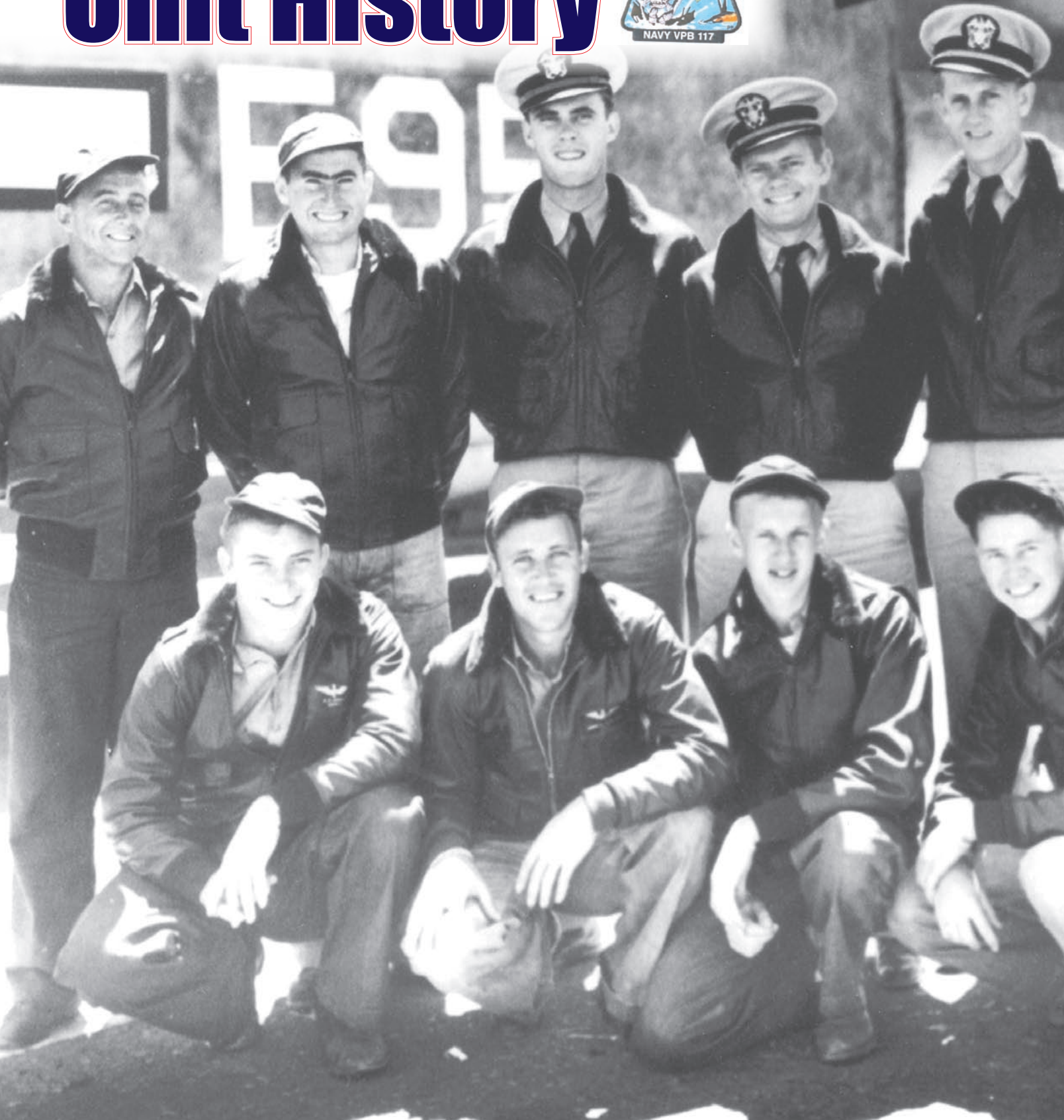


*Bomber
Legends*

Unit History

War Disney





The Blue Raiders of WWII

Navy Patrol Bombing Squadron VPB-117

Navy Bombing Squadron ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN was commissioned on 1 February 1944, at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Camp Kearney, San Diego, California. Commander E.O. Rigsbee, Jr. USN, was the commanding officer. He reported to Commander Fleet Air Wing FOURTEEN at the Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego, California. There were 18 twelve-member crews with 15 PB4Y-1 aircraft and supporting ground personnel.

During the training phase of the squadron at Camp Kearney, an official logo for the squadron was adopted. It was designed by Walt Disney. The logo depicts an enraged Mustang stomping on a Japanese warship. In the background a bomb with fuse is shown. An island with palm trees is also shown to illustrate the squadron's area of operations in the southwest Pacific Ocean.

The training period at Camp Kearney was completed on 10 August 1944. By 13 August, all aircraft and crews had made the Trans-Pacific flight to Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Territory of Hawaii. Operational training continued under commander Fleet Air Wing TWO. Orders were received to proceed to North Field, Tinian, The Marianas, and on 1 October 1944, the squadron reported to Commander Fleet Air Wing ONE for duty. Squadron designation was now changed to "Patrol Bombing Squadron", VPB-117.

*Crew M-28, NAAS Camp Kearney, CA 1945
Back row - Hartranft, Trabert, Whiteman (co-pilot), Fitts (patrol plane commander), Braakman (co-pilot), Parrott, Hopson. Front row - Sienkiewski, Allison, Norton, Anderson, Swanson*

Unit History

Cont...

It was on Tinian the squadron became "The Blue Raiders". Tokyo Rose in a radio transmission from Japan welcomed Commander Rigsbee and VPB-117, the Blue Raiders, to the Pacific. She predicted dire things would happen to Blue Raider personnel when they confronted

the glorious armed forces of Japan. All crewmembers liked the name, and so the squadron was now "The Blue Raiders".

On 4 October, offensive operations began with flying patrols of 1000-mile sectors from Tinian. The

shooting down of 2 Japanese aircraft, a Kate and an Emily, and sinking of 700 tons of enemy shipping was the beginning of a distinguished combat record that would later result in the award of the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION on 17 April 1947. Operations were moved to West Field. Tinian on 18 November 1944.

By 4 December 1944, the squadron was relocated to Tacloban airfield on the island of Leyte in the Philippines of the Southwest Pacific Theater of Operations. Here the

squadron reported to Commander Fleet Air Wing TEN. Again 1000-mile patrol sectors were flown of up to fourteen hours duration. Crews flew every third day or more often at times. Inclement weather, primitive facilities,

and enemy air raids contributed to hazardous living conditions. With the sinking of enemy shipping, shooting down enemy aircraft, and sighting of enemy warships, the Blue Raiders continued to compile its outstanding record of destruction to the Japanese war machine. All this was not accomplished without casualties. While low,

loss of life and aircraft was inevitable.

Commander Rigsbee was detached on 25 December 1944, as commanding officer, and was replaced by Commander Harold W. McDonald, USN. On 25 January 1945, Lieutenant Commander Thomas P. Mulvihill, USNR, assumed command of the squadron after commander McDonald was detached.

The next move for the squadron was to Maguire Field, Mindoro Island on 7 February 1945, and then reported to Fleet Air Wing SEVENTEEN, Group 1. Combat operations now covered the coast of French Indo-China and the West Coast of Borneo. Operation included tracking a Japanese Task Force, working with submarines to sink enemy shipping, and striking the Japanese whenever possible including land targets on routine patrols. Rusting Japanese merchant ship hulks littered the coast of French Indo-China, and the sea-lane supply line to the south had been severed.

Lieutenant Commander Roger J. Crowley, Jr., USNR, took command of the squadron on 8 April 1945, after Lieutenant Commander Mulvihill was detached.

In May, the first of the new PB4Y-2 Privateer aircraft arrived. Due to age and hard usage, the PB4Y-1 aircraft were deteriorating and maintenance was becoming a problem. Replacement crews and aircraft were a continuing factor due to crew rotation and combat losses.

The Japanese surrendered on 14 August 1945. On 16 August the squadron was back to West Field, Tinian, and reported to Commander Fleet Air wing EIGHTEEN for duty. Security and weather patrols were then flown from Tinian.

On 6 September, Commander Sole L. Windham, USNR, relieved Lieutenant Commander Roger J. Crowley, Jr. as commanding officer.

The squadron returned to Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Territory of Hawaii, on 4 November 1945, and to Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Camp Kearney, San Diego, California on 13 November. Patrol Bombing Squadron ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN, The Blue Raiders, was decommissioned on 17 November 1945.

So ends the Log of PATROL BOMBING SQUADRON VPB-117, THE BLUE RAIDERS.



*PB4Y-2
Privateer,
Maguire Field,
Mindoro,
Philippines,
Bureau No.
59597.
The plane we
usually flew.*



*Official
Consolidated
- Vultec photo.
Photo by Otto
Menge. PB4Y-
A Privateer,
1945*

VPB-117, The Blue Raiders

THE COMBAT RECORD OF WORLD WAR II

Combat Patrols _____	1,617
Combat Hours Flown _____	18,459
Combat Patrols Each Day _____	5
Average Hours Each Patrol _____	11.4
Japanese Ships Sunk _____	210 (109,700 tons)
Japanese Ships Damaged _____	274 (96,085 tons)
Japanese Aircraft Shot Down _____	63
Japanese Aircraft Probably Shot Down _____	5
Japanese Aircraft Damaged in Air _____	9
Japanese Aircraft Destroyed on Ground _____	16
Japanese Aircraft Damaged on Ground _____	4
Japanese Shore Installations Attacked _____	300 (approx.)

THE COMBAT LOSSES OF WORLD WAR II

Aircraft _____	17
Personnel _____	72



A) French Indo-China, McKong River Delta area. River steamer that was camouflaged and we attacked, 1945. "A" photo shows lower level.
B) French Indo-China, McKong River Delta area. River steamer that was camouflaged and we attacked, 1945. "B" photo shows upper level.



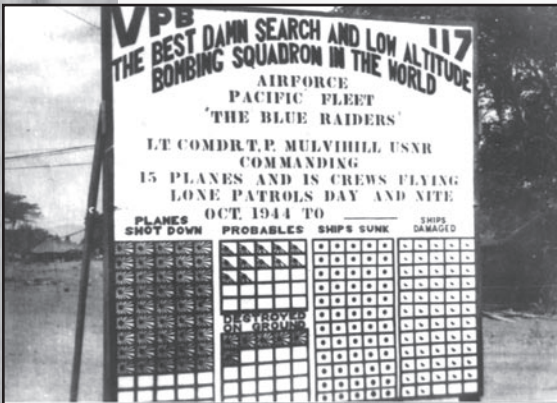
Official Consolidated - Vultee photo.
Photo by Otto Menge. PB4Y-2
Privateer, 1945



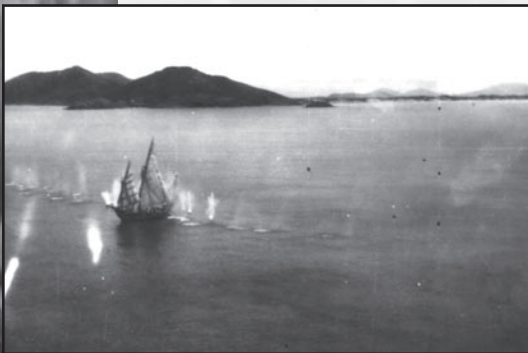
Crew M-28, NAS, Miami, FL 1945
Back row - LeRoy Anderson ARM 3/c,
Billy Parrott ARM 3/c, Billy Hopson AOM
3/c, Edwin Swanson 5 1/c, Ralph Allison
5 1/c, Max Trabert AMM 1/c (plane cap-
tain), Lawrence Norton AOM 3/c, Edmund
Sienkiewski AMM 3/c. Front row - Dale
Whiteman, Ensign; Orvis Fitts, Lt. (JG.); Paul
Hartranft 5 1/c; Jack Braakman, Ensign.

Unit History

Cont...



VPB-117 Blue Raiders scoreboard, Maguire Field, Mindoro Philippine Islands, 1945.



French Indo-China Cape St. Jacques off the estuary of the Mekong River. Strafing a Japanese picket junk, 1945.



LCDR Orvis N. Fitts, USNR (Ret.), with the VPB-117 memorial plaque at Naval Air Museum, NAS Pensacola, Florida, October 2003.



Naval Air Museum, NAS Pensacola, FL. PB4Y-2 Privateer. Was used for fighting forest fires by Hawkins and Powers, Greybull, WY. Donated to the Naval Air Museum. It lacks the two top deck turrets, no armament, had been re-engined with different engines. Has a different windshield in cockpit, no radar antenna housings, etc. 2003.



Orate Airfield, Guam. PB4Y-1, Bureau No. 32321. Converted to passenger use. Commander Air Force Pacific Fleet, subordinate command Forward Area, Rear Admiral Earnest I. Gunther. I was staff pilot for the admiral from September - December 1945.