

MEMORIES OF VP-40, 1953-1955
by
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In March of 1953, Cdr. Whitener brought VP-40 back from Sangley Point in their PBM Mariner aircraft. The squadron underwent the normal leave and transfer process, so in a short time Cdr. Joe Kellam (now deceased) took over as Commanding Officer with Cdr. Jim Logan as Executive Officer. Almost coincidentally, the PBM's were exchanged for P5M-1 Marlins, VP-40 being the first West Coast squadron to receive the new aircraft.

The squadron had some fifty officers of whom six were regular Navy and the rest about equally divided between recalled Reserves and first tour Reserves. The recalled Reservists came from NARTU Oakland, NARTU Seattle, NARTU Denver, NARTU Memphis, and, in at least one instance, the Standby Reserve.

I believe we started out with twelve aircraft and crews. I was first navigator in Crew 1 with Lt. Gene Aiken from Oklahoma as first pilot and Ens. Bob Lynch as second navigator. Cdr. Kellam was, of course, the Patrol Plane Commander. The plane captain was "Pappy" Ford, Petty Officer Bridges was the gunner and Chief Gray sat at the radio station. I do not recall the other crew members. Cdr. Logan had Crew 2, and the recalled Reservists had most of the other crews. Lcdr. Harry Thorington, a regular, was Supply Officer and had his own crew, Crew 11 comes to mind.

Lcdr. J.R. "Robbie" Robison, NARTU Oakland, was Operations Officer, Lcdr. Phil Rosa (now deceased), NARTU Oakland, was Admin Officer, and I believe Lcdr. "Kappy" Kapranos was maintenance Officer. I was sent to Communications Officers Short Course in Monterey and relieved Ltjg. Dave Dearolph. Ens. Mike Madden, a ground officer, was our Air Intelligence Officer, assisted by Ltjg. Mac McInnes.

Other officers in the squadron were Don Wasson, Jim Summers, Jim Stevens, Fritz Weigandt, Hal Hanson, Don Lindsay, John Simmons, Ed Viola, "Buzz" Bozzuto, Don Shiflette, Bob Odgers, Philo Vance, Bruce Floyd, "PJ" Pettyjohn, Bill Secord, Bob(?) Holman, Jim Crane, (?) Coffield, Tom Altee, (?) Cobb, Henry Abe, Newt Newton, Hal Stevens, Ray Cannon, and others whose names may come to mind as I recall those times.

The training cycle was far from routine what with new aircraft, and virtually new pilots. During the cycle a serious condition was found in the aircraft called intergranular corrosion. This seemed to affect the magnesium alloy castings such as flap hinges and so forth. I don't recall the fix, but they may have been replaced by aluminum castings. The time to diagnose and fix this fault stretched the training cycle so actually VP-40 was not ready to deploy until January 1954.

As all P5M pilots know, the plane was heavy and somewhat underpowered for its size. Thus, the Transpac could not be

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