WINGS OF GOLD
Fall 2019
The Voice of Naval Aviation Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
World War I Seaplane Hangar

Historic Site at the University of Washington

story submitted by Lee Corbin, photos courtesy of the Museum of History and Industry & Alex Chen

On the campus of the University of Washington, just a few feet from the water's edge of the Montlake Cut ship canal, stands a truly historic piece of U.S. Naval Aviation history in relative obscurity: the only WWI-era, all-wood, Navy seaplane hangar remaining in the United States. Probably, the world.

With America's entry into the European war, the Navy, particularly Naval Aviation, would be called upon to fight the war at sea against the German U-boat menace. A training system was quickly established that included three Naval Aviation ground schools, the first being MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The University of Washington would follow for all west coast training, and Dunwoody Industrial Institute in Minneapolis would handle the center of the country. These three basic schools were meant to be the first stop in the training system, providing initial instruction up to high-speed taxi, but not including actual airborne flight training. To prevent students from inadvertently taking the craft airborne, the wings of the Burgess U-2 and Curtis HS-1L aircraft were clipped short.

The basic training program was also for the aircraft machinists and riggers who would assemble and maintain the Navy's flying fleet.

The University of Washington's ground school, commanded by Lieutenant James Campbell Monfort (Naval Aviator #35), opened on June 11, 1918, even before the barracks, shops, and hangar were close to completion. Assigned training aircraft were three Burgess U-2s, followed shortly by a Curtiss HS-1L, straight from the Lowe, Willard & Fowler (L.W.F.) aircraft factory in College Point, New York.

The hangar was completed in September of 1918, and would...
remain in use for training by the Navy until January of 1919. Ten classes of approximately 20 cadets would complete the course during that time.

With the war having ended, the Naval Training Station buildings, including the hangar, were turned over to the University of Washington. With its cavernous interior, and the placid waters of Lake Washington at the bottom of the seaplane ramp, it was quickly recognized that this building would make an ideal “shell house” for the school’s rowing team. One of those teams, the 1936 crew, would go on to win the Olympic Gold Medal in Berlin as Adolph Hitler looked on, as chronicled in “The Boys in the Boat”, by author Dan Brown.

The old hangar would serve as the UW shell house for the next 30 years, until 1949, when it became the school’s canoe house for boat rentals and storage.

With the popularity of Dan Brown’s story, it was recognized that this former hangar needed to be restored and protected to give it another hundred years of life, a process now well under way. For additional information and photos: https://www.washington.edu/ima/waterfront/asuw-shell-house/

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**USNA Powered Flight Program**

*story & photo provided by LT Steve “Poopy” Korbein, USN, PFP Instructor Pilot*

This week marks the completion of the final Summer 2019 training block for USNA’s Powered Flight Program (PFP). PFP is a highly selective program for 1/C Midshipmen during the summer of their final year at the Academy. Eligible students are selected based on their performance as Midshipmen and their consistent interest in and aptitude for a career in Naval Aviation. The syllabus consists of three weeks of fast-paced ground and flight instruction on Maryland’s Eastern Shore out of Easton Airport flying the Piper Warrior. The program culminates with a solo flight in the landing pattern, an impressive accomplishment after only nine flights in an aircraft.

This year, our program is proud to report a 93% completion rate for the 136 Midshipmen who participated in one of the three training blocks this summer—the highest ever in the program’s history! The Midshipmen who select Pilot or NFO will save months of training time by validating Introductory Flight Screening, the first step in the Naval Aviation training pipeline. Given the significant return on investment provided to the Naval Aviation Enterprise, we look forward to continuing this program for years to come.

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*MIDN 1/C Kohl Dorsey and MIDN 1/C Mike Cortiz with instructor LT Steve Korbein after completing PFP solo flights*