally, the emphasis in the early years was on training. In April 1917, the training program was just recovering from the effects of a six-month hiatus that began in June 1916 when accidents underscored the unsatisfactory nature of the aircraft in use.

The effect of the \$3½ million provided for aviation in the Naval Appropriations Act of August 29, 1916, had not been felt. The Naval Flying Corps, authorized by the same act, had not been established. Aircraft manufacturing was undergoing some measure of expansion as a result of orders from abroad, but not as a result of Navy orders. Although suitable sites for air bases along the East Coast had been selected, their establishment and construction were still in the planning stage.

Some advance had been made in flight training after the delivery of N-9's late in 1916 and the experiments conducted with shipboard catapults had borne some fruit. The USS *North Carolina* was equipped with gear necessary to carry and operate aircraft; the USS *Huntington* and the USS *Seattle* were being similarly equipped.

Outside the Navy, interest in aviation was widespread. Aviation elements existed in the Naval Militia and in the National Naval Volunteers and, without much practical

Navy support, a start had been made in training men to fly the airplanes and mechanics to keep them flying. Student groups at universities, led by the unit formed at Yale, found the money to buy aircraft and hire instructors. Other young men not associated with the organized units were taking instruction on the chance of joining them.

Curtis and other enterprising manufacturers had set up schools not only to profit from the growing interest but also to stimulate its continued growth. Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary, an ardent advocate of aviation and one fully aware of the possibility of war, raised money by individual subscription to form the National Coastal Patrol Commission. Its first unit, Aerial Coastal Patrol No. 1, was composed mainly of men from the First Yale Unit. From these efforts, there were many fully or partially trained aviators when war came and many more who recognized the aviation potential.

The air station at Pensacola had opened in January 1914. Its flight

training program was informal although in the next three years some progress was made toward developing a formal curriculum. Personnel were assigned individually, rather than in groups. In consequence, training was sporadic and, although men assigned in the summer of 1915 were generally considered the first class at Pensacola, the station still lacked the formality of class organization.

Ground school for prospective pilots stressed the technical aspects of aviation but, because all the students were Annapolis graduates, omitted entirely such subjects as navigation and fundamentals of seamanship. These courses were added later when officers were recruited from civilian status. Training of airplane mechanics was more formal, but these classes had only been started recently.

ALTHOUGH the years preceding the declaration of war against Germany left much to be desired in terms of training, organization and numbers of pilots and aircraft, there were notable events that pointed to a future in which airplanes would go to sea and take their place in the growing arsenal.

Air operations in the Fleet were inaugurated January 6, 1913, when the entire naval aviation element set up the Aviation Camp on Fisherman's Point, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As part of Fleet maneuvers, aircraft flew scouting missions and were charged with spotting mines and submerged submarines. Such activities served to demonstrate the operational capabilities of the aircraft and to stimulate an interest in aviation among the personnel.

On April 20, 1914, an aviation unit was first called into action with the Fleet. Twenty-four hours after receiving orders, three pilots, 12 enlisted men and three aircraft, commanded by Lt. John H. Towers, sailed from Pensacola aboard the USS *Birmingham* to join Atlantic Fleet forces operating off Tampico in the Mexican crisis. The next day, a second aviation detachment, commanded by Ltjg. P. N. L. Bellinger—one pilot, three student pilots and two aircraft—also from Pensacola, embarked in the *Mississippi* upon the same mission.

In the vicinity of Veracruz on

May 6, the Curtiss AH-3 hydro-aeroplane, piloted by Ltjg. Bellinger, with Ltjg. R. C. Saufley as observer, was hit by rifle fire while making a reconnaissance flight over enemy positions—the first marks of combat on a Navy plane.

Such activity furthered the importance of aviation in the Navy and the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels boldly announced that the point had been reached "where aircraft must form a large part of our naval forces for offensive and defensive operations."

In the process of developing aviation, many a hard-set Navy record was chalked up as pilots proved by courage and tenacity the potential of aircraft.

On October 6, 1912, Lt. John H. Towers, flying the Curtiss A-2, took off from the water at Annapolis at 6:50 A.M. and remained in the air six hours, ten minutes, 35 seconds, setting a new American endurance record for planes of any type.

On December 3, 1915, Lt. Saufley, flying the Curtiss AH-14, set an American altitude record for hydroaeroplanes, reaching 11,975 feet over Pensacola and surpassing his own record of 11,056 feet which he had set only three days before.

Lt. Saufley, again flying a Curtiss hydroaeroplane at Pensacola, bettered on March 29, 1916, his earlier record with a flight to 16,010 feet and, on April 2, extended it again, this time to 16,072 feet.

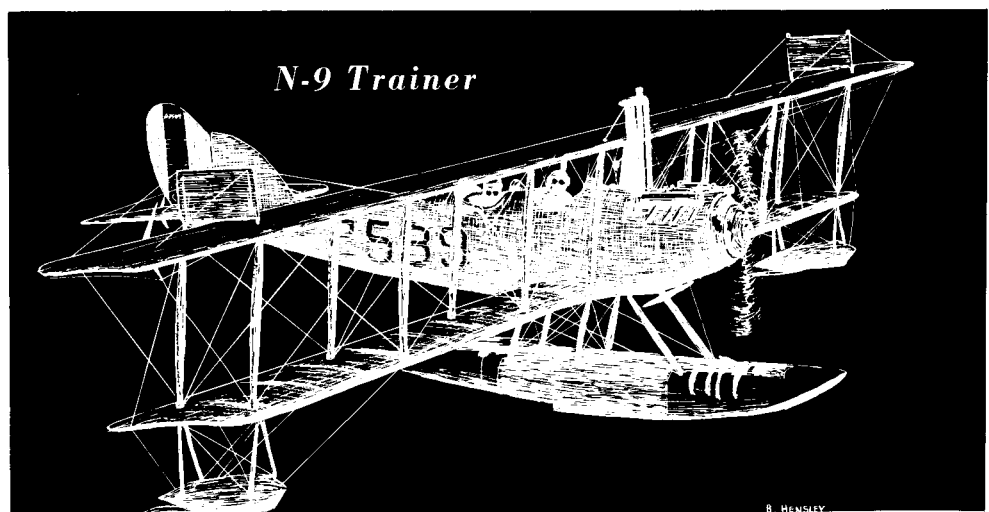
A little over two months later, June 9, 1916, on an endurance flight in the AH-9 over Santa Rosa Island off Pensacola, Lt. Saufley crashed to his death after being in the air eight hours, 51 minutes.

When war came, the Naval Aviation program was marked by improvisation. In April 1917, several

privately owned fields and schools, plus those of the Naval Militia at Squantum and Bay Shore, were placed under the jurisdiction of the Navy. These facilities served as outlets for the initial expansion of aviation and carried the load until stations of a more permanent type could be built. Base construction began at once.

The training program was revised to permit assignment of new classes every three months for an 18-month course for either heavier-than-air or lighter-than-air pilots. But no sooner was its implementation approved than it was abandoned as impractical once the expansion began. So that the heavier-than-air training might be concentrated at Pensacola and the lighter-than-air training be more efficiently conducted, negotiations were completed with Goodyear for a balloon and dirigible school at Akron. About the same time, a contract was made with the Curtiss Exhibition Company to give flight training at the Curtiss School at Newport News, Va.

To meet the growing demand for aviators, a training section was organized in the Office of Aviation (Operations) under the direction of Lt. Earle F. Johnson. Johnson not only supervised training, but also had cognizance over the enrollment of candidates for pilot training. He also directed the movement of personnel by coordinating the assignments with the Supervisor of the Naval Reserve Flying Corps, LCdr. John H. Towers. The multiple activities connected with these tasks combined to make the training section one of the most important offices at the start of the war and one of the largest sections of the Aviation Division at war's end.



THE FIRST THREE MONTHS: APRIL, MAY, JUNE, 1917

The small group of Navy and Marine Corps Aviators, whose enthusiasm and persistence had nurtured the early growth of aviation, was neither large enough nor well enough equipped to wage war. When the call came on 6 April 1917, only one air station was in operation, with 48 qualified pilots and student aviators and 239 enlisted men. The Navy had one airship and three balloons, and none of its 54 aircraft had been designed for the work that was now required.

The work of molding this force to meet the requirements of war began slowly and gathered momentum as it went. Its beginning, as marked by the events of the first three months, follows:

APRIL

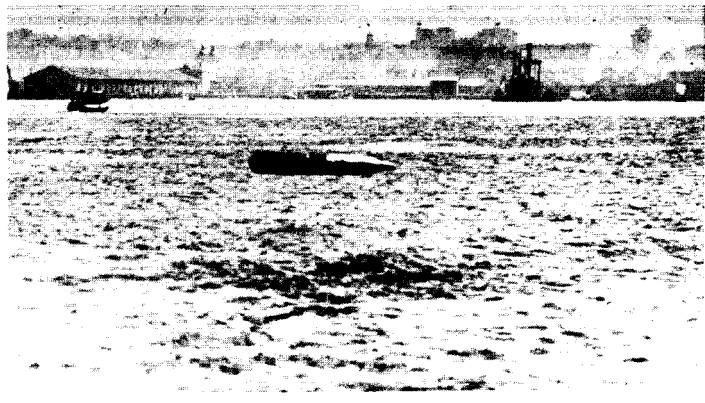
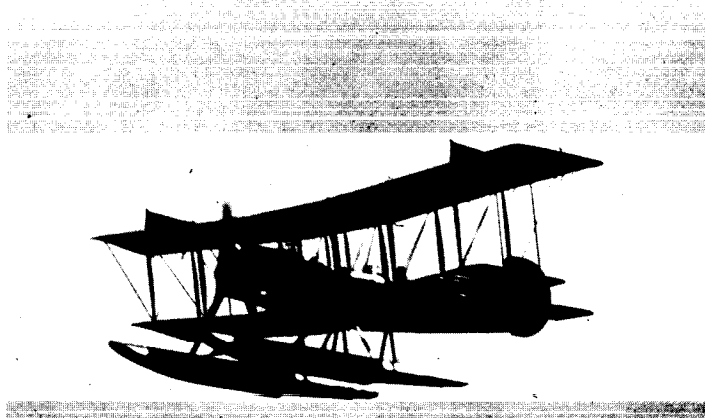
6—The Secretary of the Navy, by approval of the recommendation of a Board on Flying Equipment, established standard flight clothing for the Naval Flying Service and authorized its issuance as Title B equipage. Clothing consisted of a tan sheepskin long coat, short coat and trousers, moleskin hood, goggles, black leather gloves, soft leather boots, waders, brogans and life belts.

7—By Executive Order, the President directed that the Coast Guard be transferred from the Treasury Department to operate as part of the Navy.

14—The Navy's first guided-missile effort began when the Naval Consulting Board recommended to the Secretary of the Navy that \$50,000 be apportioned to carry on experimental work on aerial torpedoes in the form of automatically controlled aeroplanes or aerial machines carrying high explosives.

20—The Navy's first airship, DN-1, made its first flight at Pensacola. Its performance was unsatisfactory on several counts and after only two more flights in the same month, it was grounded and never flown again.

26—In a continuation of the experiment started with USS *North Carolina* in late 1915, the catapult installed on USS *Huntington* was given dead load tests at Mare Island. With a pressure of 40 pounds, the new catapult sent the empty launching car down the track with an end speed of 33.6 mph. With a pressure of 95 pounds and a dead load of 700 pounds, an end speed of 45 mph was achieved. *Huntington* thus prepared for employment as the third ship of the U.S. Navy equipped to carry and operate aircraft.



PRACTICE TORPEDO DROP IS MADE FROM AN R6L PLANE

27—The Marine Aeronautic Company, Advance Base Force, was organized at Marine Barracks, Philadelphia Navy Yard, by the transfer of personnel from the Marine Aviation Section at Pensacola, from other Marine Corps units, and from the Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps. Capt. A. A. Cunningham was in command.

MAY

1—An expansion of the training program was approved which called for assignment of new classes every three months and the establishment of a course of 18 months' duration to qualify officers as pilots of either seaplanes or dirigibles. The program also provided for training enlisted men as aviation mechanics and for selection of a few for pilot training and qualification as Quartermaster.

4—The Commandant of the First Naval District was directed to assume control of the Naval Militia station at Squantum, Mass., for use in air training. On the same date, arrangements were completed to take over the Naval Militia station at Bay Shore, N. Y. These were two of several actions taken immediately after the declaration of war to expand the flight training program while stations of a more permanent nature were being built.

5—The Secretary of War agreed to a proposal made by the Secretary of the Navy that a joint board be established for the purpose of standardizing the design and specifications of aircraft. The board, subsequently established, was originally titled, "Joint Technical Board on Aircraft, except Zeppelins."

5—Pensacola reported on a test in which a Berthier machine gun, synchronized to fire through the propeller, was fired from a Curtiss R-3 taxying on water and standing on the beach.

15—The Secretary established an order of precedence for work involved in the preparation for war. "Aircraft and their equipment" were ninth on a list of 20 major fields of material procurement.

16—The Aircraft Production Board was established, by a resolution of the Council of National Defense, as a subsidiary agency to act in an advisory capacity on questions of aircraft production and procurement. Membership included a representative from each service, the Navy's being RAdm. David W. Taylor.

17—Aircraft Machine Gun Procurement—The Chief of Naval Operations requested purchase of 50 aircraft machine guns, synchronized to fire through propeller, and another 50 for all-around fire.

17—Cdr. Noble E. Irwin was ordered to the Material Branch to relieve Lt. J. H. Towers as officer-in-charge of the aviation desk in the office of CNO. Lt. Towers was given additional duty orders to the Bureau of Navigation as Supervisor of the Naval Reserve Flying Corps.

19—The first national insignia adopted for U.S. aircraft was described in General Orders and ordered placed on all naval aircraft. It was a red disc within a white star on a blue circular field on the wings, and red, white and blue vertical bands with blue forward, on the rudder.

19—The Chief of Naval Operations requested that two small seaplanes and one pilot be detailed for duty in connection with radio experimentation at Pensacola.

19—Seven student aviators comprising the Harvard unit, with Lt. H. B. Cecil in charge, reported to the Curtiss Field at Newport News, Va., for flight instruction.

23—The initial production program to equip the Navy with the aircraft necessary for war was recommended by the Joint Technical Board on Aircraft. It was to consist of 300 school machines, 200 service seaplanes, 100 speed scouts, and 100 large seaplanes. The N-9 and R-6 were listed as the most satisfactory for school and service seaplanes, but others were not sufficiently developed to permit a selection.

29—A contract was made with Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Akron, Ohio, to train 20 men in the operation of lighter-than-air craft.

30—The Navy's first successful airship, the B-1, completed an overnight test flight to Akron from Chicago where it had been assembled. The pilot was R. H. Upson of Goodyear.

JUNE

4—The construction of five prototype models of 8- and 12-cylinder Liberty motors was authorized by the Aircraft Production Board and the Joint Technical Board of Aircraft. Commencing on 29 May, the design of these engines, based on conservative engineering practices especially adapted to mass production techniques, had been worked out in a room in a Washington hotel by two engineers—J. G. Vincent and E. J.

Hall of the Packard Motor Car Company and the Hall-Scott Motor Car Company, respectively.

5—Part of the First Aeronautic Detachment arrived at Pauillac, France, aboard USS *Jupiter* and its second echelon, on board USS *Neptune*, arrived at St. Nazaire three days later. The detachment, which was the first U.S. military unit sent to Europe in World War I, was composed of seven officers and 122 enlisted men under command of Lt. Kenneth Whiting.

11—USS *Seattle*, which in late 1916 had become the second ship of the U.S. Navy equipped to operate aircraft, made ready for convoy duty at the Brooklyn Navy Yard by transferring all aviation personnel and gear ashore and securing her catapult to the deck where it would not interfere with normal operations. This eliminated *Seattle's* chance to prove herself as an aviation ship in war.

14—The establishment of coastal patrol stations in the United States was initiated when the first base contract was let. Sites covered by the contract were all on Long Island, at Montauk Point, Rockaway Beach and Bay Shore, the last destined to become a training station.

20—The first Curtiss R-5 twin-float seaplanes assigned to naval service were received at NAS PENSACOLA. R types were assigned briefly to cruisers, saw some service in flight training and were used in many of the early experiments with torpedoes.

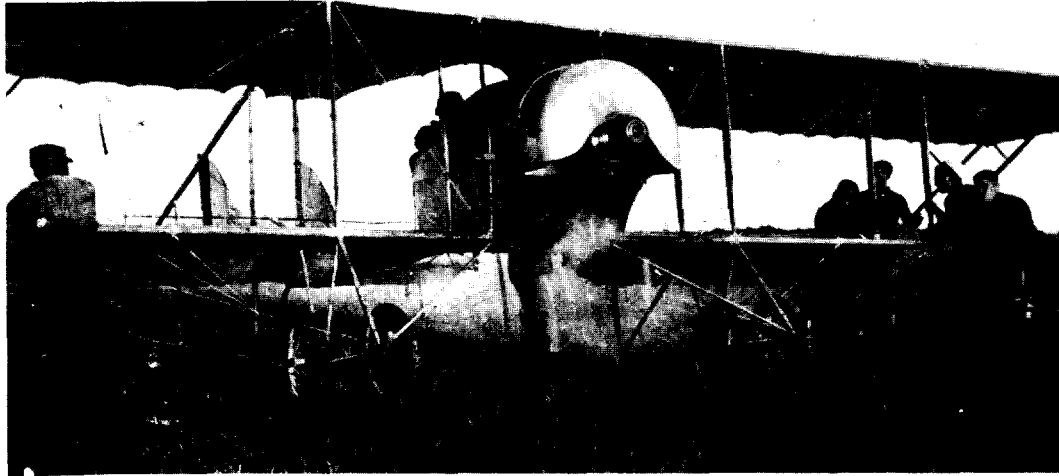
22—Enlisted men of the First Aeronautic Detachment began preliminary flight training in Caudron aircraft under French instructors at the *Ecole d'Aviation Militaire* at Tours, France.

22—Change No. 11 to Navy Uniform Regulations made the first special provision for aviators. It provided a summer service flying uniform of Marine Corps khaki of the same pattern as service whites, which was to be worn only when on immediate duty with aircraft. The order also provided for a coverall of canvas, khaki or moleskin of the same color as the uniform, as a working dress uniform.

28—Thomas W. Barrett, a member of the First Aeronautic Detachment, was killed in a crash of his airplane while under flight training at Tours. He was the first Navy man killed in France in WW I.



CAPT. IRWIN HEADED U.S. NAVAL AVIATION IN WW I



PILOTS WERE TRAINED IN FRENCH 'CAUDRON' BY FRENCH INSTRUCTORS

FIRST NAVAL AVIATION UNIT IN FRANCE

Of the many elements of the United States armed forces sent overseas immediately after the declaration of war, one of the first to get there was a detachment from Naval Aviation. This token aeronautical force, sent in response to a request from the French government to bolster morale, was made up of men only partially trained at Pensacola. Once their training was completed at French stations under French instructors, these men would make up the first cadres for United States air stations yet to be located and built. The story of these men is ably related by one of them.

WE WERE really a split-up outfit that became attached to every man's army and every man's navy. One thing brought us together—mechanics, carpenters, college students, taxi drivers, farmers—we all wanted to fly. And soon—without much training—we did. We flew with the French, the British and the Italians. Some of us even flew with the United States Marines, but most of us never fired an American machine gun or dropped an American bomb, or even saw an American-made plane until we got back home.

There were only 122 of us, and we were probably the most oddly assorted outfit that ever sailed to France.

In early June, 1917, General

By Joe C. Cline

Pershing was in England, still on the way to France, the First Division of the Army was still in America, the draft law was being implemented, and we, the First Aeronautic Detachment of the U.S. Navy, were landing in France.

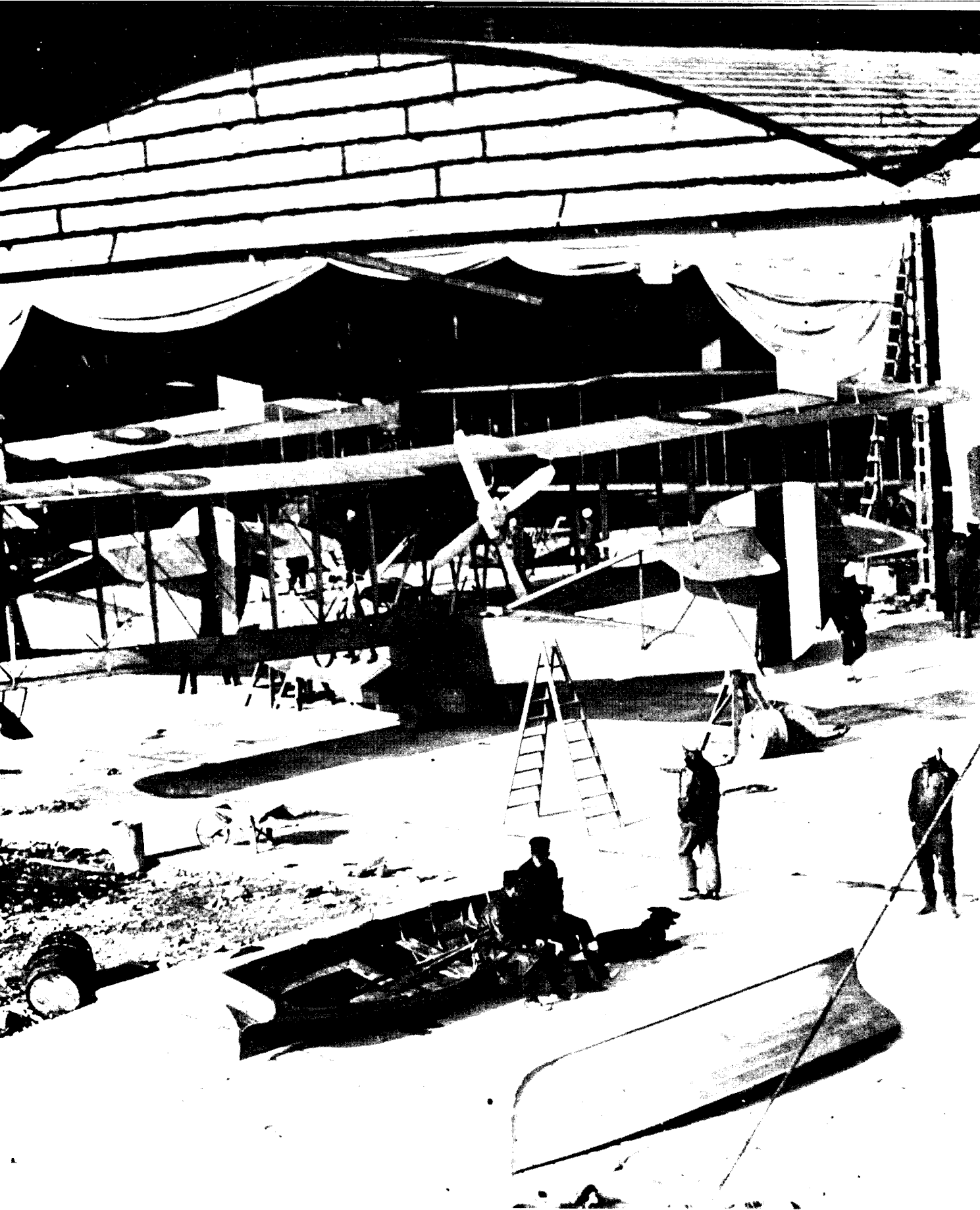
We were the first fighting force from the United States to set foot on French soil after the declaration of war.

ON APRIL 3, 1917, I enlisted in the United States Navy as a Landsman for Quartermaster (Aviation) after having served four years in the Illinois Naval Militia. I arrived the next day at NAS PENSACOLA for flight training. At

that time, there was no cadet status for student aviators; in fact, there were no ground school or flight instruction provisions for such a large group. Only a few regular Naval Aviation officers were attached to the station at that time.

All of us were volunteers. We came from nearly every state in the Union and nearly every walk of life. We were utterly green and inexpressibly eager.

After about three weeks of drilling and some Navy indoctrination, where I found my Naval Militia experience a definite asset, volunteers were called for duty in a foreign country. Fifty Landsmen for Quartermaster and 50 Landsmen for Machinist Mate were selected. Quartermasters were to be trained



ONE AIRCRAFT ASSEMBLY CENTER WAS LOCATED IN HANGARS AT BREST

'The instructor. . . gave you hell in French

N° du Brevet 336

N° de Registre

NOM *Cline*

PRENOMS *Joseph Charles*

DATE DE NAISSANCE *1. Mars 1896*

CÉLIBATARIÉ, MARIAGES

PROFESSION *Representative Automobile*

TITRES UNIVERSITAIRES

Arme *Aviation*

SITUATION Corps d'origine *Aviation*

Grade *2e classe*

MILITAIRE Rang ou emploi occupé avant l'entrée dans l'Aviation

Nommé dans l'Aviation le *22 Mars 1917*

COURS PRÉPARATOIRE ET ÉCOLE DE DÉBUTAGE

Reconnu comme breveté par l'État sur ses antécédents dans l'Aviation

NOTES GÉNÉRALES :

Nombre de vols en B. M.

ÉCOLE DE PILOTAGE

Date du 1^{er} vol *22 Mars 1917*

Date du 1^{er} vol seul *21 Mars 1917*

Date de 1^{er} voyage T. M. *28 Mars 1917*

Date de dernière *26 Mars 1917*

Nombre de vols pour le B. M. *21*

Nombre d'heures de vol pour B. M. *112.2*

Inventaires des avions

NOTES GÉNÉRALES: *1^{er} vol effectué à l'École de Pilotage de St. Nazaire*

ÉCOLE DE PERFECTIONNEMENT

Type d'avion utilisé *B. M. 10*

Date du 1^{er} vol seul *21 Mars 1917*

Date de fin d'entraînement *22 Mars 1917*

Nombre de vols *14*

Nombre d'heures de vol *17.51*

NOTES GÉNÉRALES: *1^{er} vol effectué à l'École de Pilotage de St. Nazaire*

ÉCOLE D'APPLICATION

1 voyage de formation *1. Mars 1917*

Autres avions pilotés *None*

CLINE'S FRENCH BREVET, NO. 346



AVIATORS MCGUIRK AND CLINE

as pilots and Machinist Mates were to be trained in maintenance and overhaul duty, but they ended up as Observers, Machine Gunners and Bombardiers in everybody's army or navy. They became the First Aeronautic Detachment of the United States Navy.

In a few days, the outfit was split up. We shoved off for duty aboard two Navy colliers, the USS *Jupiter* (later the first U.S. aircraft carrier, the *Langley*) at Hoboken and the USS *Neptune* at Baltimore.

I reported to the latter in Baltimore where we loaded grain and flour for a week. Then we shoved off for Norfolk and additional supplies and sailed for France with the destroyers, USS *Perkins* and USS *Jarvis*, as escorts. After a 12-day crossing, we landed in St. Nazaire, France, on June 8, 1917. (The first echelon in the *Jupiter* had arrived three days earlier, on June 5.) Our commanding officer was Lt. Kenneth Whiting, USN.

After we arrived in France, nobody knew what to do with us. Lt. Whiting rushed off to Paris to see the American Ambassador, the Naval Attache, the French Minister of Marine and a few others. There was a conference in Paris. It was agreed that the French would train us. They would supply us with airplanes, motors, instruments, armament, bombs and accessories—in which the United States was woefully lacking—and construct three air stations for us while we were in training.

In a few days, we shoved off for Brest, then to a small fishing village near the entrance of the Bay of Brest, and took over barracks that were once used by Napoleon's troops. We had to wait until the class of French students at the flying school at Tours had finished training. This took about ten days.

One rainy night we arrived at Tours. We were loaded into trucks and driven to the *Ecole d'Aviation Militaire de Tours* and began flight training on June 22.

None of us had had any ground

school instruction and few of us had any idea about the theory of flight. Our instructors did not speak English and we did not speak French. We were divided into small groups of eight or ten students, each group assigned to an instructor. One leather flying coat, one pair of goggles and one crash helmet were issued to each group and these were passed from one student to another as his turn came to fly.

The plane used for our primary instruction was the Caudron G-3, a French biplane with warping wings and a two-place cockpit, powered by a 90-hp Anzani or LeRhône engine. The instructor sat in the rear cockpit. After takeoff, he would turn controls over to the student and instructions would begin. If the nose was too high, the instructor would push forward on your helmet. If it was low, he would pull back on the helmet. If the left wing was down, he'd tap on the right shoulder; right wing down, tap on the left shoulder. A flight lasted about 20 minutes.

After each flight, the instructor would pull out a pasteboard card with a line drawn down the center. One side was written in English and the other in French. The instructor would explain all the mistakes you had made while in flight. He gave you hell in French while pointing to the English translation. Perhaps it was just as well we did not understand his words.

One day an amusing conversation with a French student took place. Our instructor, Benaush, who was in charge of the class in dead stick landings on a spot from 2,000 meters, was very excitable and emotional. At these times, he would shout and scream at a student who was doing something wrong in the air, throw his hat and cane and anything within reach. The French student explained, "Benaush is good pilot. He knows everything student does wrong. When he does, he will throw away his hat. If he is getting in worse

while pointing to the English translation.'

trouble, he will throw away his cane. And if at last he throws away his pipe, the man is dead."

I think about two-thirds of our group of 50 students qualified to solo under these adverse conditions, and each one did so in less than five hours of dual instruction, which is an indication of the ingenuity of American youth.

The course at Tours included a cross-country flight to Vendome, to a British flight school about 80 miles distant and return, a spot landing from 4,000 feet with dead stick on a small field we called the salad patch and an altitude test to 8,000 feet where we were required to stay for one hour.

We were then sent to *Ecole d'Aviation Maritime de Hourtin* on a small lake outside Bordeaux. This was a French Navy Base where we were to receive our preliminary seaplane training. Our instructors were French non-commissioned officers, also non-English speaking.

There were no barracks available, so we pitched tents among the scrub pine woods on the shore of the lake. Our three mess boys cooked our meals, consisting of French rations in the French galley with a choice of red or white wine. Our mess hall was the outdoors under the pine trees; our table, boards placed on empty gas drums. Like all youngsters, we thought this was a great way to fight a war. Our skipper was Lt. Virgil Griffin, USN. In a few days we were joined by Ens. Artemus Gates, USNR, of the Yale unit.

The planes were seaplanes of the F.B.A. (Franco-British Aviation) type, a biplane pusher, powered by a 90-hp rotary engine. After three hops with an instructor for about 15 minutes each, I soloed this little boat and found quite a difference between landplanes and seaplanes. It was much more difficult to gauge distance when landing on smooth water.

After a month at Hourtin, we were sent to *Ecole d'Aviation de St. Raphael*, in the south of France

on the Mediterranean. This was the Pensacola of the French Navy. Ens. Gates was in charge of our first group, and Lt. Grattan Dichman was skipper of the American students. Here we started right in flying all types of French seaplanes—F.B.A., Tellier, Salmsons and Donnet-Denhaut (DD)—completing the course in altitude tests, rough water landings, bombing and gunnery.

On October 17, 1917, I received my French Brevet, Number 346. My total flight time, including Tours, Hourtin and St. Raphael, was 31 hours and 52 minutes. I was ready for war, still a Landsman for Quartermaster; pay \$17.60 a month.

Many of the Quartermasters who did not complete flight training and most of the Machinist Mates were sent to the French Army School of Aerial Gunnery at Caseaux to be trained as observers. Other members of the detachment were scattered all over Europe that summer. Some were sent to our station at Bolsena, Italy, for training with the Italian Navy. On receiving their Italian Navy wings, they were assigned to NAS PORTO CORSINI, Lt. W. B. Haviland commanding.

It was from this station that Haze Hammann of the Baltimore gang put his name on the honor roll with his daring rescue of a fellow pilot under attack by Austrian aircraft off the naval base of Pola. They gave him the Medal of Honor, the Italian War Cross and the Silver Medal of Valor. Admiral Sims said of his work that day, "I know no finer individual exploit in the war."

OUR NEXT form of training was in a construction gang where we started to build the Navy's aviation training station at Moutchic. We built canvas hangars, shoveled sand, broke rocks, slept in tents again. Our mess hall was some airplane crates in which a few F.B.A. seaplanes arrived. These we as-

sembled and flew at intervals in order to keep us from forgetting we were pilots. This tour of obnoxious duty was to last only a few weeks until people from the States began to arrive and take over the building. Some of the Yale unit arrived, including Ens. Robert Lovett, USNRF.

Orders were then reached for us to transfer to NAS LECROISIC, on the Bay of Biscay near St. Nazaire. We arrived there the first week in November, and the first offensive patrol by an American flyer in the service of the United States was made on November 18, 1917. Our commanding officer was Lt. William Corry, USN.

Pilots of the First Aeronautic Detachment who reported for duty at this station were: Foss Hardendorf, Paul Gillespie, Bob Harrell, Lon Harvie, Charlie Boylan and I. We were still enlisted men in the U.S. Navy. We were joined there by Ensigns Ken Smith, Sam Walker, Reggie Combs, Henry Landon, USNRF, all of the Yale unit, and Ensigns Fred King Becker and Thomas Ryan, USNRF.

We flew French Tellier seaplanes, powered by 220 Hispano engines, and our job was to escort the convoys from the States through our sector from Quiberon to St. Nazaire. Le Croisic, a little fishing village on the north coast of Brittany, was always a welcome sight after a long, cold, four-hour patrol.

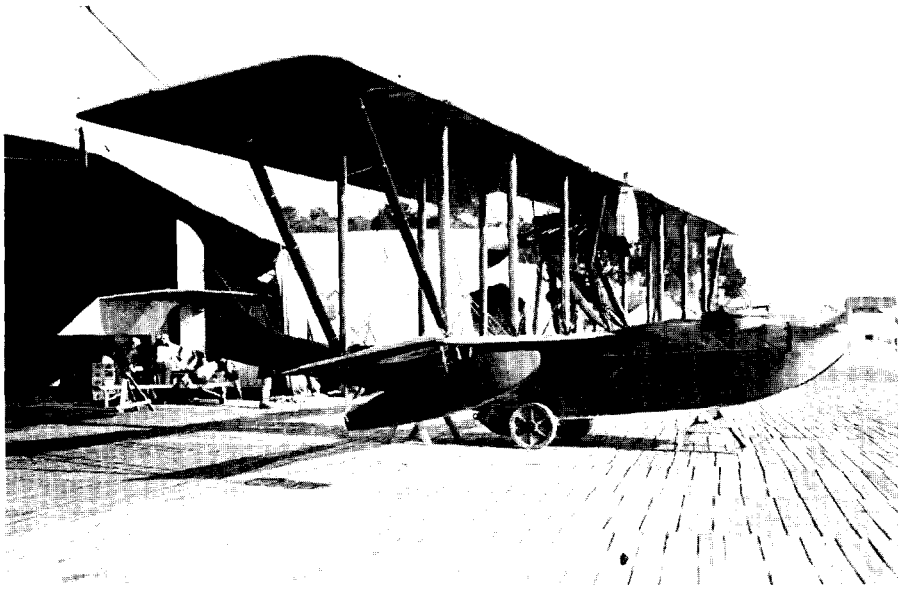
Observers at Le Croisic, also of our detachment, were Skaggs, O'Brien, Kneip, Strope, Hobt, Williams, Brady, Studer, Rourke.

Two of our original detachment, Weddell, pilot, and Eddy Kneip, observer, were killed at Le Croisic. Returning from patrol one afternoon in a Tellier, Weddell put the ship in a tight flipper turn before landing and a wing crumbled. They crashed in the bay just off the station.

One day at Le Croisic, three staff cars drew up to the gate and the young ensign Officer of the Day came to attention. He stood aghast

'Our designation . . . was still that of

Student Aviator after finishing three different French schools.'



ONE FRENCH SEAPLANE USED WAS DONNET-DENHAUT

when Admiral Sims and Admiral Benson stepped out of the car to make a surprise inspection of the station. After a mad scramble, we managed to get into uniform for personnel inspection.

Mac Weddell, Paul Gillespie and I stood in formation together, proudly displaying our French Brevets on our dress blues. Admiral Sims wanted to know what they were and what they signified. Weddell explained we were aviators, had been trained by the French Navy and had been on active flight duty escorting the convoys through our sector for many months.

The Admiral turned to Lt. Corry and asked why we had not been commissioned. Corry answered he had so recommended on several occasions. The Admiral then summoned one of his staff who took our names. Within two weeks we were ordered to take examinations for commission. We finally became officers, USNRF.

Our designation as pilot was still that of Student Aviator after finishing three different French schools and qualifying in all types of French seaplanes, plus many months at Le Croisic flying convoy

escort. It was not until I returned home that I became Naval Aviator No. 1832.

Lt. Corry was transferred to Brest and took command of that naval air station. He had been my inspiration in the Navy and I was most anxious to serve under his command again. I therefore put in for duty at Brest, which was granted, and reported to that station in October 1918. Lt. Corry was relieved at Le Croisic by Lt. William Masek, USN.

AT BREST I saw my first American airplane. We had heard much, in glowing terms, about the Curtiss HS-1 seaplanes with the famous Liberty engine. These were arriving from the States. After all necessary equipment for submarine patrol, such as bombs, radio, aldis lamp and battery, pigeons, machine guns, fire extinguishers and a full load of gas were loaded on the plane for a four-hour patrol, nobody could get the plane off the water. In a short time, a modification was made on the plane by adding six feet to the wing span and this aircraft was designated the HS-2. It was still necessary to install three strands of salmson cord on the right rudder bar to offset torque in order to fly this crate.

These planes were assembled at Brest and then delivered to our air stations along the French coast. Planes were also being assembled for these stations at Pauillac, the main aviation supply base which had been established for the use of the U.S. Navy in France.

The French Naval Air Station

at Dunkerque had been under periodic attack by German aircraft from Ostend and Zeebrugge and bombardment from the sea. This was a strategic location for an air base because of the German submarine pits at Zeebrugge on the North Sea.

The French wanted the U.S. Navy to take over and operate this station, but Lt. Whiting would not recommend doing so without a definite fighter cover.

Therefore, the next group to finish training at St. Raphael was ordered to Paris and then on to Issoudun for training in fighter planes with the French Army. After about a month at this school, orders came to report to an RAF school in England for air gunnery instruction. From there, they went to the Royal Air Force Base at Ayr, Scotland, for further combat training in Sopwith *Camels*, S.E.5's, Bristol fighters, Avro's and D.H.4's.

Members of the First Aeronautic Detachment in this group were the following: Landsmen for Quartermaster Velie, Carson, Hough, Ganster, Chapin, Marshburn, O'Conner, Bamrick, Young, Parker, Jern-

igan, Elliott and Wardwell. They reported for duty at Dunkerque in February 1918 and flew off a canal Hanriot single-seater pontoon fighters with rotary engines. Lt. Godfrey deC. Chevalier was the commanding officer.

Three of our outfit—Carson, Young and Elliott—caught a German submarine on the surface heading for Zeebrugge. Carson, flying a DD, began the attack with bombs, but was beaten off by cannon and machine gun fire from deck guns. Elliott and Young, who were flying cover, attacked and, with guns blazing, wiped out the entire deck crew. Carson, who was standing off, then returned to the attack, dropped his bombs, and sank the submarine.

WHEN THE Armistice was signed and the war was over, the original detachment was split up, serving all over Europe, so that it was impossible to contact many of the old gang again. But the following members, I knew, would never come back: Barrett, Manley, Weddell, Kneip, Velie, Hough, Ganster, Chapin, Marshburn, O'Gorman, Goggins and Nelson.

Many of the First Aeronautic Detachment on returning home were given the opportunity to continue with the Navy. Some became officers in the regular Navy; others made a career in civilian aviation. Harold Elliott became general manager of Eastern Air Lines, Paul Gillespie was managing director of the Roosevelt Flying School on Long Island. Later, he was with the Civil Aeronautics Administration and, during WW II, he was a captain in the Navy in command of NAS NEW ORLEANS. Pete Parker for many years was chief pilot for Eastern Airlines. Franklin Young spent many years as pilot-captain for Trans World Airlines. Duke Jernigan was head of the aviation department for Texaco, Inc., and was the first man to tow a glider across the United States. Eddie Nirmaier flew for a radio corporation for years. Charley Boylan operated an air service in New Orleans and was killed in a crash.

I have no idea what happened to many of the others not mentioned, but if any of them are still around and kicking, I hope they keep her nose down and fly straight. They were a great gang.



DETACHMENT WAS AT TOURS WHEN PHOTO WAS TAKEN