

Before Photoshop: The photographer on the top wing, standing by the strut and hanging by his shoes is my father James Scales at age 24. This photo was composed for Navy Utility Squadron Two's 1944 Christmas Card to the unit's families.



Utility Squadron Two adopted the universal sign of utility, the safety pin, for its insignia. Colors: A red triangle encloses a red numeral 2, a yellow safety pin open, and black letters Utility.

A SQUADRON CHRISTMAS CARD

THE STORY BEHIND AN UNUSUAL PHOTOGRAPH THAT BECAME THE BASIS FOR A 1944 CHRISTMAS CARD BY LEE SCALES

PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

George Lee's photo of Martin JM-1 engine run up at NAAS Arcata.



This is the story behind a Grumman Duck assigned to VJ-2 with photographers appearing to ride on the outside of the flying amphibian. Before being sent to the South Pacific, Navy Utility Squadron Two (VJ-2) was training at NAAS Arcata in northern California. It was getting close to Christmas and a group of the photographers got the idea to do the picture as a Christmas card for the families of VJ-2.

My father, James Scales, seen on the top wing, sat on the barracks dining table where a squadron mate photographed him as if he was leaning over the wing, camera in hand. For the

image of him standing by the strut he leaned up against a ladder, and finally the image of him hanging by his shoes was done with fellow photographer Bud Hegerman on the barracks table and dad laying on the floor. Hegerman is seen sitting on the bow of the J2F and that photo was taken with him sitting on a barracks chair. They used a photo of a Grumman J2F Duck that was assigned to VJ-2 in the late 1930s, and with a late-night darkroom session they added themselves to the various positions seen in the photo. The Christmas cards were made and sent to the families. The thing that I find so interesting is that this picture somehow made it to the National Archives.

My father joined the Navy in 1942, and went to NAS Pensacola for photography school. Upon completion, he was sent to NAS North Island, San Diego, California, for additional training, and then was assigned to Utility Squadron Two where he finished his tour of duty.

Navy Utility Squadron Two was reformed on 1 November 1943, after being deactivated in mid-1941, and placed under the command of L/Cmdr. William R. Lipscomb. The squadron's



Crew of Martin JM-1 with my father, James Scales, standing fourth from left and George Lee is seen front row center.



Pilot on a training flight in a Grumman F4F Wildcat experienced an engine problem and could not land at NAAS Arcata due to heavy fog and was instructed to ditch in the shallow waters off the coast of Arcata. My father was on one of the recovery boats and photographed the successful ditching.

reformation took place at Naval Auxiliary Air Station Vernalis in San Joaquin County, California, but due to an overcrowding of other training squadrons VJ-2 was transferred to Naval Auxiliary Air Station Arcata in Humboldt County. At the end of November, both of these auxiliary air stations were part of Naval Air

Station Alameda Air Center.

Aircraft assigned to VJ-2 were six newly acquired Martin JM-1 Marauders and six Grumman TBF-1 Avengers. The Martin JM-1s were converted B-26C Marauders built at the company's Omaha plant. They were lacking any combat equipment or armor plating as they were built for Navy use as a high-speed target towing and utility aircraft. The challenge facing the squadron was the JM-1 was totally unfamiliar to many of the young pilots and was unproven in the utility function of target towing.

Training began as soon as the squadron arrived at NAAS Arcata with familiarization of all the latest technical orders, notes applicable to the aircraft, and pilots' handbooks. Additional training in celestial navigation for flights across the Pacific were completed over



The remains of the Wildcat after ditching. Pilot was unhurt and the plane was pulled from the water and scrapped.