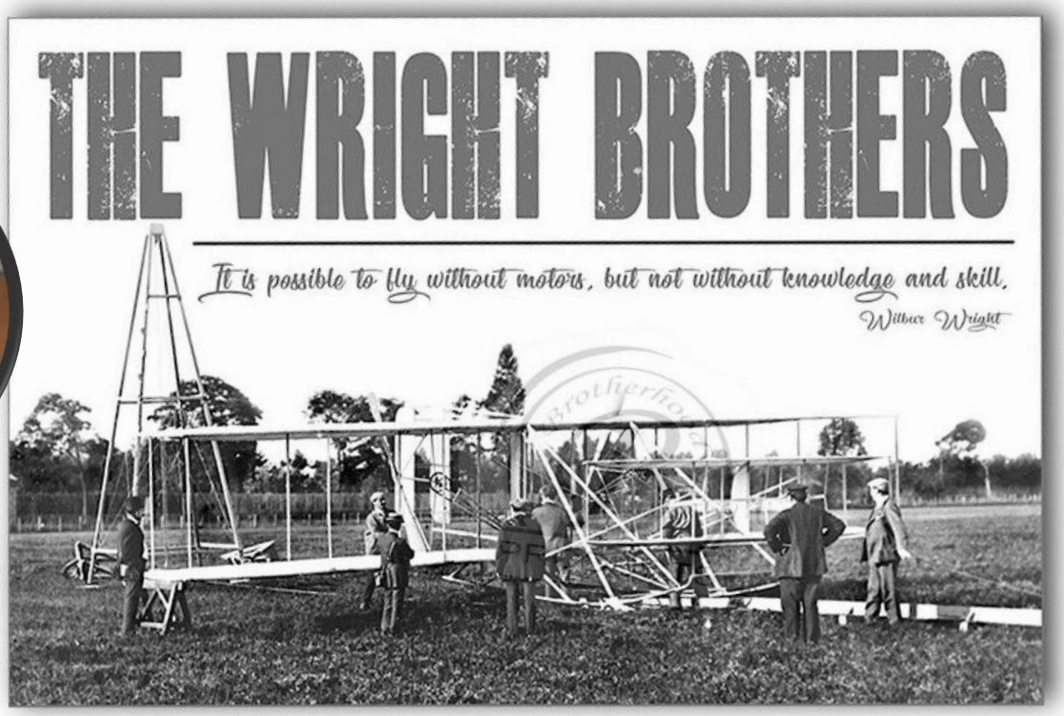
201 TOURIST CENTER DRIVE, PO BOX 368, HAVELOCK, NC 28532

AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

WWW.ECAVIATIONHERITAGE.COM

2023 Summer Elementary School Engineering Camp



12th Annual 2023 Family Fly-In and STEM Night

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

Barry & Arlene Fetzer

Tom & Susan Braaten

Havelock
Tourist & Event Center

Thank You to our Donors!

Minges Bottling Group, Inc.

Food Lion

Black's Tire & Auto Service

AMC Theatres

Mac Daddy's

Chick-fil-A

Moore's Olde Tyme Barbeque Chicken & Seafood

Tryon Palace

Thank you to all the STEM Presenters!

- Cherry Point EOD
- USMC MAG-14 "Flight Gear"
- USMC 2nd MAW
- Greg Sabin "Flight Simulator"
- FRC-East Engineering "Robots"
- Havelock Police Department
- Col Jimmie Green "Ejection Seats"
- MGySgt Richard Hazlett "Pedro"
- Craven Community College
- Havelock Fire & Rescue "Jaws of Life"
- Coastal Pines Girl Scouts
- Civil Air Patrol "Flight Simulator"
- SSgt Skylar Miller, USMC, Meteorologist
- Sgt Rebecca Hopper, Craven Co Sheriff's Dept Canine Unit
- Gary Shelton, Magician
- Havelock High FFA "Animals"
- Aurora Fossil Museum "Fossil Dig"
- Adam Persky "Parachute Drag"

Norman Fetzer: Navy Blue

By Barry Fetzer, ECAHF Historian

Summer 2023 ECAHF Newsletter

This is the second in a three-column series about my Uncle Norman Fetzer (Aug 1920-Dec 2004), my dad's elder brother, who was a Navy pilot during WWII.

In the first of this series of columns, I highlighted Norman's possible reasons for his interests in flying and enlistment in the Navy. A 1943 US Navy press release told the story of his enlistment and training as a naval aviation cadet: "*Norman Fetzer was commissioned an ensign in the Naval Reserve following completion of prescribed fight training at the U.S. Naval Aviation Training Center, Pensacola, Florida. Prior to entering the Naval flight training program, Ensign Fetzer attended Kent State University and was a member of the varsity football and boxing teams there. This past April (1942) he began preparatory training at the US Navy Reserve Aviation Base, New Orleans and, successfully completing the training in New Orleans, reported to the "Navy in the Air" for basic and advanced flight training. Having been designated a naval aviator, Fetzer will report to one of the Navy's operational units.*"

But getting there wasn't easy, like anything worth achieving. According to author Sheila Eldred writing for History.com, "WWII Naval [Aviation] Cadets Trained like pro athletes." Eldred continued, "They woke at 5 a.m., ate 5,000 calories a day, ran through chin-deep rivers, strapped sandbags to their backs and marched up and down steps. They even learned how to handle venomous snakes.

Naval aviation cadets in exercise formation, circa 1942.
Photo courtesy of Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC- Chapel Hill

They weren't training for the latest obstacle course race or reality show. These were the thousands of men who enrolled in the Naval Aviation Cadet Training Program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Among them were two future presidents: George H.W. Bush, who enlisted the day after he turned 18 in 1942 and went on to become a pilot and Navy lieutenant and Gerald Ford, who served as a coach of swimming and other sports.

One of five such ground-training schools in the country, the cadets spent about six hours a day for three months in intense exercise. 'Everyone had to be in supreme physical condition,' says Anne R. Keene, author of *The Cloudbuster Nine: The Untold Story of Ted Williams and the Baseball Team that Helped Win World War II*.

Some of the cadets were athletic prodigies who lettered in multiple sports, she adds. 'On top of that, they had to practice military drill, marksmanship, avionics and other academic classes; as well as keep their individual quarters neat and tidy,' says WWII historian Donald W. Rominger, Jr..

Indeed, it wasn't only the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill that had been transformed to host the nation's newest Navy Pre-Flight school, with dorms serving as barracks and new additions such as a canteen, a new pool, a gymnasium and an obstacle course. The chemistry department ramped up with extra war funding, and courses in Russian and Japanese were added to the language department.

The cadets' coursework included Morse code, navigation, meteorology, seamanship, physics, gunnery and psychology (if taken captive, they would need psychological skills), in addition to 'the ability to kill a man twelve different ways with his bare hands.'

But the focus on the physical was necessary, Naval leaders thought, to match the opposition. 'The need for a physical program is very evident,' T.J. Hamilton, Lieutenant Commander, USN, division of Aviation Training, wrote in a 20-page physical training program proposal. 'Our pilots to be inducted into the Naval service in general come from a soft, luxurious, loose-thinking, lazy, peace-time life in our homes and schools, and must be prepared physically and mentally to meet and defeat pilots and personnel of our enemies who have been thoroughly trained in a purposeful and wartime physical and mental system for years; in fact, from childhood.'

The proposed daily schedule consisted of early morning calisthenics or road work, followed by breakfast and a rotation between physical drills, military drills and academics. Afternoons were devoted to mandatory sports practice before supper and study. 'It was alternatively incredibly challenging, dangerous and wearisome,' Rominger says. 'However, these were young, healthy and robust young men, and they were more than able to snap back. Plus, their officers knew their limitations and how to govern the pace of their training.'

Some of the more physically grueling elements included overnight survival hikes; one such 14-mile outing led to the death of the mascot, a dog named Ensign Brown. The idea was to train cadets to survive crashes in jungles or islands.

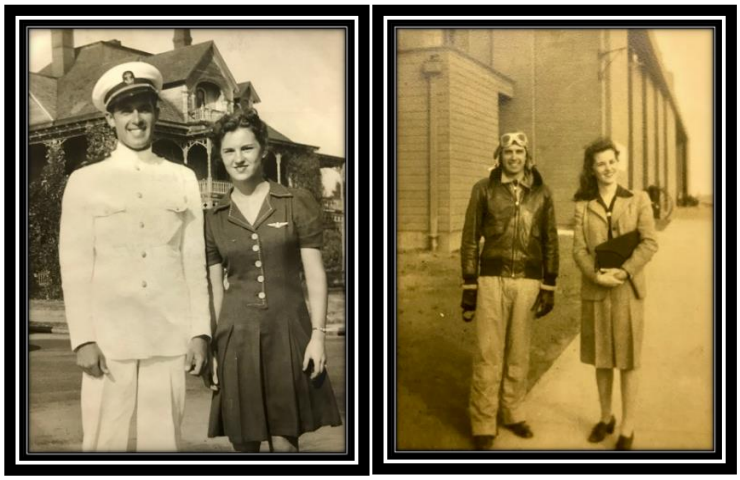
They were dropped in unknown locations in groups or pairs and forced to find their way out, using everything they'd learned about survival: what sorts of berries they could safely eat, how to get water from plants, how to navigate with the sun and stars, which snakes were venomous, how to create a fish hook and line.

Even sports weren't played as usual during peacetime. 'They didn't call fouls,' Keene says. 'It was the hardest fighting way of sports imaginable. The theory was, the enemy is going to kill you in the worst way possible, so whether it's basketball or soccer, it's all out, and you had to fight your way through it. If you were elbowed or knocked down, you just got back up.'

Besides traditional sports (which included a baseball team featuring some of the best players of the day, including Ted Williams), there were physical challenges such as an aero-wheel, a giant wheel sometimes used in performing arts circuses that cadets strapped their feet into and rolled in to improve balance, coordination and core strength."

The aero-wheel promoted balance and core strength.
Photo courtesy of Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC- Chapel Hill

Norman successfully completed the Naval aviation cadet program and went on to flight training at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola. Norman did not want to leave his new bride, Cecelia (pictured with him below at NAS Pensacola), behind as so many of his fellow naval officers would do during WWII, sometimes for several years. So, rather than being assigned to "one of the Navy's operational units" as the words from the above US Navy press release predicted, he applied for, and was accepted to, being "plowed back" as a flight instructor at NAS Pensacola after he earned his "Wings of Gold".



Norman and Cecelia posing in Pensacola, Florida after his winging (note Cecelia wearing Norman's newly-earned wings) and in front of the NAS Pensacola main hanger following a training flight, circa 1942-3. Fetzer Family photos.

In Norman's log books (that I donated to the Naval Aviation Museum aboard NAS Pensacola), he logged time in several different aircraft as a student and instructor as well as in the Link Trainer. Unfortunately, I did not make copies of the log books before donating them. Consequently, the detailed information on the aircraft he flew is limited to the photographs I have of him pictured in various aircraft.

Postcard photo courtesy of Ebay. Photo circa 1940

I have to assume, without access to his log books, that Norman flew the NP-1, pictured neatly lined-up on the NAS Pensacola flight line above.

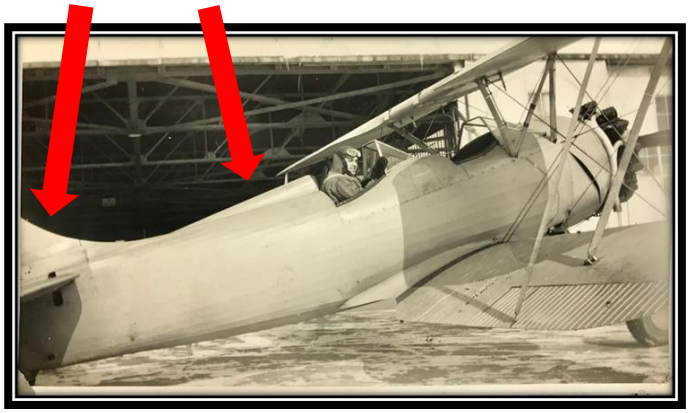
From Wikipedia: "On July 10, 1940 the Spartan Aircraft Company received an order from the United States Navy for 201 aircraft for use as a biplane primary trainer. It was a conventional biplane with two-seats in tandem open cockpits. Designated by the company as the NS-1 it was given the military designation NP-1. The NP-1 was powered by a 220 hp (164 kW) Lycoming R-680-8 radial engine."

Like the N3N "*Yellow Peril*", the NP-1 was also painted "peril yellow" and, perhaps, was intended to add industrial backbone and auxiliary production for the Navy-built N3N *Yellow Peril* as well as a means to replace the crashed N3N aircraft that had served, and would continue to, serve as the Navy's primary training aircraft.

(L) NP-1's in formation and (R) the cover an NP-1 operator's manual, circa 1940. Photos courtesy Wikimedia.

While we can surmise Norman flew the NP-1 because of the timing of his training and this aircraft being in the Navy aviation training inventory, he never mentioned flying it. But he did mention flying the WACO and the N3N *Yellow Peril*. The below photo confirms that, even without his log books, he did fly the WACO.

The NP-1, N3N, and Waco biplane training aircraft were all very similar in appearance. Note the curved entry of the empennage into the fuselage of the below aircraft and the curved aerodynamic "headrest" design on the top of the fuselage behind and slightly above Norman's shoulders. This aircraft, photographed with Norman in the aft cockpit, is likely a WACO UPF-7, an aircraft used in a university civilian pilot training program established prior to WWII and mentioned further below in this column.



Norman in cockpit of what is likely a WACO UPF-7. It was probably painted "peril yellow". Fetzer Family Photo.

An N3N *Yellow Peril* training aircraft assigned to VN-2D8 (Training Squadron 2 Eighth Naval District) pictured at Corry Field near NAS Pensacola, Florida, in 1938. I wish we had a photo of Norman in the cockpit of a *Yellow Peril*, but none exist of which we know. Note that both the WACO and the N3N in the above photos are missing the "Townend Ring", a narrow-chord cowling fitted around the cylinders of an aircraft's radial engine to reduce drag and improve cooling. According to Wikipedia, "'The Townend Ring' was the invention of Dr. Hubert Townend of the British National Physical Laboratory in 1929. It caused a reduction in the drag of radial engines and was widely used in high-speed aircraft designs of 1930–1935." Photo courtesy of the US Navy.

1939 WACO YPT-14A, with the Townend Ring installed, developed as a WWII trainer, which later became the civilian UPF-7. Photo courtesy the National WACO Club.

According to https://barrierislandaviation.com/authentic-vintage-waco-biplanes, "In the late 1930's prior to the US involvement in WWII, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized that compared to some European countries, the US had a lack of trained airplane pilots and instructors. In an effort to provide the country with an adequate pool of potential military pilots for the increasing threat looming in Europe, Roosevelt unveiled what would become the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) on December 27, 1938. The Plan provided funding to participating colleges, universities and flight schools, for a 72-hour ground school course, followed by 35-50 hours of flight training to 20,000 students a year. Just as the name indicates, the CPTP was a civilian program funded by the government as an integral part of our national defense. It increased the US ability to fight an air war by training a large number of civilians to be pilots able to transition quickly into the military. The real value of the program was realized and ramped up after the Nazi invasion of Poland in September of 1939.

The federal Civil Aeronautics Authority required any CPTP participating flight school to own at least one aircraft for every ten students enrolled. Seeing that the country had as much of an aircraft shortage as there was a pilot shortage the Waco Aircraft Company devoted more than 80% of its production to the UPF-7 a tandem seat biplane trainer for the CPTP efforts.

Once the US joined the war following Pearl Harbor, the CPTP program became the War Training Service (WTS). Participating students still attended college courses and took private flight training, but were required to sign agreements to enter military service after graduation. By the time the CPTP/WTS was phased out in the summer of 1944, more than 435,000 people, including thousands of women and African-Americans, had been taught to fly. Notable legends trained under the CPTP include:

Astronaut/Senator John Glenn, top Navy ace Alexander Vraciu, WWII triple ace Bud Anderson, Douglas test pilot Robert Rahn, top WWII ace Major Richard Bong, former Senator George McGovern, WASP Dora Dougherty, and Tuskegee airman Major Robert W. Deiz."

While we have a photo of Norman in a WACO (and without his flight logbooks to confirm it), it was probably the N3N *Yellow Peril* in which Norman got most of his flight time as a student naval aviator. From Navy.mil: "What was common to most all N3Ns, regardless of version, was the color, which prompted the nickname *Yellow Peril*. Although it was oftentimes applied to all primary trainers with that particular hue (including the NP-1), the nickname was most associated with the N3N."

And from Wikipedia: "The Naval Aircraft Factory (NAF) N3N was an American tandem-seat, open cockpit, primary training biplane aircraft built in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the 1930s and early 1940s.

The NAF built 997 N3N aircraft beginning in 1935. Production ended in 1942, but the type remained in use through the rest of World War II. The N3N was the last biplane in US military service.

The N3N was also unique in that it was an aircraft designed and manufactured by an aviation firm wholly owned and operated by the US government (the Navy, in this case) as opposed to private industry. For this purpose, the US Navy bought the rights and the tooling for the Wright R-760 series engine and produced their own engines.

The N3N, sometimes known as the *Yellow Bird* for its distinctive, high-visibility paint scheme, or less kindly, *Yellow Peril* for the jeopardy in which student aviators often found themselves, showed itself to be rugged, reliable, and generally forgiving to student pilots."

In addition to the WACO and N3N *Yellow Peril*, I remember Norman's flight log books also included entries for time in the Douglas SBD-2 *Dauntless*, the SNJ *Texan* (described further below in this column), as well as the Link Trainer while assigned to NAS Pensacola. The Link was an early flight simulator that allowed pilots to develop the rudimentary skills needed for instrument flight while safely "bolted to the ground".

Link trainer similar to the one Norman logged time in during his training. Photo courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

What was it like for Norman to fly a Link Trainer (or "Blue Box" as it was affectionately called)? While I never asked him, I think the description written by Thomas Van Hare, entitled The Link Trainer published on April 14, 2013 on the website HistoricWings.com: A Magazine for Aviators, Pilots and Adventurers is a good description for those of us who never had the experience. "When he entered the Link Trainer room, he saw that there were ten of the machines neatly lined up to either side, a walkway separating the two rows.

Like all new pilots, he was assigned to undergo intensive instrument training in the Link ANT-18, which consisted of a small, airplane shaped wooden simulator with an enclosed cockpit that, when the hood was down, put the pilot alone inside with the flight instruments. His task was to fly around (if only "virtually") while the trainer rocked left and right, nose up or down, turning and twisting to reflect his movements on the controls. Behind each Link Trainer, there was a desk manned by an instructor who gave instructions through an intercom to the pilot through his headsets. A plotting table with a pen marked on a map the courses flown.

Somehow, as the new pilot was soon to learn, the line never seemed to be where you wanted it to be — or at least just where you thought it was supposed to be.

The idea of the Link Trainer was that you could learn to fly on instruments in the Link first and then, when you had to do it for real, you'd be skilled enough to succeed — and survive. The place to make mistakes was in the Link rather than in a real airplane where your first mistake would likely be your last. When you did screw it up in the Link though, the machine would start to spin around and around, simulating a stall and spin in a real airplane.

Looking across the two rows of Link Trainers, he was surprised to see that all of them were spinning. Just then, the top of one of the Links popped open and the pilot clambered over the side and leapt to the floor. My God, he thought, that one bailed out! What am I in for? He swallowed hard — he was next…."

In addition to the WACO, N3N *Yellow Peril* and Link Trainers that Norman got time in, we also know from photographic evidence that he flew the SNJ or T-6 "*Texan*" during his time assigned to NAS Pensacola.

According to the US Navy Historical Division, "The SNJ *Texan*, with over 17,000 examples delivered to the US military and numerous foreign nations, was the most widely used trainer ever. The earliest version was an open cockpit monoplane with fixed landing gear and a fabric covered fuselage, but with the 1938 introduction of the SNJ-1, the *Texan* had evolved into an all-metal aircraft with retractable landing gear.

During the World War II era, the SNJ served the purpose of transitioning pilots from biplanes to monoplanes, and they were also employed as gunnery and instrument trainers. In addition, many a carrier pilot logged his first traps aboard a training carrier in a *Texan*. The SNJ served the purpose of transitioning pilots from biplanes to monoplanes and they were also employed as gunnery and instrument trainers."

I do not know whether Norman spent his instructor time flying the advanced flight training SNJ and Dauntless or, alternatively, in the basic flight training NP-1 or N3N *Yellow Peril*. But most of the photos we have of him posing in aircraft are in the SNJ and the SB-2 Dauntless, so perhaps he served as an advanced flight instructor.

Circa 1944. Norman (L) with a North American Aviation SNJ (note the spinning prop as he poses on the wing) and (R) in the cockpit of a Douglas SB-2 *Dauntless*. Note the distinctive dive brakes on the left wing's trailing edge. Fetzer Family photos.

After completing his advanced training in the SNJ and receiving his coveted "Wings of Gold", Norman was "plowed back" or sent back into additional training to become a flight instructor, one of thousands of instructors needed to train the tens of thousands of naval aviators necessary for the war effort. According to Wikipedia, "In 1942 alone the [Navy aviation training] program graduated 10,869 aviators, almost twice as many as had completed the program in the previous 8 years. In 1943 there were 20,842 graduates; in 1944, 21,067; and in 1945 there were 8,880. Thus, in the period 1942 to 1945, the US Navy produced 61,658 pilots – more than 2.5 times the number of pilots as the Imperial Japanese Navy."

Norman was a part of this amazing Navy "student production line"…at least for a while. I don't know exactly when Norman's Navy flying career came to an end, but end it did. While he never spoke of it, there was the "hushed" family story of his crash landing of a Navy aircraft in a field during an unauthorized "low level" (buzzing or flat-hatting) flight over his Bedford home town and over the family farm near Bedford, Ohio.

Norman allegedly ran out of fuel, dead sticking the plane onto one of the Fetzer Farm's fields. While, as the story goes, he damaged the aircraft's propeller, engine, and undercarriage, he obviously walked away from the crash, never to fly again. Amongst the few details we heard of the incident include that the unidentified aircraft (it was most likely an SNJ *Texan*) in which he crash-landed had its wings removed, was craned onto a flatbed trailer, and was unceremoniously hauled back to Pensacola, ignobly getting there via highway vice skyway.

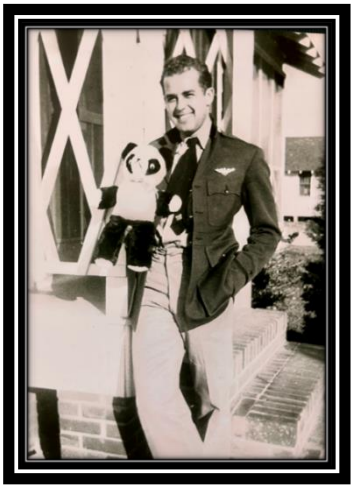
This mishap was likely the reason for Norman's assignment to an ACORN unit for the remainder of his wartime and post-war service. His duty preference, as recounted in the first column in this series, was to remain in Pensacola with his bride and serve as an instructor pilot. But that preference became moot when he crash-landed his aircraft during what was probably an unauthorized flight home and, of

course, the “minor” matter of running out of fuel. So, he packed his seabag and overseas Norman went, spending an unplanned and unhoped-for year or more away from Cecilia.

The below photograph of Norman, with what could be interpreted as a somewhat sheepish grin on his face, was taken at the Fetzer Family farmhouse where he supposedly crash-landed his aircraft. Is it possible he is holding, post-crash, a “sympathy for your crash” or “congratulations for surviving your crash” teddy bear?

Unfortunately, this photo has no markings or explanation as to the reasons for it being taken. Perhaps the absence of an explanation for the photo is a clue in itself. It is embarrassing for a pilot to run out of fuel…one of the biggest embarrassments a pilot can have (if he or she lives), especially an instructor pilot. For pilots, the three most useless things in the world are the runway behind you, the altitude above you, and the air in fuel tanks (in other words, the fuel you don’t have). While pilots may get away with some flat-hatting from time-to-time, no pilot ever gets away with non-combat-caused or non-mechanical failure-caused fuel exhaustion. Norman was lucky to get away with his life. C'est la vie.

I wrote about my brother-in-law’s dad in a previous edition of this newsletter. He was also an instructor pilot (with the US Army Air Forces) during WWII. He crash-landed a T-6 *Texan* in a corn field out of fuel…just like Norman…on his last flight too.



Teddy bears are often given as gifts to adults to signify affection, congratulations, or sympathy. Fetzer Family photo circa 1945.

In the next and final of this three-column series on Norman’s “Navy Blue” experiences, I will review his service with an ACORN unit in occupied Japan.

Board of Directors

MajGen Thomas A. Braaten, USMC (Ret)
Chair

Mary Beth Fennell
Vice-Chair

Raymond E. Dunn, Jr.
Partner, Dunn, Pittman, Skinner & Cushman, PLLC

William L. Lewis
Havelock Mayor

Brenda K. Wilson
Havelock Commissioner

Christopher McGee
Havelock City Manager

Col Jimmie Green, USMC (Ret)
Marine Corps Pilot

Rhonda Murray
MCAS Cherry Point
(Ex-Officio)

Adam Persky
Business Representative

Col John Langdon, USMC (Ret)
At-Large Seat

LtCol Barry Fetzer, USMC (Ret)
Historian

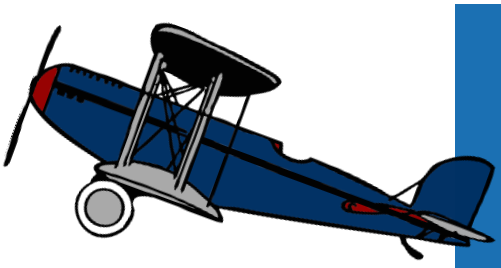
Timothy Clark
At-Large Seat

Mark Meno
Fleet Readiness Center East
(Ex-Officio)

MGySgt Richard Hazlett, USMC (Ret)
Aviation Curator

Dr. Bill Fortney
NC State University

Guy Nelson
Retired US Marine/Navy Seat



SAVE the DATE

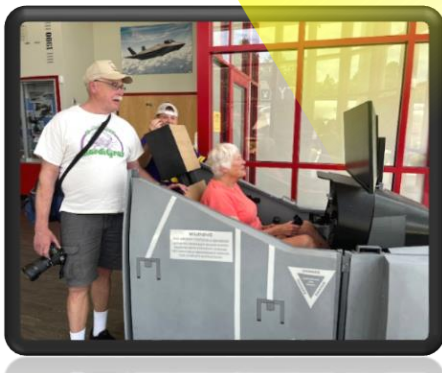
Members & Sponsors Night

October 17, 2023

2024 Gala

February 23, 2024

Spotlight an Exhibit



Our newest exhibit is the AV-8 "Harrier" Simulator. The simulator was constructed by Greg Sabin for use during summer camp and other events. It was decided to keep the sim in the building for guests to experience. Young and old enjoy the thrill of flying.

The exhibits are open Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm and Saturday from 10 am until 5 pm. Stop by soon and test your piloting skills.

Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, by joining forces as members of ECHAF, we will help honor Marines' vital mission in advancing military aviation, a mission they've accomplished since 1942 when MCAS Cherry Point was commissioned as a USMC airfield. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

Annual Membership

- Co-Pilot (Student) $25.00
- Pilot (Single) $35.00
- Squadron (Family Membership) $50.00
- Wing (Business/Group Membership) $250.00

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/State:_____Zip:_____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Payment Method: ____Cash ____Check ____ Credit Card

Please call with credit card payment.

Visa or MasterCard Only

252-444-4348

EASTERN CAROLINA AVIATION HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Havelock Tourist & Event Center

201 Tourist Center Drive

PO Box 368

Havelock, NC 28532

Visit us online:

https://ecaviationheritage.com/

Email us at:

events@havelocknc.us