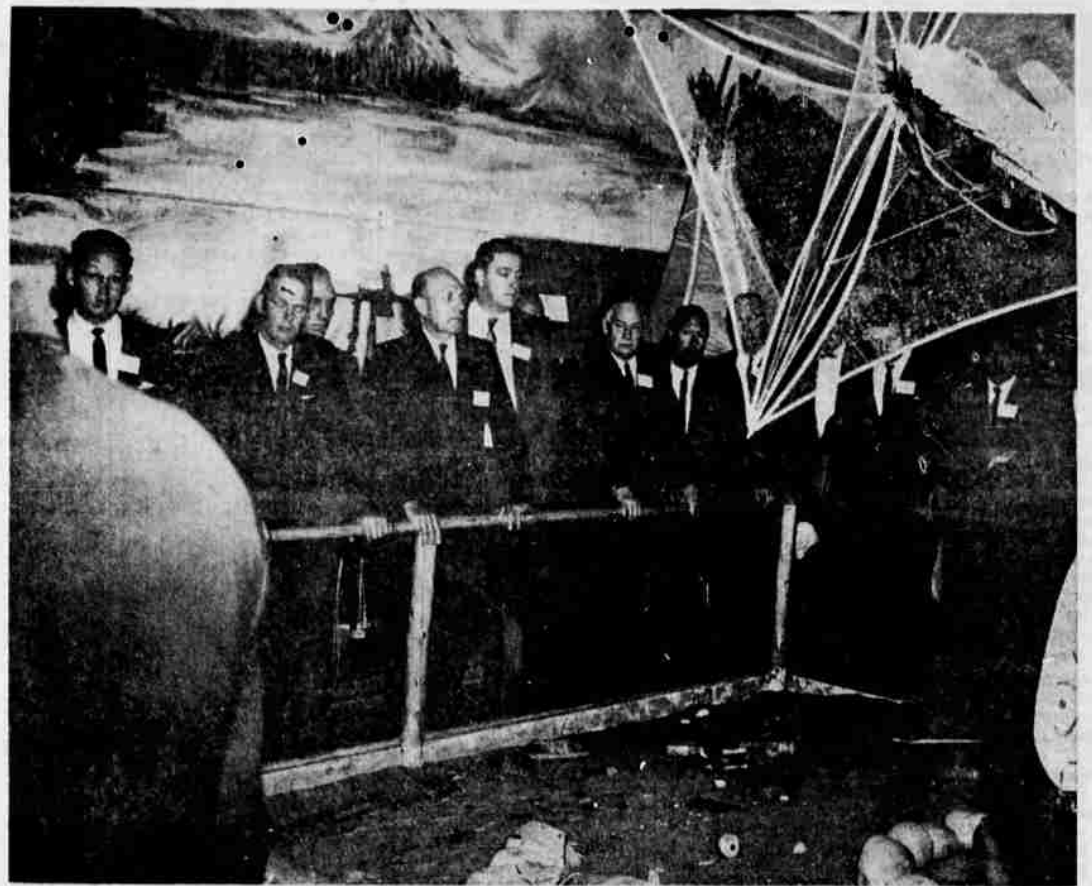




Rear Admiral William A. Stuart welcomes southern Oregonians to Whidbey Naval Air Station. (U.S. Navy photo)



Oregon visitors to Whidbey NAS watch demonstration of survival techniques on distant tropical beach. (U.S. Naval photo)

Features

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Southern Oregonians View Whidbey Island

BY HERB GREY

Mail Tribune Advertising Manager

Forty-nine southern Oregon business and professional men had a first glimpse of Naval sea-going airpower May 10 when they participated in a U. S. Navy guest tour of Whidbey Island in Puget Sound.

Leaving the Medford airport early in a Navy R5D, the party was flown directly to Ault Field on Whidbey Island in a morning overcast that permitted no view of Portland and Seattle. Ault field, with two fine 8,000 foot runways, was constructed at the start of World War II and was named in honor of Comdr. William Bowen Ault, a Naval squadron leader who lost his life in the Coral Sea Battle.

While the big Navy plane was en route to Whidbey, the Navy selected as "honorary senior Citizens" Judge John L. Barber, Jr., of Eugene, Frank J. Van Dyke, Medford lawyer and former speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, State Representative Sidney Bazett of Grants Pass, State Senator Lynn Newbury of Ashland and Mayor Charles B. Gill, Jr., of Grants Pass.

Whirlwind of Activities

Upon arrival at Naval Air Whidbey the southern Oregonians were greeted by Rear Admiral William A. Stuart and Capt. Renfro Turner, Jr., commanding officers, and other staff and squadron commanders, and immediately embarked upon a whirlwind of activities that left them both amazed and reassured.

Whidbey Island, where the U.S. Navy's quarter-billion dollar air station has become a giant in the defense of the Northwest, Canada and Alaska, lies 65 miles north of Seattle. Its strategic location commands the east end of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the main entrance to Puget Sound.

Second only to Long Island, New York, in size in continental limits of the U.S., Whidbey is 38 miles long and 16 1/2 miles in area. It was discovered by pioneer Martin Tettezon a century ago.

Navy Needs In Mind

Mother Nature must have had the needs of the U.S. Navy in mind when she established the weather pattern for this green-clad island.

In an area where yearly rainfall averages 40 inches, Whidbey Island happens to lie on the lee side of the lofty Olympics, and has a rainfall of 19.8 inches. The year round mild weather means lots of good flying weather and places Whidbey's record of landings, take-offs, touch-and-go landings and ground control approaches high among all the nation's military establishments.

First on the busy program of Navy aviation orientation was a briefing of the southern Oregon delegation by Admiral Stuart, Captain Turner, and various squadron commanders. Commander Fleet Air Whidbey, it seems, commands all fleet aircraft in the Northwest area, is responsible for the coordination of training and operational readiness of the Heavy Attack and Patrol Plane squadrons.

Training seems to be a never-ending job at Whidbey. "Professionalism is our business" is a slogan painted in large letters on one of the Ault Field hangars and, from personal observation of the Oregon visitors May 10, the officers and men in every phase of the widely diversified fields of operations and training are real professionals.

The daily training includes practice shipping reconnaissance with special emphasis placed upon anti-submarine tactics, navigation and patrol crew training, long range practice radar bombing missions, radar plotting, celestial navigation and highly important field mirror landing practice.

There is close liaison between Rear Admiral Stuart, Commander, Fleet Air Whidbey, and the Canadian Flag Officer Pacific, who commands air and surface forces for the defense of Canada. Frequently both forces combine for maneuvers in each other's area to assure surveillance of the off-shore waters for shipping and submarines.

Stresses Surface Shipping

In the initial briefing for the Oregon group, Admiral Stuart stressed the vital importance of surface shipping in case of war and the priority given by his command to anti-submarine operations.

Under the supervision of Admiral Stuart, PV2 "Neptune" and PSM "Martin" patrol planes take off daily to conduct shipping reconnaissance and look for submarines far and wide in the western Pacific. A3D "Skywarriors" heavy attack bombers, are usually in the air on long range radar bombing missions and practicing radar plotting, navigation and field mirror landings.

Whidbey's mission to provide facilities, services and materials to support "operations of aviation activities and other assigned units" is a big order, calling for extensive repair shops and heavy supplies of everything needed to keep a fighting fleet at sea.

Interesting Demonstration

One of the highly interesting demonstrations witnessed by the Oregon visitors dealt with survival and featured ingenious methods of open-sea and land survival learned through bitter wartime experience in World War II and Korea. Everything from the "Gibson Girl" transmitter with box kite to various types of snares for wild animals were shown and explained.

When the Oregonians took time off for lunch at the spit-and-span messhall, we had a visit with First Class Aviation Bo's'n's Mate Don Waits, who conducted a portion of the survival demonstrations.

Don, whose home was once at Maupin, Ore. and whose parents now reside at Beaverton, described the grueling seven-day test for men who complete his course. "You have to learn to be a fisherman and hunter to survive," he said, "so most sailors wind up the week of hardship by becoming real sportsmen in these fields."

Physiological functional stresses under high-speed, high-flight conditions were the subject of one especially interesting lecture; the complex function of hydraulic retracting

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Oregon air tour members view equipment used in plane-to-plane refueling at Whidbey Naval Air Station. (U.S. Navy photo)



Crew member of Navy P2V-7 "Neptune" shows visitor patrol bomber at Whidbey Air Station. (U.S. Navy photo)



Crew of Navy S2F all weather plane, both land and sea based, show southern Oregonians big Grumman ship. (U.S. Navy Photo)