History

of

CAP Coastal Patrol No. 4

CAP Coastal Patrol No. 4 made its first operational flight on May 17, 1942. However, prior to that flight a great deal of hard work had bean done in order to get the Fourth Coastal Patrol Base of the Civil Air Patrol into operation.

In March 1942 Major Burnham, the present Commanding Officer of CAP Coastal Patrol Not 4, was on duty at Atlantic City, New Jersey, as a pilot in what was then known as the First Patrol Force of the Civil Air Patrol, later known as CAP Coastal Patrol No. 1. The Major had been the Personnel Officer at Atlantic City and had, therefore, been in immediate contact with most of the arrangements with the Army prior to the establishment of Coastal Patrol Bases, as well as the actual operations after they began. The Major's log book shows that he flew to Atlantic City on March 7, 1942 , and participated in the first overwater flight of the Civil Air Patrol, which took place on the same day as the planes arrived. The emergency was real. There was no time for training or planning. Tankers and all other types of merchant ships were being sunk daily right before our eyes just off the Atlantic Coast. Very often, ships would be found on fire in the early morning hours between Cape May, New Jersey and New York City. Some of these sinkings were within three or four miles of the Coast, and it was quite obvious that the German High Command knew that our Coast was practically unprotected.

By the end of March the first three Civil Air Patrol Bases had apparently proved their usefulness to the Army Air Forces, and it eras decided to rapidly expand the CAP Coastal Bases from Maine to Florida. Major Burnham was advised of this fact by Lieutenant Colonel Earle L. Johnson, who was at that time a civilian and had just accepted the position of National Commander, Civil Air Patrol. Colonel Johnson had visited the Atlantic City Base several times and asked Major Burnham if he would be interested in opening another Base for the Civil Air Patrol.

On April 16, 1942, the Major's log book shows that he flew from Atlantic City to Parksley, Virginia, and that day is really the beginning of CAP Coastal Patrol No. 4. Of this, the Major says:

"Colonel Johnson had discussed with me the need for a Coastal Patrol Base between Cape May and Norfolk. German submarines had moved south after the arrival of the Civil Air Patrol at Atlantic City and Rehobeth. Furthermore, the Navy had begun convoy operations and was giving some surface escort. Submarine commanders have always feared aircraft, and they, therefore, moved their operations southward towards Norfolk and Cape Hatteras. I, of course, was very interested in Civil Air Patrol work and felt that it was one of the known necessities at the time to protect shipping. I, therefore, advised him that I would be very happy to help start a Base. At that time, I had no definite ideas of just how long I intended to remain on Coastal Patrol duty. I had left my wife and children and my business very hurriedly to go to Atlantic City; and, as a matter of fact, although I lived at home between December 1941 and March 1942, I had been spending practically all of my time working for the Civil Air Patrol as Wing Adjutant for New York State.

"On April 15, Colonel Johnson called me from Washington and asked me to fly down to Parksley, Virginia, the following day and to advise him if the Field at Parksley was sufficiently good to operate from. He had previously asked Captain Gill Robb Wilson and Tom Eastman to fly down and look at the Field, but they had

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gone down in a Grumman Widgeon; and, after flying around the Field several times, they decided that it was much too small to land the Widgeon.

"On the 15th, I flew down in my Stinson Voyager; and, after flying around Parksley for about ten minutes, I decided that the chicken farm, just one mile southwest of the town, must be the Airport that was marked on the aeronautical charts. A faint outline of what once was two runways could be seen from the air. By the time I landed, a small group of local people had come out to the Airport to see what was going on. I found that I really had landed on the Parksley Airport, which was at that time being used as a chicken farm by a Mr. Harry Barton. Several years prior, a group of Parksley citizens had joined together and bought the land for a small Airport. The project was extremely unsuccessful, and soon the Airport was closed. Frankly, I never understood why this Field was picked for an Airport because there are so many beautiful, large farms and fields in this vicinity.

"Parksley Airport was bounded on three of its four sides by deep ditches and on one side by a busy little road. Although the approaches were fairly good, all of the runways were surrounded by fairly large trees, which I could see were bound to cause us difficulty. The former runways needed cutting, but they were pretty good on the surface, with the exception that they were far too short. One of them was sixteen hundred feet, the other was eighteen hundred feet in length. The buildings on the Airport were not much to speak about. A local private aviator had erected a shed, which was called the hangar. It was a small frame building with no weather stripping, no floor, no gas, and no oil. It was so low that you could not even hangar a Fairchild, as it was only built for the owner's small Aeronca. There was a farmhouse being occupied by Mr. Barton and his family. It was a pretty nice six-room building but very run-down. It, of course, had no electricity, no water, and no heat. There was also a chicken house, occupied by five thousand lusty baby chicks. I forgot to mention that there was an old barn, a wood shed, and a two-holer.

"Upon my arrival Mr. Barton was very friendly, and he immediately whisked me to town to meet Mayor William Lewis of Parksley. I soon found out that the Mayor was one of the nine partners who owned the Airport, and that he was more than anxious to get a good tenant. Mr. Barton was paying the corporation all of $5.00 per month for rent, and they were perfectly willing to get rid of him if they could get $25.00 per month rent from the Government.

"Although I knew that Civil Air Patrol at the time had no funds whatever and had only received authorization to pay a limited number of personnel certain small stipulated amounts daily for expenses, I had been informed that some money would be available for the purpose of starting a new Base. Apparently, this money was to come from the Tanker Protection Fund. The tanker companies were so anxious to get protection that they had banded together and set aside a fund of money to be distributed to Civil Air Patrol Bases to ay for those things which couldn't be begged, borrowed, or stolen.

"After talking to the Mayor, I spent some time at Parksley with the Power Company (R.E.A.) and the Telephone Company. I found that Parksley was a town of approximately five hundred inhabitants and that it was a very prosperous little agricultural center.

"It seemed to me that facilities were available as well as the man-power to set up a Base. At the time I was worried about the housing situation because there was a United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Group operating in the vicinity, and most of the men were boarding in Parksley. No housing seemed to be available until someone suggested that possibly our men could stay at the Parksley Volunteer Fire Department, which had the most modern building in Parksley. After a hasty conference with the head of the Fire Department, I came to the conclusion that we could rent the second floor of this building and use it as a temporary barracks.

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"I, therefore, called Colonel Johnson in Washington and advised him that a Base could be successfully operated from the Parksley Airport. At that time there was no anticipation that bombs would ever be used on CAP planes, and it never entered into my mind to consider whether the planes could be flown from the Airport with armament. If that question had been asked, I would have turned down the Airport. It was certainly a small and dangerous field to operate from, but I knew that the type of planes we were going to use could do the job, and I felt that the risks which had to be taken in flying out of such a field were worth taking in view of the emergency.

"Colonel Johnson wanted to know how soon we could get started. I told him that we couldn't get started at all if we were not given some money. We had lots of work to do. The runways had to be improved, trees had to be cut down, the hangar needed enlarging, and the farm house needed telephones, electricity, and a thorough overhaul. Radio equipment also had to be installed; and, as I had no idea where such equipment was coming from, I told the Colonel that it would take at least $2,000 ($8,000?) in cash and a month of preparation. Of course, if the Civil Air Patrol had been given any help at the time by either the Army or the Navy, a Base like Parksley could have been started in three or four days. However, we were given no help of any kind and very little money.

"The flight crews and mechanics were not to report until the Base was in shape to start. Therefore, I tried to give a safe estimate. The records show that the first patrol flight took off exactly thirty-one days after I made my first trip to Parksley.

"After receiving my estimate, Colonel Johnson asked me to wait in Parksley and said that he would call me back in a short while, and let me know whether to proceed or not. One hour later, he called back and said that I should proceed immediately to prepare the field for operations, and that the Tanker Protection Fund would advance $1,500.00 to help out. I told him that I, of course, would need some help, and he suggested that I pick out two or three men from Atlantic City to assist me. He also informed me that my job was only to get the Base started, after which time I would be relieved because the Base was to be manned by personnel from the Virginia Wing, who were to be in entire control and direction of the Base. At the inception, it had been the plan to have the Wing of each State direct the activities of Bases located in their home States. I know already from my own experiences at Atlantic City that this could not possibly succeed. New Jersey had only been able to supply one plane when operations began there, and New York was really doing the job, having supplied most of the planes and most of the personnel. The Base at Rehobeth was being run by the Delaware Wing, but it was obvious even to them that they would need additional planes and personnel, and that there were not enough in Delaware alone to take care of the job.

"I returned to Atlantic City on the evening of April 16th, and that night convinced Captain Rudolf Smutny (USMC) and Captain Harold Cobb (AAF) that they should come to Parksley and assist me in opening the Base. Both of these men were capable pilots and had been in Atlantic City for a few weeks. They had helped out there in operations and had a business background which would make them very valuable in setting up a Base. The following day Smutny and I went to Parksley, and a few days later Harold Cobb came down also. There followed two weeks of intensive preparation.

"Acting upon authority of Colonel Johnson, I also induced Lieutenant Robert H. Minton, CAP, to leave his post as Adjutant of the New York Wing and come to Parksley as Administrative Officer. Shortly after arriving at Parksley, Harold Cobb decided to leave because he wanted to join the Army, and I needed someone to set up and run the office. I had worked with Bob Minton in New York, and I knew that he was familiar with CAP procedure, so I was very happy to have him join me.

“Bob, Rudy and I spent those two weeks getting things ready. The runways were immediately cut and rolled. We hired all available help in the vicinity to cut down trees and make the approaches to the runways less dangerous. This was important as an Army plane had cracked up and burned a few months before, due to the closeness of the trees to the runways. A concrete floor was installed in the hangar, and the building, itself, was raised three feet so that a fairly large airplane could be hangared. Gasoline was very difficult to get. The only Oil Company in position to provide 80 octane aviation gasoline to Parksley at the time was Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, and it was only after a trip to New York to see the head of the tanker fleet that I was able to induce them to serve us with gasoline and install a two thousand gallon tank.

“Mr. Barton and his chickens became a problem. The Town did not feel that they could evict him immediately, and I had no real legal authority to force them to do so. At first, a compromise was necessary, and we temporarily agreed to let him have the downstairs of his own home while we occupied the upstairs. I knew that this couldn’t work as soon as operations were to begin, but I still had not been told by Colonel Johnson that the money for the Base, itself, had been appropriated, so I was afraid that I might get in trouble if I threw Mr. Barton out, and the Base, itself, never got started. The Colonel had told me to get the Base ready but that he was doing so in anticipation of the money being appropriated and that I, therefore, should not evict Barton. Consequently, we prepared the upstairs of the building for operations and administration. Telephones and electricity were installed in a few days.

“Our next problem was radio. I had been advised that the Virginia Wing would supply the radio receivers and transmitters necessary for the Base radio. After ten days they still had not arrived, and I began to get worried. Again, I called Colonel Johnson and told him that I was ready to begin operations but that I did not have any radio section. I also advised him that I had been visited at the Base by Colonel Allan C. Parksinson, Wing Commander of the State of Virginia and Lieutenant Hawthorne of the Virginia Wing. Although the Virginia Wing was prepared to send personnel to Parksley as well as six Monocoupe aircraft, it was quite obvious that the Wing, itself, was not able to supply sufficient aircraft and that the aircraft they planned on sending to Parksley were not properly equipped with radios and instruments. Some of the instruments had not arrived, and the radios were being installed very slowly at Langley Field. I pointed out to Colonel Johnson that I felt quite certain that he would have to call in other States for planes and personnel to get the Bse into operation on the date we had mentally set. I also informed him that I objected very much to the use of the Monocoupe aircraft on a field as small as Parksley, as I knew that we would have trouble with them, and I wanted to avoid accidents. After a very lengthy discussion, Colonel Johnson advised me that, in view of the fact that the Base was ready to operate with the exception of radios and that the money had not yet been appropriated to open the Base, I and my assistants should return to Atlantic City and continue there as pilots until such time as money was available to open the Parksley Base.

“After that conversation, I was very happy that we had not evicted Mr. Barton. By that time we had become very fond of Parksley. We knew the townsfolk, and we realized that it was a very nice place to live, despite the summer heat and bugs. Before leaving town, we told our new friends that we expected to be back soon, and inside of one week we returned to Parksley with orders to begin operations.

“Upon our return, it really became necessary to do things. Getting rid of Mr. Barton entirely was the first necessity, and installation of the radio was the second. In view of my lack of legal authority to evict, I arranged with Barton to rent him a house in town for three months and to allow him to tend his chickens at the Base until they were large enough to sell. We, therefore, actually operated an Air Base off of a chicken farm for three months.

“Getting the radio was more difficult, and I finally got Dr. Larry Dunn of the New York Wing to provide us with a transmitter. We had already received a new receiver from National Headquarters. Dr. Dunn came down

with Al O'Donnell of Lear Radio and installed the transmitter. It was a homemade 50-watt rig which never worked very satisfactorily. However, it served the purpose for those first few weeks.

"Bob Minton had our administrative setup working very well. When we first came back to Parksley, I had inquired at the R.E.A. office where I could obtain a secretary. The manager said, "you can have ours because we won't have enough work for her before long." He pointed to Irene Hillman, and I hired her right then and there. That was one of our greatest pieces of luck. Irene is now a Master Sergeant and our Administrative Officer. She has been a mainstay of the Base ever since it started, and her work has been absolutely perfect.

"Although there had been very little contact with the Army about the new Base at Parksley at that time, I had paid a visit to Mitchel Field prior to returning to Parksley. At Mitchel Field, I contacted Colonel Bodle of Air Support Command, who was in charge of Civil Air Patrol operations on the Coast under Air Support Command. Colonel Bodle advised that, as soon as the money was available for our operations at the Base, he would send me a Directive. He advised me, however, that the Directive would be very similar to that under which the Atlantic City Base was operating. He made arrangements for the Army to install a private-line telephone hooking up Parksley, Rehobeth and Atlantic City. This line was to be our contact with Mitchel Field via Atlantic City.

"At the inception, our flight plans were to be filed via Atlantic City with Philadelphia Interceptor Command, but I felt that this would be a very slow method of filing these plans and believed that it would be better if we had some connection with Norfolk Interceptor Command. I, therefore, asked the Colonel for permission to visit the Commanding Officer at Norfolk. Upon my return to Parksley, I visited Norfolk Interceptor Command and called on the Commanding officer. He had a very vague idea of what Civil Air Patrol was doing but felt that if we were going to fly in his area he should know all about it, and he, therefore, requested that we file our flight plans with Nofolk and was kind enough to install a private line direct to Norfolk Interceptor Command. This was a great break for us because it meant that we could file our clearances with ease and that we could also procure weather information from Norfolk, which has been very helpful.

"As soon as the radio equipment was installed, I then contacted Colonel Johnson in Washington and advised him that this Base was ready to begin operations. Rudy Smutny and I had been burning the midnight oil preparing for the operation, itself, and we had carefully written up a booklet known as the "Bible", which was to be handed to each pilot upon his arrival. In this "Bible" he was told where to go, what to do, and why to do it. He was given full instructions as to the Base's operating plan and radio procedures. Although we, ourselves, did not know too much, we at least knew that if we wrote down what the men were to do they would be bound to understand much quicker and be able to do it much better. At Atlantic City, we had learned by the trial and error method. At Parksley, we benefited by those trials and errors.

"By the time the Base was ready to open, Colonel Johnson had arrived at the conclusion also that the idea of each State running its own Coastal Patrol Base was impossible. After all, it wasn't a State's war, and Civil Air Patrol quickly abandoned its original policy. He advised me that the pilots and planes would arrive at the Base in a few days. They began to arrive on May 14th, and they came from Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Massachusetts, Virginia, Iowa, District of Columbia, Texas, Delaware, New York, and many other states. Parksley was obviously destined to be a typical American effort. Before the men arrived, I had been frantically trying to get mechanics through National Headquarters and was, of course, mainly interested in getting experienced ones. However, it seemed practically impossible to employ anyone with real experience, and finally National Headquarters arranged to obtain for us some green mechanics through the Pennsylvania Wing. The Rising Sun School of Aeronautics had just graduated a class of A and P mechanics, and most of our boys came from this school. Some of them had been out about a year, but it can be said that, generally speaking, they were quite inexperienced. The record of this Base provide that they were well trained and that they did a good

job here. Of course, the old system of trial and error had to be used, and there were lots of things we did those early days which we would not think of doing today.

"The pilots and observers straggled in each day by plane, and I was happy to note that we were getting a fine class of men and, in general, airplanes that were in very good condition. We had "Pappy" Sutton, who came from Lake Charles, Louisiana, with "Louie" DiCarlo as his observer. "Pappy" and "Louie" only stayed here for thirty days, but all of us will remember them as two grand guys. They were oil men from way back as could be noted by the fact that neither of them had a full set of fingers. They had a Stinson Voyager owned by "Pappy", and it is still at the Base because before they left they sold the Voyager to one of our mainstays Lieutenant Calvin Pardee, III. This particular plane has flown more than 1200 hours on patrol without even a murmur. When "Pappy" owned it, his greatest delight was to fly down the beach chasing the wild horses and cattle which roam the Virginia shore near Chincoteague. Sutton was a big believer in pure gasoline. He always wanted 100 octane and was certain that his engine would quit with the 80 octane we insisted on using. It was difficult even to prove it to him by the manufacturer's instruction book. "Pappy" and Louie" Left after their short stay and went back to Louisiana to help open the Base at New Orleans. That was the system in those days. Give them a month of experience, and then let them help to open another Base. It is our understanding that "Louie" DiCarlo since leaving this Base has had two forced landings at sea.

"Another arrival from Lake Charles was Bill Gooch and Warren W. Bourdier, the latter is still with us. Gooch stayed for white awhile and fell in love with the idea of flying something bigger than his Voyager and is now testing B-24's for Henry Ford. Their plane was practically new like Sutton's, and the two planes from Lake Charles were very valuable assets because they could always be counted upon.

"Bob Silverman and Fred Stanger came in from Philadelphia in Bob's Ryan SCW. Both of these men are still with us, and Bob has proved himself invaluable as the Supply Officer at this Base. Stanger has been one of our most consistent pilots and has piled up hundreds of hours over the water.

"Bob Fisher came in from Keokuk, Iowa, in his blue Waco. Bob is now with the Ferry Command, but while he was with us, he was either flying or taking the boys' money at "gin".

"Marco Young came in from Shreveport, Louisiana, in his Beechcraft. "Marco" is a wealthy motor trucking operator. He has converted his entire line of trucks from gasoline to diesel engines, and he was forever trying to convert his Beechcraft into something that it should not be. As a matter of fact, we were quite happy to have him maintain his own plane in those early days because very few of our mechanics knew much about a Beechcraft, however, later on when we got some more experienced mechanics, none of them would sign "Marco's" log book because there were too many wires and pulleys that just didn't seem to belong where they were. Nevertheless, it flew, and it did a grand job. "Marco" was a grand pilot. He couldn't hear too well, and he couldn't see too well, but he had an instrument rating, and he was always anxious to try his luck against instrument weather. We had a hard time holding him on the ground whenever the weather got bad.

"There also was "Jake" Schlager, who came in from Pittsburgh with "Bud" Howell. The latter is still with us, and in the early days he was extremely useful in helping us out with our radio problems. He came down originally expecting to be a pilot; but, as soon as we found out that he had radio experience, we grabbed him and tied him down to our biggest headache. As time went on, we were able to release "Bud" from radio, and he is now a very active pilot. "Jake" came down in a rather old Fairchild 24, but it seemed to be in grand condition. One month later, however, it met its end in the Atlantic Ocean, and it was our first forced landing of any kind. More of that later. You can see from the few men mentioned that they were of high caliber and a swell bunch of fellows. All of the men who came to the Base had been flying for quite sometime. They knew the emergency was great, and they were prepared to do the job.

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“As soon as they arrived, we helped them make arrangements for rooms. If they could not find rooms in town, they were lodged at the firehouse where we had installed forty Army cots. The Fire Department had agreed to board and lodge us at the very high ratio of $14.00 per week. At that time we were not in position to bother with feeding ourselves, and we were very happy to have the firemen do the job, despite the fact that they did it very badly. At the beginning most of the personnel lived at the firehouse, which included mechanics, pilots, radiomen, et cetera. As time went on, most of them moved out and began to room at private homes. At the beginning the townsfolk were rather aloof and not too anxious to take us into their homes, but they mellowed very quickly, and many of us will long remember the hospitality of the people with whom we lived.

“It was Rudy Smutny’s job to teach the boys how we wanted to patrol our area. Rudy was the Operations Officer, and it was certainly a thankless job in those early days. He decided to take each man on a flight in his own plane, and for days on end Smutny was in the air personally practically the entire day. Our area was about 85 miles long and ran from the points 25 miles at sea, known as Winter Quarter Shoals, down to the harbor at Norfolk. At the beginning, we were responsible for an area extending 30 miles at sea. Later, this area was extended to 60 miles. I spent most of my time in operations, watching over our faltering radio and teaching our ground personnel their various sundry duties.

“Supply was already a terrific problem. Civil Air Patrol had not yet established its position with the War Production Board, and it practically had not priority standing whatever. Private flying was still pretty much of a standstill, and, some of the old supply houses still had a stock of parts on hand. Through these old friendships between private fliers and their former supply sources, Civil Air Patrol was able to maintain its planes in the early stages. Later, as their supply dwindled, it became absolutely necessary to have priorities, and it is a wonder to me that we were able to get along as well as we did. I began seeking around among my personnel to find someone who could handle the supply job. Bob Silverman had been the Purchasing Agent at Brewster Aircraft, and he seemed to be the logical man. It was a great stroke of fortune for us because Bob’s previous experience stood him in great stead, and he seemed able to find parts and supplies when no one else could. We immediately began to stock up with practically everything imaginable, and it was not long before we were in pretty good shape. At the beginning, we had so few parts and supplies that we could not even do an ordinary 25-hour engine check. We had the men to do it, but we did not have safety wire. We did not have gaskets, and very often we just lacked the time. At the start, we were not even allowed to have servicemen, and the mechanics spent most of their time pushing the planes around and feeding them with gas and oil. They wre also making minor repairs here and there which were possible with their limited equipment. So we sent some planes down to Norfolk Municipal Airport for their original 25-hour check.

“Our hangar was just a shack with a roof on it. It became necessary to get equipment. We needed a battery charger, welding equipment, presses, spray guns, and those innumerable articles which must be on hand to maintain and repair aircraft. How to get them and get them with as little money and priorities as possible was the problem. Fortunately, we had men who were willing to make sacrifices and help out. One of these men was Aubrey B. Hilliard. “Tex” for short. As his name indicates, Aubrey was from Texas. However, his most recent home was Richmond, where he had set himself up as a deluxe automobile body repair man. I understand and fully believe that he had the best shop of this kind in Richmond, but the gasoline shortage practically ruined his business, and he wanted to fly much more than he wanted to fix automobile fenders. He came down with the Virginia contingent; and, as soon as he saw what we needed, he volunteered to bring down all of the equipment from his shop that we could possibly use. This was another stroke of luck because “Tex” brought us a wonderful air compressor, welding equipment, presses, et cetera, all of which are so vitally needed.

“Through the summer, we worked under very primitive conditions. The weather was good, and, generally speaking, the planes were in good condition. Every day from the crack of dawn until dusk, we were out there

flying. From May 17th to September 17th, we flew 3700 hours with only two days during which there was no flying because of weather. We averaged about 27-hours per day, and the weather had to be mighty bad to make us stop.

With fall coming on, it became necessary to think more and more about preparing our buildings for a winter operation. By that time, we had begun to accumulate some money. The checks were coming through, and the Base was getting a surplus to work with. Our first necessity was still the hangar. It was decided to add substantially to the original small building and to install weather-proofing and heat. It would have been impossible to have this job done by outside labor. In the first place, we did not have enough money to do it that way, and in the second place the outside labor was not available. However, we had been allowed to employ 16 men as guards for day and night duty, and in hiring these men, I had concentrated on men who could do things with their hands.

"The real all-round man at the Base from the very early inception had been Jim Core. I ran into Jim very early in the game when I first came to Parksley. We needed someone to install our electrical wiring and radio antennas. Jim did the job on a private contract basis. At that time, he was very busy as Director of Civilian Defense in this area, but he found time to do odd jobs on the side. It was not long before I found out that Jim Core could do nearly anything, and he was immediately hired as a mechanic. Jim and his group were picked to build the hangar, and it did not take long for them to do the job. Inside of 60 days, we had converted our small shack, capable of holding two planes, into a perfectly modern hangar, capable of holding ten planes. Jim found a complete steam heating plant which we virtually stole, and the hangar was perfectly comfortable all during the wet and cold winter of 1943.

"In order to paint planes we needed heat; and, during the course of the winter, we painted two of our planes. The hangar was completely weather-proofed and adequately lighted. Our stock room, which had formerly been located in the Operations Building, was moved to the hangar, and it became a complete unit of supply and maintenance. By heating the hangar and making it adequately large, we were able to avoid the trouble of starting engines in the early morning after a cold night. Our Dawn Patrol planes were always stowed in the hangar, and we never experienced any great difficulties getting them started. Our pilots inspected their planes before they left the hangar, and they were able to do so in reasonable comfort, thereby making their inspections more thorough.

"From the very beginning, I had hoped to make our operation a safe one. I realized that this was possible but that it would take constant perseverance and attention to the job in order to keep the accident record clear. I recall that prior to going to Atlantic City, I had visited Colonel Bodle in company with Gill Robb Wilson at Mitchel Field. The Colonel had said, "Patrolling the coast is a dirty job. Looking for submarines becomes very boring and monotonous after a short while. It won't be long before the engine sounds very rough each time you go out over the water, and believe me I admire men who volunteer for duty such as this." The Colonel could not have spoken more truthfully. The record of this Base proves what he said. We have been here since May 1942, and we have yet to sight a submarine. We have flown 10,000 hours on patrol in search of submarines and trouble and have seen nothing of the enemy. True, we have seen two ships that were sunk by enemy mines off the Norfolk harbor and one ship on fire after a collision at sea. We have seen a few dead bodies of victims of sinkings, and we have picked up life rafts, life boats, debris, et cetera, from sinkings outside of our area. Intelligence reports of the Army and Navy have proved that, but since we have been here, there has not been one sinking by an enemy submarine in our area. Whether it is due to our continual efforts, plus the Army and the Navy efforts from Norfolk, is something we will never know, but our work has been very boring for the men, and it has always amazed me that their morale has stood up so well.

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“If you had come upon the enemy once in a while, it would have relieved the boredom and would have given each flight the anticipation of a real manhunt, but the flights went out with little expectation of seeing anything, and, therefore, there was plenty of time to sit and reflect on how uncomfortable and dangerous a piece of work it was. In the winter months, the knowledge that a forced landing means death in a very short while if you are not picked up is a very distasteful thought.

“The answer to the problem wasn’t easy. We were working with planes that had been built for private use, planes that were never intended to stand out in the open, days on end, or to fly daily in practically any weather conditions. Our problem was preventative maintenance. We had to prevent accidents by not letting a ship fly unless we knew it was as perfect as we could possibly make it. From the very beginning, I tried to drum this into the heads of my Engineering Staff and their men. They learned the lesson very well. Strict rules were immediately established. A system was set up whereby the record of hours flown for each plane was kept in Administration; and, when a grounding order was issued for a ship to be checked, that ship could not be flown regardless of the need for a ship on a flight. There were many times when we needed ships so badly that we felt that we should let it go on just one more flights, but I knew if we did that once, it would happen again; and sooner or later a plane would crack up, and we would have learned a bitter lesson. Therefore, the rule was never broken.

“At 25 hours, the oil was changed, and the ships received a 25-hour engine check. At 50 hours, the oil was changed again, and the ship received a 50-hour engine check, which was very thorough. At 50 hours, spark plugs were changed, gasoline tanks were cleaned out for sludge, and the engine was really thoroughly checked out. At 100 hours, the process was again repeated, but at this time the airplane, itself, was gone over from stem to stern. Worn cables were replaced, fairings were tightened, and instruments were thoroughly checked. Besides these regular checks, daily inspections were made, and planes were constantly repaired. Nothing, no matter how small, was ever ignored. The rule was that ships were to be grounded immediately, regardless of whether the necessary repair was minor or major. This policy has paid dividends.

“Very early in the game, we decided not to do any major overhauls. We knew we were operating off a sandy airport close to the sea, and that such a spot was not the proper place to take engines completely apart. We, furthermore, knew that the engine manufacturers were very busy and that they were making frequent changes in their engine specifications without notifying aircraft owners. We knew that, if we sent the engines to the factory for major overhaul, they would received all of the new modernizations. We decided to major the engines after 400 hours of flying, regardless of condition. If the engine showed bad symptoms prior to 400 hours, we did not hesitate to send it up for a major overhaul. If it was operating perfectly at the 400 hour mark, we majored it anyhow. Wherever possible, the engines were sent to the factory for these majors. Wherever possible, we even avoided doing top overhauls because we felt the factories could do a better job. The Franklin engine is very small and quite simple, and we did not hesitate to top these, but we never attempted to top a Jacobs, Lycoming, Warner or a Ranger engine, and we are very happy that we did not. Our policy was expensive, but it was safe. As the result of this policy, we have only had one complete engine failure of a mechanical nature at this base. In June 1942, “Jake” Schlager’s Fairchild was forced down at sea as a result of a vapor lock. “Jake” had been flying with both of his tanks on, and at the end of two hours the engine quit cold. The left tank had drained completely dry, and the right tank refused to flow. A forced landing was made, and within an hour and a half “Jake” and Lee Savage and Lawrence Fletcher were fished out of the water with no bad results. At that time Lawrence Fletcher was being carried as a student observer. We learned a lot from this accident. We realized that two people were enough in these small planes over the water. We had been training our observers by carrying them as a third passenger. Shortly after that, National Headquarters ruled that no student observers could be carried. We also learned that Fairchilds drain one tank and then the other and that the safest way to fly them is on one tank first and then the other. Our men were instructed to fly on the first tank until it was two-thirds used and then to switch over. None of us like to switch tanks in the air over the

water, but after a while we got used to it, and it never bothered anyone. Our policy proved to be very wise because about six months later James Smith, "Smitty" for short, had the same experience flying in his Ranger Fairchild. Just as in "Jake's" accident, "Smitty's" engine quit as his left tank drained dry. He was flying at one thousand feet, and his engine caught again one hundred feet over the water. Needless to say, "Smitty" never flew with both tanks on again. Our only real engine failure took place in June 1943 when the fuel pump broke on one of our Franklin engines. A forced landing was made by Lieutenant Myers and Lieutenant Cooper, and the men were picked up in about an hour by the Coast Guard. There were no injuries.

"Our base went through all of the usual Civil Air Patrol trials and tribulations about safety equipment. When our first accident occurred in June 1942, we were still flying without any Government safety equipment whatever. Before the Base opened, I bought the entire stock of kapok life vests at Abercrombie and Fitch in New York. These vests cost $3.50 each; and, as we had no funds for such necessary articles, the men had to buy them from the Base when they arrived. After seeing Schlager, Fletcher and Savage milling around in the ocean in those green jackets, I realized how difficult it was to see a man in the water with such an inadequate piece of life saving equipment. The Army and Navy were using yellow jackets, which were inflated with air when the containers were released, and these jackets were not only comfortable but could stand up for days. After our accident, I pestered Air Support Command so much that we were finally issued thirty life jackets by the Base Supply Officer, at Langley Field, Virginia. We still had no life rafts; and, despite the efforts of National Headquarters, none were officially issued to us until March 5, 1943. In the fall of 1942, we did get two life rafts by very peculiar circumstances. At that time an Army Liaison Officer was assigned to the Base by Air Support Command to teach them how to fly the missions properly, and how to handle bombs which by that time were being carried. Our Liaison Officer was Lieutenant Charles R. Sloan. He was so annoyed by the fact that we did not have any safety equipment that he went down to Langley Field one day and without any authority whatever, asked for two life rafts for which he signed personally. The civilian employee at Langley Field did not know whether we were entitled to them or not, but he did not think the matter to be important enough to bother the Boss so he issued the life rafts. These life rafts were a godsend. Wherever possible, the following ship on patrol carried one, and we at least had some feeling of security from these rafts. It was not until March 30, 1943, that we finally received ten one-man rafts, which were manufactured on a contract given out by the Office of Civilian Defense. Prior to that time, we had been issued some rubber life saving suits, later known as "zoot" suits, which were supposed to protect one from cold water. We were thankful that we never really had to use these suits. They were so uncomfortable to fly in that the men never really kept them on properly, and I am sure that, if they had been forced down, the suits would have hindered more than helped.

"The record of other Bases, who had forced landings during the winter months, proved that life is very short in icy water. No doubt, many lives were lost by Civil Air Patrol fliers because they did not have life rafts. Certainly, this would have been the same if we had had forced landings at sea in the winter prior to March 5, 1943. We all know this, and each flight during the winter was as real a risk as any combat mission being undertaken now in the European theaters of war.

"Our men can thank their trusty airplanes and our magnificent Engineering Staff for the fact that we went through the winter of 1942 and 1943 without a forced landing. Our Engineering Officer, Captain William A. Reed, and his able Assistant, Lieutenant Paul R. Loux, Jr., have done a truly marvelous job. Whenever they, or any of their men, were in doubt, the planes were grounded, and we never compromised with luck. The men at this Base as a result have always had a great deal of confidence in the planes that they were flying. They knew that to the best of their knowledge and ability the plane being flown was ready for flight and in perfect condition.

"CAP-CP 4 has handled its operations just as any Army combat squadron would have done. Shortly after we were under way, it appeared that it was entirely too much work for an Operations Officer and his Assistant and

an Intelligence Officer and his Assistant to run the Base during the summer months when operations begain at 04:30 in the morning and ended at 20:30 in the evening. Therefore, four Operations Officers and four Intelligence Officers were used, thereby making it possible to spread the work and give more men experience. During the summer and fall of 1942, Lieutenant Arthur C. Pottorff and Alfred C. Nowitsky was his Assistant. Lieutenants A.D.F. White and Frederic W. Deisroth were called in to help them out. Lieutenant James T. Rutherfoord, Jr. was Intelligence Officer with his Assistant, Lieutenant Murray W. Keller. Called in to help them were Lieutenants Daniel A. Breene and Burton B. Howell. The system worked well. Operations and Intelligence proceeded very smoothly and this system was maintained until the winter months when shorter days made it possible to go back to the old system of two Operations Officers and two Intelligence Officers. When winter came, Lieutenant Pottorff left the Base, and Captain Nowitsky was made Operations Officer, which position he has held until the present time. Captain A.D.F. White was made Assistant Operations Officer and Flight Surgeon. These two men have done outstanding work. They have never flinched at the long and early hours of their job, and they have always followed carefully their instructions to do the job and do it safely. Captain Rutherfoord and Captain Keller stayed at the helm of J-2. In my opinion, their work was so thorough and complete as any military unit could be with the information which they were given or were able to get. No flight ever left this Base without being briefed by the Intelligence Section. They always had information on the weather, on shipping, on gun firing, and on enemy activity, plus any other facts pertaining to their mission. With Operations, Intelligence, Engineering, Supply and Administration running smoothly, there could be no reason for anything but success, and I feel that CAP-CP 4 carried out successfully all of its missions. Despite the fact that we were using civilian type aircraft, and despite all the difficulties of getting parts and supplies, there was hardly a time that there were not sufficient aircraft available for duty. As I have stated before, there was not a great deal of enemy activity in this area, and I firmly believe that the fact that we were here and continually patrolling the coast had a great deal to do with the lack of enemy activity.

"As our duties come to a close, we can look back upon the past as a period in which all of the personnel at this Base did their jobs to the limit and extent of their ability. From May 17, 1942, to the closing day, August 31, 1943, this Base never received one single word of criticism as to its manner of operating or its conduct in carrying out its missions from either the Army, the Navy, or National Headquarters of the Civil Air Patrol. It did receive many evidences of appreciation for the work done, and there are enclosed, herewith, copies of some of these letters of commendation.

I.W. BURNHAM, II
Major, Civil Air Patrol
Commanding.

NB: This copy of CAPCP 4 history was graciously provided to NYWG courtesy of Jon Burnham and Ron Geffen of Burnham Securities, NYC.

COPY

HEADQUARTERS FIFTH NAVAL DISTRICT
Naval Operating Base
Norfolk 11, Virginia

23 August 1943

From: ComFive
To: CO CAPCP 4, Parkley, Virginia – Major I.W. Burnham II

Subj: CIVIL AIR PATROL CAOSTAL PATROL, 5ND

1. The three CAPCP Units, operating in this Naval District, have rendered substantial services in prosecution of the war.

2. These units have flown a total monthly average of 2,136 hours, representing a monthly average of 325 escort, 406 patrol and 34 search flights. Thirteen submarine sightings, 10 ship disasters, and 22 plane accidents at sea were reported. A close check was maintained on commercial fishing vessels operating in this area. A comprehensive survey of wrecks in these waters was conducted.

3. CAPCP 4, Parksley has flown a monthly average of 602 hours, representing a monthly average of 117 escort, 88 patrol and 12 search flights, and has played an important role in the protection of coastal shipping between the Delaware and the Chesapeake.

4. The Commandant is cognizant of the difficulties and dangers which have attended your operations. Fore the energy, persistence, skill, resourcefulness, and daring displayed, as well as for the fine patriotism manifested, you and the members of your command are commended.

5. The Commandant also desires to express his thanks for the valuable assistance rendered by CAPCP 4, Parksley, to him in the discharge of his responsibilities.

/s/

H. F. Leary

Cc:
CESF

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COPY

COPY OF TELETYPE MESSAGE RECEIVED CAP COASTAL PATROL NO. 4 ON JULY 9, 1943.

PK V JO NR 2

FROM: ANTISUB LIAISON OFFICE

TO: MAJOR I.W. BURNHAM, II, CAP 4, PARKSLEY

REF: 091228

THIS IS RESTRICTED REFER YOUR MESSAGE Y22E THE INITIATIVE SHOWN IN THE RESCUE OF THIS NAVY FLIER IS WORTHY OF COMMENDATION. WELL DONE.

ADMIRAL H. F. LEARY
COMMANDANT FIFTH NAVAL DISTRICT

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HEADQUARTERS FIFTH NAVAL DISTRICT
Naval Operating Base
Norfolk, Virginia

April 16, 1943

Message from Capt. R.S. Crenshaw, U.S.N., Assistant Commandant for Operations.

I wish to extend a greeting to the Parksley Patrol at the end of a year of fine work. Your continued interest and perseverance in the daily grind has been most commendable and is sincerely appreciated. We have counted on your patrols in the coverage of convoys, in patrol of the Coastal Waters and in special investigations, as an integral part of the defense of the Coast and shipping. When you make no report we feel confident that the area you covered is clear, and when you report something we pick up our ears and act on it at once. We have learned to place dependence in what you say. Keep up your good work.

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COPY

I have been instructed to read the following message to you.

"Although there is only one candle on your birthday cake tonight, it does not indicate by any manner or means the value of the service you have performed for the United States or the Navy. Giving of yourselves unstintingly such as you have, has built the Civil Air Patrol into an organization well worthy of carrying the American battle flag. First, I want to congratulate you on your efforts to be of service and then I want to thank you for the work which you have done."

/s/ Manley H. Simons

Rear Admiral Manley H. Simons, USN
Commandant of the Fifth Naval District
Norfolk, Virginia

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