



The Day Book

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A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum



Whether it was repairing engines in the engine assembly department in 1958 or rewiring an F-14A Tomcat from the Hampton Roads based VF-14 squadron, the men and women of the Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk (NADEP, Norfolk) have been an irreplaceable part of the Naval Air Forces for the last 80 years. As of September, 1996, the Navy will close down NADEP, Norfolk as part of a nationwide base closing measure. (U.S. Navy photos)

Without US, They Don't Fly

Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk's 80 years of service to the Naval Air Forces

by Amy Waters Yarsinske

The heart of Naval aviation is maintenance. The phrase "Without US, They Don't Fly" is true not only of Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk, but of all

maintenance performed on the flight line, aboard ship, and in hangers at Naval Air Station, Norfolk and Naval Air Station, Oceana. Squadron level maintenance, sometimes aided by depot and manufacturer personnel, has a profound impact on the operational readiness of fleet aircraft. Aviation maintenance personnel have been keeping naval aircraft flight worthy since Naval aviation's infancy in Hampton Roads.

When the first Naval Aviation Detachment arrived at Pine Beach in 1917 it was accompanied in short

order by blacksmiths, carpenters, machinists and riggers who wore rates of seaman (aviation). These men became the nucleus of the facility known today as Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk (more commonly known as NADEP, Norfolk), once employer to over 8,000 residents from Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Hampton, Newport News, outlying cities like Elizabeth City and Moyock, North Carolina. In its early days, military rates were trained to

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We Are Going Places...

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

Just a few weeks ago, I visited the Washington Navy Yard to attend the first conference ever for Navy museum directors. There are currently ten museums throughout the United States operated by the U.S. Navy. They range from small, one person operations to large organizations having as many as 110 paid personnel.

Where do we stand? We are not the largest--the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, FL can claim that title with over 160,000 square feet of indoor exhibition space. Of course, each plane on display takes more exhibition room than our entire gallery. Neither are we the smallest. The Naval Air Test and Evaluation Museum at Pauxtent River, MD is manned only by volunteers; its exhibits consist primarily of aircraft-related models. The HRNM is fairly young having open its doors in 1979 at Pennsylvania House. The Navy's newest museum, the Naval Undersea Museum, opened its doors four years ago in Keyport, WA in a beautiful contemporary structure complete with a 300 seat theater.

What we are, in my opinion, is the most professional. Together our staff--civilian, military and volunteer--have taken the unique situation of being a

"tenant" institution, and have flourished. The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is the only one in the entire Department of Defense system, which is comprised of over 150 museums, to be located in a non-government owned facility.

Being the first offers a lot of challenges in addition to rewards. The programs we develop together, like the five year plan, the Speaker's Bureau, public relations and marketing endeavors, along with temporary exhibits indicate that we are going places, willing to take risks and change according to our audience needs. During the conference, I explained some of these undertakings, and just shared the excitement of working at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum with the other directors.

As a group, Navy museum directors need to become more visible, and more vocal about their needs. To that end, the Deputy Director of Naval History, **Capt. C.T. Creekman, Jr.**, will visit the museums. He plans a trip our way very soon. Another product in the works is a "shareholders" report to the Secretary of the Navy about our museums. I have provided input for that publication, and will certainly



HRNM docents Charlie Devine and Margaret Godfrey wrap students in Civil War-type bandages at the annual D.A.R.E. festival at Northside Park in Norfolk. Events like this allow HRNM to teach the public. (Photo by Bob Matteson)

share the finished report with you. If Navy museums are to serve in these turbulent times of downsizing and cost-cutting, they must demonstrate not only their usefulness, but their mandate of educating people through the Navy's artifacts.

We are trying to share the Navy's story through several new ventures. During the next few weeks, the Imaging Resources Department of the Naval Air Reserve, Norfolk will edit the museum's first promotional video. The video will be edited to different audiences: special interest groups (both civic and reunion); potential donors and volunteers; and students of all ages. **David Hartman**, former host of the ABC-television show *Good Morning America*, has agreed to narrate the video at no cost. We are also undertaking a telephone survey to measure visitor awareness of the museum on the Southside. Approximately 400 people are currently being interviewed about the HRNM to determine a baseline which will then be use to measure the effectiveness of a summer advertising campaign. Check the electronic and

About *The Day Book*

The Day Book is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 200 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The DayBook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum. The newsletter takes its name from a 19th century Norfolk newspaper.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at (757) 444-8971, by fax at (757) 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~VAM/vamhome.html>. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1,000.

HRNM Staff

Director
Becky Poulliot
Curator
Joe Judge
Education Specialist
Bob Matteson
Exhibits Specialist
Marta Nelson
Museum Technician
Ofelia Elbo
Assistant Curator
Tom Dandes BTCS (SW)
HRNM LPO
EM I Francis Cannon
Editor of *The DayBook*
Gordon Calhoun
Volunteer Coordinator
Edward Lane
Director, HRNHF
Maj.Gen.Dennis Murphy,
USMC (Ret)

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NADEP, Norfolk personnel (then known as the Overhaul and Repair Department) work on Navy Grumman F8F Bearcats on the assembly line in NADEP's Building V-88. The Hampton Roads Naval Museum has several photographs, maps and documents telling the story of one of the most important Navy institutions in Hampton Roads (March 1950 U.S. Navy Photo)

NADEP, Norfolk Remembered at the Museum

by Joe Judge

Every day the museum accepts calls, letters or visits from people interested in the history of the Navy. While the closing of the Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk (NADEP) has brought much sadness, it has also brought much interest in the Depot's long and significant chapter in the history of Naval Base, Norfolk. The museum collection holds several resources that are available for the historian or casual researcher.

The museum photographic collection is the most popular part of the museum's archives and contains many pictures of NADEP, beginning with the earliest tent hangers on the air station to the 1990's. One of the more significant items is a large format (20" x 27") photo album entitled "Overhaul and Repair Department." This album offers a complete photographic snapshot of

the Depot (known at the time as the Overhaul and Repair Department) from 1946-47. From disassembly to engine cleaning and painting, every feature of aircraft maintenance receives photographic treatment. The back of the album provides statistical tables on production and employees at the department for the years in question. A companion collection entitled "Overhaul and Repair Department, U.S. Naval Air Station...Photographs of Operations, March 1950" gives a similar portrait of the Department a few years later.

Another large format (18"x 24") album is entitled "Development Plan, Overhaul and Repair Department, N.A.S., Norfolk, Virginia." This 1959 book provides a wealth of statistical data on personnel, budgets, aircraft serviced, land use and buildings. Architect's sketches and maps detail future plans for the

Department.

Besides these organized albums, the staff at NADEP also donated a set of loose photographic prints that illustrate ongoing aircraft maintenance from the 1920's onward. Some of the museum's other photographic files are closely connected to the NADEP story. These files include photographs of Navy aircraft, pictures of the Naval Air Station and aerial portraits of the Norfolk Naval Base complex.

Other records at the museum help to tell the NADEP story. Maps of the base from 1917 onward show the patterns of growth and expansion. Academic papers on the history of the base discuss NADEP among other topics. Books like *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II* (Washington, 1947), *Conscripted City* (Norfolk, 1951) and *The Hampton Roads*
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One Big Happy Family

Museum personel and NADEP, Norfolk

by Bob Matteson
and Gordon Calhoun

The Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk, better known as NADEP, has been a familiar sight at Naval Base, Norfolk for over 75 years. On Sept. 11, 1996, it will close its doors for the last time. What is NADEP really and why is there a relationship between NADEP and the people who have served it for so very long?

Hampton Roads Naval Museum exhibits specialist **Marta Nelson** had the pleasure of working for NADEP in the 1970's and 90's. She began an apprenticeship as a Sheet Metal (Aircraft) Mechanic at what was then called Naval Air Rework Facility (NARF) shortly after some college in 1976. Her starting wage was three-ninety an hour. Like a lot of Norfolkiens, Nelson was a second generation NARF employee. Her father, Ray Nelson, was a Production Controller at NARF for many years. The year he retired from NARF, she started her apprenticeship.

Nelson was the first female accepted into the sheet metal apprentice program. Being a sheet metal mechanic was not what she had in mind when she decided to work for NARF. Originally, she had applied to be an Aircraft Instrument Mechanic apprentice. This job was much "cleaner" than a sheet metal mechanic as one got to work in a clean, air conditioned facility repairing delicate instruments. Many females worked in this field. However, there were no positions available and she was reassigned to the sheet metal trade.

As the only female in a class of 53, she found the experience to be very humbling, and a rude awakening. "There were few women in those fields; and like most women entering male dominated fields, I had to put with a lot of comments," Nelson said.

In 1976, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) was just starting up. There were no courses on sexual discrimination. The most frequently asked question according to Nelson was,



Marta dear is that you?? Pictured here is HRNM exhibit specialist Marta Nelson near one of the heat treat furnaces at the Naval Air Rework Facility (known as NADEP, Norfolk today) in 1977. She worked four years as a sheet metal (aircraft) mechanic at NADEP, Norfolk. The furnace behind her was used in the heat treating metal process. (Photo provided by Marta Nelson)

"Why are you here?" To this, she responded "For the same reason you are." In time, she came to realize there were things she could do and things she could not do. Some tasks she could not do because of physical strength limitations, however, she had the advantage of being small. "Because my hands were small, someone was always coming up to me and asking for my help to retrieve something or put in a rivet in an area they couldn't reach," Nelson said. She focused on doing a good job and would not let crude comments distract her. She let the quality of her work speak for her.

As an apprentice, Nelson worked alongside people who were there for years, true artisans in their own right. Part of what the artisan gave the apprentice, in terms of experience and knowledge, was a legacy of family. "I gained an appreciation through observation, on-the-job training, and hands-on teaching. There was a real sense of family, of team work, of pride in the work and the product produced," Nelson said.

The apprenticeship program consisted of on-the-job training, college credits and specialized classes related to the trade. Nelson attended Tidewater Community College for two semesters concentrating on engineering studies. After completing the college portion of the program, Nelson began her on-the-job training where she worked in various capacities related to the sheetmetal trade. She worked on the A-6 and F-14 lines making repairs, modifications and replacements to the fixed metal structure of the actual aircraft. She worked in confined places such as fuel cells and intake manifolds. As an example, she spent "what seemed like forever" in the cockpit of an F-14 disassembling metal structural components and identifying, treating and repairing corrosion. She attended welding and corrosion schools and spend time in the wing, fiberglass, heat treat, manufacturing, layout, honeycomb, foundry and non destructive inspection shops to name a few. She also learned how to operate tools and machines from

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the simplest of pneumatic drills to numerical control laser strippit machinery. The goal of the program was to educate and provide experience to the apprentice in all phases of the sheetmetal trade as it relates to aircraft.

Two years into her apprentice program, Nelson, now married, was forced to resign her apprenticeship when her husband transferred to Tennessee and then to Colorado. In 1989, Nelson moved back to Norfolk. Within six months after her return, Nelson sought employment at NADEP and was hired on the spot.

She reapplied to the apprenticeship program and was reinstated during a lift in a hiring freeze. She was credited for the time she spent as a sheet metal worker. Nelson, thankful for the opportunity, finished the apprenticeship program and graduated in January 1992 at the top of her class. She worked as a sheet metal mechanic journeyman level for 14 months. "Even while away, I never lost the feeling of family, of not wanting to let the others down," said Nelson. The workers at NADEP were keenly aware that lives were involved with what they did. They had a feeling of ownership and a strong sense of responsibility for what their name went on.

When NADEP was targeted by BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure Commission) for closure in early 1993, Nelson was very saddened by the whole thing. "It tore families apart, forcing decisions on people they might not otherwise make. It's demoralizing to people. Morale was terrible and people were scared." Several months before the confirmation of the closure, Nelson

began to look at other Federal employment and transferred to the HRNM.

Thankful for the experience, opportunity and the many things she learned at NADEP that she uses every day in her position as the museum's exhibit specialist, Nelson said, "as with everything else, you remember the good and the bad and take it with you through the rest of your life."

"It was remarkable how simple the aircraft were to maintain (in the 1950's)...my supervisor would walk through the plane and mark X's with a piece of chalk where he wanted me to drill for the electrical system...he did it all from memory."

Museum docent Harrell Forest had a slightly different experience at NADEP. Forest worked at NADEP back in the early 1950's when it was known as the Overhaul and Repair Department of the Norfolk Naval Air Station.

Back in those days, aircraft were much simpler in design. Instead of working on high performance aircraft like the F-14 *Tomcat* and A-6 *Intruder* like Nelson, Forest worked on piston-prop *Avenger* torpedo-bombers, *Bearcat* fighters and BPY patrol aircraft. "It was remarkable how simple the aircraft were to maintain," Forest said. "I worked on the assembly line in Building V-60. The aircraft came to the line completely stripped. When a new aircraft came in, my supervisor would walk through plane


and mark X's with a piece of chalk where he wanted me to drill holes for the electrical system. He knew exactly where to place the marks and he did it all from memory."

The assembly line where Forest worked had two lines of planes. A picture of this line can be found on page 3 of this issue of *The Day Book*. Every morning, the planes would be moved up slightly. In about 30 days, the aircraft would be finished with the assembly line and ready for Building V-90 next door.

"We worked without air conditioning and only had ceiling fans. If the temperature reached above 105 degrees Fahrenheit, we got the rest of the day off. I got paid one dollar an hour or about \$36 a week after taxes."

In 1951, Forest enlisted in the Navy and took the skills he learned and applied them to his rate. He worked with the transport squadron VR-22 aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Coral Sea (CV-43)* in 1954 and 1955.

After his Navy term was up, he worked for the Standard Oil Company for ten years. But soon, he returned to NADEP where he managed the technical libraries. Aircraft were steadily getting more complex. Blueprints were needed to properly fix an aircraft. The blueprints were many pages long and it was the librarians who kept track of them all. Over time, the blueprints became too thick and clumsy and the libraries switched over to microfilm.

Forest retired from NADEP in 1991. In the continuing spirit of the NADEP family, his son Randal has worked at NADEP for the last ten years. 

Remember the Maine!

and other events from the Spanish-American War as the Hampton Roads Naval Museum presents a

Living History Associates vignette on the "Splendid Little War" and its effect on Hampton Roads



Where: Nauticus Theatre
When: August 14, 1996
7:30 p.m.

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work on motor construction, wing and fabric manufacture, aerial bomb releases, and special air armament. The Navy even employed, as it does today, professional engineers to supervise engine and machine shops. Since these were the days of wood, canvas and wire airframes, master carpenters and smiths oversaw intricate wirework and joiner work. During its first weeks of operation, the Naval Air Detachment had aircraft anchored off the beach but, as conditions improved, canvas hangars appeared. While aircrews and mechanics made do with makeshift canvas hangars, wooden buildings were being constructed along the road through the air base and its adjacent piers.

What began as a relatively small operation at Norfolk grew quickly

personnel were mostly enlisted men, this would change with post war growth. The first brick and concrete buildings on Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads were built in 1930 for the Assembly and Repair and Supply Departments. The first civilian employees, numbering about 50, were hired the same year from a pool of eligible personnel at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. By 1939, the Assembly and Repair Department had a workforce of 786 enlisted and civilian personnel. As the war in Europe intensified, an extensive building expansion and land reclamation program had begun in 1940 under the commanding officer of the Naval Air Station, Capt. Patrick N.L. Bellinger, Naval Aviator #8. A good portion of this work was completed prior to the United States'

jet squadron qualified for fleet operation. Helicopters also began to have more of a presence in fleet amphibious operations.

Though there are many stories to tell about NADEP, Norfolk, one of the most important occurred while the Navy was engaged in the early 1950's in putting heavier, faster jet aircraft onto aircraft carriers. This presented a challenge as existing carriers were hardly configured to handle the newest breed aircraft. Officer-in-Charge of the Overhaul and Repair Department at this time (1953-1955) was Capt. Sheldon W. Brown. Brown was destined to play a vital role in guiding program development. In the end, carriers demonstrated greater striking potential and operation flexibility while increasing the safety of operations on the flight deck. Brown's work was critical to development of canted flight decks for aircraft carriers, work he did while Officer-in-Charge and Director of Ship's Installation Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics. His technical and administrative skills coupled with years of aviation experience led to development of true innovations such as the steam catapult, angled flight decks and the barricade emergency arrestment device.

On April 1, 1967, the Overhaul and Repair Department became Naval Air Rework Facility (NARF). Seven of its original branches became NARF departments: administrative services, management control, weapons, engineering, quality assurance, production planning and control, and production engineering. Aircraft serviced by NARF included the A-6A *Intruder* and its electronic warfare variants, the experimental swept-wing fighter/bomber F-111B, the anti-submarine patrol aircrafts SP-2 *Neptune* and P-3 *Orion* and F-8 *Crusader*. Along with servicing the frames and wiring of the aircraft, the facility also overhauled all the engines of the previously mentioned planes. The redesignated NARF, Norfolk boasted 119 buildings, 6,000 civilian and 76 military employees.

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NADEP, Norfolk in its infancy. The Navy originally established the facility to tend to a small seaplane squadron in 1917. By the 1980's, the facility employed over 4,000 civilian and military personnel. (Circa 1920 U.S. Navy photo)

and by 1918, Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads was born and with it, the parent facility of the Depot: the Construction and Repair Department. During the First World War, the air station had three primary duties: experimentation, anti-submarine patrols and instruction of student naval aviators. In addition to these primary duties, the Mechanic's and Quartermaster's School trained upwards of 1,000 enlisted personnel in the construction and maintenance of seaplanes by the end of the war.

The Construction and Repair Department was renamed the Assembly and Repair Department in 1922. Though in the beginning,

entry into the Second World War. The Assembly and Repair Department claimed over 8,600 men and women, military and civilian, among its ranks by 1945. This would be the largest number of employees to work at the facility in its history.

The department was redesignated the Overhaul and Repair Department on July 22, 1948. Overhaul and repair facilities at Norfolk did not escape the effects of military downsizing in the post war period. Attention shifted once again to research, testing and technological advancement. As has been the case between wars, increased emphasis was placed on weapons of war for the aircraft. In the same year, the Navy had its first

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NARF was also the rework point for all versions of six missile types in the 1960's. This included: the air-to-air missiles AIM-7 *Sparrow*, AIM-9 *Sidewinder* and AIM-54 *Phoenix*, and the air-to-ground missiles AGM-53 *Condor*, AGM-62 *Walleye* and RIM-X. By the 1970's, the Navy introduced the Grumman F-14A *Tomcat* and the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 *Hornet*. NARF was designated the cognizant field activity (i.e. the facility with the knowledge and skills necessary to do the work, also known as CFA.) for the F-14 in addition to ongoing CFA Depot work on the A-6A *Intruder* and TF30 and J57 engines. The *Tomcats* repaired at NARF were flight tested on July 8, 1974. That same year, the facility prototyped the F-8J for a massive Rewire Program of the F-14.

The 1980's brought state-of-the-art advancements in technology and the need to streamline the control and administration of all six NARFs located throughout the world. Thus, on March 31, 1987, the NARFs became Naval Aviation Depots, and with this change came the reorganization effort in which depot headquarters functions were moved from Patuxent River, Maryland, to Commander, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) in Washington, D.C.

Operations at NADEP, Norfolk continued with the same quality and efficiency, typical of the facility's long history of doing so. In all the visitations I made through Atlantic Fleet aviation commands in the 1990's, none was more proud, more enthusiastic and conscientious of the quality of their work and its impact on fleet operations. The quality of work reflected every civilian and military's trade, continuing the tradition of excellence that has been the facility's hallmark since 1917. At the time of my visits, and subsequent interviews of personnel, Capt. Bruce A. Pieper was the Commanding Officer. His command encompassed over 84 specialty trades spread out in more than 90 buildings and 172 acres of Naval Air Station, Norfolk, making



Fuselages from Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bomber/minelayer undergoing overhaul at NADEP, Norfolk's fuselage repair facility inside Building V-28 (March 1950 U.S. Navy photo)

it the largest tenant command on the station and an integral part of the Hampton Roads megaport complex. It remained, despite sweeping cutbacks in the early 1990's, the largest employer in the city of Norfolk, and a viable industrial force in the Commonwealth of Virginia. At any given time in this period, there were upwards of 500 fleet operational aircraft in the confines of the

NADEP, Norfolk Through the Years

Construction and Repair Department-1917 to 1922

Assembly and Repair Department-1922 to 1948

Overhaul and Repair Department-1948 to 1967


Naval Air Rework Facility (NARF)-1967 to 1987

Naval Aviation Depot (NADEP)-1987 to 1996

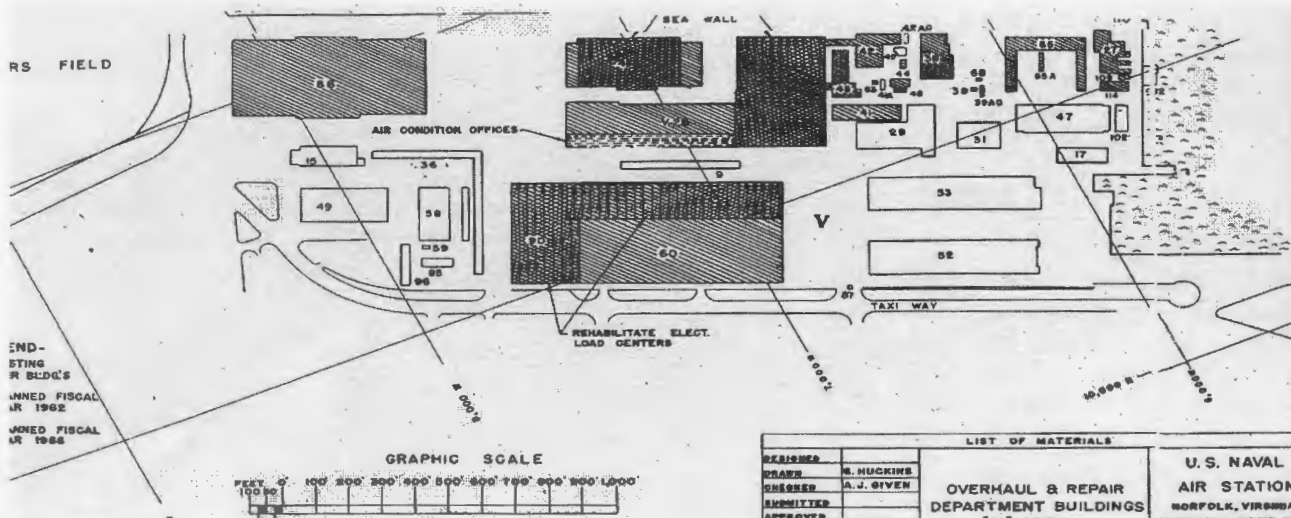
Hampton Roads area. NADEP, Norfolk provided on-site depot repairs, or Standard Depot Level Maintenance (SDLM), and modified, on a continuing basis, the A-6E *Intruder*, KA-6D tanker variant of the *Intruder*, EA-6B *Prowler* and F-14 *Tomcat* as well as most of the

components associated with those platforms. Though most of the area's Naval aircraft eligible for NADEP's In-Service Repair (ISR) program located here at Naval Stations Norfolk and Oceana, the Depot did deploy teams to other air stations on the East Coast or to deployed aircraft carriers. The ISR staff consisted of highly skilled artisans from all the aircraft trades, in addition to a group of planners and estimators with unique abilities in the repair of aircraft in the field.

As was done in the past, NADEP, Norfolk aggressively continued to provide services to other countries and commands until the time of its disestablishment in 1996. The ISR program was involved in the foreign military sale of 12 RH-53D helicopters to Israel, and also supported carrier suitability testing by the French Air Force.

Clearly, NADEP, Norfolk's history is about people and the role they have played through time to ensure a functional Naval air force. The people of NADEP, Norfolk have kept Naval aircraft flying since 1917. They do so with pride and unbounded commitment under all imaginable conditions in times of peace and war. 


*The proceeding was an excerpt from chapter eight of the author's upcoming book **Wings Over the Bay: Where Naval Aviation Really Began**. The editor would like to thank the author, Amy Waters Yarsinske, for allowing us to publish this excerpt.*



Remembered continued from page 3

Communities in World War II (Chapel Hill, 1951) provide information on the Depot's activities in World War II.

Despite these sources, documentary material regarding NADEP is not as plentiful at the museum as illustrations. Many Navy commands in the early years of the twentieth century did not keep historical records. Other Norfolk Naval Base records were destroyed in the fire that swept through the Fifth

Naval District administration building in 1941. The National Archives in Washington, D.C. and its regional branch in Philadelphia, as well as the Operational Archives at the Naval Historical Center in Washington, all contain documents that relate to the history of the Fifth Naval District and Norfolk Naval Base. No doubt a future historian will explore all these sources on his or her way to remembering the history of NADEP, Norfolk. 

The map above is an example of the many resources the museum has documenting the history of the Naval Aviation Depot, Norfolk. This map in particular was done in 1957 in preparation for the Depot's expansion for jet aircraft. (From Development Plan, Overhaul and Repair Department, NAS Norfolk)

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum announces...

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum Speakers' Bureau

The HRNM has speakers available for your group. Our speakers are wise and willing to talk about many aspects of Naval history.



**Want more details?
Contact Bob Matteson
444-8971 ext. 112**




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print media to see how we do.

I am also happy to report that effective June 15, over 15 presentations of the Speaker's Bureau had reached approximately 1,300 people. We now plan to step up our efforts with the publication of a tri-fold brochure advertising the bureau.

Lastly, I would like to announce the receipt of a very special donation from a very special group. On June 4, museum curator Joe Judge received a publication

entitled *Reflections On World War II: An Oral History* from Susan Igarada's A.P. History class at Booker T. Washington High School. this publication contains oral histories and memories of local World War II veterans as recorded and interpreted by the students of the class. It has become a part of the museum's archives. We thank the students of Booker T. Washington for the publication, and for their hard work. 

From the Depths of the HRNM Archives Comes...

One of the first “Off-Limits” Orders for Norfolk

by Joe Mosier

One of the most valuable and yet under used aspects of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum is its outstanding library and archives. To pique your interest, *The Day Book* will feature from time to time outrageous, funny and fascinating primary source material from the library. Our first example is found on Roll 11 of National Archives Microfilm Publication M-125, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains*, 1 January 1805 - 31 March 1815.

U.S. Frigate Chesapeake, 24th May 1808

Sir,

Some months past having received information that Mr. John Lyon & several of the young officers were in the habit of frequenting gambling houses, I issued an order prohibiting such practices, a copy of which order I have the honour to enclose to you. At the same time pointed out to Mr. Lyon the impropriety of any person entrusted with public money visiting such places. He acknowledged the impropriety of such conduct & gave me his honour if I would not report him to you, he would not visit such places for the future. — A few days since, after I had ordered him to prepare himself for a cruise in the Argus, I was informed by Lieut. Sinclair that Mr. Lyon still continued to gamble and that he had been betting as high as Thirty Dollars on a card. Not having any other Purser to send in the Brig in his place, I did not arrest him. On his departure he made a large Requisition for money, but knowing he stood debitted for large sums at the Navy Department for which he had not accounted & knowing also that he had contracted several considerable debts at this place, I would not advance him more than what necessary to make two months advance to the Officers of the Brig. I informed him that I should lay his card before you and required that he would before he sailed give me a statement of the manner the monies he had been charged with had been appropriated. This he promised to do, but I could not obtain it from him. I am informed, Sir, Mr. Lyon possesses other bad qualities which will prevent his filling the Station he occupies with credit to himself — it is stated that he is frequently intoxicated and is extremely loose & negligent in his accounts. — I have given Capt. Wederstrant the above information, who will take care not to place any further sums in Mr. Lyon's hands untill he shall receive your instructions upon that head.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

your ob. servt.

Stephen Decatur, jr.

U.S. Frigate Chesapeake, Norfolk Harbour, 18th Dec 1807

Capt. Isaac Hull

Sir,

Having received information that there is a gambling table at the Eagle Tavern in Norfolk and that many of the officers of the Squadron, have frequented said gambling table, it becomes my duty conformally to part of the first article of the Act of Congress for the better government of the Navy of the U. States, to be vigilant in inspecting all such as are placed under my command, and to guard against & suppress all dissolute & immoral practices and to correct all such as are found guilty of them. To do this I find it necessary to issue the following general order which you will be pleased to communicate to each of the officers belonging to the gunboats — viz.

No officer, belonging to the Squadron under my command, shall after being notified of this order, visit the Eagle Tavern in Norfolk kept by Mr. Glenn, or any other gambling house whatever. If any officer shall in violation of this order, visit the Eagle Tavern, or any other gambling house, he will do it at the risque of being arrested and tried for a breach of part of the 3rd, 14th & 17th articles of the Act of Congress for the better government of the Navy.

I have the honour to be etc.

(signed) Stephen Decatur, jr.

The Norfolk City Directory of 1806 lists Thomas Glen as keeper of the Eagle Tavern, 28 Market Square. Market Square was located about where the Confederate Monument in downtown Norfolk currently stands. Christopher McKee in his definitive work on the early U. S. naval officer corps, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession*, points out that the only way the Navy could recover money from a defaulting purser was to sue in federal court. “(T)he largest single delinquency was John Lyon’s \$8,273.95. Lyon, a compulsive gambler, was deeply overdrawn before his habits came to light and he was dropped from the roll of pursers. His was a sad and hopeless case - the money forever gone as far as the United States was concerned, because Lyon ... remained utterly insolvent till the day of his death.”¹⁵

Volunteer News & Notes

by Edward Lane

Special Announcement!

The staff of the museum would like to extend a very special Thank You to docent **Hunt Lewis**. On May 6, 1996, Hunt was the first docent to reach the milestone of **1,000 hours** of volunteer service. He has been a docent here at the museum since December, 1993.

What makes someone so dedicated? Well, we asked him what he enjoys most about volunteering at HRNM. He replied that he enjoys working and being around the general public. Hunt plans to stay in the museum's service until he is no longer able. For someone



HRNM docent Hunt Lewis cutting his 1,000 hour cake (Photo by Bob Matteston) who did not know the HRNM even existed until a few years ago, we are certainly happy that he has found a home here:

Hunt is no stranger to the Navy. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1961 and served for ten years as a damage control and communications officer. He served aboard the intelligence gathering ships

USS *Investigator* (AGR-9) and USS *Georgetown* (AGTR-2), and the destroyer USS *James C. Owens* (DD-776). His shore duties included Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet and Commander, Amphibious Forces, Atlantic.

Other Volunteer Milestones

Not forgetting the other docents, we congratulate the following volunteers on their valuable contributions to the museum:

500 hours

Tom Duggan
Bob Comet

400 hours

Charlie Devine

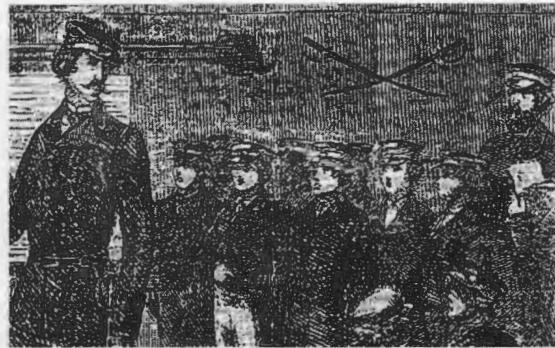
100 hours

Paul Bohn
Bill Eley
David Dashiell
Gene Hanlin

Special event participation

The volunteer corps has helped us out in spreading the word about the museum. On May 23, the museum participated in the D.A.R.E. day festival at Northside Park. **Charlie Devine, Miriam Burgess, Leo Grudzinski** and **Margaret Godfrey** dressed in Civil War period custom and spent the day bandaging kids with Civil War-era field dresses. See a picture of them in action on page 2.

We also like to thank **Leo Grudzinski** for coming to the Virginia Symphony concert in period uniform.



Happy Birthday to You....

July

Joe Curtis
George Fleck
Pete Watson

August

Gary Abrams
Ray Weller
Bill Colona
Luther Beck



Upcoming events

Here is a preview of museum events which you will receive more information about in the mail.

On **July 13-14**, **Bill Whorton** and the Ship's Company of *CSS Virginia* will have their displays on the ironclad and the Confederate States Marine Corps set up in the museum's Civil War gallery.

On **Aug. 14**, **Mark Greenough** and **Living History Associates** will present a vignette on the Spanish-American war. See page 5 for more details.

Last, but certainly not least, mark your calendars for the **Annual Summer Docent Picnic**. It will take place on **Aug. 22**. We are looking for more committee members to work on this fun event. More to come later.

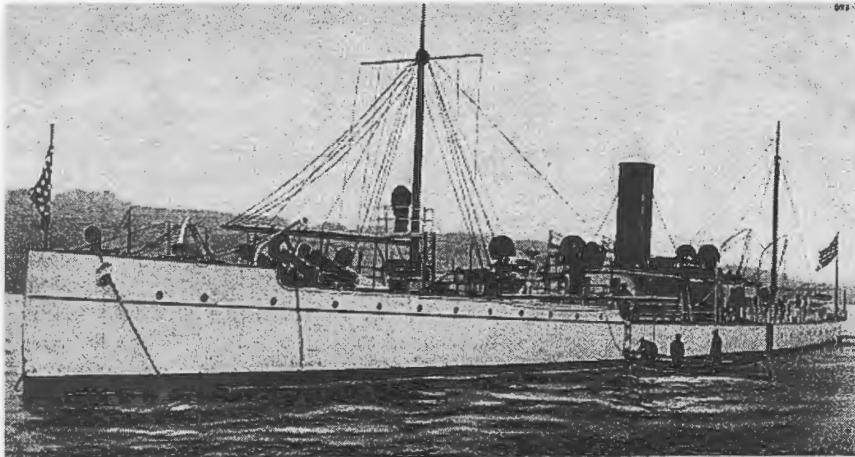
The Museum Sage



Shame!

The all-wise sage is most disappointed with his readers. Outside of two docents who are already very knowledgeable with the museum's collection, no one gave an answer to the sage stumper posed in the last issue. Since the exhibit has been taken down, the sage will graciously give the answer.

The original question was to name the U.S. Navy's pre-World War I ship designed for ground support. The answer is pictured below.



The odd looking ship is the dynamite gunboat USS *Vesuvius*. Built in 1890 by the Pneumatic Dynamite Gun Company, *Vesuvius* carried three 15-inch guns that used compressed air to fire its shell. Compressed air was used to avoid accidentally setting off the nitrocellulose, commonly known as guncotton, warhead of the shell. Guncotton is a close chemical relative of dynamite and has far more destructive power than the more commonly used black powder.

At first, the Navy was not very keen with the idea of a ship which carried such an unstable chemical onboard. Critics also pointed out that the ship was just plain impractical as it did have any turrets, thus one would have to turn the whole ship in order to correct fire. With the outbreak of war with Spain in 1898, the Navy reluctantly agreed to take *Vesuvius* with the rest of the fleet down to Cuba.

Since the ship was not armored, the Navy kept it behind the rest of the fleet during the day as to prevent enemy fire from hitting the guncotton shells and taking out half the fleet in the ensuing explosion.

During the night, however, *Vesuvius* lobbed its seven foot, 500 pound guncotton shells at Spanish troops. It had a terrible effect upon Spanish morale as the explosions and damage were quite devastating.

The sage hopes that his readers will better prepared for the next stumper.

What's the cartoon?

The cartoon in the upper left hand corner of the page appeared in the May 27, 1913 issue of *Life* magazine. It is poking fun at Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. Daniels was a North Carolina newspaper publisher and staunch political ally of President Woodrow Wilson. Upon his appointment to the position of Secretary, the press frequently mocked him for not knowing anything about the needs of the Navy or what a ship was

in the first place. Many of the Naval officers were mad at him for banning alcohol in the ward room.

Some of the criticism, however, was unwarranted as he did make more educational programs available to enlisted personnel and approved the largest shipbuilding program to date.

The sage thought the cartoon would be an appropriate symbol for the column.

I have a photo of a billboard proclaiming Whitehall, N.Y. as "the Birthplace of the U.S. Navy." Whitehall is just a small, eastern New York town. What's the story? (Question posed by HRNM docent Edward Cox)

You are right to distrust absolute statements that include the words like, "the father of...", "birthplace of...", "the first..." or "the biggest..." The key to this story is knowing that in 1775, Whitehall was called Skenesborough after its developer, a Tory (a British loyalist) named Maj. Philip Skene. The town is located on an inlet to Lake Champlain. Concurrent with the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, militiamen under Ethan Allen seized a schooner owned by Skene and renamed it *Liberty*. More important to the "birthplace" was the shipyard developed on the site of Maj. Skene's sawmill in late 1775, early 1776. The Continental Congress ordered shipwrights and workmen from other colonies to New York to construct a small fleet to attempt to repel an expected British invasion via Lake Champlain. Some 300 to 500 men at Skenesborough built the small fleet of gundalows and galleys that Gen. Benedict Arnold used at the Battle of Valcour Island in October 1776. While the rebels lost the battle, Arnold's fleet delayed the British invasion from Canada until 1777. 