

A Lifetime Of Experiences



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World War II

NAS, Quillayute:

History

Prior to 1941, the Army had purchased major areas of land on the tip of Cape Flattery (the most northwestern point in the United States), and the Quillayute Prairie, about 30 miles to the south. Plans were for a major Coast Artillery Installation on the Cape, and sizable support activities at the Quillayute area. In 1941, these plans were abandoned and the Quillayute property turned over to the Navy.

The Navy planned a major Naval Air Station there, having in mind two important advantages. One, the better use of the off shore bombing and gunner areas, and two, for the protection of that shore area.

At Quillayute, the Army had built several buildings, a hospital facility, an operating building, and others. They wanted a deep well for an adequate water supply and contracted a local well driller. Upon consultation, the well driller said that the Army's location was unacceptable. The underground rock strata precluded any major underground water streams. A location, about a half mile distance, and on the other side of the rock stratas, would be productive. The Army contracted with him to drill a well, and provided six inch casing, paying on a per foot basis. The driller drilled down to six hundred feet and had a dry hole. He had to cart water for the hole drilling. At six hundred feet, the Army gave up.

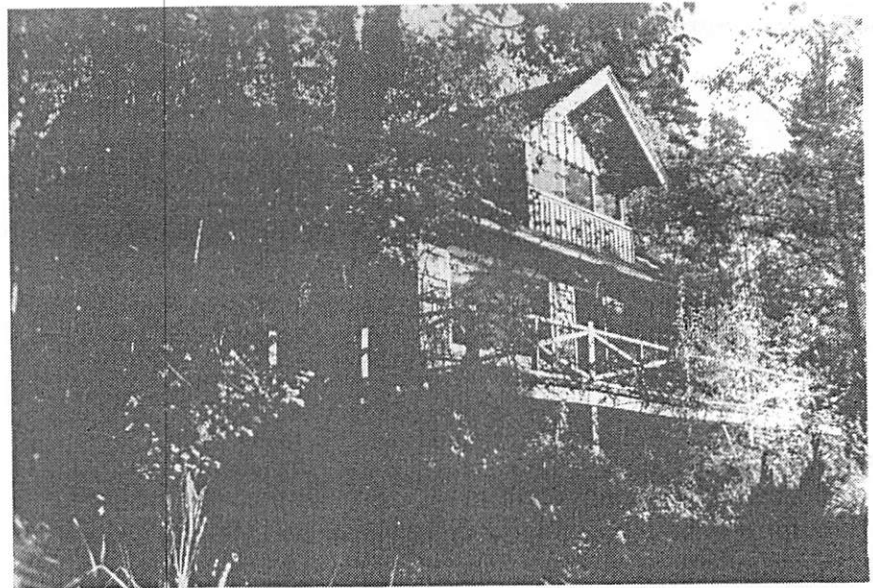
In 1941, the Navy contracted with a major nationally recognized Contractor to build the Air Station and facilities. Major equipment was moved in, and construction of buildings and runways were started. One of the major problems was the rain. In ten years (1931-1941), the average rainfall was 132 inches. Rainfall of five inches in eight hours was experienced. There were days when over six inches of rain fell in a twenty-four hour period. One consolation was that the area soil was predominantly decayed (fern brake) and extremely porous. Two hours after a heavy rain, you could kick up dust. A second problem was transportation into the area. There was a one track railroad from Port Angeles, and a single lane gravel road paralleling the railroad. Neither one was built for heavy travel or heavy loads.

With the installation of plans, the Navy assigned an "Officer In Charge" of the Contract. He moved out there, and had a small office building. Though he was a civil engineer, this Contract was beyond his experience, and he was continually at

odds with the Contractor. The Contractor objected to his interference.

With the termination of the Seaplane Servicing Barge Contract, Captain Sprague called me in and questioned me with respect to my experience with contracts and contractors. I referred him to my experience with the Bellingham Project. He then asked me if I'd take over as Engineer In Charge of the Quillayute Deal. We discussed the problem, and my comments were mainly the job was one of cooperation, and getting the job done. Shortly thereafter, I got orders from the Naval Air Bases to Quillayute as Officer In Charge.

I would have liked to have been able to fly out there, but Port Angeles Coast Guard Station was the nearest possible landing facility, so that was out. A car was assigned to me, and any travel expenses. I drove out, a matter of about 150 miles, including a two hour ferry ride across the Puget Sound. There were no living facilities around. I established contact with the Contractor's Resident Engineer. He was an excellent engineer, had been with the company a number of years, and had handled several major contracts. At first, he was rather cold, but we quickly developed a good relationship. We went over the Station plans, scheduling, and of operational progress. They seemed in order and well planned. Immediately I made it clear that I was there to help and there would be no hindrance. Immediately progress on the Station picked up. Shortly, they were ahead of the planned and accepted schedule.



Lake Crescent Home

In June, 1943, Ruth and the family drove out from Jersey. I had rented a cottage on Lake Washington, across from the Naval Air Station. In the fall, the youngsters started school. Things went well during my activities at Bellingham. With the Quillayute development, I hoped to get something closer by. With inquiries in Port Angeles, I learned of an available summer home on Lake Crescent. It was owned by the local Ford dealer, Mr. Verne Samuelson. Arrangement was made for renting it. It was isolated, heating was by a fireplace, there was a small 32 colt electrical plant, and a satisfactory water supply, sewerage was drained into the lake. In August we moved out there. It was about fifty miles to the Station. I had a Navy car, so mileage didn't matter. In September, the youngsters started school, the third school they'd been in a year. The cottage sat between the lake and the highway, about fifty yards, downhill from the highway. When the kids left for school, Ruth saw no one during the day as road traffic was minimal.

One of my personal problems was the matter of getting in enough flying time. First, to maintain my flight pay, and in my wanting to keep my hand in flying a variety of equipment. With the Bellingham operation, I could arrange for weekend flying. With Quillayute, it was a different story. One of my first and better acquaintances (outside my working associates) was with "Chuck" McNary, Photographic Officer of NAS, Seattle. We became close friends and I learned that one of his problems was a heavy load of aerial photography. All Naval Facilities were supposed to be photographed every six months. Practically all of this was oblique pictures. He had a Chief that was very adept in aerial photography, but the major problem was getting an aircraft and pilot. Weather was a major concern. However, the schedule could be worked in anytime of the week. It was arranged that we'd work weekends, and he'd arrange area coverage to conserve aircraft flight time. It worked out well. I arranged with Operations to have an SNJ assigned to photography for two days practically every weekend.

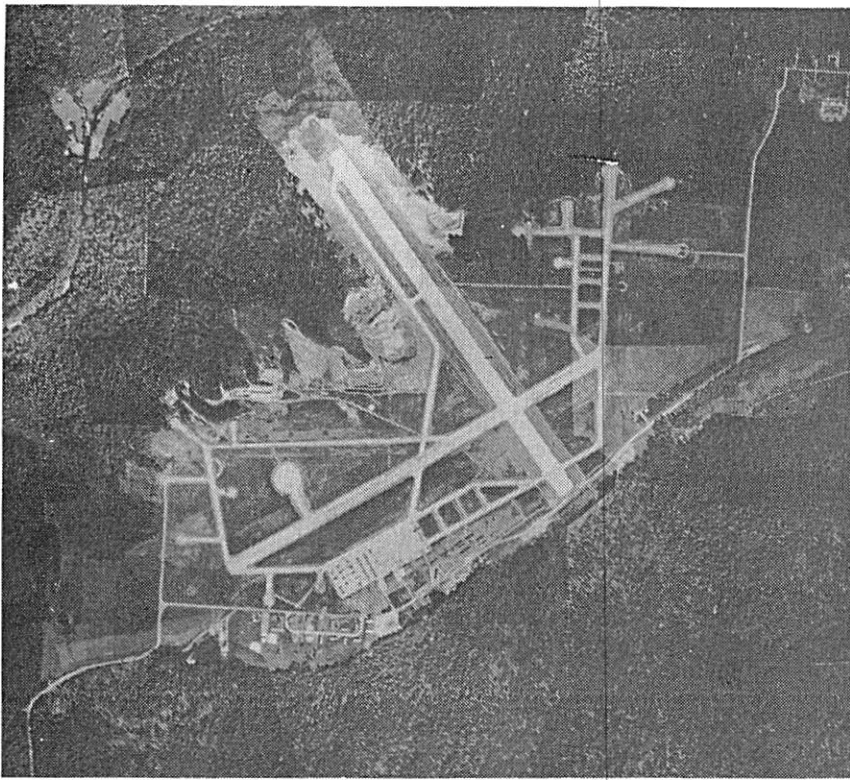
Most of the operations were routine, 800 to 1000 feet and just flying as the Chief directed. However, two incidents stand out. Practically all of our flying was with the hatch open. I always had the usual shoulder belt harness. The Chief had a special harness that permitted him movement, and still provided the required safety.

In this instance, we were photographing a couple of facilities in the neighborhood of Everett Washington. We were about eight hundred feet and going along well. Suddenly, there were a couple of serious "bangs." I looked back, there was a

cloud of feathers and then I noticed some new vibration in the plane. The Chief called on the intercom, "What was that?" I said, "I think we struck a duck or two." We headed back to Sand Point. The plane handled normally, excepted for the increased vibration. Upon landing, and inspecting the plane, one propeller blade was all red, probably from blood. On the right wing, outboard of the landing gear, there was a dent in the entering edge of the wing, similar to an inverted derby hat. On the vertical fin, there was blood and some feathers. In checking, the prop had a slight bend. However, it was my first and only experience of striking birds in flight.

The other occurred a little later. I was still with the Bellingham Project. I got a call from "Chuck" saying they had a special request from the VR-Transport Squadron. They were getting new R5D's (DC6's), and they were coming up from California. They wanted pictures of the planes flying in the vicinity of Mount Rainier. It would be a high altitude flight, and we'd not have oxygen. He wanted someone he could trust to evaluate the situation, and abort the flight should the lack of oxygen be a problem. The Station would not make a special oxygen installation for just this one case. On the specified day, the Chief and I took out a practically new "J" on the way to Mount Rainier. We climbed to about 15,000 feet. Mount Rainier is 14,832 feet. Shortly the flight of R5D's appeared, and we were in radio contact with them. The weather was clear, perfect for the pictures. We got several, and when ready to head home, the Chief came on the intercom, "You're not going back home straight and level, are you?" I said, "Probably not." We were then about 14,000 feet, and gradually losing altitude. I asked him if he had his camera secured and harnessed up tight, "Okay."

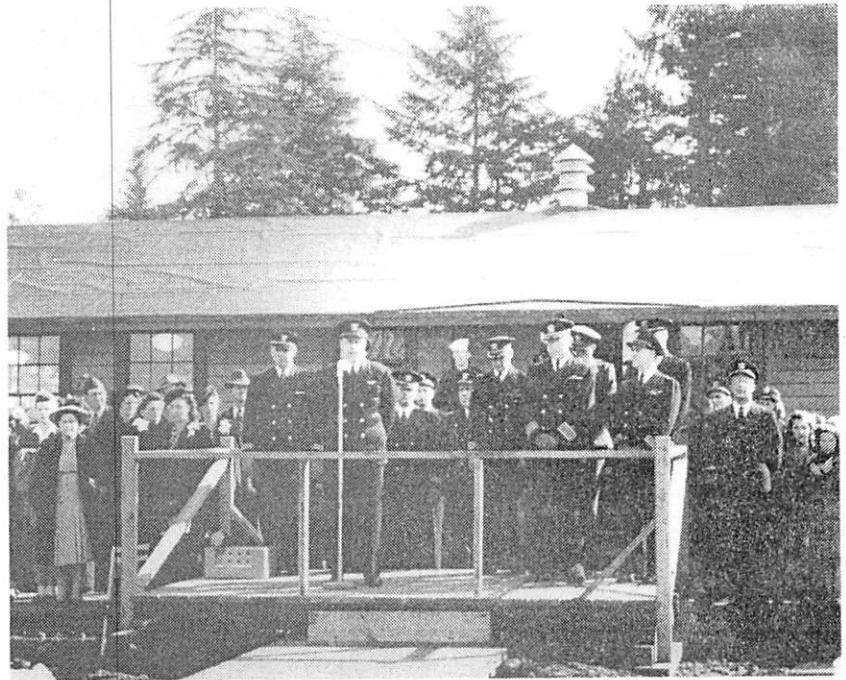
I had intended to do an "Immelman Turn" a half loop, with a roll out on top. Apparently I didn't gather enough speed before standing the half loop, and just about the time we hit the top, the "J" stalled out. We were inverted, and the "J" went to an inverted spin. The "J's" are not a good aerobatics airplane. I recognized the situation immediately, and applied reversed controls for recovery. There was no reaction toward recovery. We were going down probably 1,000 feet a minute. I was really concerned. I was counting and had decided for bail out at about 6,000 feet. The terrain here was about 2,500 feet. When I was down to about 5 in my count, the "J" began to recover, and quickly we came out okay. We were at about 5,000 feet. I never let on to the Chief the true circumstances, and he never thereafter asked me, "You're not going home straight and level, are you?"



NAS Quillayute, Aerial Photo

Back to Quillayute, progress was ahead of schedule. The Operations Engineer and I got along well, and he let his bosses know. Indirectly, I heard of this from "home base." Planning ahead, we scheduled the commissioning of the Station for March, 1945. This required a lot of planning and processing for required equipment, the processing of personnel, assignment of aircraft, and setting a schedule for operations. At the recommendation of Captain Sprague, I was ordered as the initial Commanding Officer (CO). I picked a cadre of my initial staff, Ben Johnson as my Executive Officer, Joe Jones as Personnel Officer, Joe White as Supply Officer, Medical ordered a Dr. (Commander) Baumgartner, and others. At this point, most of my effort was at Sand Point.

Commissioning was on schedule. It was quite an affair. We had a blimp from Tillamook, a Coast Guard Air Sea Rescue team, quite a cadre of visiting planes and people. Locally I'd invited people from Forks and the adjacent area, and of course, the exercises were open to the public. The local Quillayute Indians were there. Commander Jack Bergen, Executive Officer of the Air Bases, read the Commissioning Orders, I read my orders, and the flag was raised with honors for the commissioning ceremonies. It was a glorious day for me.



NAS Quillayute Commissioning

There was still a lot of work to be done to complete the construction of the Station. Also a lot of work in equipping the Station facilities. I had a wonderful staff, and they all worked diligently in getting operations going.

One of the problems for the enlisted personnel was the matter of liberty. Here we were 150 miles from Seattle, about 65 miles from Port Angeles, and nothing in the way of liberty facilities locally. Helpful in this, was our Chaplain Father O'Brien. He was a Catholic Priest, but first a Navy Chaplain. All men were "his boys." He was out playing ball with them. Regardless of one's religious beliefs, all were alike. Ensign Millsap was the Recreational Officer. He did a good job in providing athletic activities for the men aboard. We arranged a "Liberty bus" (sometimes two) that left every Friday afternoon, after hours for the Liberty Party in Seattle, etc. Ben Johnson was a marvelous Executive Officer. In civilian life, he'd been the State Attorney for North Dakota, and every officer and all personnel performed well. Space does not permit mentioning all the unusual experiences we had, good, bad, indifferent.

Operations:

It was about a month after commissioning, before we had an Air Group aboard. They flew in with their planes, F6F's and TMB's. The Skipper was Lieutenant Bill Woolen. He was USN, while all others were USNR's. Operations were

difficult. They brought their own Carrier Aircraft Service Utility (CASU). They were tolerant of the starting conditions. Early in their experience aboard the Station, the local American Legion in Forks asked for a meeting at the Station. The auditorium was finished, but there was no heat. We held the meeting, and the Legion welcomed me as the Station CO and Lieutenant Woolen representing the "Fleet." In the course of the evening, they presented two little bear cubs, one to me as the Station Commander, and a second one to Bill Woolen. They were named "Tuffey" and "Taffey". The squadron's cub was left in a vacant room in BOQ. Somehow the next morning he was missing. In no way could he have gotten out the window.



NAS Quillayute "Taffey" My Bear

I kept little Taffey, he had to be bottle fed. He became about 75% housebroken. He had the run of the Administration Building. I'd take him to our quarters (the former Army Hospital facility, with fourteen rooms). He roamed the place, and one of his favorite experiences was to climb up the sideboard and eat Ruth's candles. One of the yeoman had the extra curricular job of tending the "Old Man's Cub." He wasn't very happy with the job. The cub grew, and I had Public Works make a yard for him and a "bear house." He loved the outdoors, and I was afraid he'd climb the six foot wire fence. One of his favorite items was bottled Coke. We'd punch a hole in the bottle top and pass it in to him. He'd grab it, sit up on his hind-legs, and drink the Coke. He'd learned that shaking the bottle, increased the flow of Coke. On a couple of trips into Seattle, I took him with me. I'd go down the street, with little "Taffey" on a leash, and the public would stare and holler, "a cub, a cub."

When he was about half grown, apparently either accidentally, on purpose, or otherwise, the "bear house" got separated from the wire pen, and he got out. One morning a couple of the GI's looked out their barracks window and saw a bear cub up an evergreen tree. They went out and clubbed the cub out of the tree, but when they got it down, they saw the collar and recognized the "Old Man's Cub." Little Taffey was so badly injured, we had to put him to sleep. It was just as well, as he was getting of a size too big to be around. If let loose, I'm sure he would have been a problem. So ended my Bear Story.

One of the interesting flying experiences I had there occurred in 1945. One night, about 2200, I got a call from Dr. Baumgartner, the head of our Medical Department. He said that they had a serious appendix case, an enlisted man. He said that he had performed many appendix operations, but he didn't feel the facilities at Quillayute were adequate for a case as serious as this. He said to take the man into Seattle by surface transportation would require about six hours, and the first ferry running from Port Ludlow to Edmonds was at 0600. So at best, it would be about 0900 or 1000 before they could get him to the hospital via surface transportation. He asked about flying him in. We had a "Howard" ambulance plane, a single engine plane, with facilities for two stretchers, and a seated attendant, pilot, and a copilot. I called my Operations Officer, and asked him to meet me and Dr. Baumgartner in Operations.

It was about 2230 when we got together. My Operations Officer, Hal Hamson, was a former Alaskan Bush Pilot, and a very capable pilot. The weather at Quillayute was about two miles and 1000 foot ceiling. Port Angeles weather was down, and Seattle was reporting two miles and 1000 feet, with the likelihood of improving conditions. Payne Field at Arlington was reporting 3000 feet and a five mile visibility. A flight would be a solid instrument flight all the way. The route from Quillayute was north to the straits (through a mountain pass about three miles wide). Upon reaching the straits, we'd pick up the west leg of the Port Angeles range, over Port Angeles, and out the east leg to the interception of the westerly leg of the Payne range, around to a southerly leg of Payne, which went directly over NAS, Seattle. The problem was that at Sand Point, the range was about two miles wide. To the west of Seattle were hills, and the same to the east. You had to center on this beam one degree. After talking the prospects of the flight, I asked Hal what he thought. We decided to try it. I decided to take the left seat and do the flying and Hal would keep the check and progress. One problem was that the engine exhaust of the Howard was out the left side of the plane. At night, the exhaust glare made the reading of instruments

difficult. The plane was readied, the patient on a stretcher was loaded, and a Corps man attending. We took off about midnight. At about 300 feet, we went into the "soup." The flight progressed on plan, we hit the ranges perfectly, and at Payne at 2500 feet. We were in and out of the cloud cover. We headed for Sand Point letting down to 1000 feet, then on down. We hit Sand Point directly and with no wind, we made a straight in approach and landed about 0130. Seattle hospital had an ambulance waiting. Later information was that the patient recovered, and regained good health. A worthwhile flight, but it was a relief when it was over.

Visitors:

In spite of its out of the way location, Quillayute had its share of visitors. On one occasion, the Secretary of the Navy, at that time, visited the Station in a tour of facilities in the northwest.

Shortly after the Station was commissioned, I got a call from one of the Aides of Admiral J. J. Ballentine, COM-FLT-AIR, 13th Naval District. This included Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. The Aide said that the Admiral would like to visit the Station and when would be a convenient time? Of course, anytime he wished. A date was set for the morning of that date. That morning, about 0830, I got a call from Operations saying that Admiral Ballentine was in the "traffic pattern." I hurriedly drove to Operations, in time to see his SNJ landing. Upon taxiing to the line, there was Admiral Ballentine. Upon leaving the "J," deplaneing, and after introductions, he said, "These J's are a nice old man's airplane." We had a tour of the Station and review of its mission, etc. In conversation, he inquired about fishing and hunting. The area was one of the choice fishing grounds of the country. He said that he'd like to come out on a fishing trip. So it was set up to his choice.

The Coast Guard's Station at LaPush was the center of the then prevalent Canine Beach Patrol. Coast Guardsmen, with their dogs, patrolled the beach. The enlisted man in charge of this activity was a large, half indian, who knew every inch of the territory. He probably had no more than the second grade formal of education. I had met him, and had inquired of the Station CO of his experience, and his knowledge of fishing spots. I was told he was the best around. I inquired if he could be borrowed for VIP fishing trips, and got an okay.

Again, one of the Admiral's aides called, asking about a fishing trip. It was set up, and this time the Admiral arrived in an SNB Beech in his fishing clothes. I had a fair supply of

fishing gear, and the "guide" brought a supply of gear applicable to the area and water. Introductions were made, and we had a marvelous day. This was the start of many fishing trips. Always the Admiral would inquire if I could get the "Coast Guardsman" for a guide, and always we had him.

On several weekends, we had the Admiral and Mrs. Ballentine as our house guests. They were lovely people. On one trip, I drove them around the area, and we visited the Quillayute Indian Reservation. There was a general store which supplied the Indians needs, and sold some of their crafts. At that time, one of the scarce items for civilians was toilet paper. In this store there was a shelf full of toilet paper. The Admiral inquired of Mr. Ryan, who operated the store, if the T.P. was for sale. He was told, "Yes, how many rolls do you want?" The Admiral inquired, "Three?" and Ryan said, "As many as you want." The Admiral got twelve rolls. I wanted to carry them for him, but he said, "No." As we walked out of the store, there was the Admiral in his blues, with twelve rolls of toilet paper ranked up on his arm. I wish I'd had a camera! This was one of many wonderful experiences we enjoyed.

At a later date, one morning my secretary called me, and said that Admiral Ballentine was on the phone. This was a most unusual instance, normally one of his aides would call. I answered and the Admiral said, "Dobbins, I have a house guest. I can't mention his name over the phone, and I would like to bring him out for a fishing trip." I said, "Most certainly! When do you want to come?" A date was set, and he inquired if I could get the "Coast Guardsman" for a guide. I assured him that we'd have the "best" to guide the party.

On the scheduled day we had things in readiness. It was the spring salmon season and our guide recommended the "Dickey River." We had boats there, bait, and all accessories. About 0830, the "Twin Beech" arrived with Admiral Ballentine, and Admiral Marc Mitcher, of Battle Midway fame. It will be recalled that Admiral Mitcher was of small stature, probably 5 feet, 9 inches tall and probably 140 pounds. A wonderful guy! Introductions were made and in jeeps we proceeded to the Dickey. Again, our Coast Guardsman guide was waiting. Now picture if you will, this guy was probably 6 feet 2 inches tall, weighing probably 220 pounds, and all muscle. Introductions were made around, and when Admiral Mitcher was introduced to the Coast Guardsman, the Coast Guardsman grabbed Mitcher's hand and squeezed it. With every squeeze, Mitcher's face winced, reflecting the pressure of the handshake. At the same time, the Coast Guardsman slapped Mitcher on the back, rather hard slaps, and in time with the hand shakes. He (the

Coast Guardsman) said, "Admiral, have you been out there very much? We want to do what we can for you boys." I thought Admiral Ballentine would die laughing.



Arrival - Admiral J. J. Ballantine

We had a good day of fishing, and the Admirals went home with a nice catch of salmon.

At another time, I got a call from the 13th Naval District Headquarters, saying that they had a VIP who wanted to visit an outlying facility, and they thought of Quillayute. Upon arrival, it was Commander (Dr.) Wassell. The Doctor had been in the Asia area, and escaped just ahead of the Japanese invasion. He was back in this country for rest and recreation. Upon arrival, we had a nice visit and I agreed to take him on a tour of the area. We went into some of the isolated areas. We visited lumber men. We walked some of the dense forested areas, and he had a wonderful time. We had him as a house guest, and thoroughly enjoyed his company. In his remarks, "Commander Dobbins, this area is more rugged than any I've



Admiral Marc Mitcher and Admiral J. J. Ballantine



NAS Quillayute - Dr. Wassall

ever seen in Asia or the Islands." It will be remembered that after the war, a movie was made of the Doctor's life and experiences. His friendship is one I'll always remember and enjoy.

Another one of my unforgettable experiences occurred about a year after the commissioning of the Station. A new Howard DGA (Damn Good Airplane) was assigned to the Station. It was a standard five place configuration, high wing monoplane, with fixed landing gear. These planes had been used extensively at NAS, Atlanta, the Navy's Instrument Training Center. I went into NAS, Seattle to pick it up.

At that time, a newly assigned Chief of Physical Development, was awaiting transportation to Quillayute. I contacted him, and when he and his gear were aboard the Howard I asked him if he wanted to sit up front with me. He said, "No, I'll sit in the back" (which turned out to be fortunate).

One of the Howard's unusual configurations was that in both the pilot's and copilot's seat backs, the parachute was installed. With the usual harness coming out and was integrated with the shoulder seat belt harness.

We got the airplane, and I gave it the usual preflight check. We taxied out at the south end of the north-south runway. With clearance from the Tower, we took off. It was a normal take off, climbing out and at about the end of the field and start of Lake Washington, about fifty feet, the engine quit cold. There wasn't time to make any choices, but to ditch straight ahead!

I called to the Chief, "Tighten your seat belt and when we hit the water, get out FAST!" I slowed the plane up to a near stall and went into the water. The landing gear hit first, and threw the plane into a near vertical position. The impact of hitting the water knocked out the windshield, and the plane began to sink immediately. The impact also threw me forward, and pulled the parachute out of its back of seat position. I found myself partially wrapped in the parachute. I struggled and freed myself from the chute and headed for the only rear door. Fortunately, the Chief had gotten out with the impact of the water. He had loosened his seat belt, and the impact of the water threw him up against the part opened door. He was out shortly after the impact.

By the time I got out of the plane, it was at such a depth, that all was dark. I had no feeling of which way was up. I breathed out a small blast of air, and noticed which way it went and began paddling in that direction. I finally saw a lightened area, and paddled for that. When I broke out, I was breathless, but above water.

The Tower had seen the whole situation and immediately dispatched a crash boat to the scene. Also, one of the people living in a home adjacent to the lake, seeing the incident, immediately launched a boat and got there about the same time as the crash boat. The Chief had a bad cut on his head, but otherwise was okay. The crash boat took both of us to shore, and we were taken to the hospital for checking. I passed my check okay and was given a dry set of clothes.

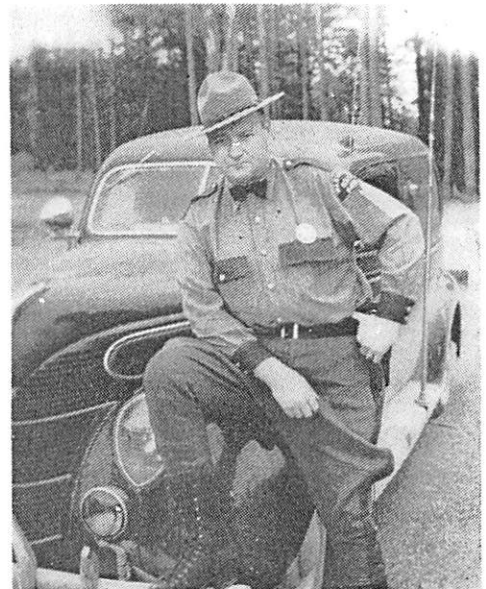
It so happens, that in Atlanta, they had lost several of the Howards with the same apparent condition. In those cases, all planes had burned with the loss of all aboard. The NAS, Seattle Station had a Service Barge, just for cases of accidents on the lake. The next day, they began dragging the area and finally hooked the Howard and lifted it to the surface. At that point, the lake was about 700 feet deep. Upon inspection of the plane, it was discovered, as expected, to be a fuel problem.

The Howard fuel tanks were in the wings and fed fuel to the engine fuel pump by gravity. The fuel lines came down along the fuselage, and near the landing fuselage fitting made about a twelve inch loop up, over, and down, around the fitting. This "hump" caused an air lock in the fuel system. If there had been sufficient time, it could have been sucked out with the wobble pump. As a result of these findings, all Howards were grounded and the fuel system lines relocated so as to eliminate this "air lock" condition. So the incident wasn't for naught.

The next morning, I got a "stagger-wing Beech," also consigned to the Station. After a careful check, it was ready for the trip to Quillayute. I contacted the Chief and asked him if he wanted to ride out with me. He said, "If you order me to, I'll have no option, but if there is another way out, I'd prefer to take it." So I left him for surface transportation. I later learned the Howard trip was his first airplane ride. The trip with the "Beech" was uneventful, just another "experience."

Personal Experiences:

With my arrival in Quillayute, I developed many new acquaintances and new experiences. There was Boyd Rupp, the local State Police, Jack Anderson, one of my hunting pals, and many others. With my arrival in the area, I said that with the exceptional hunting there, I wanted to get an elk, a deer and a bear while I was there. I accomplished this mission. With fishing, there weren't ten days in the whole time we were there that we didn't have fresh fish in the refrigerator. Another one of our experiences was the digging of razor clams at Ruby Beach. Of course, there were the activities aboard the Station.



Boyd Rupp - Forks, Washington



Digging Razor Clams
Ruby Beach, Washington



One Day's Digging - Ruby Beach, Washington

We had movies in the theater most nights. Church services were held regularly. Chaplain O'Brian conducted Mass and Jewish services. For the Protestant services, these were conducted by the Reverend David from Forks. Our daughter played the piano for this service. There were no activities in Forks, except the Antler Hotel and a "house of ill repute." The latter was ruled off limits for all military personnel. The Antler Hotel was a gathering place for loggers, and was a gambling resort. While not off limits, the management was warned, no military personnel.

The local telephone company was privately owned. Mrs. Scherer was the Operator, and the central was in her home. I have no idea how many customers they had, but there was only one line, connecting with the Station phone system. The Station phone system was tied in with the Coast Guard system, and was maintained by the Coast Guard. Several additional lines were run into Port Angeles, and into Seattle.

In Forks, the local power station was a 50 KW installation. Diesel powered, of course, this had nothing for the Station. Initially we had four 25 KVA diesel generators connected in parallel for supplying the Station with power. These were good for emergency power, but we needed a larger and better source of power. Two 150 KVA diesel units were bought from Casper, Wyoming. They had been replaced by more up-to-date equipment. These were of the vintage of 1912. More up-to-date equipment was just not to be had.

These two units were shipped in, and presented a problem of getting them from the freight yard to the Station. There were two bridges on the usual route to the Station.

Neither one of these would have stood the combined weight of the truck and heavy equipment parts. We had to take a round about route. A new facility was built to house the new generators, foundations were laid, and preparation for their assembly in that building. Upon arrival, it was found that one engine's crankshaft was bent .012 inches out of line. This engine was held for "spares," the other engine was assembled. It had two cylinders, and supposedly was governed to 120 RPM. One of the requirements for operation was a large compressed air storage tank and a diesel driven compressor. This provided 400 PSI air for starting the engine. One of its problems was oil leakage. In spite of all new gaskets, all hand made, the leaks were severe. Finally the engine was fully assembled, and attempts for starting were made. Finally we got it running. It exhausted into the atmosphere (no muffler and made a terrible racket). Diesel fuel was a new problem. It had to be trucked in from the railroad yard in a large tank truck, another unintended expense. This monstrosity was dubbed "Dirty Dora." We finally got it running, but its scheduled load was never achieved. With it came a large transformer for transforming the generated current to 220 V. for connecting into the Station power system. We never got it into satisfactory operation.

In 1945, the Navy got a new 600 KVA, Worthington diesel generator that was scheduled for another facility. It was canceled and shipped to Quillayute. This was installed by a Navy Installation Team, and came on-line about the time I left the Station. In the meantime, the original Caterpillar Generators maintained the Station's power. One of the problems of the multiple installation was the phasing in, when connecting another generator into the system.

One of the interesting local characters, "Charlie Huelsdonk," was known as the "Iron Man of the Hoh." Legend has it, he came into the area from Seattle, about the turn of the century. He came via ship to Clallam Bay, a port west of Port Angeles. He hiked through trails for about seventy miles to the Hoh River. He built a log cabin, and a few years later, returned to Seattle and brought his new wife out to the cabin.

The State of Washington had a bounty on killing cougars. They were predators on the elk. Huelsdonk became one of the State's leading cougar hunters. It was said that about 1905, he made a trip back to Seattle and brought back an iron cooking stove. Again from Clallam Bay, he packed the stove on his back down over the trails to the cabin. On being questioned about the trip, it was asked of the problem of packing the stove on his back. He said that the stove wasn't

Station Activities:

Following the commissioning of the Station, things developed unbelievably well. The Department Heads fulfilled their responsibilities beyond expectation. One of the first steps of my management was to get all Department Heads in a meeting, with my Executive Officer and myself. I told them, without consultation with each other, to develop and present to me a Statement of their responsibilities and duties.

My Executive Officer, Ben Johnson, was an outstanding officer. He came to Quillayute from the assignment of personnel at NAAS Klamouth Falls. In civilian life, he'd been Attorney General for the State of North Dakota. He was an outstanding attorney, and just what Quillayute needed. He was my right hand in station operations.

When I got the requested "Task and Mission" Statements for the Station Department Heads, I proceeded to analyze them. I found drastic overlaps and voids. I then called the individuals in, and reviewed their statements. Revised statements were prepared. At a meeting of all Department Heads, the statements were reviewed in total. Thus, everyone knew what his T & M was, and the interrelations with other Departments.

George Petit was the Security Officer. He had responsibilities for the Fire Department, all security personnel, including Shore Patrol, and enforcement of all security measures. In civilian life, Petit was an assistant to the President of the University of California in Berkley, California.

Gunner Berg, the only Warrant Officer, was responsible for all arms, ammunition, and all gunnery activities. Considering the Mission of the Station to supply all bombs and ammunition for all Air Group activities, he had a big responsibility. He handled about 100 tons of ammunition a week.

Don Herron, the Transportation Officer, had the responsibility for all transportation equipment and the manning of the same, for all Station requirements, except the manning of security assigned equipment. With the location of the Station, the hauling of materials, and personnel, it was a big job.

Jeff Smith, the Public Works Officer, had the responsibility of caring for all facilities of the Station, and the supervision of all new construction. Considering the out of the way location of the Station, he was limited by Station personnel. One of the more humorous facets of Jeff's activities was his Public Works Office. It was a separate small building, heated by a wood burning pot bellied stove. Jeff liked his

coffee, but the Navy coffee wasn't fit to drink. He said his folks in Lake Charles, Louisiana, used to send up the southern "chicory coffee." Jeff had a large coffee pot, and in the morning, he would put the coffee pot on the stove with a handful of the chicory coffee and partially fill the pot with water. That would set on the stove, and "gurgle" all day. By afternoon, the contents were like molasses. Jeff would take a part cup of that, smack his lips, and remark, "Now, that's real coffee."

Frank Mason was the first Operations Officer. Though a Lieutenant, he was inadequate for the job. Early in the Station's use, I had him replaced. His replacement was Ed Hanson, a former Alaskan Bush Pilot. He was an excellent pilot and operations officer. He had the responsibility of all Station Flight Operations, the coordination with Fleet flight activities, and in addition, the maintenance of all station aircraft. Also, he had the supervision of all tower personnel and activities. Though the care of the runways came under Public Works, he had to report on the general condition of the runways. The maintenance of the LTA facilities was included in his activities, so he had a major job. Space does not permit me to report on all activities I want to report. My Executive Officer, Ben Johnson was tops. He took care of all minor problems.

I previously mentioned the Operations Officer, Frank Mason. He was one of the first assigned officers to the Station, and lived aboard as soon as BOQ facilities were available. He was inclined to be overly impressed with being Operations Officer. Without consulting me, he directed an available Brewster "Chief" (Patrol Bomber), to the Station. He flew it once, fortunately without mishap. It was totally unsuited for any station operations, and I quickly ordered it deleted from station aircraft.

The next unpleasant experience occurred shortly after the commissioning of the Station. NAS, Tillamook was the Operational Headquarters for all lighter than air operations in the northwest. One of their planned operations was a coast patrol to Quillayute, remaining on the mast overnight, and returning the next day.

Early in the operation planning, they had ordered a portable mast sent to Quillayute and made ready for use. They sent a detail to the Station to train Quillayute in ground handling, and the putting of a "blimp" on the mast. Mason was in on these sessions.

The mast was on a "hard-stand", about fifty feet in diameter, connected to one of the runways with a concrete drive about twenty-five feet wide, barely more than enough to

move the mast to the runway.

One day we got word that a blimp was coming in for a sample landing, putting on the mast, then unmastering, and returning to Tillamook. Mason was alerted and directed to have a cadre of men to ground handle the operations. Upon operation of the arrival of the "ship," it made a pass over the runway at a reduced altitude. Mason and the men were in position to handle the operation. The wind direction made it necessary to approach the mast from other than the paved runway area. Mason gave them a wave off and asked for a delay. He got a larger tractor out, and planned to tow the mast to the runway. I was there and questioned Mason's decision, pointing to the possibility of the mast running off the driveway. Mason said, "I know what I'm doing, and I am in charge of the operation."

Shortly after starting to move the mast from the "hard-stand" onto the driveway, the mast ran off the drive, and tipped at an acute angle, making it totally useless for any landing and masting operations.

In the meantime, the wind had picked up to the point where ground handling became difficult. On another pass, the blimp was over the runway at proper altitude for ground handling but badly drifting. Finally mason gave the order to the ground handling group to drop all handling lines. A gust of wind caught the blimp and smashed it onto the runway, badly destroying the bottom of the car, and inactivating some of the controls. Effort to revise the situation proved hopeless and the blimp had drifted to the far north of the runway. The Blimp Commander gave the order to deflate, valve the gas. The blimp was destroyed.

A crew came up from Tillamook and salvaged what was available of the craft, and destroyed unusable items. So ended the first attempt to use Quillayute for LTA operations.

I called Mason in, and told him he was totally incapable of serving as Operations Officer. He lacked the good judgment of handling essential operations. Also, I was submitting an unfavorable fitness report on him. I asked for his immediate replacement, and his replacement quickly arrived.

One of our problem cases came in the operation of the Ordinance Department. They had a First Class Ordinance man named Bittner. He had a splendid record, and Berg recommended that he be promoted to Chief. Ben Johnson then talked with him and agreed. The papers were put in, and in due time, his promotion came through.

I had talked with our leading Chief, and he said that the Chiefs would be helpful in assisting him in picking up his new duties.

One of the responsibilities of the Department was the unloading and transportation of ammunition from the railroad siding to the Station bunkers. In this instance, they were unloading a car and using a new five ton International truck we had just gotten. The Gunner had made it clear that all 500 pound bombs were to be loaded over the rear wheels, and no more than ten be carried in a load (plus other small items). In this instance, Berg went to lunch, and left the crew under Bittner, working in loading the truck with the bombs. When Berg came back from lunch, the truck was broken in half at about the mid-frame section.

Upon questioning, Bittner said that they loaded four 500 pound bombs in the mid-section, and were preparing to load others over the wheels, and the truck broke in the middle. This story was without reason, but all the crew supported Bittner's story. Ben Johnson came into the investigation. Bittner held to his story. Upon questioning the other men individually, and putting one man against the other, it was finally determined that Bittner was lying. He had made the men promise that they would support his story. The facts were that they had ten 500 pound bombs loaded in the middle, and were bringing more from the freight car. They attempted to move the truck when it collapsed. Bittner, when faced with the truth, admitted the facts. He was given a bad fitness report.

In the meantime, Bittner had irritated all the Chiefs with his nasty attitude and his "assuming he knew it all." The Chiefs were against him all the way. This bomb loading case was a blemish on his new record.

Bittner was given his spot as the Acting Chief for Daily Duty. It was my practice to get up at all hours of the night, and make inspections. This night, Bittner had the 1200 to 0800 duty at the entrance Guard House. It was about 0200, when I walked up to the rear of the Guard House. When the enlisted sentry on the gate saw me, he made a dash for the Guard House. I said, "As you were!" and he stopped. I went to the Guard House door, looked in, Bittner had his head down on the desk, apparently sleeping. I quietly opened the door, and stood there for several minutes. Bittner never moved. I said, "Bittner" and he jumped up and said, "Yes Sir, Yes Sir." I said, "You were sleeping on duty." He said, "He... I just had my head down resting my eyes, I..." I said, "How long was I standing in the open door before I spoke to you?" Bittner said, "I heard you as you came in and you spoke from outside the building." I said, "Bittner, I'm pressing charges against you for sleeping on duty."

Charges were made, and a court was held. He was convicted of the charges, "Sleeping on Duty." Since I had been

instrumental in his promotion, and he was under probation, it was my prerogative to demote him and request his transfer. I recommended he be demoted to a Second Class Ordinance man. Shortly, he left the Station, record not to be changed. A career wrecked.

Shortly after the commissioning of the Station, we had a Chaplain report aboard. Father O'Brien fitted into the Station's activities well. He used to refer to the Station personnel as "my boys." The matter of ones Christian affiliations, he was always available to discuss problems with any of those aboard, at any time day or night. He'd be out playing ball with the men, and participated within the Station activities. Though he was a Lieutenant Commander, he preferred to eat meals with his "boys." He conducted Mass for the Station people and also conducted a Jewish service. It was a disaster for Quillayute when he received orders to one of the larger carriers.

I never saw a person that I knew in real life, portrayed in movies as Bing Crosby in "Going My Way," reflected Father O'Brien.

His successor, another priest, was just the opposite. He'd have nothing to do with any other personnel, other than Catholics. This was in complete reversal from Father O'Brien's practice. I called this Chaplain in, and had a talk with him about his responsibilities. His reply was, "My first and sole responsibility is to my church." I quickly had him transferred out.

There were new questions and problems always coming up. We had about 300 civilians aboard the Station. At that time, sugar was a rationed product. Practically every work group on the Station had their "coffee mess." They'd went to the Galley, and get coffee, sugar and evaporated milk, etc. I was wondering how much of these products were going ashore.

I called in my Commissary Officer and inquired as to how much coffee we were using. He said that he didn't know, but would check. Later he called back and said we were using about 135 pounds a day. I asked him to come in and let's look into this further. We decided to make a survey of the coffee messes aboard the station, and about how many men each served. We got this information, and it was surprising how accurately it portrayed actual numbers. We figured two cups of coffee a man per day. Some would have more, and others none at all. Adding this up, adding the coffee used in the Galley, and figuring the Navy standard of thirty cups per pound, we came out to about what we were using. So I said, "Say nothing about it." One problem solved.

There were many more happenings, but space won't

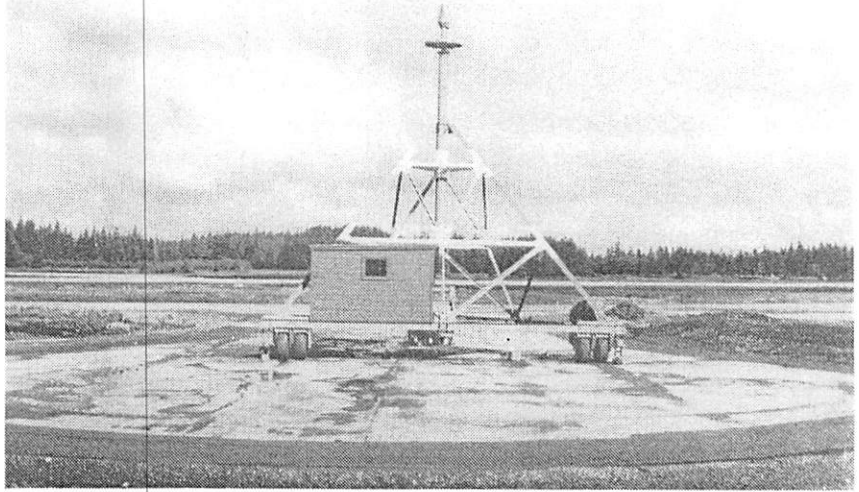
allow relating them here.

Relations with the Fleet:

The prime mission of the Station was to serve Fleet activities and personnel. They had nearly two thirds of the total military aboard the Station. Basically, one Air Group, and FASRON Unit (Fleet Air Service Squadron), did all maintenance work on the operational aircraft. The first FASRON Skipper, a Lieutenant Commander, was a pleasant person to deal with, but shortly after his arrival, he got orders to a new Station.

Through the "grape vine," I got word that the new FASRON Commander was a difficult person to deal with. He'd been in several operations with poor relations with others. One afternoon, I had a call from the Gate House, that Lieutenant Commander McCurdy had just come aboard, and had been directed to the Administration Building. He arrived, and we had a congenial talk. I introduced him to my available officers, and had the BOQ Officer show him to available quarters. The next morning he came in, and said that his assigned quarters weren't suitable. We had one room, a large room, fitted for VIP visitors. He wanted this room. I told him directly across the hall was a duplicate room. If he was in the VIP room, and we had use for it, he'd have to move out. He could have this other room, and fix it up to his desires. It would be permanent for him. He accepted this. His next demand was for a car assigned to him for his personal use. I told him that there were no personally assigned cars on the Station. All cars were a part of Transportation, that even the car I used was a part of the Station Fleet. If he had use for a car, he could call Transportation, and a car would be provided. He accepted this, though he didn't like it. There were other demands, but I never said, "No." I always offered a substitute for his demands.

It turned out that he was a bad "boozer." He always had "booze" in his room, and was a heavy drinker at the Bar. However, this wasn't any direct concern to me. He was not in favor with his men. He didn't get along with the Air Group people, and after about six months, he was removed. I heard that he was shipped to the Aleutian Islands. Later I heard he was ordered back to Fleet Headquarters at Seattle, and shortly after arrival there he committed suicide.



LTA Mast - NAS Quillayute

We had a LTA Squadron based in part at the Station. Their home base was Tillamook, Oregon. These "blimps" patrolled the coast. They would fly north to Quillayute, just a good days flying time, then remain overnight tethered on the mast, refueled, rearmed as necessary, and the next day return to their home base. We had a "blimp" aboard practically every night.

A Coast Guard Sea Rescue Group was based at the Station. They had two PBY's. They made routine over water flights, and also explored the land area from the air. If needed there, they had a good general knowledge of the local areas, including all the wooded area. They had their own maintenance crew, as well as two flight crews.

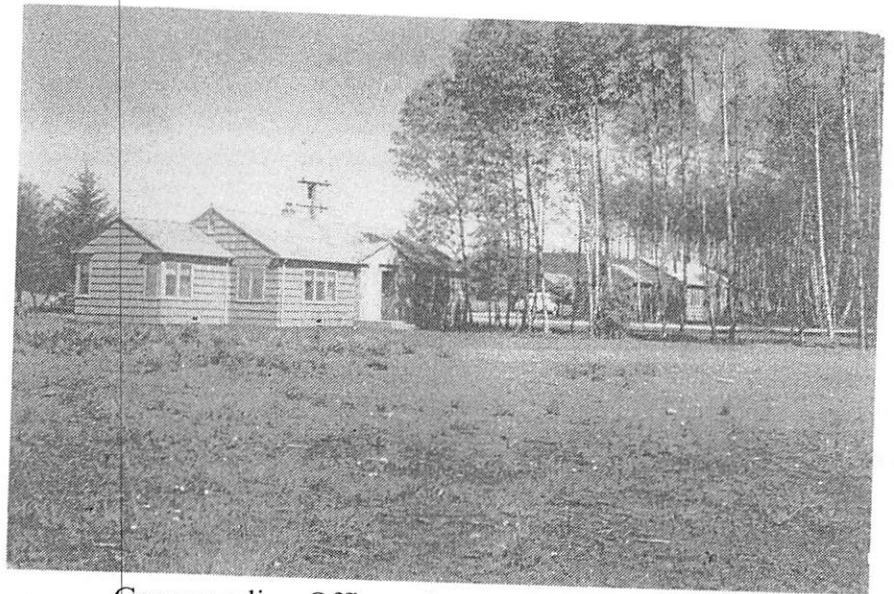
In 1945, the Japanese began sending balloons over via the Japanese air currents. Some of these were loaded with high explosives, and others with flammable materials. The Air Force based three P-38's, two flight crews, and a radar unit aboard the Station. The Radar Unit would spot the balloons, and the P-38's would go out and shoot them down.

The Air Force Pilots did a lot of ribbing the Navy Pilots about how superior the P-38's were to the Navy F6F's. At the Station, the "Fleet" had an instructor that had returned from the Pacific. He was an outstanding pilot, and a Congressional Medal Winner. After one of the "ribbing" sessions, this fellow said (addressing the Air Force guys), "Two of you can take off with your P-38's and I'll follow with an F6F and will fly both of you into the ground." He got a good laugh. But after the two P-38's took off, on their tails was the Navy Pilot in his F6F. The P-38's were faster on the straight away, but lacked

maneuverability by comparison. Our Navy Pilot took on one of the P-38's, and every time the P-38 would attempt to turn, he was cut off by the F6F. The result, number one was flown into the ground. Then afterwards, number two P-38. Again the same story, the Navy Pilot out maneuvered the P-38, and forced him down to the ground. After that, there was no bragging about the P-38's.

At Port Angeles, the Navy based a submarine, the Tambour, for use in the North Pacific for providing experience for the squadrons in search of submarines. The Tambour would go out twenty to thirty miles off shore, and run submerged and on the surface. These trips would run two or three days each. I went out on a two day trip. It was a most interesting experience, living aboard a submarine. At one point, on the second day, the Commander and I were in the control area, and he said, "Want to take command of the ship?" I said, "I'd take command of any air activity, but I know nothing about submarines." He said, "I'll be right here by you. You got the CON." For about two hours, while running submerged, I had command. I can truthfully say I've commanded a submarine!

One of the activities aboard the Station was the "Officers - Wives Club." Most of the pilots of the Air Group were young newlyweds. Ensigns or JG's, housing areas were at a premium, and wood was the common fuel. Most any shack became a living facility, with its wood burning stoves.



Commanding Officers Quarters, NAS Quillayute

In early 1945, the contract was let for building two residences aboard the Station. One for the Commanding Officer and other for the Executive Officer. Ben Johnson, being a bachelor at that time, had no use for one. So it was turned over to Dr. Baumgartner. Upon completion, Ruth and I were given blank purchase orders for \$5,000 to go into Seattle, and buy the furnishings for the two homes. What a spree! We never had so much fun, before or since. These were very comfortable seven room single floor homes. Unfortunately, we had such a short stay in ours.

On the evening of VE Day, we had quite a party at the O'Club. Like most military O'Clubs, we had three "One Armed Bandits." On that evening, one officer's wife, Mrs. George Pettitt said, "Never played one of these things," and she proceeded to play the "Nickel" machine. The first pull hit a jackpot. I think it was \$5.00. So she said, "Now the Dime Machine," and again, the first pull, another jackpot. I think it was \$10.00. Then she said, "Now, for the Quarter Machine," and again, the first pull a jackpot of \$25.00. It was the first time I ever knew of three jackpots in three tries.

It was a sad day in leaving the Station. Things in the war activity were beginning to wind down. The last Air Group never went to the Pacific. My Executive Officer, Ben Johnson, was made Acting Commanding Officer, and we had to leave our nice new home aboard the Station.

USS ATTU, CVE-102:

It was about late July, 1945, that I received my orders to report to the ATTU on or about 1, September, as Air Officer. Transportation was provided to NAS, Alameda (San Francisco), and for the moving of the family from NAS, Quillayute. The intervening month seemed to be too little time for all to be done.

We rented a cottage in Hoquiam, Washington (Grays Harbor area). The Navy people at Quillayute moved our things. We hated to leave those new quarters. With the change of location, it meant new schools for the youngsters. Bob was checked in at Hoquiam. Both Betty and Bob checked into Hoquiam High School.