~ Chapter III ~*"Aviation Cadets"*

Letters From Des: The Life of a Marine Corps –Naval Aviator and Test Pilot

Throughout my childhood, and I would reckon that of any baby boomer, I heard repeated references to the Great Depression and the frightful effect it had on families. The economic crash in the autumn of 1929 didn't manifest its full worldwide effect until the 1930's as cash money and jobs seemed to disappear. Men who lost their livelihood, lost self esteem as well.

Youngsters today might know that money doesn't grow on trees, but those who lived through the Depression didn't see much money circulate at all. My father, Des Canavan, entered the University of Washington in the fall of 1931 and for four years studied for a Bachelor of Science Degree with the hope of becoming a doctor. Since the University of Washington did not then have a medical school, his acceptance to its medical fellowship *Pi Mu Chi* in December of 1934 didn't promise a future in medicine. Des was accepted to a medical school in Germany when, in fact, he "didn't have enough money for bus fare across town". How he would ever attend medical school in what had become Nazi Germany was problematic.

In a hurried campaign to recruit and train Naval Aviators, Congress passed legislation on April 15, 1935, that would create a new rank in the United States Naval Reserve – that of Aviation Cadet. Democrat Carl Vinson's Committee of Naval Affairs had a made quite a study in the wake of the unintended problems that existed as a result of the Vinson-Trammel Act of 1934 that increased the number of planes that the Navy was authorized to have, but not the trained pilots to fly them.

The Act also provided for two new carriers to be built, as well as cruiser escorts with aviation support. Annapolis alone could not produce the naval aviators fast enough. In fact, two years before, 50% of the graduating class of 1933 had to be sent home because the Navy was restricted as to how many commissioned officers it was allowed. Moreover, the hide-bound requirement of two years of sea duty after commissioning and before any special training was allowed, further restricted training for pilots. Between August 1932 and July 1934, no new students were ordered to Pensacola for training.[1]

By comparison, within that same time frame, in the Far East the Japanese had invaded Manchuria in their quest for military expansion and economic resources. In Europe the French and British just watched while Hitler coalesced his power within the fractured state of Germany, appealing to the business leaders with promises of a revived economy and the people with the purist zealotry of Nazi destiny.

President Roosevelt was a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy and knew its traditions and its problems. It's hard to know if Roosevelt could foresee the extent of the conflagration that was to strike. But the world was becoming more destabilized everyday; he was willing to ready the Navy. He signed the legislation authorizing the Aviation Cadet Program six days after passage in the House, known as Public Law No. 37.

The word was spread far and wide that the Navy was looking to train prospective pilots; *Wheaties* boxes, *Readers Digest*, *The Saturday Evening Post* contained advertisements, colorful posters were strategically placed in the Post Office, news releases appeared in college campus and community newspapers. Barnstorming recruiters

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[1]Gary Shattuck, *Fleet Cadets* © 1997 citing Navy Bureau of Aeronautics, *1933, 1934, 1935 Annual Reports.*

went forth to demonstrate their skills. Using the existing twelve Naval Reserve Districts, the Navy added a screening mechanism in a Selection Board consisting of two Naval Aviators and one flight surgeon to evaluate potential Aviation Cadets.[2]

The physical was by far the most rigorous part of the screening process. Candidates had to be in the best of physical conditions. It has been estimated that only five percent of the total applicants survived the screening process that would allow them to proceed to Elimination Trials. The application itself and the personal interview also carried weight. The full court press of advertising and recruiting had effectively allowed every young male in the country to think he might aspire to a future as a pilot.

Those whose who devised and debated the program really wanted college educated young men who were "officers in training" to apply. But the Depression had prevented some of the potential candidates from attending more than two years. This would remain a bit of a sticking point as young men went through the system, earning their wings and yet they were still "Aviation Cadets" and not fully commissioned officers. Eventually the military system caught on, but the early Fleet Cadets found themselves in awkward positions once away from the mother station of Pensacola.

In a matter of three months the first seventy cadets arrived in Pensacola, Florida (Class 81-C) and each month thereafter a new class came in until the original seventy became four hundred and ninety-six on January 1, 1936.[3]

For my father, the experience was both serendipitous and a no-brainer. He, like many young men, was fascinated by airplanes. He wanted to know what it was like to fly.

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[2] Gary Shattuck *Fleet Cadets*, pp. 8-9.

[3] United States Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*, Foreword.

He and his friends went to see Will Rogers at a fly-in and he was close enough to touch the skin of the plane. According to my father, Rogers frowned and told him, "Don't touch the plane, kid." -Famous last words? Later, on August 15, 1935, while Rogers and the one-eyed Wiley Post were seeking a flying route between Seattle and the Soviet Union, he crashed his seaplane into an Alaskan lagoon and that was the end of a great American humorist. But my father still wanted to know what it was to fly.

By the spring of 1935 my mother, Alice Marie O'Keefe, was also a student at the University of Washington. Des was about to graduate. They were both in the library when "Marie" noticed an item in the campus daily newspaper from the Commanding Officer at Sand Point stating the need for aviation cadets – with the bait of cash at the end of a four-year commitment. The minimum of two years of a college was required to apply. Des and his friends had 4 years of college and very few job prospects. If they could pass the demanding physical and show some talent, they might actually have a future in a brand new field. Commercial flight was beginning to show strength by airlines actually having doubled the number of passengers carried in the past five years as well as picking up postal routes, greatly improving the speed with which mail was delivered. If a cadet could complete his four-year commitment, there was a very real possibility of having a job flying for an airline.

Was there a better deal out there? A starting salary of $75 a month, room and board, clothing and an all expenses paid education. A train ride to Pensacola, Florida if you made it. A ticket home if you washed-out. After graduation the pay increased to $125 a month and there was a lump cash bonus at the end of four years.

Des was looking forward to another summer at Seward Park as a lifeguard. Greg Hallenbeck, who wrestled with Des on the University of Washington wrestling team, studied aeronautical engineering, had graduated in December 1934. The summer before graduation, Greg quietly married Helene Clark, a recent high school graduate, who was soon pregnant. While in school he had a job parking cars next to Victory Square, but had begun to work for Boeing as a draftsman and engineer. In college the boys had shared an old car with no floorboards, which Marie found disconcerting when she was learning to drive. Engineering student Bob Galer was a basketball star and "campus hero" and Jim Mueller just wanted to fly, was better off financially; they all had been friends for years.

Greg and Helene moved in with his mother and stepfather. In applying for this once-in-a -lifetime opportunity to be paid to learn how to fly, Greg had to supply a birth certificate. Greg Hallenbeck discovered his real name on his birth certificate and that of his father was "Boyington".[4] While his mother was embarrassed by the revelation, the fortuitous disgrace allowed the "new" Greg Boyington to say he was unmarried and got recommendations from his University of Washington professors and ROTC staff.[5]

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[4] Bruce Gamble. *Black Sheep One*, pp. 51-57.

[5] Note: The University of Washington spelled his last name "Hollenbeck". Both Greg and Helene were raised in rather disruptive non-traditional family settings. Perhaps that was what drew them to each other.

Applying for the program, all four boys made it to Elimination Trials with Dick Mangrum[6], who would prove to be a touchstone for them. The four boys decided to sign up for the Marine Corps Reserves rather than the Navy. Since they had to wait until after their graduation on June 17, 1935, the first trials were filled with earlier applicants. Enlisting in the Volunteer Marine Corps Reserves on August 22, 1935, Desmond Earl Canavan became a Private First Class in the Marine Corps Reserve officially on September 5, 1935.

Elimination Trials, which began at Sand Point on September 16, 1935, lasted almost a month, giving the successful applicants a chance to learn how to fly as well as a taste of what might be expected in the military. But the main focus was flight training, on the ground and in the air. My father told the story that Dick Mangrum had taken him aside at one point and told him very confidentially that he just wasn't sure Des was cut out for flying, that he wasn't taking the whole program seriously enough, maybe wasn't mature enough. By then my father was hooked and ready to "straighten up and fly right." I've recently read others' memoirs at Elimination Base, and I do believe everyone got that father/son talk. By the end of the course probably another 25%- 35% washed out. The rest were told to go home and await orders.

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[6] Dick Mangrum would be a mentor for the four men throughout their careers in the United States Marines Corps. He handled Elimination for them, was at Pearl Harbor & Ewa Field, Pacific Theatre (Ulithi) and eventually became a Major General and served as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps from July 1, 1965- June 30, 1967.

On January 26, 1936, Des received his "Honorable Discharge" as PFC in the Marine Corps Reserve "to accept appointment as Aviation Cadet in the U.S.M.C. R." (PDF # 070)***.

As predicted by his initial orders signed by Dick Mangrum on September 5, 1935, space at Pensacola became available in mid- February 1936. The four young men were called up and went together, becoming members of Class 88-C.[7] (PDF: # 069)*** As they packed their duffels in mid- February 1936, Hitler was preparing to enter the Rhineland which he did on March 7, 1936, - preemptory to planned discussions by the leaders in Europe.

Marie and Helene[8] went down to the station to kiss the boys off[9]; Fred "Ray" Emerson, Greg Boyington, Bob Galer and Des Canavan. Emerson had gone through E-Base after the other three, but was accepted into Class 88-C. Jim Mueller re-joined the aviation cadets in Chicago arriving from his native Michigan.

When Des left Seattle, Washington in the winter of 1936, he knew that he would be gone at least a year, if he didn't wash out, and Marie would continue going to college, working as a waitress at Rippe's Café at 4th and Pike Streets, and having her normal activities to keep her busy. He wrote her from the road…

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The Olympian ***Milwaukee Road*** ***Feb.14, 1936***

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[7] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket,* pp. 37-38.

[8] Note: While everyone knew Greg and Helene were married and had an infant, no one considered telling their secret.

[9] Bruce Gamble. *Black Sheep One*. p. 64.

"I surely spent a sleepless night thinking about us and the future. Yesterday was the hardest day of my life to live. I've always heard that the first goodbye is the hardest and I do hope it is. You were very sweet my dear and boy I'll remember that last kiss you gave me for a long time to come. It was just right. We'll get along honey. It will be awfully hard to live down love like ours. It's a great consolation to me to know that you love me as much as you do. I have no fears for our future. You won't hurt me and I won't hurt you.

Gregg[10] (Boyington) and myself are serious about our gals while Bob (Galer) and Fred (Ray Emerson) love them all. They will probably go to town when they get to Chicago but Gregg and I are just going to a big show or something on that order. We're in Montana now going thru the Bitter Root Mountains. They look very much like the Blue Mountains in Eastern Oregon. I suppose they are a continuation of them really. Everything is covered with ice and snow and I suppose it will be that way all the way to Chi. We have wonderful accommodations. Everything is perfect and the meals are not expensive either. I am going to eat quite light so I'll keep in better shape. I just had some orange juice, toast and coffee for breakfast. I will close now so I can mail this at Missoula. This is not a letter, but just a post card. I'll write you a real long letter soon only I wanted you to get this right away.

I love you, *Des* *P.S. I love you again.*

[10] Note: Des variously spelled Gregory Boyington's name "Gregg" or "Greg". He was talking about the same person. Boyington would gain the name "Rats" or "Ratz", but was not called "Pappy" until the Black Sheep Squadron was formed in 1943.

Along the way Des wrote Marie short missives telling her of his adventures, like a scout laying a path before her, telling her what she might see and surely what to avoid. He became more convinced that the more he saw, the better the Northwest looked.

"Darling,

We're just getting into Minneapolis 24 hours late, dear, and talk about cold last night. It was 43 below zero at Summit, N.D. I went outside for about 2 minutes & before I knew it my ears were frozen. Minnesota is nice country but the rest isn't much. Washington has still got anything beat I've seen. I had swell dreams of you last night & did you get loved. – Des"

Des wrote from Chicago detailing his and Boyington's visit to the Aquarium and Planetarium which he thought were marvelous. He and Greg stayed in an inexpensive hotel[11] down by the Loop, treated themselves to a glass of beer and went to a show in a theatre called the *Uptown* that was four times bigger than the Paramount back home. The lobby alone was bigger than the whole bottom floor of one of their theatres. The *Uptown* had a big aquarium in the center of the lobby with black swans swimming in it. But then Des dismissed Chicago overall.

[11] Note: Interviewing Des for his biography of Boyington, Bruce Gamble related the stories of how these unsophisticated fellows flooded their Chicago hotel room to the dismay of the hotel staff. Boyington also managed to tweak Des' re-frostbitten ear as they walked near the planetarium along Lake Michigan, thus causing unrelieved pain for months. *Black Sheep One*, p. 65.

"As for the city itself, it's the nuts. It's so darn smoky, dirty, and sooty that it's filthy. The soot falls just like hail and you can see it settle on you…. I'm really glad to get out of that dive though. You couldn't hire me to live there."

The next day Des wrote from aboard *The Dixieland*, A.K.A. the "Dixie Flyer".

"*It's going straight to Miami & boy, it's really a crack train. All the rich buzzards from Chi are on it and do they think they are something. We're behind on time & a little while ago we were going 87 miles an hour, so the conductor says. The Ohio River just hove into view & it's frozen solid with great jagged chunks of ice sticking way up in the air. It's quite a little stream. As soon as we cross it we'll be in Kentucky.*

I quit writing to look at Kentucky & now we're in Tennessee. We're going to get off at Nashville & see what the South is like. We'll catch a train out of there tonight about 1:00 and we'll get to Pensacola tomorrow afternoon.

You'll really be disappointed when you see all of this country. It isn't anything like you'd expect. People in the South sure do live in shacky looking dumps. All you can see is cornfields & it's still snowing even down here. I've never seen so much snow in all my life & will be glad to feel the warm sunshine again. We really do live in the nicest part of the country, so much as I've seen. You can't compare the scenery with what they've got here. Maybe I'll change my opinion when I see Florida."

Arriving in Pensacola on 18 February 1936, Des was exhausted and instantly thrown into the middle of life as an Aviation Cadet. His address was now penciled darkly on his brand new gold embossed stationary with winged anchors of the Naval Air Station,

Pensacola, Fla. “Cadet Barracks 233”. But his excitement was tempered by some disappointment.

> *“We got in yesterday afternoon but I was too darn tired to let you know about it. I’m really a long ways from home, but I wouldn’t trade any of the country I’ve seen for the good old Northwest. You talk about wanting to get away from there but you don’t know what you are talking about. You are living in a garden spot of the world and don’t know it. When we begin our travels, I’ll prove that to you although you don’t believe it now.*
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> *I like the South but it really isn’t anything like you would expect. The negroes and the poor whites live in the most squalid conditions you can imagine. Their houses are simply shacks & hovels some without even doors. Filthy, boy oh boy, you can smell them ten miles. There is a different part of the South that is more pleasant though. At Nashville we stopped over a few hours. We had dinner at one of the famous old southern hotels. It was really marvelous. The food was cooked so well & the old negro servants just step around. A big negro orchestra played during the whole thing. The people who are fit to talk to are most congenial and pleasant. They are so friendly and I do like to hear them talk. The women are very good looking, that is the upper class are. I suppose it’s because they don’t do any work because they can hire negroes to do it for practically nothing.*
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> *Now to give you an idea about this place, there isn’t millions of waving palms as you’d expect. The only palm trees are those that are planted. The rest of the trees are short shrubby pine I believe. The beaches are all real white sand and*

really darn nice alright. Terrain is pretty flat, in fact darn flat. The weather is wonderful, just about like a late spring day up there. Everyone I talk to doesn't like the place though. They say they are under too much of a strain all the time. Too many regulations makes it kind of the nuts. The way I look at it though is that they are necessary because they save men's lives.

We have plenty keen food I think but you ought to hear the squawk the boys raise. Just something to beef about I guess. We all have negro servants and are treated like kings. Our uniforms are really wonderful. It will take one month to get them tailored. The white ones are really something. No one saves their money down here and if you want something all you have to do is ask anyone and they'll lend it to you. The boys are really nice and everyone gets along marvelously. Sure from all over the country…

I got down here owing 5¢ that's how broke I was. I hope the palmy days are here at last though. I'll let you ride the gravy train with me if you want. The San Carlos Hotel is a darn nice one from the outside as far as I can see. The town is the nuts. They don't seem to have garbage dumps but just throw it where it lights. If you come down here you'll be plenty disappointed. I want you to wait now until I can get my commission & then we can really go to town."

Marie saved a 1936 newspaper article describing the Aviation Cadet School Course for the *Seattle Times*[12]. Singled out from the 40 University of Washington students qualifying for Pensacola the four friends Bob Galer, G. Boyington, D.E.

[12] *Seattle Times*. 1936 Clipping, no date visible.

Canavan, & J. Mueller for the United States Marine Corps. This sort of news release in columns back home were typical publicity for the program.

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"Campus Heroes to Become Naval Aviators

40 U.W. Students Flying at Pensacola"

"Dreaming not of football games and campus dances, but of flying 'checks', the din of airplane engines and the chance of active service with the United States Fleet, forty former students of the University of Washington have enrolled, since last July, as aviation cadets at the Naval Air Station at Pensacola.

Cadets from the University of Washington, who learned to fly at the Sand Point Naval Air Station, were deflated promptly on their arrival at the Navy's great flying school in Florida.

They learned to fly all over again, in two-seated sea planes, with an instructor.

There Is No Back-Talk

Cadets, who must gas and grease and care for their own planes when serving with Squadron 1, wear a Gossport helmet, which has connections enabling the instructor to talk to the pupil, but no connections through which the pupil may answer. The cadets listen and learn.

At the end of approximately fifty hours of flying, cadets graduate from Squadron 1 to Squadron 2, and promptly are tossed into Pensacola Bay, by way of congratulation. After this they become 'gentlemen flyers', and use advanced land training ships, which are serviced for them by enlisted personnel.

As a cadet ends his days in Squadron 2, his worries increase. For he must pass a rigid series of 'checks', which either 'wash him out' or send him on to work in fast fighting planes. At the end of a year at Pensacola the cadets, with training in every type of naval aircraft, go to the fleet, proudly wearing the wings of a Navy aviator. Cadets serve three years on active duty with battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers, and with some naval air base."

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Flipping over the article to see what was on the reverse side. The headline reads:

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"War Clouds Over Europe; Bees Buzz Drowsily Here"

There is an interview of the Reverend E.E. Turner who had returned from four years as pastor at the American Church in Berlin, Germany. An Ohio Wesleyan graduate the young minister was distressed that people were underestimating Hitler. Sitting in a spring garden of cherry blossoms next to Lake Washington, the good Rev. Mr. Turner tried to emphasize:

"…the nation isolated by treaties, impoverished by war and near the edge of a nervous breakdown, uniting itself against the world. And of bordering states, along the frontiers of which guns bristled, demanding a harsh vengeance.

People underestimate Hitler. They underestimate Hitlerism. The world put Germany into a Ghetto, in a way. It cut them off. And Hitler made them into a tribe of 65,000,000 people, united more securely than Germany has ever been united in history.

People say that the Nazi movement would collapse if Hitler died, or were killed. But I don't think so. The Hitler propaganda machine is too well organized.

If Hitler were to die, some other Nazi leader would immediately take his place. I think it would probably be Maurice Hess, who organized the Storm Troopers. Radio stations would broadcast the last words of Hitler as advocating his successor and Germany would accept him.

Germany in the twenty years since the war has been pushed close to the edge of a nervous breakdown. We know something of what they experience because we had our depression. But they went through eight times what we did. Hitler aroused them to a mass hysteria."

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In light of what we all know came to pass, the distress that the rest of the world felt in the early months of 1936 seemed at odds at with what must have seemed the potential of a bright future for my parents. And yet they were the flip sides of the same coin, preparing for a future at war.

For Des, learning to fly, all expenses paid was the opportunity of a lifetime. And so it was for many young men of this time. I'm not certain if people today realize what a significant opportunity it was for the few hundred young men who made the cut nationwide. The Pensacola Naval Air Station had been there for some years. Naval Aviators were created and Navy traditions were taught and reinforced. The new rank, Aviation Cadet, opened the service to young men who didn't know much about the Navy. They might have been behind a plow in the Mid-West just weeks prior to their acceptance in the program. Now they would learn what it meant to be in the Navy.

According to the Foreword of the *1936 Flight Jacket* The officers of the Aviation Cadet Battalion found training the Aviation Cadets just as difficult as it was for the cadets to endure the battalion training. The Flight and Ground training had been established for years, but adding a whole new component of military training to inexperienced young men, especially those who had no prior military exposure, had to be well planned and coordinated with the vital flight and ground lessons. The courses were demanding and the students were constantly subjected to "tests" which required their full concentration.

> "One half of each working day is spent at the Squadrons in actual flying, while the other is devoted to ground school, in a course that requires about ten months for completion. The first month is an indoctrinal period, in which the newly arrived cadet is given an introduction to Navy Regulations, Naval customs and usages, official correspondence, elements of ordinance, practical seamanship, and military drill."[13]

That was just for starters. Cadets were "thoroughly grounded in principles of air-cooled and water-cooled engines, including mechanical, electrical, fuel, lubricating, and cooling systems."[14] An engineering mind would be what they would be looking for. But they were also looking for men who could understand aerodynamics, aircraft construction and equipment; who could take apart their plane and put it back together in a pinch.

They also had to learn how to pack their own parachute and that of their instructor, spent hours learning radio code, radio theory, signal flags, and aerial photography. In time they would be required to learn "aerial defense: gunnery, fixed and

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[13] U.S. Navy. *1936 Flight Jacket*: Ground School.

[14] Ibid.

free machine guns, torpedoes, horizontal and dive bombing, navigation, scouting and strategy and tactics rounded out the Ground School."[15]

The whole time they were spending half a day at Ground School, after the first month of indoctrination, the other half they spent in the air, learning to fly under the watchful gaze of the Instructor at each Squadron[16]. As the cadet gathered the requisite "up-checks" needed to go on to the next Squadron level, he could move ahead competing against himself to complete the course.

To qualify at Elimination Base for Aviation Cadet Battalion all of the men had to have passed a minimum of ten hours of dual instruction followed by a short solo flight in a land plane, thus demonstrating some aptitude in a plane. Arriving at Pensacola, Squadron One began to retrain the young pilots in seaplanes within the confines of Pensacola Bay, effectively away from the swells of the Gulf of Mexico thanks to the barrier island, Santa Rosa.

Squadron One required about forty hours of flight time within nine weeks of training, during which check-flight system of examinations recorded the cadet's progress or lack thereof. Each stage of completed instruction was followed with a ride with a check-pilot who would grade the cadet's proficiency. A satisfactory performance rated an "up-check", signifying he could continue. A "down-check" sent the student back to practice his weakness until he could get two "up-checks" in succession. A "bust" became an issue of great concern that would merit review before the Squadron Flight Board, his

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[15] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*, Ground School and Squadron One.

[16] Des' Log indicated his first flight instruction was March 27, 1936 with enlisted Navy pilot "Coward" who was frequently cited as a Squadron One instructor.

instructor, and the Squadron Commander. The board could decide to give the cadet more instruction and more time. In fact most cadets, at one time or another, would find one skill or another would require extra coaching.

At this level, between Ground School and Squadron One, the first two and a half months were a period of assessment for both the cadet and the instructors. Within the cradle of Pensacola Bay, the seaplanes were a very forgiving craft. The N3N biplanes were fitted with floats and painted bright yellow. Known as "Yellow Perils" they could be easily seen in the sky, in the field, or in the drink. But with each day divided between intense ground school instruction and flight school, flying an hour a day on average; the aviation cadet could feel a lot of pressure being tested every step of the way. By the time he finally got the hang of spirals and spins, reverse control turns and precision landings, it was time for another test and off to Squadron Two.

From everything I've read from memoirs of other Aviation Cadets of this era, they had much the same experience. They absolutely *loved* flying, some even *loved* Ground School- especially if they had a knack for tinkering with engines or electronics. Most appreciated learning skills that might actually help them, even if they washed out. But all of them had a tale about an unreasonable instructor- who shall remain nameless, who caused them no end of angst about their performance as pilots and came very close to squelching their careers. These are wonderful stories. As I read them I couldn't help but wonder if these wonderful natural pilots somehow had the misfortune to get in the same two-seater with this unreasonable, unhappy man.

When I read my father's letters I have to remember that he was a recent college graduate who had spent most of his life between Seattle and Orcas Island. A healthy,

quiet, young man with a passion for my mother-to-be. He had perfect twenty-twenty eyesight combined with uncanny powers of observation. A man of great patience, it took a lot to rile Des Canavan, whereas his buddy Greg Boyington was quick to fire up.

Squadron Two was the home of "the toughest check-pilots who ever climbed into a cockpit". According to *1936 Flight Jacket*: "These gentlemen usually "bust out" and send home about thirty percent of the students who innocently wander into their clutches, but they do their job so well that not one cadet has been injured in more than a year- a remarkable record for the dangerous period of primary landplane instruction."[17]

Squadron Two course was twice as long with twice the flying hours of any other: eighteen weeks and eighty flying hours. The solo checks were given after only seven hours of dual instruction and after eleven hours of solo practice. "Precision spins, splits, fishtails, small field emergencies, and precision landings in a 100-foot circle"…is followed by a twenty-five hour check "THE NEMISIS of many a would-be Naval Aviator…. Climaxed by six circle shots, of which at least four three-point, full-stall landings must be made within the circle."[18]

Wake Island Pilot, John Kinney wrote about Squadron Two flight training in his chapter "Flying At Last".[19] Kinney explained the considerable adjustment for the Aviation Cadet between flying an N3N with floats versus NS-1 on wheels. The unobstructed view in the seaplane was completely absent. The pilot had to taxi in an S to

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[17] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*. Squadron Two.

[18] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*, Squadron Two.

[19] John Kinney with James McCaffrey, *Wake Island Pilot*, © 1995, p.25.

even see if there was another plane on the runway before taking off. Landings were equally difficult and the primary landing strip when you were in the Navy was on the rear third of an aircraft carrier. It was *vital* for Aviation Cadets to perform full-stall landings, in effect to know how to land on a carrier deck that was plowing forward through a rolling sea.. Kinney explained why all the aero-acrobats were important to fighter pilots whose very survival would depend on having experience with those skills.(PDF: # 120)***

If the cadet's work was satisfactory, "the student begins the advanced solo stage, where he gets his first aerial acrobatics, including loops, wingovers, split-S turns, snap-rolls, Immelman turns, falling leafs, cartwheels, and figure eights over pylons…. The average student could successfully pass the flight requirements for the commercial transport pilot's license. He now goes into three-plane formation work, where he is initiated into the mysteries of skidding into position with his rudder, crossing over from "V" to echelon, returning without chopping off his partner's tail, taking off in formation, and making formation landings. Two cross-country flights are made in three-plane formation, and at this stage night flying instruction is given."[20] (PDF:114)***

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Dearest: *29 August 1936*

Your ace is still an ass. I flew an UP for my instructor and then flew a DOWN for the other check pilot yet I'll always swear I flew one of the best UPs this station ever saw. I can't fly any better than I did on Friday and if it isn't good enough I'll be seeing you soon. I've got another chance on Monday and if I don't

[20] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*: Squadron Two.

make it, it may be too bad. My instructor told me the way I flew Friday I was good enough to fly the final check right now and I went right up to the next hour and stunted, small fielded, and circle shot just as well as I had for him and this bastard gave me a DOWN and never gave me a reason for it.

My instructor was about ready to come to blows over it but it didn't do any good. He couldn't make the check pilot change his mind. What happened really I think is that the stunts made him sick so he took it out on me. He never did give me the reason for giving me the DOWN. He couldn't think of any except that it was a DOWN. I have a lot of new ideas on what heels some navy men are. I got into every small field I ever shot at perfectly and he couldn't deny it either but yet he gave me a DOWN. I'll never get over that. He's a heel of the first order. Someday I swear I'll get even with that fellow. He can't fly any better himself than I did Friday. My wingovers weren't good was all he could think of saying and then he tried some and his speed varied from 95-60 knots when it should have been 80-40. If I'd done as badly as that I'd have given myself a DOWN. They haven't got me licked yet and I know I can still fly with the best of them and I'm out to show them Monday. They'll give me an UP or have one of the wildest planes rides they ever had. The trouble with some of these pilots is they have lost their guts along the way. One crash makes them ground shy and when they come whipping in too close for comfort they lose their nerve. I know it's so because I've seen it happen twice. Thank somebody I have an instructor with plenty of nerve. He's a real gent. One of the best.

...No one can ever convince me that I can't fly like the very best no matter what happens. My instructor knows me better than anyone else and he told me I could fly as well as the best of them and had plenty of nerve. Perhaps if I got sick doing stunts along with the rest of the boys it would be better for me. I don't know why but perhaps if I got sick along with some of those check pilots things would be simpler. I don't know what I'm saying hardly I'm so damn burned up at the whole affair. Up to now I've had the best record of anyone in our class and now I have to piss out and it gripes me beyond words to express it. I think I deserved the first DOWN but I didn't the second and I'm ready to join the Russian Revolution or anybody's revolution. In fact I may even try flying for the Army if I get busted out of here. This is all silly because I know I'm going to stay and graduate because I can fly … but then there is always the possibility that I'll get reamed again. I wish Monday were here right now and what a ride I'd give that check pilot…"

Flipping over the letter, Des recovers from his diatribe:

"Continuation of yesterday's dissertation:

Did you notice anything peculiar about yesterday's letter? I just reread it and it doesn't even make sense. I just rambled and scribbled. In case you haven't guessed it, I was tight or practically so. I was so angry over getting that DOWN after I fly a wonderful UP that I took the weak man's way out and imbibed in the brimming cup…. Please excuse…

I'm going to fly an UP tomorrow for sure so don't worry about a thing. I've had an awful lot of tough luck this last week but I've only begun to fight. I've just hit a temporary slump but I'm coming out of it fine."

Des sent Marie a telegram on September 2, 1936, announcing he had passed "check" after all. Des' Log for August 28, 1936: Check-Pilot was named "Gray" .

From time to time Des' letters to Marie reflected some confusion or doubt about his being able to finish in the program. His separation from her became a real problem for him. Some of the cadets whose girlfriends lived closer to the station seemed to feel more on an even keel, at least in Des' opinion. But being married was strictly forbidden for cadets, although some did marry in secret. Des' separation from Marie did cause him repeated bouts of depression.

"The song ('These foolish things remind me of you. ') is so true. So many little things keep you constantly before me. It's nice to be with you so much but it increases my desire so much that perhaps it isn't good for me. When I get up in the air I try to forget our being so far apart and perhaps that's why I get into trouble sometimes. I try so hard to forget by flying as hard as I can. The last two times I've been aloft I've stunted so hard that the ships had to go in to be over hauled. I don't think it was my doing altogether but I probably helped. I have to do things that makes the whole thing take a back seat so I can have some peace of mind. About every two or three weeks on the weekends, when it gets so I just can't stand it any longer, Jim [Mueller] and I and usually another marine get ourselves some beer and go out on the beach and drown our troubles. For a few days after that we are alright again. It seems to relieve our tensions."

The course was demanding and exacting; the young men had to find ways blow off steam. The Navy recognized the challenge of corralling a few hundred young men 24/7 for the better part of a year in Pensacola, Florida where there wasn't a whole lot going on. There were sporting competitions among the classes, but getting "liberty" could only mean a trip to town with your buddies. Pensacola attempted a pseudo-Spanish Colonial appearance that was sadly lacking. A terracotta red tile roof of the San Carlos Hotel did little to dispel the reality that Pensacola was a Navy town. The railroad tracks ran right through town. Bars, uniform shops, and the hotel whore competed for the pocket money of the temporary residents, sailors and aviation cadets. It left an uncomfortable emptiness for visiting family and friends and a lingering depression for the student aviators.[21]
Des told Marie the latest skinny:

> *" A bunch of our boys got in some combination beer joint and whore house last night and got to arguing with the babes over the price or some silly thing and the gals called in a bunch of bruisers and they beat the pants off the whole bunch of them. The cops came out and took them down to the cooler and they just got back to the station. They are a sorry looking mess. Blood from head to foot and they'll probably catch hell from the commandant too. Good thing I don't frequent those places because I surely would have been in that scrap and then I'd be in more trouble than I am now.*
>
> *I wish you could get down here someway but I guess it's impossible. Summers had his gal down here last month and I guess it was too much of a good*

[21] Samuel Hynes, *Flights of Passage*. © 1988. Pp.70-73.

thing because it's costing him a little money now. He got stuck for $75 instead of the customary $35-$50. How does it feel not to have those worries?"

In August of 1936, Des wrote home that the heat of Pensacola was unbearable, years before air conditioning allowed the South any chance to "rise again". Jim Mueller's parents stayed at the hotel and

..."are just about dead from the heat. It's terrible and I feel so sorry for them. The poor people are going home Monday because they can't stand it. We have more or less gotten used to it now. I just sweat and stink and think nothing of it. It's really going to settle down to some serious heating up this next month. I just lost a buck betting how much Boyington weighs. He weighed 171 when he came down here and I bet he weighed at least 158. He put a 5 pound weight in his drawers and yet he weighed only 154, in other words he has lost 20 pounds with this much heat and without his honey.

Do I ever smell like a goat. God it's terrible. It's raining outside yet it's 90 in the barracks. Can you beat that?"

Moving through the system of checks required persistence and skill, and a bit of luck. Accidents could occur in spite of all precautions. Acrobatic flying was expected, specifically taught in order to prepare the cadet for any eventuality, especially in a war time situation. Dogfight training would be strictly taught and not something the young men were supposed to do on their own. Stalls and spins were initiated in order to train the pilot how to get OUT of such a precarious spot. Des learned a lesson he wouldn't forget.

Des wrote on September 12, 1936:

"I broke my thumb yesterday, at least I think it's broken. They took an x-ray of it anyway, but I haven't found out yet what the score is. Isn't bad but I'm writing this between my index and third finger… Took a mechanic for a ride in a cross country hop and thought he'd like to fly it, so I let him take it. Most of them can fly after a fashion and like to try it anyway, so like a fool, I gave him the controls. He was pretty erratic but I thought I'd let him smooth his own errors out. Didn't care what he did as long as we kept the general course. First thing I knew we were in a spin and really wrapped up. I let it go two and a half times because I thought he'd put it in a spin purposely and was fooling around. When he didn't come out, I grabbed the stick and found he'd frozen on it and wouldn't let go for hell or high water. I didn't know whether to s--- or go blind. We were so close to the ground and I knew if I jumped and left him I'd probably get court martialed, so I forced the stick away from him but ruined my hand doing it. That was the scaredest (sic) I've ever been in my life. I've got courage and all that but when the man with the scythe gets that close to one and then you're not being able to do anything about it, wow. If I had it to do over again and was as unsure of whether I could get the guy off the controls, I'd leave him and to hell with him. I like life. I didn't tell the medical officer how it happened because it would have gotten the mechanic in trouble and me too I suppose. After this I'm going to fly my own airplanes though. One learns something new every day, doesn't one?"

By the 7th of October 1936 Des' log indicated he was flying the much more powerful O2U Vought Corsair with its 450 horsepower Wasp engine. Only seven months into the program and he was in Squadron Three. The craft was twice as powerful

as the NS-1, but by then the cadets were so very experienced that the last ride with a check pilot was after only eight hours in the Corsair. The *1936 Flight Jacket* claimed that no cadet had been dropped for unsatisfactory flying after passing the eight-hour check in Squadron Three.[22]

But interestingly Greg Boyington told the story in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* about a new colonel he had the "dubious pleasure of meeting" while he was a cadet in Squadron Three at Pensacola and had given Greg a "down-check". "He had rattled me so much by screaming at me that I had no idea of what he expected me to do, so I don't know how I could have flown properly". This particular colonel eventually became the infamous "Colonel Lard", a non-fictional person whose pseudonym says it all. Colonel Lard at Squadron Three in 1936 became immortalized by Boyington as one of two "bad types" who rise through the ranks. In Lard's case by hiding under the "guise of the disciplinarian… spends his nights pawing over the Navy Regulations and the Marine Corps Manual, trying desperately to fit the personnel under him into violations of these regulations." The other type preferred to scuttle someone's career by tossing out records in a slow and premeditated fashion. [23]

Many years later I asked my father if he knew who "Colonel Lard" was. He laughed and said, "Oh, yes!" Then I asked him if he would tell me. He shook his head "No". I could only conclude that he is some one I know. I have a photo of Squadron

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[22] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket,* Squadron Three.

[23] Greg Boyington, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, © 1958, Bantam Books, p.127.

Three Instructors. There is only *one* Marine Corps officer standing in group of 11 instructors, the rest being Naval Officers. Hmm.[24]

In Squadron Three the three-plane formation now grew to form nine-plane formations and the cadets learned every possible combination of "V", echelon, and line maneuvers. (PDF:#117)***

My dearest little Marie, *3 November 1936*

This is the loneliest day I've spent since I've been down here… Perhaps it's the weather that makes me so lonely. We aren't flying today on account of it. Yesterday our formation got caught out in a storm which is on now. The ceiling was as low as 3-400 feet and we had to fly below it. We broke windows for miles on our way home I guess. It's just like having nine airplanes in a bunch fly right down the middle of the street at about 1-200 feet. If you think that doesn't set up a roar and vibration. Some kid zoomed the main street of town night before last during night flying and scared the natives half to death. He took the whole length of the street flying right down between the buildings. No one knows who it was but they know it's one of a nine-plane formation, so they've grounded the whole bunch until they find out who did it. Some fun. Another kid, (he sure is a squirrel), got over by Mobile (Alabama) in night flying when his motor cut out on him. He bailed out and landed in some alligator swamp and it took him all day and night

[24] Note: Bruce Gamble revealed in his biography of Boyington, *Black Sheep One*, that Lieutenant Colonel Joe Smoak was Boyington's "Col. Lard", his recurring nemesis. Des' Log does not list Smoak as one of his instructors in Squadron Three.

to get back on the road again. These swamps are almost impossible and those snakes and alligators bother me.

It's getting quite cold in the air now. I haven't any gloves and my hands get so cold. It's not too pleasant flying when it's cold and cloudy. Gee but I got crossed up in a cloud the other day. I felt as though I were flying level and when I came out I was just falling ass over teakettle. That makes me feel like an elk. If you watch your instruments carefully as you go into a cloud you can fly thru them with no trouble, but if you trust your senses you are lost.

Golly but it's cold down here… You ought to see the stuff we put on to keep warm in the air now. We look like people from another world. We have fur lined boots that fit over our shoes and big fur-lined suits. All in all I don't think one could get out of a plane with all that stuff, in case you had to bail out.

I'm having trouble with my sinuses again because of the high altitude flying and the comparative cold. I know you always hated my constant blowing of the nose, but it doesn't look like it's going to get much better if I keep flying."

By November 6, 1936, Des was flying the 620 horsepower Hornet engine in an SU, scouting plane, putting into practice formation, radio work, navigation, cross-country and gunnery work. The men usually flew between one and two hours a day, depending on the weather. That was quite a bit of flying for any pilot. The pressure to finish Ground School, especially mastering radio code, the vital sending and receiving 26 words a minute could have been any pilot's Achilles' heel. According to Gary Shattuck who did extensive interviews of early Aviation Cadets, the Morse Code Test required many after dinner coaching sessions to pass. One of my father's friends Hamilton Lawrence found

Celestial Navigation extremely difficult and my father in his interview wished he could have had more instrument and night flying instruction. But these were early days, before voice radio contact and it was tricky to discern pinpoints of light on the ground from the wingtip lights in a nine-plane formation.[25]

Squadron Three cadets began learning aerial gunnery where a fighter dove on the observer plane from above, preferably from out of the sun, and also shooting at a sleeve target which was towed by another plane. By Thanksgiving 1936, Des was coming to the end of Squadron Three training and Ground School. But that didn't mean there wasn't a lot more to learn, just the opposite. Moreover the cadets in 88-C who had survived ten months of training were now placed in barracks with the incoming new class.

27 November 1936

"I believe I know this fellow Brannon that you were telling me about. He's a rather tall red-headed kid. Perhaps he's in the class that is coming in today. I'll look him up and see. The poor devils. I feel sorry him having to go thru all the hell we've already taken. If he only knew he'd keep right on going and not stop at all…. Yet it's wonderful to fly. I'm over the dangerous period of flying now.

"They spread the older fellows out among the new boys to try to help them with their flying questions…"

With the holiday, a four-day weekend, discussion inevitably turned to "Topic A".

"The boys are talking over the woman. We are in a wing with some of the new classes. One of them was telling about a date he had. The babe chewed up a bunch of peanuts and then spit them all over him. Then took a whiskey bottle and

[25] Gary Shattuck, *Fleet Cadets,* p.42.

knocked over every glass on the table and broke them on the floor, then started to cuss in a way only these southern bags can cuss. That's the reason I never go out down here… I've got my self-respect to keep anyway."

Des managed to do a lot of reading and to go to the movies… *a lot*…

"I think I'll go in and see 'Mid-Summer's Night Dream' tonight. Another show… Christ. I never want to get inside a theatre after I leave here and I want you to remind me of it whenever I suggest going to a show. I'd rather do hard work than go to a show, but I've got to do something to pass the time away. Honey, absolutely, I don't think I can take it much longer. I just wasn't made to live without you. Help me some way to make it easier for me to stay, please honey, I'm begging you.

Last night four of us went up to Alabama at some little beer joint and drank some beer and we met two genuine, honest to God, hillbillies, and they were the funniest kids I ever saw. One had a fiddle, the other a guitar and I'm telling you they were good. It was absolutely a scream to listen to them talk that genuine southern backwoods dialect. Perhaps we were a little tighter than usual but I did enjoy their singing and playing. We were thinking what a sensation they would create if one could transplant them just as they were there and put them on some stage…They didn't have to try to be funny, they were so genuinely comical.

I had to quit writing and come back to the barracks. It got so damn cold up there I couldn't take it. Gregg had some babe out in the sand last night and he came in and went to bed without taking a shower and he's got sand over everything. He surely is a character. Takes on all the officer's wives and stops at

nothing. I wonder if his wife is the same. She's really getting the run around if she's remaining true."

Boyington was one of the Aviation Cadets who was married in spite of the prohibition. He kept the secret by trusting that his friends would never tell on him. To my knowledge the only person who ever threatened to reveal their marriage was Helene who had to live a rather miserable existence. She was an unskilled young woman with a baby and no visible means of support. As an Aviation Cadet, Boyington was not making enough money to support a wife and baby. Neither his family nor hers was willing to assume the care and keep of Helene and young Greg, Jr, who was also called "Bobby". Bruce Gamble's biography of Boyington described all-too-well the sad circumstances that were the result of a rash union of two people who were raised like "Topsy- just growed-up". Over the years, my mother told me many stories of how she tried to help, but she was a young woman working her way through college and could only do so much. Helene's needs with an infant were more than Marie could handle. But, as a friend to both Greg and Helene, was frequently torn between wanting to help the young mother and baby and understanding the young family's future depended upon Greg's becoming an aviator and not being thrown out of the program.

My mother frequently quoted the axiom "If the Marine Corps wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one." In time the prohibition of marriage would be amended, but for the first classes of cadets the strains of being unmarried were more onerous than being married. Eventually young couples would share houses and responsibilities for the non-military part of their lives. In time the denial of their marital

status was an economic and social issue with housing, children, medical care and schools becoming a priority. It had to be dealt with.

Unfortunately in Greg Boyington's case he and his wife came to have three small children before he was free to openly acknowledge them. Within a few years, unusual strains placed upon the marriage and by their own behavior, the couple would divorce and the children would be raised by relatives.

Des was anxious to get married. The past ten months without his Marie had proved the point that he was ill-suited to living without her. He had a reoccurring concern that he would die without her. That all this flying would end up killing him, if he didn't have her. It was a morbid preoccupation that was reinforced by his life experiences.

> *"I 'd just as soon not fly today anyway. A hell of a good friend of mine was killed at Quantico or Anacostia and it effects (sic) me rather queerly. I've never been afraid of flying for myself it's always been for feelings of you and my folks that has bothered me in case I should take my last ride. For myself I don't give a damn. I want to live as long as I know you love me. As long as I have you though I do want to live in the worst kind of way and golly, honey, with you I could really live. We'll have a wonderful time. We always have had and I don't see why a little thing like getting married should stop us. Darn but we've had a lot of fun, haven't we? So many things come to mind as I look back over those five years.*
>
> *Remember the first year at the beach when I wanted to take your picture and you ran away? Johnson and I caught you and he took it while I held you. I think you were like the little red hen when the rooster was chasing her that day,*

*because you could have run a little faster. Of course the parking on Pritchard's Isle is a matter of history. There weren't many paths on that peninsula that we didn't take in. That peninsula was made for woo."(PDF: #095)****

Planning ahead, he supposed that they would be stationed in California, near San Diego at Coronado. The flying field was at the end of a peninsula just west of San Diego Bay and San Diego.

" It's about a 30 miles drive around that small isthmus to San Diego which is really too far, so most of the officers live at Coronado, just a little place but with quite nice houses. It's exclusively residential, not a store of any kind in the town. We'll have ourselves a Filipino boy or something so you won't have to do the housework but I do wish you would cook my meals. I can remember your making darn good clam chowder and Parker House rolls; so with that as a start you could keep me well fed and happy… I'd marry you if you couldn't fry an egg."

Meanwhile Greg enclosed a penciled note to Marie thanking her for the package she sent of homemade goodies. Des shared them with the boys.

"Honey Child:

Those were fine candy you sent us, thanks. I think you ought to marry our man "Des" as he is getting more gloomy and lonesome every day. Greg"

Squadron Four put Aviation Cadets back in seaplanes by equipping the same type of craft, Vought Corsairs from Squadron Three, with floats. With the addition of hooded cockpits, which when accompanied by a safety pilot, the cadet learned to trust his instruments. The leap of faith, that a pilot could find his way across miles of ocean in a

cloud and safely land if he could trust his instruments, was not always a lesson easily learned. My father insisted that many accidents by experienced pilots could be explained by a pilot not trusting his instruments. That split second judgment to trust his senses rather than his instruments has caused many "pilot error" fatalities. Instrument flying was also taught at Squadron Five.

The weather was so poor at the end of November there was very little flying for the men. Thanksgiving holidays cut into the lessons as well. Having nothing to do but stew and worry over his abilities led to Des' depression.

> *"I've been listening to foul weather schedule lecturer… Whenever it rains (and it's raining of course) they throw a flock of speeches at us about the old navy, semper fidelis, and all that stuff. That doesn't make me feel any better either. Thank God I haven't got much more to go. I came down here to fly and just as long as I fly I'm alright but as soon as we quit I go absolutely crazy. The only thing I haven't taken up is biting my fingernails and I'm thinking seriously of that. I wonder if smoking would keep me any calmer… Most of the boys do smoke to beat hell which is a nervous trait, I suppose. It might be that it's my appendix that's making me this way too. I don't know. It bothers me quite a bit but rarely seriously. I mean it's just kind of sore all the time. I'm going to wait till I get back home to have them jerked so I'll get longer leave with you.*
>
> *"I've been keyed up for flying so long that when we have a time of inactivity it's just like cutting off a friend's dope supply. Consequently the time when I've ordinarily been flying I couldn't think so much about you because you have to keep your mind on so many instruments, what you are going to do in case*

your motor cuts out, or in case of fire etc. When all that is taken away from me then I start brooding over being away from you and I just go from bad to worse. I have to admit it has me licked right now though. Not the flying or anything connected with it, but just the place and being away from you. Darling, you would be more than making me happy by meeting me at Christmas time; you'd be saving me from something that's really got an awfully tight hold on me. It seems as though I've lost all fear of airplanes and that's bad. One should have a fear of them or a great respect for them because it's bad news if you haven't. This loving you and not having you has made me reckless and careless which I can note quite readily myself. The kid I was flying with last time even remarked that I was flying pretty wild and usually it takes quite a lot to make another pilot comment on your flying. I thought I noticed it myself but wasn't sure until he told me …"

Eventually Des hit on a brilliant idea that became more intricate and devious as the wheels of his brain spun full circle. Des spent his time cooking up plans for his Christmas holiday. I love the sequence of letters full of rushed excitement at the brilliance of his scheme to meet Marie halfway across country. I sense his pinging off the walls of the barracks. He excitedly wrote Marie.

Darling Marie, *29 November 1936*

In 26 days I'm going to see you or else…. If I just hadn't bought your present I could have sent you that money and it wouldn't have taken so much more. Won't you see if your folks can send you down, honey? That's all it would cost you and I'd pay that back to them with interest. If I could be sure of flying up

there I could send you the $25 or so because that's about what it would cost me to ride up with some kid going in a car. I won't know until the last moment though.

I just feel it in my bones that you are going to be there to meet me. Something inside of me seems to say it will work out alright. My Darling, I can hardly wait. I do hope the days pass quickly. I am going to write Roll {his brother} and tell him I am coming up there because I know you won't disappoint me. I have $10 left after paying for your gift and I'll be able to save $15 out of my next check tomorrow and will draw $25 more just before Christmas. That's $50 and I can borrow $25 more which would make $75. I've got to keep $35 for my actual traveling expenses in case I don't fly and the rest for us to have a time on. I'd go in debt $500 just to see you this Christmas dear. You've just got to do it someway dearest. It's so important. Please.

The one who loves you more than life itself. –Des"

Fortunately for my father, he managed to talk Marie into taking the train to Kansas City, Missouri and meeting him for a ten-day break. Des had relatives in Lawrence, Kansas dating back to a split between 1890's Canavan brothers, one who stayed at the homestead and the other went to Seattle. Marie's father helped stake her to the train ticket which cost $68.80 from Seattle to Lawrence round-trip. Des would have to finance his end of the journey as well

Des phoned Marie about their Christmas plans, the rain cleared out, and his attitude completely changed for the better.

Dearest: *3 December 1936*

The phone call told me all I wanted to know and it's remarkable the change in me… I feel great again, happy and anxious to see you. Also it stopped raining today and I flew for the first time since Thanksgiving. I had 3 hours this afternoon above ten thousand feet and besides being colder than a nun's___ there isn't a hell of a lot of air to breathe up there and I puffed and panted for lack of air, Golly I'm excited. I should be there sometime Christmas Eve. I'd like to be there when you arrived so I could meet you as you don't know them from Adam." Des wrote frantically each day as his plans unfolded in his imagination.

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Dearest: *Monday morn*

While tossing in my sleep last night I stumbled upon a wonderful plan. To be short it's this. You come all the way to Kansas City about 40 miles farther than Lawrence, register at some nice hotel and wait for me there. We can plan to be there sometime the day before Christmas as I will get in there around 6-7 o'clock Christmas Eve. We can spend Christmas all by ourselves and alone. We can stay there until the day after Christmas or so and then go to Lawrence when Roll will be coming in. I'll look up a good hotel and give you the name and address and you can register under my name or an assumed name just as long as you tell me what it is and then we can have a wonderful Christmas. Oh, Santa Claus, be good to me. I'll have enough money so don't worry about a thing. Just be there darling and tell me what you think of this idea. *Love,* *–Des."*

∞∞∞∞∞∞∞

Dearest: *7 December 1936*

The more I think about it the better it seems to me. In case you don't know what I'm talking about it's your meeting me in Kansas City on Christmas Eve. I have not had a brainchild like this in years. We can be like your proverbial two bugs in a rug or kings and queens for the day. Here's the dope and it's plenty good too, I think. I talked to one of the kids from K.C. and he says go to the Kansas Citian, one of the better hotels in the downtown district. It's on 10th and Baltimore Avenue or Street, you can't miss it. Remember this is Kansas City, Missouri because there isn't a pot to p___ in, in K.C., Kansas. I won't be there until about the evening of the 24th at 6:00 p.m. You will probably get there sometime during the day and can take a bath and clean up and I'll get there as soon as I can. You register under my name and I'll be sure to get the right woman then. It would be terrible to be in the same city with you and not be able to connect. Get us a nice room with a bath etc. and be sure and tell the man it's for two. Oh well, I'll leave all that up to you. If I fly of course I could make it early on the 24th but you see I can't depend on it at all, so whether I fly or come on the bus, I'll arrange it to get in that same time (6:00 p.m.)…"

On December 10th Des wrote Marie's father and pleaded his case to help Marie and Des get together. It had been ten months since they had seen one another. Des calculated that they were 3,500 miles apart from each other and given the length of his naval aviation course they would have little other chance to see each other.

In his book *Flights of Passage*, Samuel Hynes explained how moving from Squadron One to Squadron Two or Three could have a very melancholy effect on the Aviation Cadets. The courses themselves continuously checked and rechecked the young

pilots for their ability to integrate the various skills learned at one level to be instinctively applied in the next. Like stacking stones for a stonewall, so the higher stones have a sound foundation, the course built upon all the past learned skills. But more than that, Hynes described Pensacola in the winter, in the rain, in the mud, of mud seeping into the planes and into the barracks. When they couldn't even fly, the boys were trained "under the hood" of Link Trainers to learn instruments. The predictable boredom of a permanently wet scenery which cast a pall in every direction, competed for time spent in stark terror instrument flying.[26]

'Unusual Attitudes' was an exercise to force the pilot to trust his instruments… to fly despite being completely disoriented. The novice pilot, who might be completely confident on a bright sunny day, could be rendered absolutely clueless in a cloud. Add a little turbulence: shake, rattle and roll, all the while under the hood and safety of the link trainer; but in a real cockpit could be a recipe for a crash. Des was always of the opinion that there should have been more training for instrument flight. He believed that most accidents in his era of flight, the proximate cause of most crashes was pilot error, mainly because the pilot did not believe his instruments. "Getting crossed in a cloud" was enough to make a believer out of Des. It shook his sensibilities enough that he finally concluded that he should always trust his instruments and second-guess himself.

Des's log for December records that he flew over 25 hours in 14 different vehicles on only eleven days between the 3rd and the 23rd for the month.

The *1936 Flight Jacket* stated "one of the biggest thrills the flight course has to offer, -seaplane launchings from a catapult. Each student gets four 'shots', two as a

[26]Samuel Hynes, *Flights of Passage*, p. 66.

passenger and two as an instructor for the next student."[27] In a streamlined version of "show one, do one, teach one", my father's log shows that he flew as a passenger for Fred "Ray" Emerson's catapult in O3U1: # 8819 on December 21, 1936, and the next day, December 22, for Greg Boyington's catapult from BuNo :8871.This was followed by Des catapulting twice as pilot with Emerson and then Boyington as passengers.(PDF #115)

John Kinney described his catapult experience as something you can only appreciate by doing[28]. An incomparably jolting experience that no one can prepare for, bracing oneself for an inevitable shock of catapulting from zero to 88 feet per second, mimicking a force of being shot from a cannon like a circus performer, fly a little distance, put down and then casually return to the seawall for a hoist back up by a crane.

By December 15, 1936, Des had learned that Marie was allowed to meet him for Christmas. He was elated and sent her a telegram:

> "WONDERFUL NEWS YOUR COMING RECEIVED. GET ROUND TRIP TICKET…PLENTY OF MONEY NOW. DON'T DEPRIVE YOURSELF WILL GET YOU BACK OKAY AND BIG TIME WILL BE PRESENT. BRING YOUR FORMALS AND LOTS OF LOVE. WILL DO THIS UP IN A BIG WAY. VERIFY YOUR COMING BY RETURN NIGHT LETTER COLLECT. LOVE TO ALL. MOST TO YOU. THANK POP FOR ME=DES."

By the time Des and Greg had their catapult rides on December 22, 1936, my father was already celebrating his upcoming Christmas holiday with Marie. He had to scramble to make arrangements to get to Kansas City and as late as 3:09 p.m. on December 24, 1936, was sending a telegram to Marie…

---

[27] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket,* Squadron Four.

[28] John F. Kinney with James M. McCaffery. *Wake Island Pilot*. p. 27.

"DARLING, WILL BE THERE AT 8. GET REST. AM A MESS=DES"

The next day, Christmas Day, he sent a telegram to Marie's family"

"MRS. J.B. O'Keefe.= HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER WELL IN HAND.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL=DES."

Marie saved the hotel invoices and wrote down every meal and everything they did on the hotel stationery. She never wanted to forget what amounted to an early honeymoon before she and Des could ever get married. They managed to spend a few days with Des' Aunt Dora, "quite old, widow about 50", in Lawrence, Kansas sandwiched between two nights at The Kansas Citian at $4.50 a night, plus valet service, one telegram to Marie's family, and two telephone calls bringing the grand total to $14.31. At the other end they spent two nights at The Pickwick Hotel at 10th and McGee for $3.50 a night. When Marie left to go home, Des wanted to write her a note right away to say "Goodbye", but Marie had taken all the stationery. Des wrote her on the back of the hotel laundry slips and sent it from The Pickwick Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri on January 2, 1937.

"Just after the sweetest girl in the world left me.

Damn you honey, you took all the stationery in the place. It's a wonder you left the bedding. I came back and looked at our little room and it made me cry to think that you weren't here anymore. Darling we had ten wonderful days together but they weren't near enough. I think of all the kinds of things that I wanted to tell you now that you are gone. Dearest, I just pray that we don't have to separate ever again but I suppose we shall as long as we are in the service. It

was so wonderful having you next to me all night long. I hope you had as grand a time as I did. That's the way it will always be, won't it sweetheart?

I think you even swiped the laundry slips because this is the last of them. You come from a long line of horse thieves. We'd be in the lock-up now if you'd taken that spoon from Harvey's. At least we'd be together now instead of getting farther apart every minute.

We'll just have to develop a philosophy of separation that won't be hard on us. I hate the things that take us apart though, It's cruel, isn't it?

I'm fresh out of laundry slips, honey child, but you know I'm thinking of you even if I have to quit writing to you. Goodbye darling, keep your love for me always and always and you know I'll do the same for you. Love, Des."

When I opened Marie's scrapbook a rather sulfurous smell lept from the pages entitled "Trip to Kansas – 1936". Between the pages an intact matchbook from the Union Pacific Railroad confirmed her travel by railroad to Kansas City and a "Bus Time Tables": Union Pacific Stages Interstate Transit Lines, with jottings and circles indicating opportunity for meals and bus changes hinted at a long bus ride home. While Des got into Pensacola that Sunday evening, Marie was "still on that damn bus". He was in heaven at having had the opportunity to see her over the Christmas break and she was basking in the memory of stolen hours in Kansas City, Missouri while her family thought she was in Lawrence, Kansas.

When Marie got home, she happily glued the matchbook covers from every restaurant, hotel, and bar they visited: Hotel Philips English Grille, the "Perfectly Air Conditioned Pusateri's: famous steaks & food", The Hotel Baltimore, The Southern

Mansion, and Buddy Fisher's Dining Room of Distinction- Ultimate in Environment* Cuisine* Entertainment". She must have been really impressed with The Hotel Baltimore because she glued down a cocktail napkin from their bar as well. There was also a book of postcards from Kansas City that included drawings of parks and museums which I doubt they ever entered, being Christmas Eve & Day and New Year's Eve and Day. For some reason she had kept three tokens which were labeled "sales tax receipts". I'm not sure why. On the reverse side one read:

> "THIS RECEIPT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE HELPING TO PAY FOR OLD AGE PENSIONS, SUPPORT OF PUBIC SCHOOLS, CARE OF THE INSANE AND TUBERCULAR PATIENTS IN STATE HOSPITALS AND RELIEF OF THE NEEDY UNEMPLOYED IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI."

As 1937 opened both Des and Marie had a busy schedule ahead. Both were aiming toward graduation but had a few hurdles to go. Des had written earlier: (Dec 7th):

> *"It seems good to be senior aviators in the Cadet Battalion. Not long ago we looked up to the kids that were where we are now and thought they were wonderful. Now we have a following who look up to us. You can fool some of the people some of the time."*

Des was still in Squadron Four and had many hours to go before graduation. The catapult was followed by:

> …"instruction in T4M's – Hornet powered Martin Torpedo planes with three cockpits, controlled by a wheel instead of the conventional stick employed in other ships. The instruction serves as an introduction to patrol boats which come

in the next course. Checks are similar to those in the advanced stages of Squadron One.

After Torpedo planes, the student goes to "big boats"- twin-engined Douglas and Martin patrol boats which are equipped for horizontal bombing… Navigation flights are now made overseas, with no roads, towns or other landmarks to guide an erring navigator.

Horizontal bombing and night flying in the patrol boats finish up this course, and after reviews in semaphore and radio transmission, the cadets who are left go back to Corry Field to fly planes small enough to sit under the wings of the Big Boats. The next time they fly over the water it will be with the Fleet."[29]

Des' log for January 1937 showed most his hours in the T4M's and not many at that. The weather may have been a factor to explain only 12.3 hours. February 1937 was a complete reversal, logging 52.2 hours in 25 flights, trying to complete his course work in Squadron Four, all in PD-1's or PM-1's: the Big Boats.

Sensing he was going to make it after all, on Valentine's Day Des gave Marie a small gold pin- her "Wings"- that she wore often from then on.

"Wear your wings with valor and honor in the face of death and all that sort of thing. That's what we listen to so why shouldn't you. Guess it takes as much courage to be an aviator's wife as it does to fly."

ooooooooooo

My Darling: *Day after Valentine's Day*

I received your lovely valentine today and it made me so homesick,

[29] U.S. Navy, *1936 Flight Jacket*, p. 38.

lovesick and just plain sick for you… I've got night flying again tonight and I've got to get this written before then. Do you know honey out of the last three flying days I've spent 24 hours in the air. That doesn't seem like much to you, but then you don't appreciate the piss pots we have to fly. I told you I thought we'd be thru with 4 (Squadron Four) today but it looks like Wednesday to me now. One of the boys who got out of V (Squadron Five) today said it only took him six weeks. So you see it may be even sooner than we expect.

I'm trying to save money to beat hell now that homecoming is approaching. I would wait till now wouldn't I? The trouble is they won't pay me my month's leave salary or my travel allowance until after I report at San Diego. That will amount to about $220. I have to get along on what I can save until then so you can see the reason for my frantic digging However we won't do too badly as it is.

The latest rumor I've heard is that some of us are going to be sent to tour various colleges in the country with planes in order to stir up some interest in getting more cadets. … it would occur during the later part of May & first of June when you'd be finishing up school.

I've got to get my flying gear on and be on my way…. Just heard that Skinner got Seattle in Patrol boats. What a break? I'd even fly Patrol boats if I could get Seattle…{Later}

I just got back from night flying … That completes my night work in 4 and I can't say I'm sorry… It was black out there tonight…. I'm awfully tired. Had

eight hours in the air today. I think I'll turn into a permanently tired mortal like your mom… I love you, –Des."

Des's log for February 15, 1937, does show 3 separate flights that date in three different patrol boats including 3.2 hours of "Nite Flying." His final check was made on Wednesday, February 17, 1937.

Squadron Five required the cadets to return to Corry Field where they previously trained for Squadron Two. Instead of flying boats, they were finally allowed to solo in top-of-the-line single-seat Navy fighters. The acrobatics that were taught previously now came into use for formalized dogfight training.

By February 23, 1937, Des was flying the Boeing Fighters F4B-1's and F4B-2's mixed with a return to occasional flights in O2U3's and NS-1's. Des was finally in Squadron Five. The next six weeks showed a determination to complete the course as soon as possible, every available day, flying a minimum of two and maximum of five hours a day in fighters. By the time he was ready to graduate he had flown over 70 hours in Squadron Five, 50 of them in the fighters.

Dearest: Friday (April 9, 1937)

Just to let you know I finished today at one o'clock and am licensed to fly anything but the Magic Carpet. Won't get my designation until Monday morning though so will shove off about Monday noon. We'll probably get there sometime Saturday[30] *so maybe I'd better break that date for Friday but keep the one for the*

[30] Bruce Gamble. *Black Sheep One*, pp. 95-96. Sharing expenses with a "Coastie" driving to Seattle, Des and Greg found a ride for the 2,500 mile journey.

R.O. dance Saturday. Soon be seeing you honey. Have that old love business under control. *Des."*

As promised Des's designation came through stamped April 12, 1937, and signed by the acting commandant in Pensacola but initiating from Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"Naval Aviator, No. 5159"

I still have his diploma dated April 9, 1937, framed as it was almost 79 years ago. Des had earned his "Wings of Gold". (PDF?)*** According to records, he and his friend Greg Boyington, designated **"Naval Aviator No. 5160"**, attended a simple 'winging ceremony" that very afternoon. Jim Mueller and Bob Galer also graduated and had their picture taken with Des, probably for the hometown newspapers. (PDFs: #118 & 119)***

All these years later I believe that my father's determination to become a pilot, to earn those wings was an amazing achievement and opportunity. His grandfather Henry Pearmain had been born in Pensacola, Florida in 1852 and had a hardscrabble life in Kansas and on Orcas Island, Washington. Then 85 years later, Des found a future by succeeding in Pensacola, Florida.

The International Military Ball given by the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, honoring the Civil and Military Representatives of Foreign Nations was a quarterly Ball given at the Olympic Hotel in Seattle.

The next Saturday, April 17, 1937, Des would be there in his new uniform proudly wearing his "Wings of Gold". In her scrapbook Marie has glued down the matchbooks from the Olympic Hotel, The Seattle Press Club, and the Roosevelt Grille along with her invitation to the Ball and Des' Aviation Cadet I.D. card from the U.S. Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida.

After a 14-month absence, Des was home at last.

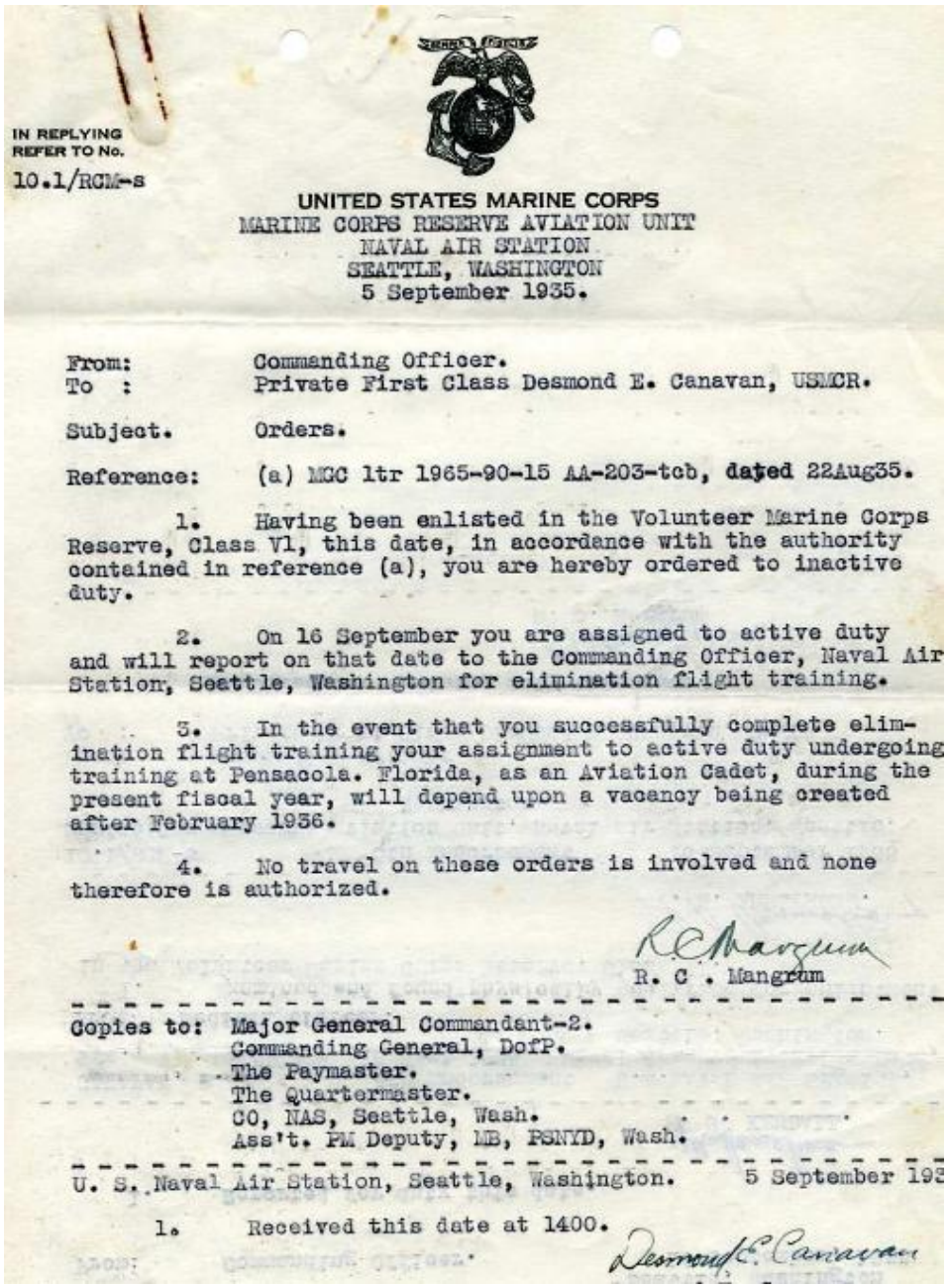
Additional Flight Jacket Photos of Class 88-C: PDFs: #043, #044, #045, #046, & # 047 for 81-C & 82-C, #233 for 87-C)***/ ∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞

End Chapter: III "*Aviation Cadets"*: *Letters From Des* pp.36-84

–The Life of a Marine Corps-Naval Aviator and Test Pilot– (14,466 words/49 pages)

 (Last revision: 2-24-16)

Next: Chapter IV: *"Aircraft One"*



IN REPLYING
REFER TO No.
10.1/RCM-s

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS RESERVE AVIATION UNIT
NAVAL AIR STATION
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
5 September 1935.

From: Commanding Officer.
To : Private First Class Desmond E. Canavan, USMCR.

Subject. Orders.

Reference: (a) MCC ltr 1965-90-15 AA-203-tcb, dated 22Aug35.

1. Having been enlisted in the Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve, Class V1, this date, in accordance with the authority contained in reference (a), you are hereby ordered to inactive duty.

2. On 16 September you are assigned to active duty and will report on that date to the Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station, Seattle, Washington for elimination flight training.

3. In the event that you successfully complete elimination flight training your assignment to active duty undergoing training at Pensacola. Florida, as an Aviation Cadet, during the present fiscal year, will depend upon a vacancy being created after February 1936.

4. No travel on these orders is involved and none therefore is authorized.

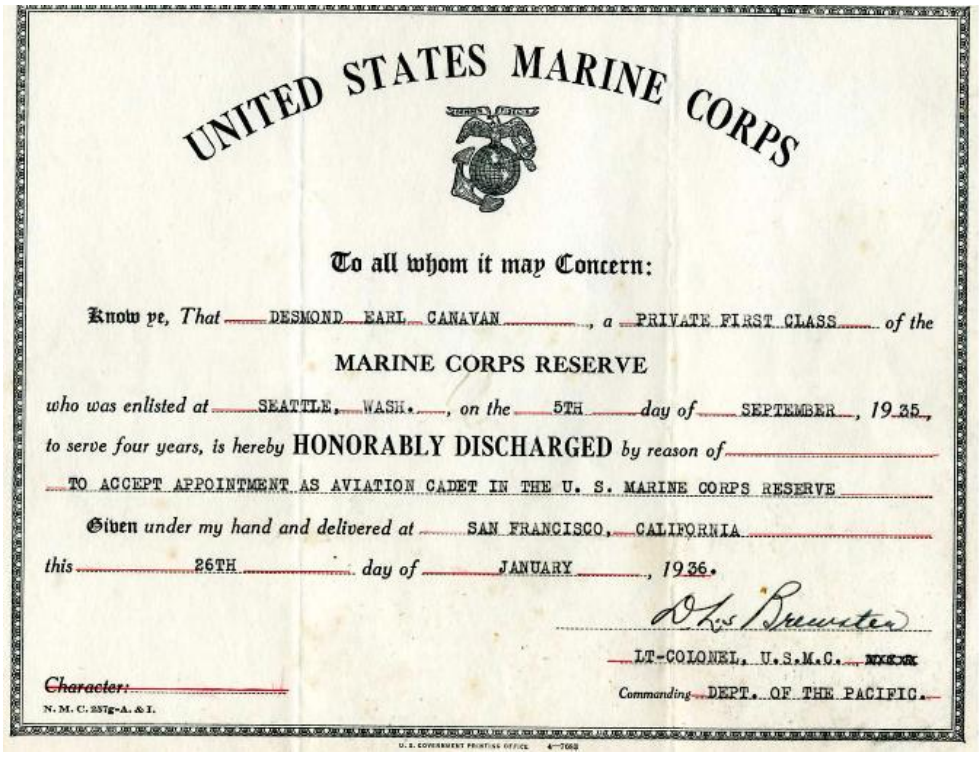
R. C. Mangrum
R. C. Mangrum

Copies to: Major General Commandant-2.
Commanding General, DofP.
The Paymaster.
The Quartermaster.
CO, NAS, Seattle, Wash.
Ass't. PM Deputy, MB, PSNYD, Wash.

U. S. Naval Air Station, Seattle, Washington. 5 September 193

1. Received this date at 1400.

Desmond E. Canavan



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

To all whom it may Concern:

Know ye, *That* DESMOND EARL CANAVAN, *a* PRIVATE FIRST CLASS *of the*

MARINE CORPS RESERVE

who was enlisted at SEATTLE, WASH., *on the* 5TH *day of* SEPTEMBER, *19*35, *to serve four years, is hereby* **HONORABLY DISCHARGED** *by reason of* TO ACCEPT APPOINTMENT AS AVIATION CADET IN THE U. S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE

Given *under my hand and delivered at* SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA *this* 26TH *day of* JANUARY, *19*36.

D. Lee Brewster

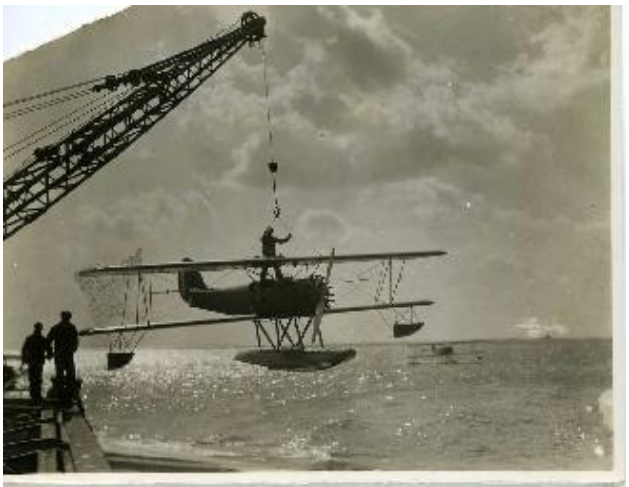
LT-COLONEL, U.S.M.C.

Commanding DEPT. OF THE PACIFIC.

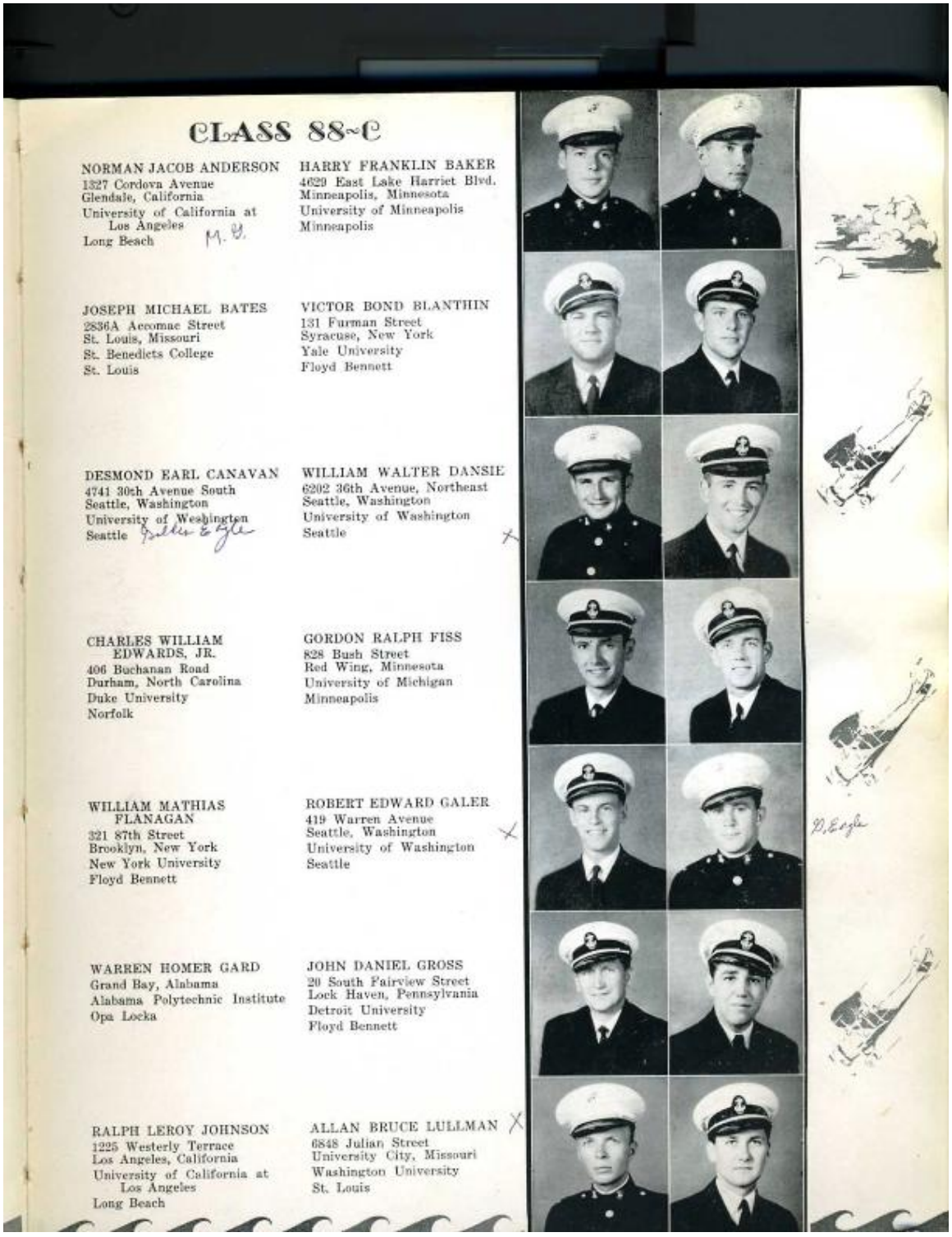
~~*Character:*~~

N. M. C. 257g-A. & I.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 4—7069



These pictures of the formations are not of mine but are just the same ones that we fly. If you don't think we get right in there close take another look. We are doing them without instructors now and it's really a lot of fun and no fooling. Soon we'll be tied together with ropes as you see and the enemies have never broken one yet so we've got to keep faith or some silly thing. You can show them to my folks if you want to. They might like to see them



CLASS 88-C

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Long Beach

HARRY FRANKLIN BAKER
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Minneapolis, Minnesota
University of Minneapolis
Minneapolis

JOSEPH MICHAEL BATES
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St. Louis, Missouri
St. Benedicts College
St. Louis

VICTOR BOND BLANTHIN
131 Furman Street
Syracuse, New York
Yale University
Floyd Bennett

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University of Washington
Seattle

WILLIAM WALTER DANSIE
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Seattle, Washington
University of Washington
Seattle

CHARLES WILLIAM EDWARDS, JR.
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Durham, North Carolina
Duke University
Norfolk

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Red Wing, Minnesota
University of Michigan
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New York University
Floyd Bennett

ROBERT EDWARD GALER
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University of Washington
Seattle

WARREN HOMER GARD
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Alabama Polytechnic Institute
Opa Locka

JOHN DANIEL GROSS
20 South Fairview Street
Lock Haven, Pennsylvania
Detroit University
Floyd Bennett

RALPH LEROY JOHNSON
1225 Westerly Terrace
Los Angeles, California
University of California at Los Angeles
Long Beach

ALLAN BRUCE LULLMAN
6848 Julian Street
University City, Missouri
Washington University
St. Louis

These names complete the First Year Roster of the Cadet Battalion

KIRK ARMISTEAD
PAUL PHILIP BARRICK
GREGORY BOYINGTON
HARRY EMERSON BOGEN
EDWIN WOODWARD BURKE
WALTER EARL DRAPER
ARTHUR FOSTER DRAPER
ROBERT LOUIS ELDRIDGE
LEON CORTLAND EMERSON
FRED RAYMOND EMERSON
LOREN GRINSTEAD
GEORGE DAVIS GIBSON
WILLIAM F. HAUSEMAN
JOHN ROBERT HOYT
WILLIAM M. HAWKES
HARRY W. HARRISON, JR.

CONRAD B. ALLISON
JOHN DANIEL BADING
WILLIAM FRANCIS BAKER
ROBERT R. BENNETT
CONDIT JUDSON BEVIER
FRED LEWIS BOEKE
HARRY ROBERT BOGUSH
ERNEST JOSEPH BOUCHER
RAYMOND W. BROWN
DONAL SPENCE BURNS
ROBERT H. CAMERON
ARTHUR H. CHADWICK
CARL W. CHRISTENSEN
WHITMEL SHARROCK COBB
DAVID FRANCIS COWHIG
CORNELIUS J. CROWLEY
JAMES WALTER DAVIS
KARL L. DIETRICH, JR.
ASA REDMOND DIMOCK, JR.
HENRY LEWIS DRISCOLL
FREDERICK M. EACHUS, JR.
DAVID HAROLD ELLIS
ROBERT ENGLISH FIELD
GEORGE EVANS FITCH
THEODORE E. FITCH
THOMAS R. FONICK, JR.
THOMAS J. FOWLER
DE LOVELL GAGE
CHARLES GEDDES
ABRAHAM L. GOLDSTEIN
JAMES CLIFFORD GORDON
ROGER A. GREIFFENBERG
KENNETH F. GREINER
LESLIE GUY HAINES
CHARLES HARBAND
FRED JACKSON HARLESS
EDWARD H. HARRISON
WILLIAM P. HARRISON
WINSTON P. HEBB
JOSEPH H. HELMSING
TRUMAN B. HINKLE
JOHN COLLINS HITT
CHARLES ARTHUR HOAG

JOHN D. HARSHBERGER
Commissioned U.S.M.C. 8 July, 1936
CHARLES HITCHCOCK
FRANK HARRISON HOLT
WAYNE JORDON
FRANCIS PATRICK KERR
RAYMOND F. KALETTA
ROBERT CHARLES LOOMIS
BASIL A. MARTIN, JR.

In Memoriam

ORIN PRESCOTT LEE,
whose untimely death was deeply mourned by his friends in Class 82-C. Died United States Naval Hospital 27 April, 1936.

JAMES H. HOWARD, JR.
FRED JONES HOWE
WENDALL KENNETT HUNT
HAROLD RICHARD HURST
JULES JAMES JORDY
RALPH C. JURGENSEN
ROBERT ANTHONY KEHOE
JAMES J. KERRIGAN
HARRY GORDON KILBURN
LAWRENCE C. KINGSBORY
EDWARD L. KOSTAINSEK
GREGG KURTH
SAMUEL S. LABOUISSE
CHARLES J. LAGRECO

FLOYD F. MILLER
JOHN ASHWELL McKEON
JOHN HENRY MACK
ROLAND GUSTAVE NYGREN
GLENN W. O'KERSON
RUDOLPH M. PETERSON
HAROLD H. RANDECKER
EDWARD FOSTER SOMMERS
TROOPER A. SHAW
ROBERT L. STEWART
EARL BERT THOMPSON
WRAY T. THORN, JR.
ZANE THOMPSON, JR.
AUGUST DORR WATKINS
ELLIOTT MURRAY WEST
VINCENT C. WRIGHT

JOHN JOSEPH LEARY
NICHOLAS JOSEPH LOBUE
JAMES VANDERBILT LOTT
HOWARD W. LUKER
HOWARD W. McARTHUR
MARTIN E. McDONOUGH
JAMES M. McQUEEN, JR.
JOHN ANTHONY MILKO
ELWOOD P. MILLER
ROMEO PAUL MORIN
WILLIAM C. NEUENHAHN
ROBERT LEWIS NUBER, JR.
THOMAS EDWARD NULTY
EDWARD LEROY PARKE
EDMOND B. PUGSLEY
HARRY G. RANDECKER
JACK J. REID
WILLIAM JAMES REID
MARSHALL E. ROBINETT
ROBERT THOMAS ROLLIS
FRANCIS MARK RUDMAN
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MARK F. SANDERS
RALPH GERALD SANDERS
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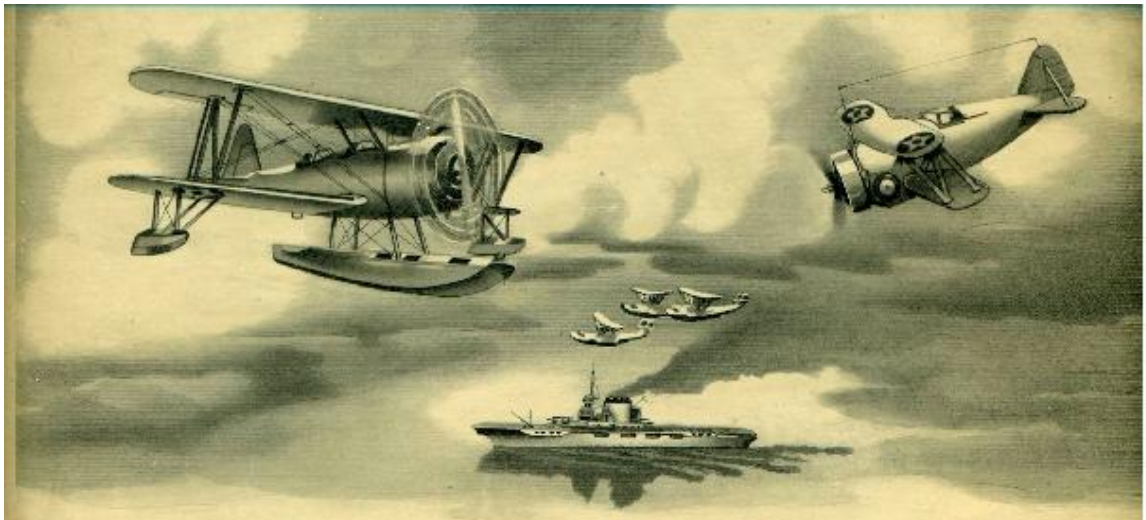
ERNEST W. SCHLIEBEN
GERALD T. SCHOENHEIDE
JOHN TYRA SCHRAMEK
EDWIN P. SCHWEITZER
ANDREW C. SHEETZ
WILLIAM LORRAIN SIM
HENRY JOSEPH SALTER
IRWIN ISRAEL STEVENS
JOSEPH STEPHEN STRAKA
JOHN JAMES TIGERT
JAMES MELVILLE VINSON
HARVEY MILTON VIOLI
CHARLES J. WANZEL
LOUIS A. WEINGART
HENRY STEPHEN WICH
TOM VINCENT WILDER
RAYMOND G. WILLIS
JOHN McKAY WYCKOFF
ARTHUR G. ZIMMERMAN



United States Naval Air Station

Pensacola, Florida

Know all men by these presents that

Aviation Cadet Desmond Canavan, USMCR

has completed the prescribed course of training as a Student Naval Aviator and, having met successfully all the requirements of the course, has been designated a

Naval Aviator

In Witness Whereof, *this certificate has been signed on this 9-th day of April 1937, and the Seal of the Naval Air Station hereunto affixed*

C. S. Blakely

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commandant

W. Murray