

## Thoughts on the Holloway Aviation Midshipman Plan

### Letter to Lou Ives

5 May 1989

In 1946 the Aviation Midshipman Program was designed by Vice-Admiral Holloway, ChNavPers, and was referred to as the "Holloway Program." It was to provide the U.S. Navy with an additional source of officers to augment the Naval Academy and the ROTC programs with Regular Officers vice Reserve Officers.

The concept was that the Aviation Midshipmen would have two years of college, two years as Midshipmen going through flight training, one year in the fleet [as an Ensign], then two more years of college. At the end of this time, seven years, they would be on par with the Naval Academy Officer who had four years at the Academy, two years in flight training, and one year in the fleet – seven years. (Flight training did not take the full two years, so the extra time was in the fleet as a Flying Midshipman.) [Ed.: For some of the early AvMid'n, a full two years were spent in flight training; and for those who had V-5 AvCad time, another 6 – 18 months were flying in the fleet as an AvMid'n, being sworn in – commissioned as Ensign – in such far-off places as Barber's Point, T. H.; the Sixth Fleet in the Med; and in a PB4Y-2 over Kodiak Island.]

The Aviation Midshipman was commissioned as a Regular Officer and had to apply for retention as a Regular Officer. [Ed: This did not obtain for those early AvMid'n. The Bradley and Johnson purges of the late '49s and early '50s seemingly had no rules for the AvMid'n – fired.] Those selected for retention would remain on active duty and go back for two years of college at a college of their choice. The non-selected would go to inactive duty and receive tuition and fees paid to a college of their choice and \$100 a month while in college. [Ed: The first fired AvMid'n were denied this opportunity, and had to fight like hell to obtain their contracted rights of college. They finally persevered. The \$100 was taxable income; G. I. Bill stipends were not.]

It was not promised, but it was anticipated that there would be a high retention rate of Regular Officers. The first group were designated Midshipmen in 1946 [December 16]. If they had already started flight training, they would receive their commission one year after designation as a Naval Aviator. Those who had not started flight training received their commissions two years from the start of Pre-Flight.

The first Retention Board met in May 1949 to consider those commissioned in 1948. 286 of this group applied for retention [Ed: I don't recall requiring application for retention. We all assumed we were USN for life – as the original pitch to us at Ottumwa promised]. The board originally selected 284 for retention.

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(The unofficial word was that the two non-selectees had both been reported for flat-hatting.) However, just before the results were released, Louis Johnson, then SecDef, was enforcing big cutbacks and the board was instructed to reconvene and cut the selection 50% [Ed: does anyone know the criteria for the RIF?]. The result was 142 were selected for retention. All non-selectees were given a reserve commission and released to inactive duty by December 30, 1949.

Those commissioned in 1949, saw the handwriting on the wall. In fact, the word was out that there would be a 10% selection rate. 379 applied for retention and 37 were selected. The non-selectees were to be released on June 30, 1950. But Korea broke out just six days before, and some were given the opportunity to remain on active duty as Reserve Officers.

When the Retention Board met in May 1951 to consider the officers commissioned in 1950, Korea was still going strong and the retention rate was 90 to 95%.

In 1951 it was recognized the groups commissioned in 1949 did not have much of an opportunity. The Navy gave them an opportunity to reapply for the regular Navy. [Ed.: I did at that time, and was informed that it was too early; and to "Submit your application later."]

Approximately 300 applied and 100 were selected for regular Navy.

/s/ Herb Sargent

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