

John Nyhuis
Ottumwa, Iowa, Pre-Flight Class 1-47?

In 1948, Don Engen,¹ a 23-year-old Lieutenant with three years seniority, was Operations Officer of VF-212, a night all-weather fighter squadron in Air Group Twenty-one [CVG-21], based at NAS Seattle.

"From time to time we would send someone to pick up a new airplane at San Diego. On one of these occasions, Midshipman John Nyhuis was sent to San Diego to pick up a 'new' F6F-5N. The trip down was uneventful as was the pick-up of the airplane, and the first two legs of the solo cross-country back to NAS Seattle. Because of impending weather, John landed at Corvallis, Oregon, then a civil field having once been a Naval Air Station. The weather did not clear."

"The weather stayed on the deck. John waited one day, two days, and on the third day ran out of money. He dutifully called Seattle each morning to check in. Running out of money, he checked the tiedowns on his grounded airplane and marched into town and went to work to make money to pay his board and room – shelling and canning the current crop of peas. He did this for about a week before the weather cleared and he climbed back into his airplane to return to Seattle."

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Newly designated Naval Aviators, although well trained to fly instruments, usually did not have the required flight hours for an "unrestricted" (white) instrument card; instead held a "restricted" (red) card – requiring a white-card pilot with the flight. Most Flying Midshipmen were in the red-card category.

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¹Don Engen became a Vice Admiral, USN, and later FAA Administrator [1984-1987] and President of AOPA Air Safety Foundation [1988-1990].