

ALL HANDS - AUG 1967:
FAREWELL TO THE FLYING BOATS AND THEIR
TENDERS ORION AND NEPTUNE CARRY ON



Farewell to the Flying

THE RETURN OF USS *Currituck* (AV 7) to her North Island base from a 10-month deployment in WestPac marked the end of the era of the Navy's seaplanes and the ladies who tended them.

The Navy's seaplane tenders have been mothballed in conjunction with the phasing out of the P-5 *Marlin*,

the last of the operational seaplanes. Replacing the seaplanes are the landbased P-3 *Orion* patrol airplanes and similar aircraft capable of carrying more sophisticated equipment and traveling longer distances. The *Orion*, which first became operational in 1962, has advanced ASW patrol capabilities.

SAIL SOFTLY but swing a big crane must be the slogan here as *Currituck* crewmen prepare to hoist a *Marlin* to the ship's deck for needed repairs.



Patrol Squadron 40, based at Sangley Point, Cavite—the Navy's last operational seaplane airdrome—had the distinction of flying the P-5 *Marlin* seaplane's last long-range patrol mission for the Navy in May. VP 40 was operating at the time with *Currituck* in the South China Sea. Even while this final mission was being flown, other "pig boats," as the *Marlin* crews affectionately call their aircraft, were being flown from Sangley Point to Konan, Japan, for mothballing.

Seaplanes will remain in use, however, but not in Navy colors. The U. S. Coast Guard plans to continue using seaplanes to fly patrol and rescue missions.

THE STORIES of the seaplane and the seaplane tender are inseparable even as they were inseparable in operation. It is fitting that their Navy careers end together.

The last remaining operational

ALL HANDS

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seaplane tender, *Currituck*, completed her 10-month deployment with the Seventh Fleet on 24 May, when she returned to her North Island base. *Currituck* served as a forward operations seadrome for North Island-based seaplane squadrons VP-40, VP-48 and VP-50.

She was also the flagship of Commander Patrol Force Seventh Fleet, head of Operation Market Time, a coastal surveillance operation involving patrol planes and designated surface ships off South Vietnam. Operation Market Time is aimed at curtailing the flow of men and war materials to enemy forces in the South via sea supply routes. The tender-seaplane combination performed this job well, but time and technology have finally caught up with the *Marlin* and other flying boats and rendered them obsolete.

The two other operational seaplane tenders, *USS Salisbury Sound* (AV 13) and *Pine Island* (AV 12) also operated with the Seventh Fleet as forward seadromes in the Vietnam area before their decommissioning. They are now deactivated at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Bremerton, Wash.

Currituck had the distinction of

Boats

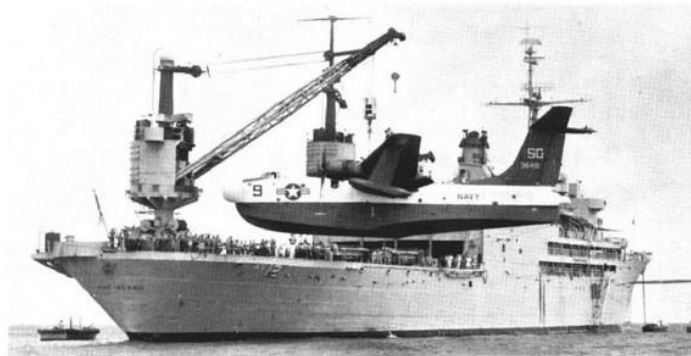
winning the last Battle "E" award ever given to a seaplane tender. She earned the award this year in competition with *Salisbury* and *Pine Island*.

THE COMPLEMENT of a seaplane tender, like the complement of an aircraft carrier, reflected the unit's ability to operate in two mediums, air and water. All surface and air ratings coordinated their functions to carry out the tender's operational mission. Whether it was pumping JP-5 to her flock, repairing an ailing member of her brood or clearing the sealane for a takeoff, the seaplane tender and her crew combined special equipment and special skills to perform competently their job and mission.

Seaplane tenders have characteristically large cranes which are used to lift seaplanes to their decks for repairs, and although seaplanes are being mothballed, the tenders'

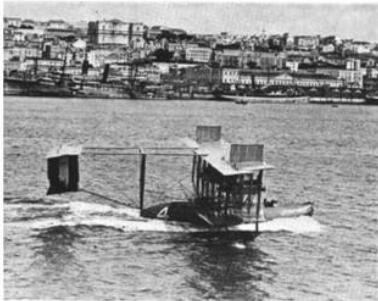


IT'S A BOAT, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S a seaplane. The versatile seaplane has served the Navy well in many capacities since the birth of naval aviation.

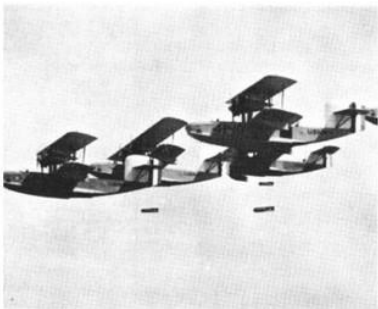


GOING DOWN—*USS Pine Island* returns *Marlin* to duty after repairs. Below: *Salisbury Sound* tends flock of *Marlins* during Operation Market Time.



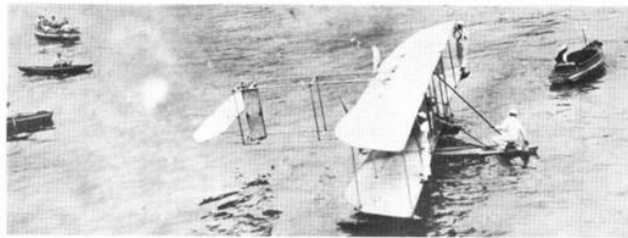


FIRST transatlantic crossing made in 1919 by Navy seaplane NC-4.



VP4 BOMBERS drop bombs during WWI.

Rt: WW II OS2N-1 is lowered onto catapult aboard USS Pasadena.



THE THIRD plane purchased by the Navy was this Wright B-1.

special naval architectural style will remain in the Fleet. But not as seaplane tenders.

Several tenders have been overhauled for other jobs, such as USS *Rehoboth* (AGS 50), originally commissioned as a seaplane tender in



1944 and converted to a survey ship in 1947; USS *Albemarle* (AV 5) was converted and renamed *Corpus Christi Bay* (T ARVH 1), and now operates as an Army aeronautical maintenance ship; *Norton Sound* (AVM 1), a guided missile ship; and *Valcour* (AVP 55) which is used as flagship for Commander Middle East. These are representative of several classes of ships, originally commissioned as seaplane tenders, which have been converted for other jobs.

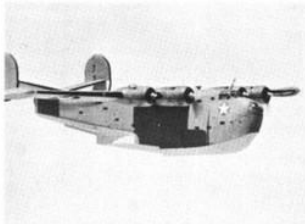
Altogether, 40 seaplane tenders serviced the flying boats. These tenders represented six different classes of ships.

The history of seaplanes and seaplane tenders actually goes back to the birth of naval aviation. In the seaplane's case, the bird came before the egg.



WORLD WAR II VETS—Pair of PBM-52 Mariners fly in formation. Below left:

Famous PBY Catalina performed many rescues. Below rt: PB2Y3 Coronado.



THE NAVY'S FIRST airplane, the A-1, was an amphibian equipped with floats making it a type of seaplane. It was purchased on 8 May 1911, which has since been adopted as the official birthday of naval aviation. The A-1 had a metal-tipped propeller and was designed to fly at 45 miles per hour.

Before the introduction of seaplanes such as the A-1, Eugene Ely had proven the feasibility of using land-type planes aboard ship, but the seaplane was yet another logical path of development. It could go with the fleet, take off on a mission and return to its mother ship.

In 1912 a flying boat, an airplane capable of landing and taking off only on water, was tested by Lieutenant T. G. Ellyson. It was successful and attained a speed of 59.4 miles per hour. But more important, it demonstrated that a combination boat and airplane could work.

World War I stimulated the growth of aviation in the Navy. In



THE MARLIN—A *Marlin* flies low over junk during patrol mission. Rt: Preparing to enter water at Sangley Point.

April 1917, the Navy possessed 51 seaplanes and three land-type planes. By November 1918, the number had grown to 1965 seaplanes and 242 land planes, as the Navy came to realize the potential of the floating aircraft.

During World War I, antisubmarine warfare was the primary consideration of naval aviation, and the seaplane was ideal for this task. The war also advanced technology, and the seaplanes continued to grow in importance and capabilities. The end product of World War I development of seaplanes was the NC-boats. This type of seaplane was capable of greater ranges, and one such craft, NC-4, made a transatlantic flight, the first by any aircraft.

FLEXIBILITY and importance of seaplanes received an additional

boost when they were introduced aboard battleships and cruisers in the 1920s. A revolving catapult was developed, enabling a seaplane to be launched from a ship's deck. This technique was used aboard battleships and cruisers throughout WW II.

The true worth of the seaplane was amplified, however, by World War II. Such seaplane names as *Catalina*, *Mariner*, *Coronado* and *Mars* will long be remembered by Navymen for their varied roles in that war. Seaplanes were used for bombing, strafing, patrol missions, photo reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare and carrying cargo.

They also made many at-sea rescues. They were able to perform in an area which had no airstrip, and with the addition of the first seaplane tender in 1921, could be

repaired and serviced at sea. This aided personnel operating in remote and virtually inaccessible regions.

The addition of the seaplane tenders with the variety of services they could perform gave the seaplanes the versatility required to enable them to remain in service for so many years. There have been many variations of seaplanes throughout this type of aircraft's long history, but with the decommissioning of the last three tenders, *Currituck*, *Salisbury Sound* and *Pine Island*, the era of the seaplane comes to an end.

The Navy planes which used the sea as their runways, and the ships which serviced them are gone, but their service and deeds will long remain a part of naval history.

—Larry Henry, JO2, USN

Orion and Neptune Carry On Tradition of Navy's Patrol Aircraft

The SP2H *Neptune* patrol plane (left) and the P3 *Orion* (right) are two multipurpose aircraft which are relieving the older seaplanes. The *Orion* is equipped with electronic detection devices and armed with antisubmarine weapons. It is the Navy's most advanced long-range patrol aircraft. The *Neptune* is shown flying low over a Vietnamese junk while on a Market Time surveillance patrol south of Yung Tau.

