

EVOLUTION OF THE AVIATION CADET TRAINING PROGRAMS¹

April 15, 1935 – Passage of the Aviation Cadet Act created the grade of Aviation Cadet in the Naval and Marine Corps Reserves, and set up a new program for pilot training in which otherwise qualified college graduates between the ages of 18 and 28 would be eligible for 1 year of flight instruction, benefits of pay, uniform gratuities, and insurance, and after serving 3 additional years on active duty would be commissioned as Ensigns or Second Lieutenants, be paid a bonus of \$1,000.00, and be returned to inactive duty as members of the Reserves.

July 20, 1935 – The first class of Aviation Cadets to report for flight training convened at NAS Pensacola. First of the group to become a Naval Aviator was Elliot M. West who was designated on 12 June 1936 and assigned naval aviator number #4,854.

June 13, 1939 – The Aviation Cadet Act of 1935 was revised to provide for the immediate commissioning of ensigns or second lieutenants of all cadets on active service and the future commissioning of others upon completion of flight training. The law also extended the service limitation to 7 years after completion of training of which the first four would be required, and provided for promotion to the next higher rank on the basis of examination after 3 years of service. A reduction in the bonus payment upon release to inactive duty was made with the provision that aviation cadets already serving in the fleet be given the option of remaining on the old pay scale with the \$1,500.00 bonus, or, accepting commissioned pay and the new \$500.00 discharge payment.

1946 thru 1950 – Aviation Midshipman Act, or the so called “HOLLOWAY PLAN”. The first class started in the fall of 1946 [12-14-46] composed of former AvCads who were well into the flight training program and chose to be redesignated Aviation Midshipmen rather than be released from active duty. The last pre-flight class was in 1950 when the program was terminated in favor of accepting NROTC and Naval Academy graduates as aviation cadets. The main difference in the two programs was the Aviation Midshipmen were to be commissioned USN upon completion of flight training, whereas, the AvCads were USNR. [“The Aviation Midshipmen” or “AVMID’N” Plan is a bit of misnomer. The term “Aviation Midshipman” is not mentioned in the act.]

June 22, 1948 – So called ‘NAVCAD’ program. In essence a re-activation of the old 1935 Aviation Cadet program. Flight training was opened to men between the ages of 18 and 25, with at least 2 years of college. Candidates were required to serve on active duty for 4 years after which they would be returned to inactive duty as members of the reserve. A limited number were to be given the opportunity to remain on active duty with possibilities of transferring to the regular Navy.

May 2, 1955 – The Aviation Officer Candidate Program was opened to graduates between the ages of 19 and 26. The new program paralleled the Aviation Cadet program insofar as flight training was concerned but in recognition of the higher scholastic attainment of its candidates, offered a commission as Ensign, USNR, upon completion of the 4 months pre-flight course.

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¹ Fred “Crash” Blechman. Letter to Lou Ives dated January 16, 2001.