

## HISTORY OF CLASS 20, PRIMARY AEROGRAPHER SCHOOL

Convened 01 November, 1940 Graduated 22 January, 1941  
by *CDR Don Cruse USN RET*

Background: Class 20 was a transitional class in the sense that the number of students was augmented because of the war in Europe. Before the powers in Washington initiated belated readiness actions, class sizes of eleven or twelve students satisfied needs of the fleet and naval aviation. Class 20 consisted of forty-two students. The tempo increased steadily in 1942 and it became necessary to move the school.

Our class was a typical cross section of young sailors, some with experience as an Aerographer striker and others directly from ship's fireroom or deck force. **Dominic Zizzi** was an example of the former, coming to Class 20 from NAS Coco Solo in the Canal Zone. Ziz could take an observation, log it, transmit it, tear teletype paper and plot a weather map. In fact, Ziz taught me the codes since I was one of the destroyer deck force types. I considered the memorization of weather codes most difficult.

There was a reason why fully qualified strikers from ships and stations attended Primary Aerographer School. One could not advance to Aerog3/c without it. In the case of Class 20, the needs of the service came into play once more. Those of us who had served more than a year in the NAVY were advanced to Aerog3/c upon graduation.

Instructors: Chief Aerographer Francis A. Barbot USN instructed in mapwork and meteorology and was our overall class supervisor. He was assisted in other subject areas such as codes, clouds, and meteorology by Aerog1/c Robert D. Case USN, MTSGT Carleton G. Cole USMC, and Aerog1/c F. R. Thumme USN. For instruction in weather instruments we went to NAS Aerology where there was a topside instrument laboratory supervised by Aerog1/c Donald T. White USN. Students were also placed on the NAS Aerology watch list to learn office procedures. One large drawback to working in the Aerology Office was facing the early morning arrival of the Aerological Officer. LT Ross R. Kellerman USN could not be placated by anything his crew did to prepare for his arrival. He was an ogre and he wanted it on his record.

Back to the Fleet: We were sprinkled liberally throughout the Atlantic and Pacific fleets upon departing Lakehurst. Class 20 graduates arrived at their first duty stations as our U.S. military was adjusting to the Japanese threat as well as the European war. This pattern will be illustrated by the following examples of individual experiences.



From Class 20, two of our classmates were captured by the Japanese on Kiska, one on Wake Island, and one on Guam. Fortunately, all four survived to repatriation in 1945 but only two decided to remain in the NAVY. Many of my classmates served where I never heard of them again. Others have become close friends and we have attended one another's weddings and met at Naval Weather Service Association reunions or ship reunions. Needless to say, there are now many missing from our class roster.

It is noteworthy that of my classmates enumerated below, two became millionaires and several became successful businessmen—either after World War II or after completing twenty years active military service. Here are some comments on known classmates to illustrate the above. Refer to the Class 20 photograph.

STEIDING, B. G. No information. KNAPP, William. Came to Class 20 from USS YORKTOWN (CV-5) as a fully qualified Aerographer striker. ROGERS, Lyman R. Came to Class 20 from USS PORTLAND (CA-33) Pacific Fleet homeported in Long Beach CA. Previous duties deck force. Departed Lakehurst by train to Camden NJ, crossed the Delaware by ferry, another train to Baltimore MD, then down Chesapeake Bay on overnight Old Bay Lines steamer. Upon arrival Norfolk boarded USS HENDERSON (AP-1), an ancient NAVY transport. Disembarked in Gtmo along with seven other Class 20 mates, sat on seabag and hammock on the pier until USS GEORGE F. ELLIOT (AP-13) came alongside in evening. Boarded ELLIOT and was served multicolored hot dogs and sauerkraut while standing to eat—she was configured as a troop transport (later lost in Solomons). \ Next morning ELLIOT anchored Culebra. Transported by ship's boat to USS WYOMING (BB-33) for further assignment. However, the black shoe NAVY had never heard of an Aerographer. After one night aboard WYOMING, which was acting as SOPA for a fleet exercise, USS RANGER (CV-4) came to anchor nearby for the night and the group of Aerographers went to RANGER and reported for duty. Needless to say, the Aerological Officer in RANGER was shocked to see eight new Aerog3/c or strikers on board his ship.

LT George F. Kosco USN was not an Aerological Officer unaccustomed to weird NAVY machinations. Since his office in RANGER could accommodate no more than three persons at one time, he initiated actions to distribute the group of eight. Perhaps the Bureau of Navigation planned it that way. LT Kosco had served in USS SARATOGA (CV-3) and was thoroughly familiar with aerological requirements, including personnel. Within a fortnight, the ship's office was cutting transfer orders for five Aerog3/c or strikers, sending three to USS WASP (CV-7), one to USS YORKTOWN (CV-5), and one back to NorVa for duty in FAW-5. Remaining in RANGER were Finger, Register, and McCartney. Rogers was accompanied to WASP by Cruse and Fairbrother. For Sea2/c Fairbrother it was like being home again for he was a plankowner. Seabags and hammocks were stowed in the Lucky Bag, for the modern WASP provided the crew with lockers and showers. No more bucket baths as in WYOMING and RANGER. Rogers served in WASP until May 1942. While the ship was completing her two Mediterranean aircraft ferry tasks, Rogers was hauled out of his bunk stiffened with arthritis, taken to sick bay and offloaded to USNH Portsmouth VA. Upon recovery he was assigned to OpDevFor until 1944 and Navy Weather Central Port Lyautey, Gtmo, NAS Atlantic City, and Lakehurst where he was Leading CPO of NATTU. He later served in the technical schools command in Memphis and was involved in their move to Jacksonville. He married Carolyn, an AerM3c at NAS Atlantic City, and they retired in Jacksonville in January 1960. Rogers taught general science in high schools as his next career. L.R. attended the wedding of Don and Marge Cruse in Paterson NJ in 1947. STINSON, Samuel H. P. Sam and I attempted to hitch hike to his home town, Sewickly PA but gave it up after reaching Philly. The only way back to Lakehurst was by thumbing a ride, but there was no traffic. We walked all night and reached the NAS in time for morning quarters. Sam was offloaded from USS HENDERSON in Pearl Harbor and reported aboard USS CALIFORNIA (BB-44) for duty in the ComBatFor staff Aerology unit. The staff aerologist was LCDR John C. S. McKillip USN. Aerographers were CAerog William R. Green USN, CAerog William N. Livingston USN (assigned to Combat Intelligence Center ashore), CAerog C. G. "Duke" Ellington USN

(mainly at CinCPacFlt headquarters as a briefer), and Aerog2/c Alexander Ebel. The group was augmented during 1941 by graduates of Class 21: Aerog3/c V. R. "Bud" Collard, Aerog3/c Lloyd Bellinger and Aerog3/c James F. Bowlin. BB-44 also known as "The Prune Barge" was moored alongside Ford Island on December 7, 1941. Sam was observing morning colors on the ship's fantail when the first Japanese aircraft attacked. BB-44 took two torpedoes and two bombs and settled in her moorings. Sam was blown over the side and hospitalized ashore. Upon release to duty he was assigned to the Combat Intelligence Center in Pearl. During the next year he was TAD to several ships including USS MARYLAND, USS TENNESSEE (Aleutian ops), and USS PENNSYLVANIA engaged in intelligence collection. In August 1944 AerM1c Stinson reported to Armed Forces Security Agency on Nebraska Avenue in WashDC. He was advanced to CAerM and later worked as a civilian in the National Security Agency until 1957. His wife, Ruth, was also an AerM. They were my neighbors in nearby Annandale VA while Sam worked in a Duron Paint store. Ruth died 12-03-97 and Sam succumbed to COPD 11-22-05. PODBIELSKI, Joseph M. Joe was a plankowner in USS WASP (CV-7) and a fully qualified Aerographer striker upon reporting to Class 20. He was transported in USS HENDERSON to the Pacific coast and our paths never crossed again. He maintained a low profile, never appears in NWSA records. He is pictured on 1958 NAS Agana Xmas card as ChAero(W-4). His widow, Janie, attended one left coast reunion of NWSA. REGISTER, James A. From Lakehurst Jim was one of our group enjoying the Caribbean en route to USS RANGER (CV-4). Along with Finger and McCartney, he served in RANGER for about two years. A USWB employee recalled seeing AGC Register in USS ATKA (AGB-3). Noted in Navy Times 4-29-85: James Albert Register Jr. died in Tuscarora NC 12-8-84. SMITH, Walter W. No record. CRUSE, Donald A. Sea1/c Cruse departed Halifax NS with seabag and hammock after USS STOCKTON (DD-73) was turned over to RN as HMS LUDLOW (G57). Train to Boston North Station. Carried bag & hammock to South Station. Train to NYC and Jersey Central RR to Lakehurst. Upon disembarking at station greeted Sea2/c Tom O'Reilly who was riding in a separate coach. We had not seen each other since we departed from USS REINA MERCEDES, the station ship at Annapolis MD, in August. Along with the other graduates in the group of eight Caribbean wanderers, Cruse was in Gtmo when the boat from RANGER transported three of us to WASP.

The CRUSE biography was published in The Aerograph in three segments: Feb99, Aug00 and May02. Will not repeat here.

**Robert H. MARTIN** was assigned to USS SARATOGA (CV-3) from boot camp. He was a plane pusher in V1 Division before striking for Aerographer. At Lakehurst he spent more time studying Bowditch than the Aerog Manual due to previously acquired knowledge. Bob was one our GTMO group and ended up back in FAW5 NAS NorVa after reassignment from RANGER. He asked for transfer from FAW5 to USS YORKTOWN (CV-5). He served in YORKTOWN as she was shifted to Pacific Fleet in time for the Battle of Midway in June 1942 and advanced to Aerog2c (or AerM2c). After YORKTOWN was lost Bob went to Suva, Fiji for duty and to FWC SF in early 1944, advancing to AerM1c. His interest in Bowditch undiminished, he requested duty in USS ZACA (IX-73), a wooden yacht operating from Treasure Island on plane guard (Bird Dog) duty halfway to Hawaii. At the end of the war Bob was paid off and sat for his Mate's license in the Merchant Marine. He was soon back at sea as Third Mate in Liberty ships, sailing for Farrell Lines to Africa, progressing to First Mate with a skipper's license. He was put ashore with a middle ear problem, found employment in Calumet City IN where he was responsible for safety in cargo loadings at that port. Bob and Marian married, then Barbara and Andrew were born, and the Martins relocated to Long Island NY. Bob joined the Board of New York Harbor Pilots Commission, moved up to Secretary before retiring in 1991. He died at end of March 1995 after spending three months in St. Francis Hospital.

Another classmate who accompanied our group from Lakehurst to USS RANGER (CV-4) was **Kenneth L. FAIRBROTHER**. When we shouldered our seabags and hammocks from the RANGER boat to the quarterdeck of USS WASP (CV-7) on a sunny afternoon in GTMO, Ken was returning to his ship. After boot camp in Newport he was assigned to precommissioning detail for WASP in Boston. His obituary was published in The Aerograph of November 2003.

One of our "Caribbean Cruisers" who remained in RANGER for duty was **Faber W. MCCARTNEY**. Mac came to Class 20 from USS YORKTOWN Aerology. He served in RANGER 1941-42, went to precomm USS PRINCETON (CVL-22) but before ship was commissioned he was transferred to NAS Glynco. He soon wished he was aboard PRINCETON! Mac participated in Operation Nanook in the Arctic at the end of the war, earning the COGARD "Arctic Medal" for duty in USS NORTHWIND. He then went to Lakehurst for duty in NATTU.

**Paul "Gunner" GAWRON, Gerald FINGER and James A. REGISTER** made up the remaining eight RANGER sailors in our group. FINGER and REGISTER remained with MCCARTNEY for duty in RANGER until, like Mac, they went to new construction (carriers). During our instruction in Class 20, "Gunner" spent most of his time reading the BuOrd Manual. Hence, he was nicknamed "Gunner," did not serve in RANGER but migrated to FAW5 NAS NorVa for duty; and Mac believes that "Gunner" later went to new construction (cruiser).

**Randall S. RICHARDSON** went to FAW5 from Lakehurst and was recruited for duty in China with the Flying Tigers. Scuttlebutt tells us that he learned to fly and remained with Flying Tiger Airlines after the war. He remained incommunicado.

**Henry A. "Red" BOUCHER** was one of our most colorful class members. A better term might be flamboyant. From Lakehurst, Red went to Squadron VN8D5 at Annapolis. He was most proud of his duty in USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6) where he advanced to CAerM. Red was written up several times in The Aerograph because of his political success and baseball fame in Alaska after going into Fleet Reserve on twenty.

**Thomas B. O'REILLY** was CAerM in USS NORTON SOUND (AV-11), at anchor at Kerama Retto at the end of the war. He tried to make his mark in the political world after Colgate University, but eventually went into sales, then started his own business machines company, which he sold at the right part of the business cycle. He married Lillian in 1949 and they have eight children. Tom remains active in Pearl Harbor Survivors Assn.

Of our several Japanese P.O.W. members, the bio of **Robert W. JONES** has been published in The Aerograph; but little has been noted on **Howard D. MILLER** who was captured on Wake Island in early 1942. He was one of many class members who were transported in the Henny Maru to points west of Panama. MILLER ended up in FWC Pearl. Two others who were disembarked to FAW4 NAS Seattle were **Walter M WINFREY** and **James L. TURNER**, both later captured by the Japanese on Kiska. Walt retired as CWO3 in May 1957 on twenty-one years of service, is now living in Rome NY, while TURNER died in 1975 as CWO4. Walt worked for the State of New York for twenty years.

[A side note on the NAVY personnel assignment and transportation systems that were in use until WW2 was well underway. First of all, most transfer orders emanated from The Bureau of Navigation in Washington. Nearly all orders moving enlisted personnel required correspondence, hardly ever by radio. Within CONUS rail transportation was commonly used to move drafts of personnel with a senior petty officer in charge. All other movement was by either USS HENDERSON (AP-1) or USS CHAUMONT (AP-5). Personnel under orders or awaiting further orders were held in a Receiving Ship (R/S) or Station awaiting arrival of one of these vessels. We were moved from R/S to R/S. Therefore it was common to find "FFT" on one's orders.

The Henny Maru and her counterpart took six months to complete the round-trip voyage between China Station (Shanghai) and Boston R/S. Stops were made at all R/S en route: Guam, Midway Island, Pearl Harbor, Seattle, San Francisco (Goat Island), Long Beach/San Pedro, San Diego, Coco Solo CZ, Guantanamo Bay, Charleston, Norfolk, Philadelphia, and New York City. I am not sure about a stop in Newport where a Naval Training Center was located.

In most R/S we slept in our own hammocks. We hated the time spent in any R/S. It was not only time wasted and spent serving in General Detail chores or mess cooking, but there was a high level of thievery. If one took eyes off his seabag it would soon be gone.]

It is probable that these class members rode the Henny Maru (USS HENDERSON) all the way to Pearl Harbor and were assigned to the NAS Ford Island aerological office located on top of the water tank or newly established FWC Pearl located across from the fire station on Kam Highway: **Victor W. AYCOCK, Harry C. HAMLIN, Howard D. MILLER, Thomas B. O'REILLY, and Samuel H. P. STINSON.** MILLER was later transferred to Wake Island, O'REILLY went to NAS Kaneohe Bay and STINSON reported to the "Prune Barge" to work for CAerog Willie Green USN. From **Amelia ZIZZI**, I learned that Ziz left the Henny Maru for FAW4 NAS Seattle and arrived Pearl Harbor a few days after the Japanese visited on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1941. He was TAD Palmyra Island when he advanced to AerM1c and went to Navy Weather Central San Francisco 11/44. He and Amelia were married there 11/44. Next to B School Lakehurst, Operation Deepfreeze and Operation Highjump in the Antarctic, C School and NAS Corpus. With onset of the Korean War Ziz received rush orders to USS ESSEX (CV-9), then to NAAS Brown Field, and FWC Pearl where he was promoted to WO. He retired from NAS Beeville TX in 12/61 as CWO3. Ziz died in 1994 in Palestine TX.

Another west coast sailor was **Victor B. MILFORD.** His first duty after disembarking from the Henny Maru was NAS San Pedro, then to a one-man billet in USS HENDERSON (relieving **Aerog1c Dan GILLIS**). When we were both in **Pappy WELLES'** pool of Aerogs on NAS Alameda in 1943 we were both AerM1c. Vic went to PhibPac, NPGS Monterey (married Frances), then back to sea and to Kwajalein for the A Bomb tests. Vic retired on twenty, purchased a supermarket in Sacramento, worked hard at it, then bought a book bindery in Stockton CA and became wealthy. Frances died in 1993. Vic lives in Sierra Vista AZ in retirement at age ninety-three.

**Luther W. CORN** also went to RANGER from Lakehurst, then to YORKTOWN until she was sunk at Midway. He went to ComBatFor aerological unit in USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB-38). I was his best man when he married Marilyn in July 1943 upon his return to CONUS. Luther retired from FWF Sangley Point as CWO2, attended Whitman College in Walla Walla for MS (Mathematics), then taught high school. Following a stroke in 4/97 he died 12/04 (Marilyn 4/06).

**Harry C. HAMLIN** served in USS OKLAHOMA (BB-37) 1939-40 prior to Class Twenty. Then he served in USS CURTISS (AV-4) until May 1945. CURTISS was swinging on her hook in West Loch when the Japanese visited Pearl on 7 December 1941, but Harry was then TAD to NAS Ford Island. **LCDR Marty BURNS USN** was the NAS aerological officer. Harry was a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors' Assn and attended the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Hawaii with Arlene. For many years Harry and Arlene were "snowbirds" rotating with the seasons between Muskegon MI and Saint Cloud FL.

The only scuttlebutt I've picked up on **William R. BROWNING** is this: CAerM BROWNING was launched in a TBM aircraft from USS BATAAN (CVL-29) on 7-14-45 for weather reconnaissance over Hokkaido, northern Japan. That a/c failed to return to his ship.

Finally, **Ray W. ECHOLS** disembarked Henny Maru in San Diego, received orders to USS SARATOGA and went aboard in Bremerton. SARA hustled to Pearl after the Japanese attack, supported Marine landings on Guadalcanal, was torpedoed by submarine, repaired by NSY Pearl and returned to SW Pac. Ray was paid off at end of WW2, joined USWB and later U.S.A.F. He served in Japan, Germany, Italy and Spokane WA. Upon return from Italy he retired and rejoined USWB for service at Ely NV, Barter Island AK, Long Beach CA, Tucson AZ, and Pocatello ID. At age 65 he retired. In 1998 he suffered a stroke.

There is no background on the Marines of Class 20 except **Sgt Robert E. DAIGH.** It is likely that he became a Marine aviator during the war. End