

Pilot Profile: Marv Bishop

by Russell Knetzger

“Join the Navy and see the World” certainly applies to Marvin Bishop. Immediately upon graduation from high school in Chilton, Wisconsin, in 1955, he signed up with the US Navy. Chilton is between Lake Winnebago and Manitowoc. Ten years later he settled in Milwaukee, but in that ten year Navy career, he had exceptional experiences.

Pertinent to our club, Marv was able to serve in the aircraft element of the Navy. With the Korean Conflict ended, the Navy offered training choices. Following “basic” at Great Lakes Naval Training near Waukegan, IL, Marv schooled next at Norman, OK, then at Lakehurst, NJ in pilot services – parachute rigging, oxygen supply, and survival gear. To satisfy a Navy rule for riggers, Marv jumped his own chute, leading him to do sports jumping. Marv was deployed to aircraft carrier service on the USS Midway, based at Alameda Air Station near San Francisco. Marv’s Squadron flew FJ4B fighters. Being at sea for 9 months included stops in Hawaii, the Phillipines, Hong Kong, and then porting several times in Okinawa, Japan.



Insignia, 1960
Operation Deep Freeze
US Naval Air Facility
McMurdo Sound
Antarctica



Marv also was based at Kingsville, TX and Quonset Point, RI, putting him on all three major coastlines of the US. Nevertheless, his two most exciting posts were “land” based, China Lake, California, and MacMurdo Sound, Antarctica. The land at China Lake, near Death Valley and halfway between Bakersfield and Las Vegas, is pure desert. China Lake is a crossroads, not a body of water.

The China Lake assignment was to a base doing hush-hush work, particularly in developing air to air missiles for the Navy. The “Sidewinder” heat seeking missile was developed in 1956 at China Lake, and to this day remains an effective weapon. During Marv’s stay there it employed 1,000 military and 10,000 civilian personnel. Most of the 10,000 were scientists on a calibre of those who worked on the “Manhattan Project,” developing the atomic bomb during WWII. Work on the missiles involved shooting them near drone aircraft radio controlled from the ground. That was Marv’s first taste of R/C.

MacMurdo Sound is on the Ross Ice Shelf, reachable from Invercargill and Christchurch, New Zealand and not accessible by air once the ice breaks



Marv Bishop with his Floyd Katz designed and built trainer, this one on floats, .15 cu.in. engine.

up in the Antarctic “summer”. The Antarctica assignment was 1959-1962 under the “IGY-International Geophysical Year.” Among the inventions during that time were the open-weave waffle pattern underwear that increases survivability in extreme cold.

Marv made trips between New Zealand and MacMurdo on ski-equipped DC-3s and even a Super-Connie on skis. Marv was part of a parachute rescue team at MacMurdo, which resulted in him being the first man in Naval history to qualify as a parachutist in the Antarctic.

After Navy service, Marv moved to Milwaukee, working for 17-1/2 years for Bostrom Mfg. Co. on S. 2nd & Oregon. Marv’s sewing skills on parachute rigging made him a good supervisor for the cushion work Bostrom did on its bus/truck seats. After Bostrom moved down south, Marv worked 10 years at Custom Craft doing interior customized vans.

Marv’s son-in-law, Scott, got him into model aircraft just 3 summers ago. Marv was looking for a hobby involving shopwork, and aviation. Marv chose an electric powered Goldberg model, though the low power was hard to fly with any wind. His instructor, Floyd Katz, advanced him to .15 & .25 engine sized trainers that Floyd had designed and built. Marv soloed on them. Marv lives with wife Debby on S. New York Ave. in Bay View, having ten grandchildren living here, in California, Michigan, Indiana and even in Tasmania.

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