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PENSACOLA DEPICTS THE STORY OF NAVAL AVIATION

By HAMPTON DUNN

PENSACOLA --- The Pensacola Naval Air Station --- the home of Naval Aviation --- got its start in January, 1914, with an original unit consisting of nine officers, less than two dozen enlisted men, and seven flying boats and hydroaeroplanes. From this inconspicuous start, more than 100,000 Navymen would learn the art of flying during the next half century, and thousands more have been trained since then.

In 1963, a long dreamed-of Naval Aviation Museum was dedicated and opened here. Its mission: to select, collect, preserve, and display significant relics and memorabilia of the historic heritage of naval aviation.

More popular exhibits are the full size aircraft, which included the Navy’s first, the Curtiss A-1, bought in 1911. Then there is a 1917 N-9 Trainer, and F4B-4 carrier fighter of the 1930’s, a successor carrier fighter, the FF-1, and the Douglas "Skystreak" experimental jet plane which set world speed records in 1947.

There is a large collection of dozens of scale models of naval aircraft. Also being shown are aircraft engines, aviation ordnance, space exhibits, aircraft carrier models, and some of the Navy’s famous Combat Art collection. Historic aviation events and history-making naval aviators are memorialized in dramatic picture-stories.

There’s also the spacecraft, "Aurora 7," which carried Navy Lt. Cmdr. Scott Carpenter into earth orbit in 1962. There is a "Hall of Honor" memorializing Naval Aviation connected awardees of Congressional Medals of Honor. Navy and Marine Corps "Aces" also are recognized.

The story of Naval Aviation truly is a thrilling one, and its related in all its glory right here at its birthplace.